

A Seminarian's Journey: Building Bridges of Peace in Nigeria's Turbulent Times

Nigeria is tragically back in international headlines following the massacre on Christmas Day, which claimed over 200 lives and saw 37 villages razed. This horrific event highlights a decade-long conflict that continues to tear the country apart.

Now more than ever, Nigeria needs to embark on a dialogue process to forge new pathways toward peace. This need is echoed by Pope Francis, who addressed the severity of the situation in his Angelus on the 31st of December.

Pope Francis decried that "unfortunately, the celebration of Christmas in Nigeria was marked by serious violence and many victims."

Assuring his prayers for the affected and their families: "May God free Nigeria from these atrocities!"

Following the Angelus, Cardinal John Onaiyekan, Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja, Nigeria, expressed gratitude to Pope Francis for highlighting the ongoing insecurity crisis and called for a concrete response.

"We thank the Holy Father for bringing it to the attention of the international community," said Cardinal Onaiyekan.

The current situation is complex and is the result of years of tensions between different ethnic groups, encompassing issues linked to food insecurity and poverty, contributing to the general instability.

Committed to the ongoing support of the Nigerian people and the development of future Church leaders, Catholic Mission is dedicated to assisting seminarians on their path to priesthood. These future priests are envisioned to be pillars within their communities, embodying and spreading the "Gospel values of justice, peace, and love," which Cardinal Onaiyekan emphasises as crucial for peacebuilding in Nigeria.

"Now, especially, [the] church has to work enormously to make sure there is peace between many ethnic groups," says Isaac, a Nigerian seminarian supported by the work of Catholic Mission who knows all too well the consequences of conflict.

Having lost his three brothers over a land dispute, he hopes that as a future priest, that he will be able to create a dialogue between communities and bring peace to his country.

You can support seminarians like Isaac on their path to priesthood in areas of conflict and help bring hope. Help train seminarians and bring peace to communities in need. Donate today at catholicmission.org.au/peace.

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For further information:

Astrid Delayre
Communications Officer

Tel: 0458 489 877

Email:

media@catholicmission.org.au

Website:

catholicmission.org.au

About Catholic Mission

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.