



BISHOPS REITERATE SANCTITY OF LIFE, CONDEMN INVASION OF CHURCH BY GUNMEN

Aug 14, 2017

EDE, NIGERIA -

Catholic Bishops of Ibadan Ecclesiastical Province have reemphasized the sanctity of human life noting that no person has the right to take the life of another human person, no matter the circumstance.

The Bishops made this observation in their communiqué issued at the end of their second Provincial meeting for 2017, held at St. Kizito Pastoral Centre, Ede, Osun State. The communiqué titled: *The Church and the Travails of a Growing Nation*; was signed by Archbishop Gabriel Abegunrin of Ibadan and Bishop John Oyejola of Osogbo, President and Secretary of the Conference, respectfully.

Condemning in strong terms the recent killing of worshippers during early Sunday Mass celebration at St Philip's Catholic Church, Ozubulu, Anambra State, by some gunmen; the Bishops declared: "We uphold still the sanctity of every human life given by God and not to be taken away by anyone and therefore can never denounce enough the evil of such a horrendous and callous killing of innocent worshippers right in the Church during the Holy Mass."

They continued: "Different accounts have been given to analyze the mayhem. The bottom line is that the security situation in Nigeria remains at best, tenuous. We strongly condemn whatever may be at the root of this and similar occurrences. Those who are charged with securing human life and property in the nation must simply do more to protect the citizens. One must ask how murderers like the perpetrators of the Ozubulu mayhem came about such deadly weapons. The proliferation of arms in Nigeria deserves urgent and decisive action."

The Bishops commiserated with the local ordinary of Nnewi Diocese, Most Rev. Hilary Okeke, the faithful of the diocese, especially the families who lost their loved ones; government and people of Anambra State and called for prayers for the repose of the souls of the departed. They reiterated the right of all Nigerians to freely adhere to any religion of their choice is sacrosanct and must be protected by all legitimate means

Speaking on the security situation generally in the country, the Bishops regretted that terrorism is back in the country with greater force and stated that a lot still need to be done by government and security agencies in this respect. Their words: "We regret the recent resurgence of Boko Haram activities in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The criminal group seems to have returned with double strength. We commend the Presidential order that has returned the Nigerian Military Service Chiefs in full force to the

centre of the battle. Sadly the wanton destruction of lives and property in Southern Kaduna is also yet to abate.”

Other areas addressed in the communiqué included: the ongoing Marian Year; enduring commitment to Liturgical Rules; moral decadence in our society; lingering challenges in the education sector; rights of workers and unpaid wages and the Restructuring of Nigeria which they said must be done according to the laws of equity and justice.