



CONGREGATIO
PRO GENTIUM EVANGELIZATIONE

PROT. 645/24

15 February 2024

Your Grace,

It is with a heavy heart that we have learned from various news sources about the frequency of kidnappings in Nigeria, a situation that has notably escalated in recent times. Among those tragically caught in the crossfire of these reprehensible acts are members of the clergy, religious and lay faithful.

The motivations cited for these egregious acts range from political unrest to radical religious ideologies. Granted that such situations exist and the people are suffering, nevertheless, nothing can justify the evil of kidnapping. It is an inexcusable criminal act that violates the ethics of conduct and degrades human dignity. The physical violence and accompanying mental torture that go with kidnapping undermine the pillars of civil and social harmony, as they traumatise the individuals involved, their families and the society in general.

In these trying times, this Dicastery offers its deepest and heartfelt solidarity to the Nigerian people, who are grappling with a crisis that is expanding in scope and intensifying in proportion. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Bishops, clergy and religious, seminarians, the devout members of the Church, all Christians and people of good will across the nation. We feel a deep sense of empathy for the innocent victims of these kidnappings and their families. In the same token, we call on the government of Nigeria to act swiftly in addressing this menace and halting the looming crisis. Besides putting measures on ground to secure lives and properties, the State, with the support of the Church, should seek ways of repositioning the nation on the path of economic growth, political stability, and religious cohesion.

We earnestly hope for a reawakening of conscience in those responsible for these abhorrent acts and implore their unknown enablers to change their ways. It is our prayer that God's divine light will illuminate their minds and transform their hearts. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families in this difficult moment. And to you our brother Bishops, you are not alone; we are with you in spiritual solidarity and moral support.

It is our prayerful hope that this Lent will prove spiritually fruitful for each believer and every ecclesial community in Nigeria.

May the Lord bless you and may Mary Queen and Patroness of Nigeria keep you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Luis Antonio G. Card. Tello
Pro - Pref.

+ Fortunatus Nwachukwu
Sec.

To His Lordship
The Most Rev. **Lucius Iwejuru UGORJI**
Archbishop of Owerri
President of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria
NIGERIA

(via Apostolic Nunciature)