



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA

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**21 DECEMBER 2021**

**“SPEAK LORD YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING”  
(1 SAMUEL 3:10),  
CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FOR 2021**

**BY**

**ARCHBISHOP AUGUSTINE O. AKUBEZE,  
CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF BENIN CITY AND PRESIDENT OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA (CBCN)**

**TO ALL:**

CATHOLIC BISHOPS

PRIESTS

CONSECRATED PERSONS

THE LAY FAITHFUL IN NIGERIA

Dearly beloved in Christ, I greet you all in the name of Christ our Lord, who has come to show us how to listen to God. Christmas is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. This feast reminds us that God is with us. Therefore, the word 'Emmanuel' should be a constant refrain in our mouths. We should, therefore, not allow any situation to lead us to despair because God is always with us. We are grateful to God for all his divine interventions in our lives. We know that if not for God, things would have been worse.

I want us to use part of our time during this holy season and maybe even beyond the Christmas Season to develop our capacity to listen to God who speaks to us in silence. In 1 Samuel 3:10, the young Samuel asked the Lord to speak that he may listen. At the baptism of our Lord, a voice declared, "this is my beloved son, listen to him" (Luke 9:35). In the letter to the Hebrews, we are told that God spoke through various means at various times in the past, but his final words have come to us through Christ (Hebrew 1:1). Jesus Christ himself affirmed that listening to him is the best part when he stated that Mary, who sat at his feet listening to him, made the best choice.

We should, therefore, establish moments of silence so that we may listen to God. Read the Sacred Scriptures, meditate on the passages, and apply them to our lives. Parents should listen to their children. Spouses should learn to listen to each other. Bishops should listen to their priests and collaborators. Priests and parishioners should listen to each other. We grow faster and better when we listen to the other person. The Lord speaks to us through the good counsel of our neighbour.

Let us pray with Pope Francis for a Church that listens to God speaking to her through the clergy and lay faithful. As we plan to celebrate the Synod of Bishops in 2023 at the diocesan phase, let us listen to the local Church members as they speak on how best the Church can provide leadership through collaboration of everyone. God can speak to us through anyone, with formal or no formal education. Let us always, like Samuel, say, 'speak Lord, your servant is listening.'

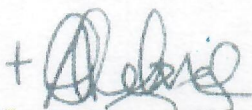
I invite you to join in praying for a Nigeria Government that will listen to everyone. Our political office holders at all levels should act according to the mind of their constituents. To listen, you must concede that the other person has dignity and goodwill. No one should lead with a mindset that they have the monopoly for solving every problem. To resolve the insecurity issues in Nigeria, we must listen to each other. If we want to resolve agitation or request for devolution of power or sovereignty of a part of the country, we must listen to each other. We must resist the temptation of arresting and charging anyone who criticizes us. We call on the Federal Government to release all those being held in captivity and those charged because they spoke on how to move the nation forward. one may not agree with everyone. Still, one has to fight for the right of everyone to speak, and the other should listen.

Dearly beloved in Christ, we worship God who listens to us in prayer. We have the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph who listen to us. So let us turn to ask God to help us hear him when he speaks to us through our brothers and sisters, especially at Christmas.

May God bless the Church in Nigeria.

May God bless Nigeria.

Merry Christmas to you and I wish you a prosperous New Year!



**Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze**  
**Archbishop of Benin-City/**  
**President, CBCN.**