

A PASTORAL STATEMENT OF THE BISHOPS' COUNCIL OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NIGERIA (LCCN) ISSUED DURING THEIR MEETING OF 29TH – 30TH JULY 2022 AT THE CHURCH HEADQUARTERS, NUMAN, ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

Preamble

We, the bishops of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN) under the leadership of His Grace, Most Rev. Musa Panti Filibus PhD., met in Numan at the Church headquarters to pray together and also to deliberate on various issues relating to the life of the church, its service to society and national issues as they affect the church and the nation as whole. We are mindful of our roles as leaders in the community of Faith to pray, speak and act in ways that are transformational contributing to the common good of the wider society. We will be ceaseless in our prayers, in speaking truth to power and in acting rightly to the glory of God and good of God's people.

We recognize that God has been gracious to His people in Nigeria, despite the increasing challenges of human sufferings in the country, the people are not without hope that someday things will be better. We commend the resilience of the people in the face of excruciating pains and sufferings. Most have not given up on the nation of Nigeria. The situations could have compelled most people to do otherwise, but they kept faith that in no distant time the narrative will be different, and the people will enjoy peace that is based on justice for all. We are confident that the people are consoled by the words of Jesus Christ in John 10:10, "the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but I came that you may have life and have it in its fullness."

On the state of our nation

It will be recalled that when this government was elected for its first term, the people across all regions and religions were excited and hopeful about the three (3) points agenda it committed to address, namely, Insecurity, Corruption and Economy. These agenda points gave the citizens some level of assurance that the government is serious to take on the issues that bedeviled the nation and further reinforced by the inaugural address of President Muhammadu Buhari (GCFR) during his swearing in ceremony where he categorically said that "I belong to everybody, and I belong to nobody." Regrettably, our nation today is marked by laments rather than the joyful expectations with which the government was welcomed. What we are witnessing today is that politics of exclusion and nepotism in government are the order of the day.

In Nigeria today, the issue of insecurity is worrisome and the worst ever in recent history. Citizens and residents now live in fear and anxiety for their safety and lives. The insecurity situation in the nation remains a major cause of concern. Unfortunately, bandits now have the courage to threaten to attack and kidnap the President and C-in-C of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This is inconceivable! What gives them the audacity to contemplate such action? We are not only worried that the government seems not to be on top of the situation but also concerned that it appears the government that has the constitutional mandate to ensure the safety of its citizens is helpless in the face of such unprecedented

insecurity situation that has befallen the nation. We are still waking from the shock of the attacks and kidnapping of passengers on Abuja-Kaduna railways, then the attack on Kuje Prisons where members of the notorious violent extremist group escaped and still at large. We are deeply saddened by recent videos of victims of kidnaps being tortured in the most inhuman way by their captives. This indeed is a sad episode to remember, that calls for the most urgent action from the government. We further hear of kidnapping of persons in their homes on daily basis and most recent, the attack on the presidential guards and rumors that the bandits are at striking position to the Federal Capital Territory. Painfully, this is the situation we have found ourselves in today in Nigeria.

Further regrettable, the cases of corruption in public offices are not only increasing but worsening by the day. We hear and read of billions of Naira being stolen by people in position of trust. The greed level in our country is extremely high. Otherwise, why will an individual siphon public funds worth billions and still feel okay, how? Funds meant for pensioners, the vulnerable and others are stolen by those with privileged positions. These thieves sadly are shameless and will want to prove that they are falsely accused of embezzlement. This can only happen in our nation. Nigeria is tremendously blessed with all that humanity needs to thrive, but such endowments are used to benefit few at the expense of the bulk of the populace. This is unacceptable and must be openly condemned by all people of goodwill and those that mean well for this country.

The economic situation of the country is fluid and unpredictable. It can best be described that Nigeria is going through acute economic crunch. The prices of goods and services are daily on the increase in such an alarming rate, where the suffering of the poor masses is disheartening. Uncertainty in petroleum price even the unavailability of the product, the dwindling purchasing power of the naira that today goes for above N700 (seven hundred Naira) to a dollar in the parallel market is a serious cause of worry. The inflation rate has risen to a record high of 17.0 percent in the history of the country. This is horrible, because the poor will continue to be poorer with huge dependents on the few working class, whose take-home pay do not often take them home. We continue to pray for God's intervention in our case. Nigeria cannot afford to regress to the point of civil unrest like what happened in Sri Lanka.

The ASUU strike and the future of our nation

As parents and citizens of this nation, we have followed with sadness and greatest concern the trend of events in the ongoing issue of strike the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The manner this matter has remained protracted is not good for the Nation. The future implications on us all including lawlessness, crime, low productivity, and failure as a nation can best be described in tears.

The continuous stay at home of our children who should be focusing on their studies is a national disaster and draws back our national progress. Therefore, the government should as a matter of urgency resolve this issue finally. We equally call on the lecturers to also allow room for constructive deliberations to ensure that our universities are reopened as soon as practicable.

Politics of retrogression

Despite these challenges, the Nigerian state has found itself moving towards a greater precipice that shows disregards for our God given diversities. This is demonstrated by the configuration of the presidential ticket of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). The Muslim-Muslim Ticket question!

While it is not in the position of the church to fiddle into such issues as determining who emerges as a presidential candidate of a political party, the church being aware that it does not exist in a vacuum but bound to obey the constitution of Nigeria, we believe that the present position of the APC no matter how it is explained does not mean well for a nation that is trying to deepen the culture of democracy and democratization processes for the good of all people in their diversities.

More so, as a church in Northern Nigeria we should be more concerned about this political configuration looking at the profile of our children and members of unquestionable integrity who have contributed immensely to the development of this nation and even the All Progressive Congress who would have balanced the religious line but put aside for no cogent reason. This is no doubt bad omen for our national cohesion and integration because it is not true that there are no competent Christians in Northern Nigeria that can complement the flagbearer as they want us to believe. We are not so worried because we are not completely without options but concerned that the ruling party that should demonstrate leadership in nation building by recognizing religious diversities and fostering politics of inclusivity has decided to exclude others on the guise of votes aggregation. We shall do our part as we trust God to guide the nation aright for our greater good as his people.

Our call

Considering the foregoing and as those called to the service of God and humanity with responsibility to intervene during times like this, we and in strongest affirmation of the position of the national leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria, we call on:

1. Christians in Nigeria to continue to pray not only for the liberation and welfare of the nation but to be intentional in their roles as active citizens of Nigeria maintaining a high standard of morality and ethics in public governance.
2. The church in Nigerian to continue to shine the light of Christ as acts that contribute towards the realization of justice, peace, and reconciliation in the nation and among the people.
3. Christians to remain truthful to our faith and as disciples of Christ, we must maintain a firm stand knowing that we are critical stakeholders in the making of better country for all who reside in Nigeria, bearing in mind that by the help of God, we shall overcome as we collectively resolve to do what is right and acceptable in the sight of God of life.

4. The government to double its efforts to confront the enemies of the good people of Nigeria. We believe that the Nigerian Armed Forces are well equipped and able to defeat forces that are making life difficult for the citizens. We recognize and appreciate the sacrifices that our security personnel are making on daily bases towards securing the nation by themselves being on harm's way, but more is required to be done. We send our condolences to families of our security personnel who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the course of duty and assure of our continuous prayers for God's guidance and protection, while also praying for God to expose the bad eggs among them and those that are behind this alarming insecurity in the country.

5. The government to make provision for palliatives to support the suffering populace, particularly the most vulnerable who are unable to go to their farms because of the fear of the unknown. The government cannot ignore or pretend not to know that the people are suffering. The government must know that its legitimacy is contingent on the joys and peace of its citizens.

We commit to pray, speak and act together for the wellbeing of our one and only country Nigeria.

May justice and peace reign supreme in Nigeria, Amen.

Issued today, 30th July 2022

On Sun, Jul 24, 2022, 9:41 PM Justice, Peace & Reconciliation Movement JPRM
<jprmovement@gmail.com> wrote: