

July 3, 2018

**CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA (C.B.C.N)
EPISCOPAL COMMITTEE FOR THE LAITY**

**TO: DICASTERY FOR LAITY, FAMILY & LIFE
VATICAN CITY, ROME.**

**RE-``INTERNATIONAL MEETING FOR THE FORMATION OF THE LAITY''
``REPORT ON BEST PRACTICES''**

- 1) **INTRODUCTION:** The Church in Nigeria has an established committee on the laity, which is committed to the study, promotion and mission of the lay faithful under an Episcopal chairman.
- 2) **OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMITTEE :**
 - i) To provide Pastoral directives, encourage and promote the apostolate of the laity through the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria (C.L.C.N), and all other lay apostolate groups; thus helping them to fulfill their vocation as part of the family of God.
 - ii) To strengthen, broaden and intensify group and/or individual lay apostolate undertaken
 - iii) To oversee and advise the laity on their vocation and mission in the Church and society by fulfilling her mission of the renewal of the temporal order for collective action, dialogue and reflection on Church's social principles to leave the society.
 - iv) To facilitate and enhance the collaborative partnership with the Church's hierarchy; priests and religious in the fulfillment of her co-responsibility for the mission of the Church.
- 3) **SOME INITIATIVES BEING PROMOTED BY THE CBCN FOR THE FORMATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION OF THE LAY FAITHFUL IN NIGERIA:**

Establishment of the Episcopal committee for the laity to regulate the activities of the various lay groups and ensuring the lay people take their rightful place in the Church

and society. Toward this end, the Laity Manual was produced to serve as guidelines for all the lay groups and the laity in general.

- A formidable structure was put in place for the lay groups to organize themselves and participate in the prophetic mission of the Church under close supervision of chaplains appointed for each lay group as pastor of souls.
- Manual for the Laity was produced by the Bishops' conference which contains pastoral exhortations and directives, thus serving as 'vade mecum' or companion for reflection both as lay individuals or as groups.
- Some ecclesiastical provinces, dioceses and parishes have established schools of Theology as well as schools of evangelization and leadership training for the lay faithful including Catechists.
- Annual seminars/ workshops at the national, provincial and diocesan levels on contemporary topics affecting the Church and society in line with the mind of the Church.
- Annual study weeks such as the Laity week, Catechetical week; Family week; Bible week; JDPC week among others, are held to educate the laity at the parish level.
- The Catholic Social Forum; the socio-political wing of the Catholic laity council of Nigeria was established to encourage and train lay faithful who wish to participate in the politics of our country and as public servants.
- The Catholic laity council of Nigeria in collaboration with the Mission and Dialogue Department of the Catholic secretariat of Nigeria has embarked on the process of sending volunteer lay people on mission ad gentes under the auspices of the Catholic lay missionaries for Africa. (CALAMA)

4) CHALLENGES POSED TO THE FORMATION OF THE LAITY IN NIGERIA.

- a) Lack of commitment by the lay people due to socio-economic factors giving more preference to pursuit of their temporal goals.
- b) Inadequate funding to finance formal training programs that would meet the yearnings and aspirations of the students.
- c) Lack of uniform curriculum by the various institutes and training schools.
- d) Inadequate personnel disposed to undertake voluntary service due to shortage of priests.

5) PROPOSALS FOR SUSTAINABLE TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR LAY FAITHFUL IN NIGERIA.

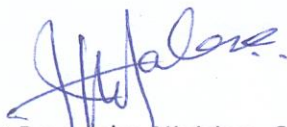
- ✓ A strategic plan to train the lay faithful starting from the parishes is at the front burner of proposed plan. Parish priests as pastor of souls have been directed create study

programs for their parishioners in order to educate them more on the Church's doctrine and the family.

- ✓ Diocesan certificate awarding training institutes are being established to empower the graduates from such institutions.
- ✓ Provincial institutions are being put in place to award Diploma certificates, while the existing Catholic universities award degrees to lay faithful.
- ✓ In addition, newsletters and magazines focusing on doctrinal and church's social teaching are produced and made available and for the entire lay faithful.
- ✓ Lay apostolate groups are being encouraged to spend part of their meetings to learn about their roles and obligations as well as the doctrines of the Church using the bible and other Church documents.

6) CONCLUSION:

The imperatives of the apostolic formation given to the lay people should distinctively have a secular character to suitably equip them for the hustle and bustle of everyday life; the formation is to be human, holistic adapted to the state, condition and needs of each lay person. The program should take cognizance of the four areas of formation; Human, Spiritual, Pastoral and Doctrinal.



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“RE- INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON TRAINING AND FORMATION OF LAY FAITHFUL”

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON BEST PRACTICES.

1) **SCHOOLS OF THEOLOGY:** In Dioceses, through the initiatives of some priests, courses are organized for lay people at the parish level. A number of such abound but very informal. However, the followings run formal courses and issue certificates at the end of the course.

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| i) School of Evangelization | - Issele –Uku Diocese |
| ii) St Paul centre | - Ibadan Archdiocese |
| iii) FIDES School of Theology | - Awka Diocese |
| iv) St Albert the Great, School of Theology | - Kafanchan Diocese |
| v) Catechetical Centre | - Sokoto Diocese |
| vi) School of Evangelisation, | - Lagos Archdiocese |
| vii) Catechetical Centre | - Otukpo Diocese |
| viii) VERITAS University, (VUNA)
Catholic University of Nigeria, | - Abuja |
| ix) Catholic Institute of West Africa (C.I.W.A.), | - Port Harcourt. |

N.B. All the above listed run regular courses ranging from 6 months or 12 months to 2 semesters. In most cases the Catechists, Legion of Mary and members of Catholic Charismatic renewal show more interest and participate actively. The number of people attending varies from year to year, from 20 to 50 or more. It is important to note that most of the participants are workers of different professions. Hence most of the institutes run week end and or Holiday courses.

In recent times Catholic Institute of West Africa (C.I.W.A) organizes programme in Theology and Religious Education for the laity in dioceses, to cater for the yearnings

of the people. This is mostly as holiday courses that run for one or two semesters for certificate and Diploma respectively.

Another important area is the issue of funding. Most participants are sponsored by either their Parish or Diocese as the case may be.

The Catholic University of Nigeria, Abuja (VUNA), has the first set of Certificate and Diploma students numbering about 40. More than 50% were sponsored by their parish priests, most of whom are either paid or voluntary catechists respectively.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE: Since the formation of the laity is strictly secular in character the schools seek four areas related to the clergy namely; human, spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral are considered. This is with a view to initiating candidates into the fullness of Christian life in an organic and systematic manner. The Catholic Institute of West Africa came up with an outline of courses which is being adopted by other institutes and with some minor amendments where necessary. For example, adopts the following courses;

FIRST SEMESTER

- 1) Introduction to Sacred Scripture and Tradition
- 2) Introduction to catechesis
- 3) Ecclesiology
- 4) Sacraments and Spiritual life
- 5) Evangelization
- 6) Missiology
- 7) Introduction to Religion
- 8) African Traditional Religion
- 9) Lay Apostolate
- 10) Christian spirituality
- 11) Introduction to Moral Theology
- 12) Use of English Language

SECOND SEMESTER

- 1) Introduction to Psychology of Religion
- 2) Use of English Language II
- 3) Introduction to Liturgy
- 4) Introduction to Philosophy of Religion
- 5) Ecumenism / Inter-Religious Dialogue
- 6) Christian Marriage and Family Life
- 7) Nature of Catechesis
- 8) Introduction to Islam
- 9) Hermeneutics
- 10) Christology(Jesus Christ)
- 11) Holy Spirit and its activities
- 12) Mariology and Cult of Saints
- 13) Four weeks Computer Appreciation(Practical)

2) **ANNUAL SEMINAR/WORKSHOP:** Representatives of all lay groups as well as delegates from Arch/Dioceses gather together for an annual conference followed by the general meeting.

Each year, there is always a Theme and sub-themes. Papers are presented and discussed. Please find below, the topics discussed for the past few years ;

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|------|---|
| 2006 | The Church and our country towards sustaining our nascent democracy. |
| 2007 | Good governance, Democracy and Christian responsibilities. |
| 2009 | Conversion for Justice and reconciliation, |
| 2010 | Politics and Election in Nigeria; the Church as a model. |
| 2011 | Insecurity and national development –Nigeria’s perspective. |
| 2012 | Insecurity and national development in the perspective of Nigerian democracy |
| 2013 | A new Nigeria is possible. |
| 2014 | The problem of Boko- Haram insurgency in Nigeria, its implication for the Church. |

2015	Blessed are the Merciful for they shall obtain Mercy
2016	The Family as centre and point of departure for lay Evangelization
2017	Building a more dynamic laity in Nigeria

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The proceedings of the annual conference are usually published for circulation in Dioceses.

The theme of the national conference for each year is expected to be stepped down at the provinces, dioceses and parishes respectively.

In addition, the Laity unit of the Catholic Bishops' Conference has organized seminars and workshops for lay leaders including national, provincial and diocesan officers.

Topics discussed include;

- The lay faithful and new evangelization
- Funding lay Apostolate groups
- Lay /Clergy relationships ; the role of chaplains
- Lay formation for Mission Ad Gentes

CATHOLIC SOCIAL FORUM OF NIGERIA:

It is the Socio-Political wing of the Catholic laity council of Nigeria, established by the C.B.C.N. in the year 2,000.

It aims sensitizing catholic lay faithful and training them for active participation in the politics of our country. Each Diocese operates under Catholic laity council in the spirit of Catholic Action based on the Social Teaching of the Church. The Forum also works in partnership with Justice Development & Peace commission (JDPC) especially in the area of Election Monitoring and training on Civic responsibilities.

The main activities include seminars, at Diocesan levels and a bi-annual national conference attracting not less than 500 delegates. The result, though slow is promising as some states can boast of Catholic governors and public servants including Ministers, Commissioners etc.

SENDING LAY VOLUNTEERS ON MISSION AD GENTES: The Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria, about two decades ago, submitted a Blue Print to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria for the lay people to go outside their territory and evangelize. The proposal was approved and committee was set up for implementation. The first attempt to carry out Mission activities in Bomadi Vicariate, now a Diocese is expected to take off by the second quarter of 2019. The focus is to bring succor to the poor people in the Niger Delta area and to assist the Diocese by providing human and material resources in the aspect of primary health delivery and adult literacy. It is interesting to know that some Missionary lay groups (Associates) do exist among the different congregations such as Society of African Mission (S.M.A), the Religious Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (O.L.A), The National Missionary Society of St Paul (MSP), Order of St Augustine (OSA) and the Redemptorists. In fact the S.M.A in conjunction with the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles has been working in Kontagora Vicariate for almost a decade with some communities on adult literacy.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING: Programmes on leadership are organized from time to time especially for newly elected officers of different lay groups. The need for on-going training and formation of lay leaders has become more expedient more than before. Hence the establishment of an indigenous non-profit Nigerian leadership outfit in 2008 known as ``LUX TERRA FOUNDATION'' located in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

The Foundation is structured to offer specialized training in leadership at all levels of the society, through the application of training skills and towards the positive transformation of the society.

The objectives of the training are achieved through a rich collection of experienced training faculty of experts utilizing such activities as research and analysis, development of modules, organization of courses, advocacy, collaboration and networking.

To achieve this mission, Lux Terra conducts specialized management and leadership development training courses, workshops and seminars that are unique for their action- oriented, participant-centered, and values-driven orientation and learning content. Participants experience collaborative learning involving the facilitator and the group of trainees/participants, whose life experience is an indispensable part of

the learning process. Highly qualified professionals, who form a multi- disciplinary team within the fields of management, communication, development practice, theology, public administration, law, public health, education , applied sciences and information technology , provide Lux Terra training and leadership development services. Courses offered include;

Leadership and Inter faith relations.

Leadership and effective Management of Church's administrative structures.

Management and leadership for Church leaders.

Leadership & Entrepreneurship for Youth leaders.

Building strong interpersonal and Team relationships.

Efficiency enhancement tools for senior executives and leaders.

Mentoring and motivating for greater performance.

Communication for transformation.

Andragogy: Introduction to Adult learning principles and practices.

The course module for leadership and management of Church's Administrative structures;

Introduction to leadership

Leadership imperative

The Church and the challenge of leadership

Leadership in turbulent times

Introduction to Human resource management

The dynamics of mentoring and motivating.

Strategic planning Mechanisms

Efficiency enhancement tools for executives and leaders

Group facilitation techniques

Conflict management and emotional intelligence

Benefits and pitfalls of ICT.

CONCLUSION: I do hope the above explanations would meet your demand. We also intend to avail you of some documents related to the information provided. Thank you very much and God bless

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Falase', is written over the printed name.

Joseph Falase
For C.B.C.N. Episcopal Chairman for the Laity