

**“MOVING TOWARDS A BETTER AND DYNAMIC CHAPLAINCY” A REPORT PRESENTED BY THE NIGERIAN DELEGATES ON BEHALF OF COLONEL (VERY REV FR) CC IROEGBU DIRECTOR OF NIGERIAN ARMY CHAPLAINCY AND COORDINATOR OF ARMED FORCES PASTORAL ACTIVITIES (ROMAN CATHOLIC) TO THE APOSTOLAT MILITAIRE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT LANDGOED HUIZE BERGEN GLORIEUXLAAN 1, 5261 SG VUGHT, NETHERLANDS FROM 18 – 23 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. We are indeed privileged to be invited to this General Assembly and to be part of the activities marking its 50 years of existence, having been absent from the 2014/2015 general Assembly due to reasons beyond our control. The Nigerian delegates heartily facilitate with this General Assembly on its Golden Jubilee and wish her many more fruitful years.

2. The importance of this general conference cannot be over emphasized. The deliberations and subsequent communiqués emanating from the previous conferences enhanced our capabilities and performances, hence, the need for this report.

**AIM**

3. The aim of this report therefore is to acquaint this General Assembly on the activities of the Nigerian Armed Forces Catholic Chaplaincy, challenges and prospects.

**SCOPE**

4. The report will cover the following:
- a. Pastoral activities
  - b. Progress Reports
  - c. Achievements
  - d. Events for the coming year
  - e. Challenges confronting the Chaplaincy
  - e. Suggestions at improving the Chaplaincy
  - f. Conclusion

## PASTORAL ACTIVITIES

5. Pastoral activities have continued to expand tremendously through the assiduous efforts of the Chaplains/Chaplain Assistants and our generous people in the Chaplaincy. The Armed Forces Catholic Men Organization (AFCMO), Armed Forces Catholic Women Organization (AFCWO) and the Armed Forces Catholic Youth Organization (AFCYON) (compromising the Choir) are the three major organizations that have continuously become source of strength and inspiration within the Chaplaincy. They have constantly been supportive to the Chaplaincy activities in their desire to uplift it. More and more people have joined the Chaplaincy as a result of its rapid growth. Thousands have been baptized as well as received the various sacraments. Many too have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.

## PROGRESS REPORTS

6. Within the period under review, the following successes were recorded:
- a. Retreats and Seminars were successfully organized at Units and Zonal levels.
  - b. Church projects and developments within Units and Zones were financially supported
  - c. Conventions and Competitions of the major organizations were successfully organized.
  - d. Career and health Seminars especially for the youth were organized.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

7. The Nigerian Armed Forces Chaplaincy has over the years been faithfully carrying out the mandate of Christ for the salvation of members of the Armed Forces and their families. Within the period under review some of the achievements recorded include the following:

- a. **Director's Pastoral Tour** - The Director embarked on a Pastoral Tour of Units and Formations across the country. The Units visited include the North East where troops are battling the insurgents. The purpose of the visit was to preach the Gospel to troops and families and to encourage them on their roles and the need to remain resolute in the quest for peace. In each location visited, prayers were also offered for the troops and families.
- b. **Chaplain Training School** - For the first time the Chaplaincy built a befitting edifice for the training and re-training of our Chaplain Priests and

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Chaplain Assistants. In the past Chaplains were trained in borrowed Church halls.

c. **Commissioning of Chaplain Priests** - Since the last General Assembly, the efforts of the Director yielded results with the commissioning of six Priests into the Military as Chaplain Officers.

d. **More Chaplain Assistants** - New soldiers have been recruited as Chaplain Assistants who have continuously served the Church as Catechists in the Military.

e. **Psychological Counselling Team** - In order to strengthen its capabilities and boost its moral to defeat the insurgency and other security challenges bedeviling the country, the Nigerian Army Constituted a Psychological Counselling Team consisting of three Catholic Priests, three Protestant Priests and three Imams to go round Army Formations, Units and Training Schools to Counsel Troops. It is hoped that the task of this team when completed would bring out the best in our troops and the eventual end of the insurgency in the country.

### EVENTS FOR THE COMING YEAR

8. The Chaplaincy has a line – up of activities for the year ahead which include the following:

- a. The Directors’ Pastoral Tour of Units and Formations.
- b. Chaplains Training Week/Conference and Retreats.
- c. Chaplain Assistants Retreat.
- d. AMI Conference
- e. National Conventions of AFCMO, AFCWO, AFCYON and Armed Forces Catholic Choir Association Competition.
- f. Pastoral visits of Bishops to Units, Formations and Zones of domicile.
- g. Seminars, workshops and Retreats for members.

### CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE CHAPLAINCY

9. The desire to move towards a better and dynamic Chaplaincy is being hampered by the following among others:

- a. Lack of a Vicariate/Ordinariate for the Armed Forces Chaplain, though it is being given attention by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria.
- b. Shortage of Commissioned Priests
- c. Shortage of Chaplain Assistants

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- d. Security challenges, especially the insurgency in the North East.
- e. Papal's recognition for deserving Military personnel.
- f. Lack of sponsorship of members to the Holy Land for Pilgrimage.
- g. Allocation of more slots for the AMI Conference, especially the lay faithful.

### **SUGGESTIONS AT IMPROVING THE CHAPLAINCY**

10. For a progressive movement towards a better and dynamic Chaplaincy, consideration should be accorded these salient suggestions:

- a. Sponsorship of members to the Holy Land for Pilgrimage.
- b. Allocation of more slots for the AMI Conference.
- c. Dialogue with Appropriate Superior Authority to commission more Priests and recruit more Chaplain Assistants.
- d. Continuous dialogue with the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria for a quicker actualization of a Military Vicariate/Ordinariate
- e. More and regular retreats, workshops and Seminars to create awareness of the Catholic faith and tenets.

### **CONCLUSION**

11. This report has highlighted the activities and successes of the Chaplaincy through the support and cooperation of the three basic organizations in the Chaplaincy, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria and the Nigerian Military authorities to whom we will always remain grateful. The challenges confronting the Chaplaincy and possible suggestions as a way forward were enumerated. The Nigerian Military Chaplaincy is ever grateful for the honour given to us once again to be part of this Conference and the activities marking its Golden Jubilee. We really appreciate the Nigerian Army for sponsoring us to attend this Conference. Our unquantifiable thanks go to our people in the Chaplaincy on whose account we are here for their constant support and assistance responsible for the growth of the Chaplaincy. We assure all that the Nigerian Military Chaplaincy will not relent in carrying out its mandate of saving souls for Christ within it and beyond as we pledge a better and dynamic Chaplaincy. Thank you and God bless you.

Lagos – Nigeria  
Sep 2016

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