

CATHOLIC MEN AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: CHALLENGE WITH GREAT PROSPECTS

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Introduction

I thank you the Catholic Men Organization of Nigeria CMO for inviting me to address this conference at this venue. The role of men in the society and the Church cannot be overstated. It might be true that a lot more is heard about the activities and achievements of the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) in the Church today but the CMO has enormous responsibilities to further incarnate the message of the gospel. As I make this input I pray that the CMO will come to occupy a higher place of relevance in the Church and society, especially in the task of social engineering in Nigeria. I greet Professor Pat Utomi who is one of the most recognizable catholic men in Nigeria, a veteran of many parts who has never shied away from trying to transform his patch of the Nigerian nation. Congratulations sir and we need more like you who would boldly commit to values that the Catholic Church can identify with even if such a “risk” might cost them mileage in society. On the day I received the invitation to this forum one of the national dailies published an interview with you. It was a good read and anyone could tell that you cherish your Catholic identity.

I have opted to speak today on how the CMO as a catholic organization might engage in the social transformation of Nigeria. In a sense you all know a lot more than I do about that of course. I choose this topic to provoke some questioning of how things stand in our nation and Church vis: “For all that the Catholic Church means and does in Nigeria why does the Nigerian society remain the way it is? How come we seem to have achieved so little?” What can the CMO do to bring the Catholic Church’s mission to greater relief in the society in which we live?

The CMO Vision and Mission

The CMO vision statement defines it as a platform through which Catholic men collaborate with others to work for evangelization and serve humanity. Its mission is to mobilize catholic men for spiritual development, effective leadership and service in the home, the church and society. These very clear statements express the essential characteristics of the CMO namely: spiritual and temporal, ecclesiastical and secular or at least what the CMO would like to be. The key words in these definitions are the ones that made me to choose the topic of today. In my opinion, a catholic organization “working to serve humanity” and to give “effective leadership ... in the home, the church and society” makes a commitment to “transform society”. Therefore the CMO, in tandem with the mission of the Catholic Church in the world, has a duty to transform society. That imperative derives from the very nature of the Church herself because evangelization is about bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth and bringing the kingdom of God to the world in which we live. Every member of the CMO therefore necessarily inherits that same task.

The Nigeria of our Times

The Nigeria we live in today is one of the most endowed in the whole world, but it is really a country in serious trouble. On practically every conceivable social index, political, economic and even religious, our country is underperforming or altogether doing badly. It has practically been hijacked by terrorists and kidnappers who don the garb of politicians and rape and violate the citizens by every means including using the constitution to legitimise their crimes. That section of the political class increasingly grows in impunity and hand-wriggling arrogance while communal, tribal and religious clashes continue to claim hundreds of lives. Provision of basic infrastructure for which Nigerians have clamoured over many decades has become a huge and permanent siphoning pipe for stealing mind-boggling sums of money only surpassed by periodic elections which the hapless populace dare not reject and the fight against insurgency, an albatross that cannot but be cast off.

As we sit here, only months away from a general elections many cannot see the end of the tunnel talk less of seeing any light there. Test gubernatorial elections and party primaries of the last few months give no reason for joy, having sounded a note of warning on the blatant rigging and manipulation that might be perpetrated, even with the collusion of the security agencies. As things stand, the possibility of change from the incumbent Federal Government which many Nigerians hope for, seems very slim because the few viable options seem uninspiring. In short, it seems that all proposed cure may be worse than the disease. Under these circumstances. The Church has a role to play and Christians have a task to carry out. Here is how Fr George Ehusani has some good counsel to give:

“The socio-political and economic circumstances of today's Nigeria truly challenge those of us who lay claim to Christianity to act as the conscience of the nation. We must assume our responsibility as salt of the earth and light of the world. Our faith must become a faith that does justice. We must be forthright and consistent in working against individual evil and evil structures in our society. As the multitude of Nigerians are plagued by poverty and all manner of human degradation, and as our worsening economic fortunes has pushed a lot of our kith and kin unto the slums, where they live subhuman lives, we cannot afford to look the other way. We enlightened Christians must stand alongside the oppressed, the impoverished, the marginalized, the sick, the handicapped, the prisoners, those denied their just rights and those discriminated against. We are called upon to defend the right of poor workers to just wages, to affordable housing, to descent transportation, to health insurance, and to adequate retirement benefits”.¹

Do we need a CMO Party of Nigeria?

Configuring our nation's situation with the vision of the CMO one can call on the CMO to seriously consider “partisan politics”, its own brand of “partisan politics”, as a tool for transforming this society in a deliberate, coordinated manner. This is not calling for a “CMO

¹Homily at the Celebration of the Opening of the 2018/2019 Legal Year of the Federal High Court of Justice, Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Maitama, Abuja. September 2018

Party of Nigeria” but for a catholic-ideals-driven strategic movement, one which will be “partisan” in its strong commitment to the virtues and values which the Catholic faith cherishes and through these, infect and influence others and confront the challenges of the society. Such a movement will be geared to inspire its members to take political involvement seriously but with a “catholic socio-political agenda ”such that one can speak of a CMO bloc of influence in Nigerian politics? This would grow not just “politicians who happen to be Catholics” many of whom I believe we already have in Nigeria, but people who can rightly and confidently be called “catholic politicians”

Such an aggregation of Catholics would give flesh to catholic ideals, would not be aimed at excluding anyone but at assembling people who can be counted on to promote and work for positive principles and values which the Church and all people of goodwill can be proud of for the purpose of the common good. We need lay people, men who can translate the prose of the pulpit and the galvanizing power of the gospel into tangible benefits in the socio-political realm. Honestly, I think that it is impossible to transform society without engaging with it in such a coordinated and deliberate way. I am aware of some effort being made to put together such a movement but whether that effort has made expected impact is doubtful.

Scripture Agrees

The Bible supports such a project. Jesus Christ at the beginning of his mission declared his mission and vision. He said: “The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord” (Lk 4: 18-19). He then bequeathed the same project to his disciples saying: “You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again?”...You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden.” (Matt. 5 13-14). Saint Paul, like other New Testament authors urged Christians to impact on society: “this age may be evil but your lives must transform it” (Eph. 5:16). “People should think of us as Christ’s servants, stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God. In such a matter, what is expected of stewards is that each one should be found trustworthy”. (1Cor4:1-2).

The Church Advocates and Teaches Same

The Church, since earliest times through the work of saints and martyrs sought to transform the society and the world. The Fathers of the Church gave abundant evidence of the fact. In 1891Pope Leo XIII initiated a new era of reconstructing the social order in the Church. He wrote an encyclical on the Condition of Labour (*Rerum Novarum*) which began a series of teachings by different Popes, councils and Bishops addressing different social issues, which have come to be known as Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Through CST especially, the Church makes concrete proposals to Catholics on how to undertake the re-engineering of the world.

The Second Vatican Council, convened in October 1962 by Pope John XXIII, stands out as a landmark event in opening the Church further to the fresh air of the modern world. It emphasised the role of the laity in making society more compliant with the divine will for the common good. The first phrases of its Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* reads “The joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties, of the women

and men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way oppressed, these are the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of the followers of Jesus Christ as well”²..... “Laymen ought to take on themselves as their distinctive task, the renewal of the temporal order. Guided by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, prompted by Christian love, they should act in this domain in a direct way and in their own specific manner. As citizens among citizens they must bring to their cooperation with others their own special competence, and act on their own responsibility, everywhere and always they have to seek the justice of the kingdom of God”. The same document continues.... “The laity are called to participate actively in the whole life of the Church; not only are they to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind”³

Call to Holiness

The Vatican II Decree on the apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* goes even further affirming that the lay people, in order to sanctify the moral order, themselves need to be sanctified. It then defined the special vocation of the laity to participate in the Church’s mission and emphasised that the duty of the lay people to work for the renewal of the temporal order is divinely ordained. “That men, working in harmony, should renew the temporal order and make it increasingly more perfect; such is God’s design for the world”⁴.

Pope Francis in his recent encyclical *Gaudete et Exsultate* speaks about a spirit of holiness, capable of filling both our solitude and our service, emphasising that for the Catholic lay person, engagement with the world must always be a vehicle of attaining the greatest goal, which is holiness. He wrote: “Just as you cannot understand Christ apart from the kingdom he came to bring, so too your personal mission is inseparable from the building of that kingdom: ‘Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness’ (Mt 6:33). Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. Christ himself wants to experience this with you, in all the efforts and sacrifices that it entails, but also in all the joy and enrichment it brings. You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavour”⁵

The repeated call to holiness shows that the Church recognises that in the course of history human conduct and institutions have been corrupted and that the world needs men who can establish the proper scale of values and offer a template with which to renew the temporal order. Seems tailor-made for Nigeria!

Call to a higher disposition

² Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, (7 December, 1956), No 1.

³ *Gaudium et Spes*, no 43.

⁴ Vatican Council II, *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin Flannery OP, General Editor, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 1965, no 7.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exultation on the call to Holiness, Gaudete et Exsultate*, No 25

If lay people generally play second fiddle to the clergy in realizing the work of the gospel in the world and in the Church's mission, Pope Benedict XVI sought to change that during his tenure. He advanced the role of the lay people in the Church when during a pastoral visit to a parish in Rome in 2009 he spoke of the need to stop seeing lay people as mere collaborators with the clergy and rather consider them **co-responsible for the Church and for the actions of the Church in the world. In short, lay people are equal partners in making God's kingdom to come here on earth** That qualitative jump, widely disseminated during the tenure of the pope, seems to have been jettisoned but ought to be better exploited by all lay apostolate organizations like the CMO for the benefit of modern society.

A road Map for the Journey

By now it should be clear from the flow of my thoughts that I am not here to propound political theories or economic strategies. My main concern is to re-propose the pastoral and spiritual proposals of the Church's legacy for the CMO, as disciples of Jesus who believe in the mission and teachings of the Church to express itself and seek to transform the society we live in by pastoral, moral and spiritual tools. In a society fraught with moral crimes and a socio political environment, often infested with players lacking integrity but well versed in the language of double speak, corruption, violence, self-interest, manipulation and other similar vices disciples one really need a navigational aid. Those who seek to transform such a society must master their arsenal. They must possess the correct understanding of who they are and what their task really is. They must show that they understand the overall principle of Christian charity as based on love for God and for the neighbour. They must show that it is only a faith that proclaims and practices love that can challenge social injustice. That understanding can be acquired through a deeper knowledge of the following:

a) The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Code of Canon Law

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) contains detailed explanation of what the Church teaches and believes and proclaims. It is authored under inspiration by the Catholic Church for the purpose of opening the eyes and hearts of Catholics to understand the faith. I wonder if any other church has all its doctrines tenets of faith so clearly and fully laid out for use like the Catholic Church has. Unfortunately few Catholics today actually know their Catechism. Catholics who know their catechism have a potent tool for action when confronted with challenges to their faith in social life. "Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have" (1Pet. 3:15). The same can be said for the Code of Canon Law which many Catholics erroneously believe is only for priests, not to talk of the Bible which is the book of life for knowing the will of God and his son, Jesus Christ. It only stands to logic that one seeks to know these basic resources of the faith he professes as member of the Church of Christ.

b) Catholic Social Teaching

However a most important tool for Catholics who wish to engage with society which need to be much better appreciated and promoted is Catholic Social Teaching (CST). In its most basic detail, CST is a collection of teachings by councils, popes and Bishops of the Church over the last century which deal with matters of human dignity and common good in society. The

teachings address oppression, the role of the state, subsidiarity, social organization, concern for social justice, and issues of wealth distribution. CST is a rich collection of guidelines for the purpose of building a just society and living holy lives even in the face of challenges that society might present. The main principles of the teachings are 4, namely: Human dignity, Subsidiarity, Solidarity and the Common Good. Some scholars further include also the dignity of work and workers' rights, Rights and Responsibilities and Care for God's creation.

Some of the more recent documents which form CST are as follows: *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *On Social Concerns* and *Centesimus Annus* The Hundredth Anniversary, by Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate* Charity in Truth and *Laudato Si* Care for our Common home, by Pope Francis. The understanding of these teachings are very fundamental to Catholic involvement with the social order in these changing times. I am sure that if Catholics knew how rich and useful these teachings are and understand how to apply them, they would become a potent force of social transformation. Unfortunately, majority of Catholics are hardly aware of the existence of CST. I think that CST ought to play an important role in the life of the CMO. CST has been tagged "the best kept secret of the Catholic Church". It is amazing that such a powerful, comprehensive, socially transforming "working document" *Magna Charta* can be so little known by all. A summary of the major lessons of CST are as follows:

- There is a link between the religious and social dimensions of life. What is social is not essentially "secular" but essentially connected with the reign of God (*Gaudium et Spes*)
- The dignity of the human person is based on his being made man and woman in the image of God. The fundamental issue in social development is: what is happening to people? (*Pacem in Terris*, Peace on Earth)
- The poor and the powerless have a special place before God. The option for the poor is therefore to be prioritised.
- Justice and love are linked. Promoting justice in the world is to transform structures which block love. Love of neighbour immediately implies securing justice in this regard.
- The common good must be promoted as the sum total of all the social, political and economic conditions which permit everyone to attain their full potential.
- Political participation is an important tool for respecting the dignity and liberty of people. It is an instrument for achieving the common good.
- Economic justice is indispensable. The goods of the earth are to be equitably shared through just wages and respect of worker's rights.
- Promotion of peace imposes the imperative of right order among individuals and among peoples. To seek peace is to seek the fulfilment of every human being.⁶
- Human ecology is tied to the survival of the planet. Nothing in the earth is indifferent to us. We have a responsibility to care for the earth our common home. (*Laudato Si*)

⁶ Our Best Kept Secret: The Rich Heritage of Catholic Social Teaching, Michael J. Shultheis, Edward P Deberri, Peter J. Henriott, CAFOD 1988,p. 14-15.

- The traditional family of man and woman remain the basic cell of society and the basis of all authentic civilization. It deserves to be promoted and protected. (*Amoris Laetitia*).

The CMO would give very valuable service if it becomes a platform for the education and formation of its members and others on the proposals contained in the **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church** the document which compiles the practical proposals of the Church on social concerns as an instrument of evangelization. Through it, the potential evangelising force of members will be activated to match the vision and mission of the CMO. It would be a worthwhile investment for social transformation.

c) Lessons of the Bible: Matthew 20: Master, what must I do?

Many passages of the Bible provide a code of conduct for the task of transforming the world. The best known stories are the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the adulterous woman etc. There are yet others which even more directly address challenges which confront Christians in their effort to live the faith in society. Such challenges include the same vices which today impede and handicap the Nigerian society like corruption, crass competition, tribalism, lust for power, position and money and the instrumentalization of religion. In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 20 Jesus teaches his disciples about the kingdom of Heaven. He likens it to a landowner who goes out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He went out at different periods again to hire more workers. At the end of the day he paid all of them the same daily wage which he had agreed with them. Then bitter complaints ensued from the first comers due to jealousy and greed. The landowner rebukes the grumbling workers since he has not wronged them in any way.

Earlier in chapter 19, a man had asked Jesus: “Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life”? Jesus told him to keep the commandments. He replied that he had kept all those. Jesus then challenged him to a higher level of discipleship. “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”(Matt. 19:21). When the young man heard these words, he went away sad for he possessed great wealth. The disciples were frightened by Jesus’s exacting demand and they asked if anyone at all could be saved then. The Lord assured them that for God everything is possible. He then assured them that everyone who would have left houses, brothers , sisters, father, mother etc. for his sake would inherit a hundred times as much and also eternal life.

These two episodes of teaching should have communicated a clear understanding of the teaching of Jesus to his disciples. He was inviting the rich young man to pass from keeping the commandments just for himself to taking transformative action to the advantage of others. The same was true of the landowner who challenged his hirelings not to focus only on their own interest by begrudging the good which he wanted to do to others. “Why should you be envious because I am generous?” (Matt. 20:15).

Nonetheless, immediately after these two elaborate teaching episodes, the apostles acted out the human script. The two sons of Zebedee came with their mother to Jesus making a request of him. Bowing low she requested him to promise that her two sons may sit one on

the right hand and the other on the left in his kingdom. His response could not be otherwise. “You do not know what you are asking”. What request could be more selfish than theirs, thinking only of the best for themselves and actually marginalising all the others?

Do we find these kind of weaknesses hindering Christian engagement as well? Have catholic men not listened dutifully to the teaching of the gospel about the kingdom of heaven over many years? Have members not kept many commandments in order to personally please the Lord Jesus? Is it not by thinking that all the commandments we have kept are sufficient that we err? Think about all the scrambling for posts and positions in various church society groups. It is important to admit that craving and power seeking paradigms only destroy the cohesion of organizations and movements. They are associated with the Seven Capital sins: anger, envy lust, pride, gluttony, sloth and covetousness.⁷Can an organization that lacks internal coherence with its belief transform the world outside of it? This is unlikely. The CMO is thus urged to be serious with God and with faith and seek to reach the full stature of Christianity by following the deeper insights deriving from the word of God. The themes addressed in the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium* call for a rejection of the new idolatry of money, a financial system which rules rather than serves and the inequality which spawns violence. He calls on Catholics to say no to spiritual worldliness, spiritual sloth and to a sterile pessimism and to say yes on the other hand to the new relationships brought by Christ. As Jesus said: “Salt is a good thing but if salt has become insipid, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another”. (Mk. 9: 50).The

The Transforming Role of the Family.

“The Church has always held it as part of her mission to promote marriage and the family and to defend them against those who attack them, especially today, when they are given scarce attention in political agendas”.⁸The family of one man and one woman is the basic cell of society, the foundation of all authentic civilization and the paramount transformer of society. It therefore deserves the priority attention of the CMO. The role of men in the family cannot be underestimated. If men play their role well as fathers every family can be turned into a laboratory of social transformation. The family offers a platform which members of the CMO must promote and energize for the project of social transformation. That Saint Joseph was chosen to be a foster father to Jesus Christ raises the profile of Catholic Fathers to an eminent degree. Taking the family seriously and playing a good Fatherly role, helps the social and emotional development of children and optimises many positive societal virtues in them, like respect for the sanctity of human life, self-discipline, tolerance, empathy, endurance service and sacrifice. Men can then grow children who will have them as models, having the inspiration to transform their own world as well. The extent to which the family and family values have been undermined, it is to that extent to which many societies suffer moral and spiritual decadence and societal dysfunction today. Well-adjusted children develop into balanced adults who are an asset to any society.

⁷ Fulton J Sheen, *The Seven Capital Sins* (Mumbai: Alba House, 2010), 96

⁸ Pope Francis, *The Joy of Love, AmorisLaetitiae*, No 44.

d) Investment in the Formation of the Youth

The youth occupy a place of priority in the mind of the Church especially in this age. The most eloquent evidence of this is the Mission Sunday theme of this year focused on the youth and the Synod of Bishops on the youth currently ongoing at the Vatican. The laity concerned for the future and the transformation of the society must make the choice of investing in the young people even though this is becoming an arduous task. The youth however have a lot to give in return. Pope Francis entitled his message for The World Mission Sunday, "Together with the young people, let us bring the Gospel to all". He admonished young people to deploy their art, energy, and creativity into the digital and cyber world and spread the faith with hearts that are open. To harness the energy of youth for social transformation passes through the same door and will yield enormous results.

e) Continuous Study of Subjects of Interest to the Church and Society

In order to transform a society, adequate understanding is requisite. Society is dynamic and therefore requires constant appraisal by those interested in transforming it. It is noteworthy that many members of our CMO are highly qualified people in many walks of life as Economists, Medical Doctors, Lawyers, Judges, Business Experts, Bankers, Engineers, etc to mention just a few. It is necessary to exploit this great resource seeking to learn from one another to achieve a common purpose. Through its members, the CMO can constitute itself into an in house institution of learning. Members are thus better equipped to deal with challenges of socio-political involvement and become more confident in standing up to be counted. In addition, Catholics are slowly turning to obtaining degrees in ecclesiastical subjects like theology, philosophy and moral theology or even Canon Law. This ought to be encouraged also with the CMO. That Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world may have been said with less noble intentions but we could turn that to our advantage. True or false as I have heard, one of the reasons for which President Obasanjo's became consultant to so many scrambling politicians is that he is a graduate of theology, which ever type that may be. Such catholic courses are available under different formats at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) the major seminaries at Ibadan, Enugu, Ikot Ekpene from the Veritas University of Nigeria and practically everywhere there is a Catholic university or seminary. Transformation effort need such enrichment as it confronts the challenges of the day.

f) Networking the Structures of Transformation

The CMO must constantly rally together its members working in important areas of society where it has credible presence. At some point in the past I observed for example a high number of Catholics occupying top positions in the public media. I often wondered whether they influenced the media in a particularly catholic way is doubtful. Did they realise they could have together made a difference? Again, I doubt it. One could say the same for the important sectors like the economy, the judiciary Business, Academia, Education, Banking, Sports. Can the CMO play the role of a mobilizing platform for these potent but latent forces? So many occupy position on important boards etc. Can they be made to identify with the vision of the CMO?

In the same respect why does it seem impossible to work out a synergy among the Catholic Church's lay apostolate organizations in order to reach a socially-transforming consensus for our objectives. The Knights of St John, the Knights of Saint Mulumba, the Catholic Women Organization, the Justice Development and Peace Commission and especially the Catholic Youth Organization CYON, seem to me potential assets for social mobilization. How can these be co-opted for the realization of a value and virtue based vision in Nigeria? How can those who are endowed be convinced to make resources available for such an exercise?

g) A Commitment to Media Advocacy

It is important for the CMO to constantly engage with the media on matters that matter in order to secure a social profile and the attention of public opinion. I do not think this is that difficult to do judging from the calibre of some other organizations which manage to be heard from time to time. Issues that relate to strong catholic belief like the sanctity of human life, the family, the death penalty, freedom of religion etc. provide content for such advocacy. Democracy feeds on public opinion among other things and public opinion feeds on the media. Most Catholic organizations do not have a credible media profile and this is necessary for influencing society. Members of the CMO who are active in the media should be enlisted in this task so that the CMO can promote their members who are achievers at various levels in the nation and the church and can promote its principles and values as well as make its voice heard on salient issue of public interest.

A Change of Attitude

The CMO must provide credible leadership for the implementation of its vision and mission but also for other Church organizations who ordinarily look up to men for leadership. Since there are so many "urgent" interest calling for attention, unless good leaders emerge who are committed to the social transformation agenda and the formation of members for attaining clear goals, much cannot be achieved. John Cardinal Onaiyekan in his numerous interventions and speeches all over the world, on numerous subjects has also called on lay Catholics to believe in their capacity to take the destiny of Nigeria on and make a difference. Only at the beginning of this month at the closing ceremony of the Interfaith Conference in Nigeria he called for a change of orientation and attitude which will translate into changing the current paradigm of grabbing resources and territory: I tend to agree "There is need for a moral revolution, a change of mind set, attitude and behaviour patterns. This means addressing the heart and soul of Nigerians, and leading them into a spiritual combat. This is what religion, any genuine religion, is supposed to be all about.... to deploy our religious values and forces into this spiritual combat for change and moral revolution".

In Conclusion

There is no doubt that today there are forces trying to relegate God, religion and faith into the irrelevance. People of faith know that this is a dangerous proposition and must therefore keep putting their faith in the position to have influence on societal and national life. Overall, I propose therefore that such social transformation project *a la* the CMO be driven by catholic virtues and values. There is no reason to feel overwhelmed or intimidated for as Pope Francis

asked in *Evangelium Gaudium*: “Who would dare to lock up in a Church and silence the message of St Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? Showing concern and engaging with the building of a better world is a task that must be done so that as Catholics, members will be able to approach the throne of judgment with a clear conscience of having tried to impact on society. It is the guarantee to hope to hear those divine words of Jesus. “Well done, O good and faithful servant, come into the joy of your Master.

Thank you all for your attention.