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<td>Ojionuka Arinze B.</td>
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CATHOLIC YOUTHS THE LIGHT OF NIGERIAN YOUTHS

By Rev. Msgr. Francis Nnalue Akukwe, Given at the 23rd National Executive Meeting of the CYON at Abuja, 3-4th February, 1995

Greetings

May the Grace and Peace of Jesus Christ be with you, guide and protect you during this 1995. We thank God who has gathered us from different parts of the country in these difficult days. Every year the problems of Nigeria seems to increase: hunger, ill-health and poor health care, acute accommodation problem, poor and difficult transportation, unemployment, inflation, multiplicity of new crimes and perfection in the old ones, neglect of Education and Youths, corruption and various forms of fraud (419), irrational ethnic and religious rivalry, and to cap it all dictatorial, selfish and insensitive government.

Nigerian Problems and the Youth

In the midst of these problems the youths look disarmed, helpless, and passive. These problems are in a special way problem for the youths. If they are not properly handled they spell misery for the youths. The youths must be in the forefront in trying to solve them. This is my challenge for you in this 1995. As a body try and find solutions to the various problems that confront youth development in Nigeria. In your national meetings, in the provincial and diocesan meetings, in your interaction with other youth organizations that compose the Nigeria Youth Council, focus on the solution of these problems. Initiate work-
shops and seminars to which other organizations can be invited. Personal or individual solution or survival is not sufficient, as such only scratch the surface. The second greatest commandment is "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk. 12:31; Mt. 19:19). Faithfulness to this command brings authentic human development, life in abundance for all.

**Solution in Christ**

To succeed you need only to align yourselves truly to Christ. The purpose of his coming to the world is to save people from such problems (Lk. 4:16-18). "For God sent his son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved" (Jn. 3:17). He is the light which enlightens all who come into the world (Jn. 1:9). Even though he is the light that has come into the world, men prefer darkness to light because their deeds are evil. "Everybody who does evil hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions will be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the truth" (Jn. 3:19-20).

**Live by the Light**

My dear youths, I invite you this year to come and stand by the truth, to live by the light of Christ, to abandon the pursuit of the values of those who surround us, but which do not square up with the way Christ showed: materialism, ostentation, exaggerated power, unmitigated pleasure, lies and deceits etc. "You are the light of the world... the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:14). Do not be led by those you should lead. I call you to live a renewed and dedicated life in Christ, a life of true conversion, a life without sin, a life of truth, a life of grace.

**Evangelism**

When this personal change takes place, you are in a position to face the faithless, politico-military leaders. You can then beam the gospel light on the issues facing the leaders. You must let them know that human life and human dignity far surpass any accumulation of wealth. Based on that
1. The army must be called to hand over power soonest to a democratically elected government. The army has not demonstrably done better than civilians in governance.

2. All political detainees should be released and all repressive decrease withdrawn.

3. Freedom of expression must be given full reign and all the closed media houses opened.

4. The wealth of Nigeria must be used for the benefit of all Nigerians, and government by "settlement" must be a thing of the past.

5. Programmes for the benefit of ordinary people such as education, health, transportation, and housing must be pursued vigorously in fact and not just in the media. Also citizens who have been rendered useless by poor socio-economic structuring must be rehabilitated etc.

Your call and action for these and similar reforms must be loud, clear and unequivocal. It is your ox that is being gored. You must bring the light of Christ to those who like to hide in darkness to protect their evil deeds. Their conversion and change mean well-being for them and all Nigerians.
A Communique issued at the 23rd National Executive Meeting of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON) held at the NYSC Orientation Camp, Kubwa - Abuja, 3rd - 4th Feb. 1995

The members of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria at the end of their executive meeting came out with the following resolutions:

1. The Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria is grateful to the Holy See for increasing the ecclesiastical provinces of Nigeria from three to nine.

State of the Nation

2. The Catholic youths of this country do not support the long adjournment of the Constitutional Conference. It seriously calls on the Conference to expedite action and finalize the business on the document to ensure the peaceful disengagement of the Military by January 1996.

3. The Organization calls on the Federal Military Government to release all political detainees in the interest of justice and peace, in respect for fundamental human rights, and freedom to express political opinions. It also calls for the reopening of all the closed media houses.

4. The youths are strongly concerned about the adverse fiscal measures imposed by the Government. We appeal that the Government introduces measures to alleviate the suffering of the masses; we also look forward to the creation of more employment opportunities.

5. We are concerned with the battered image of the nation abroad caused by fraudulent Nigerians. We call on Government to take steps to redeem our image as we prepare to host the forthcoming junior world cup fiesta. Youths are also advised to shun crime and fraudulent
practices.

6. The CYON urges the Government to look into the condition of service of teachers which leads to incessant strike actions that disrupt the educational system of the country. To reduce reoccurrence we advise that voluntary agency schools be handed over to their rightful owners.

7. The reoccurrence of religious uprisings over the years has taken its toll on the economy and growth of this nation. We call on the Government to take firm steps to stop this.

8. We finally express our deep seated happiness with the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for their glowing concern for our overall development. We also thank His Grace Rt. Rev. Dr. John Onaiyekan (Archbishop of Abuja) for hosting us.
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