



# CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA

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## PRESS STATEMENT

### **KILLING OF WORSHIPPERS IN ST PHILIPS CATHOLIC CHURCH, OZUBULU: SACRILAGE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD**

The reported invasion of St. Philip Catholic Church, Ozubulu, in Ekwusigo Local Government Area in Anambra State, on Sunday, August 6, 2017, and killing of the innocent worshippers by unidentified gunmen, is not only devastating and despicable but a new dimension of terrorism in our country, Nigeria. This dastardly act further confirms the fear of the insecurity of life and property of innocent Nigerians who go about their daily lives as law abiding citizens. That the incident could happen in the House of God during early morning Mass on Sunday, where the people have gone to worship God is indeed a sacrilege and a clear indication of disrespect to the dignity of human life.

The killing was reported to have occurred during the six o'clock morning Mass, when the gunmen opened fire on the innocent worshippers. Though the figure of casualty has been given by newspapers to be between 20 and 40, the official figure given by the Police was 11 dead and 18 suffering from different grades of injuries are being attended to in hospitals in the State.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) condemns in its entirety this criminal act which has no moral, judicial or social justification, irrespective of the motive. The act is not only a heinous crime against humanity but also a sin against God as no man has the right to take the life of another, for whatever reasons. This new wave of terrorism must not be allowed to thrive in our country.

It is indeed very sad and worrisome that people no longer have respect for places of worship and therefore could decide to turn such a sacred place into an arena for venting vengeance and killing innocent worshippers. It is also a clear indication that a new chapter of evil is emerging in the country, and there is need for all hands to be on deck to counter this ungodly act.

In a country like ours, that is already facing many challenges such as insecurity caused by Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen

invasion and other ethnic clashes, this recent inhuman act portends a greater danger to the fragile peace being presently enjoyed in the country.

While the CBCN appreciates the immediate response of medical personnel with prompt attention to the injured; the visitation of the State Governor, Mr. Willy Obiano, the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Umar Garba; as well as the condemnation of the inhumane attack by President Muhammadu Buhari and other top government functionaries and Church leaders; the action of government should go beyond the usual rhetoric of condemnation. The Police should use all available resources at their disposal to effect the arrest of the perpetrators of this ungodly act and ensure that justice is done, without delay. Also, adequate attention and assistance must be given to the injured until they are totally healed.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria commiserate with the families who lost their loved ones in the incident and pray that God in his infinite mercy will grant them eternal rest in heaven. The CBCN also sympathizes with all the injured and wish them speedy recovery. In the same vein, the CBCN also joins the Local Ordinary of Nnewi Diocese, Most Rev. Hilary Okeke, priests, religious and faithful, the governor and people of Anambra State in this hour of sorrow and pray that God will comfort and console them and ensure the return of peace and love among the people of Ozobulu and the entire State.



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