



**A Communiqué Issued by the Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria
(CABAN) At the End of Its Twelfth Annual Conference Held at Domus Pacis
Pastoral Institute, Akure, Ondo State, from November 5th - 8th, 2019**

Preamble

The Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria, with members from different parts of Nigeria and the overseas, held its Twelfth Annual Conference at Domus Pacis Pastoral Institute, Akure, Ondo State, from November 5th - 8th, 2019. The theme of the Conference was “Integrity and Corruption in the Bible.” In attendance were Most Rev. Dr Francis O. Alonge (the Bishop Emeritus of Ondo Diocese), Most Rev. Dr Martin Olorunmolu, the Bishop of Lokoja (a CABAN member), Very Rev. Fr. Dr Anthony Ojo, the Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Ondo (a CABAN member) and representative of Most Rev. Dr Jude Arogundade, Bishop of Ondo Diocese. Others in attendance were representatives of some pastoral associations of the Diocese. After serious and frank discussions and prayerful deliberations on the conference theme from different books of the Bible, we issue the following:

1. Gratitude

We thank God for all the material and spiritual gifts bestowed on humanity and creation in general, and on the Church, people of God, particularly in Nigeria. We acknowledge that the proper use of these gifts manifests the integrity of persons and preserves the integrity of the gifts endowed by God at creation. Their abuse or irresponsible use results in corruption: corruption of the gifts themselves and most importantly corruption of those who misuse or abuse these gifts.

2. Need to Cultivate and Sustain Integrity

Our world today badly needs integrity in all walks of life and in all human endeavours at the personal, family, community, societal and ecclesial levels. We affirm that integrity in the Bible requires living in all ways as humans created in “God’s image and likeness” (Gen 1:26-27), irrespective of nationality, religion or any such human considerations. It entails cultivating truth in the heart (Ps 101:2), the seat of life; and allowing biblical values and ethics of social justice, honesty, sound morality (cf. Amos 5:24) and truth in relationship (with God, with other human beings and with creation) to infuse and permeate every aspect of our human life.

Through the Sacred Scriptures we reaffirm our commitment to cultivate this life of integrity individually and collectively; we call upon all in church and in society irrespective of their origin and creed to do the same. In this way we will be persons of integrity who excel in honesty in all our personal, interpersonal and communal relationships and transactions.

3. The Reality of Corruption

We observe that corruption permeates all aspects and sectors of human life. It applies to individuals who are corrupt or to groups who corrupt themselves and their dealings. Corruption occurs wherever integrity is compromised or is lacking in any facet of human life. In the Bible corruption manifests itself in diverse ways, including falsehood, dishonesty, cheating others, misappropriation of the common good, oppression of the poor and the marginalized; the use of religion itself to serve personal needs and all forms of idolatry.

4. Corruption Diminishing Integrity in Society

We decry the diminishing virtue of integrity and the pervasiveness of corruption in society. In Nigeria, as in other countries, corruption is sadly found in diverse forms in politics, economics, education, healthcare, internet scam and in other sectors of life. Corruption is practiced by Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) who siphon foreign currencies into corrupt individual hands. Bribery, nepotism, favoritism, “419” activities; rigged election; illicit community practices; embezzlement of public funds and property, fraudulent business deals, cultic practices, kidnapping, medical quackery and examination malpractices: these and more are all forms of corruption.

5. Corruption Diminishing Integrity in the Church

We note that corruption which is endemic in society has also crept into all levels of the church. Flagrant aspects of corruption in the church include loss of prophetic witnessing, personal ambition, misuse and misinterpretation of the Bible for gain; using the church’s sacred liturgy and priesthood in the service of the god mammon; uncontrolled craving for money, power; obsession with prestigious projects at the expense of “God’s building”, the people (Eph 2:10-11), and subversive ways of selling sacramentals and even charging money for requested prayers.

6. Way Forward

Given the above scenario, we strongly call on all, especially civil and ecclesiastical leaders, to make integrity their rule of life and the guiding principle in all their dealings. All must commit themselves to cultivating and sustaining integrity and to shunning and eliminating corruption in all its forms, even if it brings suffering and rejection. We recognize that personal determination and commitment play fundamental role in our communal fight against corruption in church and society. Moral education and regeneration are indispensable in the fight against corruption. This requires the formation and reawakening of good conscience; giving good example in the family, in schools (especially in the early stages of children’s education) and in the church; and making the fight against corruption an integral agenda in all church and societal institutions.

7. Conclusion

We all must make relentless efforts at the personal and communal levels to uphold integrity and shun corruption in all its forms in church and society; remembering that “the integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them” (Proverbs 11:3). To achieve this we rely with faith on God’s grace and seek the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Saint Joseph, and all the saints who made integrity their rule of life.

Signed

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