



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

PROT. 180/18 (2)

19 February 2018

Your Grace,

Together with all the Bishops of Nigeria, you know well the regrettable case in Ahiara, brought about by the irresponsible and obstinate attitude of some priests, who systematically rejected the appointment of His Excellency the Most Rev. Peter Ebere Okpaleke, as Ordinary of the Diocese. The whole Church in Nigeria has been deeply affected and saddened.

Now, after more than five years since the appointment of Bishop Okpaleke, for the good of the Church with a commendable and an extraordinary act of humility, he decided to present his resignation to the Holy Father, who has continued to encourage and remain close to him. Also in this circumstance, the Supreme Pontiff, taking note of this noble gesture, wishes to show Bishop Okpaleke esteem and appreciation as a priest of Jesus Christ and Bishop of the Church.

At this time, as the Pope accepts the resignation of Bishop Okpaleke from the Pastoral care of Ahiara, I therefore beg you and the Most Rev. Archbishops and Bishops of our beloved People of Nigeria, to promote the spiritual and ecclesial rebirth of the Church in Nigeria and in Ahiara. In effect, the Holy Father, considering the future of this Diocese, wants that each of the parties involved should assume their responsibilities and look forward with trust for the good of the Church. For this reason, the Pope recommends that everyone should renew his or her commitment and offer an additional contribution in solidarity to the solution of the Ahiara case.

After the Meeting with the Holy Father last June 8, following His explicit Instructions, His Holiness Pope Francis received 200 letters of apology from the Clergy of Ahiara. This Congregation, in the name of the Supreme Pontiff, who knows well what was written to Him, then proceeded to respond to each priest. The Paternal benevolence of the Holy Father should be understood only as a strong appeal to that sense of Ecclesiality and obedience that every priest publicly and freely promised to his Bishop and his successors. The Christian

Your Grace
The Most Rev. **Ignatius A. KAIGAMA**
Archbishop of Jos
President, Catholic Bishops' Conference

NIGERIA

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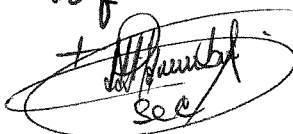
Faithful, therefore, should remind their priests and encourage them never to violate their commitments again. The Pope thanks those who, for their fidelity, did not allow themselves to be misled by obstinacy.

With the appointment of a new Apostolic Administrator, the Holy Father wants to point out that He continues to have a special and particular concern for the Diocese of Ahiara. Likewise, the Roman Pontiff is entrusting its ordinary administration to a trusted Prelate of a nearby Diocese, capable of initiating the process of healing and renewal. This means that, for the time being, the Pope does not intend to provide normal Governance to Ahiara and reserves the right to evaluate its spiritual and ecclesial progress before He makes another decision.

I warmly thank Your Grace for your benevolent ecclesial care for Ahiara throughout all these years, and I ask you to extend the gratitude of the Holy Father, and mine, to all the Archbishops and Bishops of Nigeria, to whom I request a renewed commitment to the whole People of God entrusted to their Pastoral care.

While invoking the maternal protection of Mary, Queen of Africa, I take this opportunity to express my sentiments of esteem and wish you every blessing, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

S. Card. Sodani
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