



## **CAN LEADERS URGED TO FOCUS ON THE UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

Jun 24, 2019

### **SOKOTO, NIGERIA -**

Leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), have been advised to focus on the unity of the Body of Christ, concentrate on things that will bring all Christian denominations in the country together; and avoid been tied to the apron-string of the government in power. This advice was given by the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Most Rev. Mathew Hassan Kukah, while addressing the delegates of the five-block denominations of the association; at the end of the election of a new President and vice President for the body.

The free, fair and transparently conducted election which took place at the National Christian Centre, Abuja, recently, was facilitated by the Electoral College led by Bishop Kukah. About 103 delegates from the five-member blocs denominations and national officers of the association took part in the election while the contest was between the incumbent, Dr. Samson Ayokunle of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) Bloc and Rev. Dr. Caleb Ahima of the TEKAN and ECWA Fellowship Bloc. Dr. Ayokunle emerged victorious while Dr. Ahima automatically became the Vice President of the association.

Bishop Kukah while congratulating the two contestants for their spirit of sportsmanship and successful outcome of the election noted that either of them was qualified to lead the umbrella body of Christians in the country. He also commended the delegates for the orderly way they comported themselves during the voting process and ensuring

that there was no rancour.

The Local Ordinary of Sokoto Diocese urged the President and his new Vice to focus on the task of bringing and holding together the body of Christ. He noted that the new executive must collaborate and cooperate to make CAN sufficiently distant from government and the politics of the country, which he described as being “toxic”.

His words: We may relate with individuals but our focus should be the unification of the body of Christ. We have enough number of followership to point the direction for Nigeria to move; and God’s time is the best.” He stated that Church leaders should be constructively critical of issues “as we see them,” He added: “You should not be too close to government at the expense of the Church, when the need arises. This does not mean you are to be confrontational or fight the government.

He advocated a rancour free tenure for the new executive and called on members of all the Church blocs to support the two major officers to make CAN a virile body for the promotion of Christian unity and protection of the interests of the people, especially the poor and the marginalized.

In his post- election speech, Dr. Samson Ayokunle thanked the delegates for their comportment and making the election rancour free to the disappointment of critics who were waiting for a rowdy and inconclusive exercise. Noting that Christianity is facing a great challenge in the country, the CAN President declared: “Let us speak with one voice as the body of Christ, pacify dissenting voices and make them see reason; and stop using the social media and the regular media to show our grievances and thereby demean the body of Christ”.

The President further urged that everything should be done within the CAN fold to prevent security forces from meddling in the affairs of the association, neither should members resolve to litigations to settle Church matters.

In his own remarks, the newly elected Vice President, Dr. Caleb Ahima assured of his commitment to the unity of the

association to counter the challenges facing Christianity in the country. He expressed satisfaction at the peaceful way the election went and promised to cooperate and collaborate with the president to ensure that the objectives of the association as the umbrella body of all Christian denominations in the country are realized.