

URGENT NEED TO **SAVE NIGERIA**

The Critical Role of Christian Leaders



PASTOR FEMI EMMANUEL

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info@heart2worldpublishing.org

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For sponsorship, distribution, and other inquiries
please contact

Pastor Femi Emmanuel

+234-806-503-7900

residentpastor2@gmail.com

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CHAPTER 01





Managing This Dangerous Era



Nigeria is in a serious predicament and unless something is done quickly to redress the situation, the country and the entire subcontinent of West Africa stand perilously on the threshold of an explosive and immitigable catastrophe. Today, Nigeria is in a terrible war, both with herself and with some invading militias, in different forms and guises.

Under the watch of our spiritual fathers and mothers, Christians in this nation must rally with other citizens to rescue Nigeria from this looming tragedy and put her back on the path of decency and development. So, help us God!

INTRODUCTION: A SERIOUS SOUND OF ALARM AND A NOTE OF WARNING!

“The situation is critical and it is terrible...”

This is what I've been engaging the Federal Government with and unfortunately, it has gotten to this stage that if care is not taken, nobody, not even Abuja is safe. We have been saying this for long, we've been saying this and all efforts have been in vain. I hope with the outcome of these bandits and terrorists activities, I hope the time has come now to see reasons for a very coordinated military action to take place so we displace them.

The Boko Haram elements are trying to use this place as their home just like they did in Sambisa. While Sambisa is hundreds of kilometers away from Abuja, Kaure is less than two hours-drive to Abuja. So, nobody is safe anymore, not even Abuja is safe. This is the time for action by everybody. All hands must be on deck. It's not Niger State alone, no, it's for everybody to act! ... We have tried our best.

Boko Haram elements in Niger State around Kaure. They've taken over the territory, they've installed

their flags. I'm confirming that now! They've taken over the wives of people by force!"

- Abubakar Sani Bello

These are the lamentations of the Governor Abubakar Sani Bello of Niger State on April 27, 2021 as monitored in Arise News Television following the invasion and successful occupation of parts of his state by a troublous mix of invading bandits, terrorists and militias.



A few years earlier, in a news video uploaded online by Channels Television on March 28, 2018, General T. Y. Danjuma courageously and poignantly warned all Nigerians clearly without any ambiguity or equivocation. According to him,

"There is an attempt at ethnic cleansing, in this state and of course in all the riverine states of Nigeria. We must resist it, we must stop it. Everyone of us must rise up!!!

The armed forces are not neutral. They collude, they collude, they collude...with the armed bandits that kill

people, kill Nigerians. They facilitate their movements, they cover them.

If you are depending on the armed forces to stop the killings, you'll all die one-by-one."

This observation was reinforced by Mr. Femi Adesina, the Special Adviser to the President on Media who did not mince words when he came clear with the land-grabbing agenda of the Federal Government on behalf of the Fulani people at an interview monitored on African Independent Television sometime in the first week of July, 2018. In a blatant manner, when asked about the attachment the people have for their lands, that the Fulani invaders are trying to forcefully dispossess them of, Mr. Adesina quipped,

"Ancestral attachment, you can only have ancestral attachment when you are alive! If you are talking of ancestral attachment, if you are dead, what does the attachment matter? What does it matter again?"

The National Economic Council that recommended ranching went round those states, it didn't just

legislate it. There were consultations. So, if a state does not have land genuinely, it's understood. Not every state would have ranches. You don't have to have ranches in 36 states. So, if there's no land genuinely, fine. But where you have land, and you can do something, please do, for peace.

What would the land be used for, if those who own it are dead at the end of the day?

...As somebody has said before, it's better to live on the land than under the land"

On a rather sad note, the whole sinister agenda of ethnic imperialism was finally brought out and pushed home by General Abdulmalik Biu, who defending Boko Haram even as the General Officer Commanding 7 Division of the Nigerian Army publicly declared on a Channels Television program.

"An ex-Boko Haram stands, having laid down his arms and comes back ... turned away from his negativity, stands to be a president of this country. He stands to aspire to any position in this country."

A. THE DIRE IMPORTANCE BUT INSUFFICIENCY OF PRAYERS ALONE

As a servant of God and an intercessor, I have always believed in the potency of prayer. The centrality of prayer in the political transformation agenda of the Nigerian Church cannot be overstressed. It is important however to note that prayer ALONE is not enough. The Church community in Nigeria must come to realize that, in addition to fervent intercession, we must actually get involved in the affairs of managing and governing the country. We should be involved in all relevant areas including vetting, recruiting, selecting and putting people in political offices from the local government level to the Presidency, if we are to see the New Nigeria that we all earnestly yearn for.

This is the major lesson I learnt from my involvement in Nigerian Politics. It is possible for this country to be saved, but to do this, Christians must build their own platforms to produce their own candidates and participate in politics. It was my adventure into Nigerian politics that opened my eyes to this reality. If we don't have our own platform, where good, qualified God-fearing candidates will emerge, then we are

completely at the back of the fence.

B. THE CRUX OF NIGERIA'S PROBLEM IS LEADERSHIP DEFICIT

In Nigeria, the leadership crisis is truly vexatious. We know that as a matter of fact, everything rises and falls on leadership. The worst set of people are ruling us, governing us, making unreasonable laws, putting together hostile and obnoxious policies that are largely retrogressive, and of no significant value to the populace.

God has blessed this nation beyond measure, but the only thing that we lack and urgently need is “God-fearing, visionary, accurate and accountable leadership” to translate her huge human and material wealth into improving the lot of her people.

The church represents a special breed of people in any society. They are by nature children of light. Revelation and direction are ours to give in the stormy sea of our chaotic national life. What then should be our contribution? What should we do to change the current path of destruction of our country? We must be responsible enough to devise ways to influence the

political process to get this nation steered back to sanity. We are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. That simply means the Church community and other good and patriotic Nigerians must get involved in politics from the grass root/ward level.

That physical participatory dimension, input, and involvement that will create the New Nigeria we need is what the church must rise up to activate. That is my message to the church.

The significant and vantage role I played in politics not just as an observer or sideliners but as a major stakeholder and contestant that resulted in my emergence as the Deputy Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly is a feat that God can help us replicate and multiply for the redefinition of politics and governance in this nation.

C. NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM IS DISTORTED

Democracy in Nigeria is not just about people electing and sending their representatives to govern them, but

it is about the party owners that either put themselves forward or select and send their cronies into government houses to do their own bidding which is – always to marginalize the masses and loot the public treasury they are supposed to use to take care of the populace. Political parties are “owned” by a few individuals who build the structure as their own business enterprise. Consequently, politics has become a do or die, and winner-takes-it-all affair. Under this condition, it is the end that justifies the means. That is also why Nigerian politicians never retire.

To get the most out of their investments, all kinds of desperate tricks, gimmicks, devices and malpractices are employed. This includes falsification of electoral data, circumventing statutory electoral processes, thuggery, killing, maiming, vote buying, manipulation of figures, outright buying over of electoral officers etcetera. All these are clearly not born out of a passion to serve the people but demonstrations of inordinate ambitions to steal the people blind even at the risk of wrecking the country. We cannot, in all sincerity, expect any good governance under the watch of such people; hence the church must wake up, take the

initiative and redeem this country.

D. BUILDING A POLITICAL STRUCTURE OR PLATFORM

A political structure or platform is the foundation for producing candidates who will contest at the party primaries and subsequently at the general elections. He who has the structure has the party and he who has the bigger party (meaning the bigger structure) has the victory at the polls. Ignorance of this on the part of the church is why our votes don't count. That is why Political Office holders from local government, State and National levels do not see the Church as a force to reckon with, to them church is completely irrelevant.

THE KEY TO POLITICAL STRUCTURE BUILDING

How do we build this important structure? The Church must “own” the Ward ExcOs. How do we make that happen? The Church members of participating Churches in a 'Ward' will come together to form a caucus within the designated political party which the 'Fathers' must have met to choose in their own

wisdom. They must be card-carrying members of the chosen political party, they must attend ward meetings regularly and participate in their activities. These party members will form a caucus that will nominate SEVEN of them to contest the WARD ELECTIONS. The leaders of the Wards are the ones who will go as PARTY DELEGATES for the party primary.

The party primaries produce those who will eventually emerge against other party candidates who have also qualified at their party primaries. This is the crucial reason to get into political parties (formed or hijacked by the church) leadership long before elections. Such elected Office holders will be the Local Government Chairmen, State House of Assembly members – Governors and their Deputies. House of Representative members, Senators and even the President are those that can possibly be influenced by the Church.

If the Church plays no role in the emergence of candidates, then, it has no influence over them. This truth is what the Church is yet to know.

E. DEMYSTIFYING MONEY IN NIGERIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

It is clear that Nigeria's political system is highly monetized. This, no doubt is a discouraging factor for patriotic citizens who might want to step forward to serve their fatherland. That is one of the reasons our political office holders loot the country's treasuries in preparation for the next election. If you don't have your own political platform, then you will keep paying/doing whatever the platform owners ask for.

Nigeria's constitutional provisions also do not help matters. A potential presidential candidate for instance must not only win the highest votes cast in the whole country, but must have at least 25 percent of votes cast in at least two third (2/3) of the states in the country. That singular constitutional provision has made the presidential bid an exclusive preserve of the very rich. Same for the State Governor – one third of the vote cast in two-thirds of the local government.

An aspirant seeking office must oil the party machinery by funding the plans and programs of the party from the ward level to the state or national delegate conventions. This calls for huge financial

involvement. This is where believers, who are backed up by the church to set up and run a party have advantage as the platform will not be merchandised or commercialized. A platform established through divine inspiration would be focused on building a vibrant and virile nation, and protect God's Kingdom values. If believers are released, trained, mobilized, structured and supervised, they will engage in this important national assignment just the same way they serve God.

With regards to the financial requirements for this project, I have no doubt whatsoever that the provision is within the capacity of the church.

From my explanations so far, it is clear that Nigeria's politics currently being practiced is nothing but a charade that is forever jinxed. Without the critical and deliberate intervention of the Church, if we conduct elections in Nigeria a hundred times, indeed, a million times, the results will be the same. This is why the Church must come out of her ignorance.

F. CHURCH AND POLITICAL MISCONCEPTIONS

Majority of church leaders have shown long held biases against Christian involvement in politics. They now support it but only to the extent of registering to vote and voting. Majority of them are afraid of encouraging their members to become card carrying members of political parties. As we have seen, this is where real change can be effected if we are to take our rightful place in the governance of this nation. Fears of Christians to go into party politics are many and they can be briefly summarized and dealt with as follows:

1. *Fear of Compromise*: Christians generally fear that going into politics can make one compromise his/her faith, but the truth is, compromise is an individual thing. If a Christian compromises, it is because of personal intentions, as politics doesn't necessarily compromise a person. It is a compromised person who sees the opportunity of politics to mortgage his or her belief system.
2. *Hooliganism in Politics*: Criminal tendencies are very rampant in the political system of Nigeria. This makes Christians and church leaders dislike the

terrain, but this is only because the political system is not filled with people like us (Christians). Hooliganism is to intimidate and discourage us from getting involved and the more we don't involve ourselves, the more freedom we give to hooliganism and violence to thrive.

3. *The money factor*: Definitely an agenda as daring as this would be money consuming, but an ideological and spiritually driven project won't require bribing people to join, participate and work. When a vision is good, its provision is guaranteed. No matter the cost, it can't be compared to the cost of non-involvement, which is affecting the well-being, comfort and lives of the people. As the saying goes, if you think education is costly, try ignorance; if you think political investment is costly try becoming like Turkey. God forbid in Jesus name!!!

4. *The Time Challenge*: Like the money challenge, once enough people are trained to organize themselves responsibly, the burden of management would be transferred from the church leaders to the led. The political process is periodic and occurs every four years.

Political activities like registration, ward meetings, campaigning and voting all come up at long intervals and for a short period and the general populace get to live their normal lives again. Time spent attending party meetings is a great investment in maintaining a hold on our precious freedom. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

5. Leaving the pulpit to pursue politics: This proposed political agenda does not suggest we are abandoning the pulpits at all. We are only to release our members to get enlightened, mobilized and empowered to participate in choosing from the grassroots, those to bear the rule through the party machinery as previously explained.

6. Fear of fundamentalism and religious aggression: Christian leaders might also be afraid of exposing themselves to religious fundamentalists and extremists. They feel their actions may be misunderstood and could generate physical attacks. If as a result of this fear we don't participate, we have released our nation to dogs, and dire consequences will follow.

7. *Fear of spiritual contamination and pollution:* If we get properly educated and prepared, rather than the world polluting us, we should be the ones influencing and sanitizing the entire system.

8. *Fear of Godly disapproval:* Some servants of God use doctrine and dogma to stop believers from moving near politics. This is wrong and erroneous, foretells grave consequences.

9. *Fear of political and government hostility:* Where there is a clash of interest between the Church and the State, there may be fear of attacks, persecutions and oppression but this can be wisely and collectively handled, even though such instances will be rare with proper guidance. In any case, it's never enough to stop us.

10. *Fear of loss of disciples and congregation:* In truth, rather than make us lose members, politics has a way of powerfully showing the world the clear difference between light and darkness and pull more souls to the Kingdom.

G. MY EXPERIENCE IN THE NIGERIAN POLITICS

I got into partisan politics by building the party structure in my local government (Ibadan North Constituency 2). All the ten chairmen in all the Wards that formed my constituency were my people. There was no debate who was going to win the primary for the Oyo State House of Assembly. I was the choice because I played a major role in building the structure. This is the scenario in all the remaining 774 local government areas to state and to all national elections. This same Ward delegates decide who wins a political position. This is the real meaning of ALL POLITICS IS GRASSROOT.

To survive the onslaught against the people of Nigeria, the church must replicate my experience in politics as it happened in Ibadan across the country but on a much larger scale. The church and church fathers must be bold and take advantage of the strength of their followership in their millions to reclaim the political mandate that they have abandoned for years now. Thereafter, they must mobilize like I did and build a formidable network of vibrant members who would

actively commit to changing the electoral process and governance across the country. The time to do this is now. The church has the number, reach, network, intellect and financial resources to save Nigeria.

H. THE ROLE OF FATHERS OF FAITH

May I ask these pertinent questions on serious issues/conflict facing our nation? With all due respect:

1. How do we address Southern Kaduna and other killings, Boko Haram terrorism and Islamic Agenda?
2. How do we address gross constitutional infringement as well as the dual ideology question in our constitution?
3. How can we effect the issue of National Restructuring unless and until we secure political power?
4. What do we do about Islamic fundamentalism and the need to arrest the erosion/extinction of the rule of law and democracy in Nigeria?
5. What answer do we have to Section 839(1) & (2) of the CAMA which empowers the Corporate Affairs

Commission(CAC) to suspend the BOT of any NGO (of which churches form a huge majority in Nigeria) and impose INTERIM MANAGERS(who may be Islamists) to run the Church and such a decision CANNOT BE CHALLENGED IN A COURT OF LAW? This is dictatorship at its worst and an onslaught against the big churches with wide spread membership and resources.

6. How do we explain the several mention of Islam and the legal system, in the 1999 Constitution with not a single reference to Christ, Christianity or church? Is Nigeria an Islamic state or secular state? How do we explain the clamour for National Sharia and Hijab in a secular state?

The above disturbing issues are a few of the challenges and grave dangers facing the Nigerian Church today for which we have no answers except church fathers meet urgently and plan a watertight strategy to set up effective political structures in all wards and in the 774 local government areas of the nation.

Authority flows from the top. Leadership determines the growth and sets the pace for everything. Fathers of

faith in Nigeria need to understand the urgency of our situation and rise to responsibility of stopping the malady we call politics in Nigeria. It is a move they must own, one they must see as a personal affront to the survival of the church and of the nation as well as other African nations.

If five or six mainstream Pentecostal churches with national spread will join hands with other Pentecostal churches with strong membership strength in their own localities, for instance the Orthodox, Catholics, and others. If we will participate fully down to the grassroot as explained, Nigeria will change. There are many other patriotic Nigerians, even of other faith and non-faith people that will naturally join hands with us. Nigeria will regain focus and become the envy of other nations.

CHAPTER

02





MY DESPERATE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH



The church represents a special breed of people in any society. They are by nature and nurture the salt of the earth and the light of the world. What then should be our contribution? What should we do to change the current path of perdition this country is set on? The answer is very simple - we should get involved to produce men and women we can pray for.

Praying for people in power who have no connection with our goal and no understanding of what God's principles and expectations are is an exercise in futility. It will not produce the results we need because they simply don't understand what those results and expectations are.

In addition, wheresoever the soles of our feet shall tread according to the Bible, that He will give unto us (Deuteronomy 11:24) but this can't be achieved alone by prayers without action.

As a matter of fact, I have always been teaching the principle that whatever you pray for without any corresponding action is like an arrow shot into the air without aiming at anything. The church has been shooting prayer arrows without a clear understanding and appropriate commitment to this significant principle. Praying alone without deploying our enormous – membership population to participate actively at the ward level will not change the status quo.

We pray, but deliberately refuse to apply those principles we apply to challenges in our personal lives. We know what to do to activate our prayers, why do we then refuse to behave as a people under authority? We have almost made God a liar where the issue of Nigeria is concerned. Why have we refused to take the steps that will get those prayers answered? It is high time we stopped complaining and protesting but rise up to do something if we want the manifestations of our fervent

and heart-felt prayers over the years for Nigeria to be fulfilled.

I don't believe, and I stand to be corrected, that the church has not prayed enough. While there will be no time to stop praying, as we pray, we must also rise up to carry out our own responsibilities with regards to the destiny and future of Nigeria. We must be responsible enough to devise means to influence the political process to get this nation steered back to sanity.

My passionate intention is to bring illumination to this cloudy complexities. It is to bring better understanding to our unfounded presumptions. It is to bring clarity to what I have seen, and that which I have experienced. The purpose of this publication is to bring to the notice of the church both the spiritual and the physical dimensions that are required to turn the tide that is threatening to consume our country.

As a matter of fact, we all should know that life is both spiritual and physical. Though we believe that the spiritual controls the physical, the physical must be there, it cannot be discountenanced. That physical and participatory dimension, that input, that involvement

that will create the New Nigeria we need, the church must rise up to activate it. That is my message to the church.

The significant and vantage role I played in politics not as an observer or sideliners but as a major stakeholder that resulted in my emergence as the Deputy Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly almost thirty years ago places me in an unusual position to understand the fundamental and rudimentary dynamics of party politics in Nigeria.

My four decades of involvement in God's kingdom business is equally an invaluable exposure that has given me the rare advantage to discharge this predestined obligation of helping the church refocus at this critical time, so as to recalibrate itself for the urgent task of rescuing the church and saving the country.

Church members in Nigeria are imprisoned by their church fathers – General overseers, church founders, senior pastors etc through church doctrines that mirror political participation negatively. Up till now, many church organizations discourage their members from partisan politics. Politics is still being seen as evil in

many churches.

This call is not for church fathers like General overseers, Arch bishops, Bishops, Senior pastors or even pulpit pastors to go partisan at all. They cannot be partisan because of their pastoral callings and also because members of their congregation certainly belong to different political parties. However, they are to use their enormous influence to mobilize their members towards political participation to save the church and Nigeria as a whole. It is simple. They should give directives to their immediate subordinates to take it down the line to the grass root members.

All resident pastors always watch both the utterances and body language of their General overseers before they do anything. They carry out their instructions. Faith fathers are to give directives, members will do the rest. It is not enough to say they have allowed members that so desired to do so. It will take more than that. They must accept and allow the PFN organ so mandated to train, mobilize, organize and supervise all members to belong to the ward caucuses for the church influence to be possible. No individual church

organization can do it all alone. It must be a united church community. The instruction for that must come from the top. Our faith fathers do not have to be seen or heard at all by the public.

CHAPTER

03





DEMOCRACY AND NIGERIA'S SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT



Clearly note that the concept and practice of democracy in other climes is totally different from how it is practiced or played in Nigeria. Democracy we are told is the government of the people, by the people and for the people; but here it is not so. In 1979, Nigeria did away with the Parliamentary system which was what we started with in 1960 and we embraced the American Presidential system of government. The objective I reckon was for a faster and more accelerated pace of development giving the Presidents executive powers to execute development swiftly.

The Presidential system has now turned out to be an

albatross. Apart from the cost of running it, the corruption in our system introduced and nurtured by the military but aggravated by the politicians has made a nonsense of the otherwise beautiful system that was established to aid our growth. Most people often wonder why The Presidential system of government is not working in Nigeria as it is in America where we copied it from. I will explain.

In America, it is the common people, (that is, ordinary Americans) that identify candidates with pedigree who have records of community service, ingenious contribution and so on. They go to the extent of making contributions to fund the campaigns of these candidates of their choice. For example, President Barack Obama. They are able to hold him accountable, and he dared not disappoint them. That is when democracy becomes a contract between the elected and the electorate, but in the Nigerian setting, it is the complete opposite.

There are four main groups within the Nigerian political setting:

The Political entrepreneurs or those you call the Political godfathers. They own and fund the parties sometimes at the national, state or local government levels depending on their interests and capacities. They are the warlords in control of the grassroot structure of their particular political party. They own the platforms at their respective levels.

Party members at the ward level, is what is called “the grassroot”. The grassroots is expected to determine who emerges as the candidate to be voted for during elections either at the primary or secondary levels. Most of the time, this outcome is influenced by the godfather or the person in charge and control of the political machinery within the constituency. According to the structure of electoral system in Nigeria, most local government areas are made up of either ten or eleven wards in most of the state constituencies.

The functions of the Ward Congress of the political party include the coming together of the members to

evolve policies and programs that are directed towards the fulfilment of the aims and objectives of the party within the Ward. They also exercise all other powers, authority and functions similar to that of the Local Government Area Congress, provided that Local Government Area Congress functions shall be replaced by Ward functions. The ward members are to elect candidates for Councillorship elections into the Local Government Council and also through its agencies and officers to ensure the implementation of directives from the Local Government Area Congress and other superior bodies of the party.

Though the Unit is the smallest political organization generally, effective operation and administration begins from the ward level. The ward is very significant in the management of party activities because this is the level where individual members are all allowed to participate. At this level, all individual members of the ward can contribute to the day-to-day activities of the party. Though there are ward executives for each ward, it is important to note that the executive committees are chosen by ward members mostly through elections. It is often from the ward level that electoral processes

cascade upward until it gets to the national conventions and congresses. The ward is therefore important because it is often the caucus that controls the ward machinery that will eventually control the party. The party consensus and election processes begin from the ward and it is those chosen by the ward members that eventually emerge at the top.

During the general elections, it is the ward members that campaign, mobilize and canvass for the party. They are also the people that represent and serve as party officials, and they interface with both the electoral officers and the general electorates. Ward members ensure that the interest of the party is well protected and defended during elections and at other relevant events. They serve as polling agents, supervisors, monitors and most especially the mobilization agents on voting day. No winning of election is possible in our climes without these grassroot mobilisers. Conclusively and undoubtedly, Nigeria's poll is not won on social media, bill boards or newspapers adverts but through the strenuous efforts of these political foot soldiers. This, the church community knows little about.

The Ambitious Political Office Seekers make up the third category of the players in the political terrain in Nigeria. These are political hopefuls who join political parties to become aspirants. After overcoming all the hurdles of either selection or election of the primary electoral processes within the party, and are nominated by the party to contest for the general election, they now become the candidates and flagbearers of their respective parties. This is the level where you find mostly the elites and the moneybags who desire political power, relevance and positions. Some of these positions include the presidency and vice, the governors and deputies, the Senators, Members of House of Representative, and Members of States Houses of Assembly. At the lower level, we have those contesting for Local Government Chairpersons and Counsellorship.

These people, because of what they are seeking are most times the funders of these parties. Except the aspirant is also the owner or in control of the party structure, he has no alternative than to be loyal and be a crony of the party structure owner. The aspirant would therefore need to provide the financial resources required or as

dictated by owners or godfathers the structure. Most of the time however, these godfathers always have their own favorite stooges or cult-children who must do their bidding. But just to show loyalty, sometimes, these aspirants enter into all kinds of bonds, bondage and execute all kinds of covenants or swear oaths of loyalty to their godfathers. Such Governor, Senator or Local government chairman will be a mere puppet eventually when they get into power, and in the case of Nigerian politics, loyalty is 110% guaranteed (Hundred and ten percent). That is why office holders are absolutely and unimaginably loyal to their godfathers who put them in power. And where any beneficiary is not absolutely loyal or refuses to comply with his/her godfather, the office holder suffers the dire consequences of disloyalty as can be seen in Lagos during the 2019 General Elections.

The Voters are the fourth component of the electoral equation. In Nigeria, many voters are like customers, they get paid for voting. Voters are kings in other climes unlike in Nigeria where they are treated like disposable items after each electoral season. Like every cheap article, they are used and dumped once voting is

concluded. This is where Christians or church people can come in to intervene. Most of the time, these voters do not know how these candidates emerge, they do not know who they are and they have no clue what their manifestoes are or the plans and programs that they have in the pipeline. The candidates after winning the election therefore does not feel obliged to the people or owe them any allegiance or commitment to serve their interests.

This is how far away we are from the concept, purpose and operation of democracy. Many Nigerians in frustration do not bother to register for a voting card at all because they believe their votes do not count ultimately. Sometimes they register but refuse to collect their voter's cards. A good number of people who have voter's card do not bother to go out to vote on voting day due to the same reason. Among Christians, the apathy is worse; Most Christians have no voter's card and a good number of those who have do not vote on election day. This then gives room to the illiterate and impoverished miscreants who are mainly the jobless. It is people like the market women, house girls and boys, farmers in rural communities and so on who

out of ignorance and poverty sell their voter's cards to the highest bidder. It is in Nigeria that we hear of terminologies like "vote selling and vote buying". Where else do you hear or see that in the whole world except in Nigeria? It is a shame.

Understanding Nigeria's Political Structure:

One key term most Nigerians especially, the Christian community knows little or nothing about is the Political Structure or Platform. It is the nucleus or foundation for producing candidates that are voted for on election day. Nigeria's political system is driven by grassroots politics which means it is a bottom-up structure. All political office holders that are elected must be nominated from their grassroots through the party's primaries, before they can be qualified to contest for elections. The entire country is delineated into 36 states, one Federal Capital Territory, 774 local government areas, and about 10,000 wards in the country today as recognized by the constitution.

Every party member must register at his ward level and be given a party card after paying the mandatory levy. It is at this level that real politics is played. Members meet

to elect their WARD OFFICERS made up of Ward Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, PRO and two ex-officio members depending on the preferences of each party. It is these officers that make up the Ward Executive Committee or Ward Exco. These seven people are the most powerful people in running the ward and also in determining who emerges as political office holders of the party, because mostly the delegates elect political officers at party conventions at all levels. These are the people candidates who are seeking electoral offices pay highly to buy their endorsement and votes during party congresses.

They are sometimes paid as highly as six thousand dollars per delegate depending on the contest in question - from the ward level, to constituency, Local government, State and National levels. Party officers are either elected or selected and subsequently ratified. This is what is called party machinery, structure or platform. Whoever controls this structure controls or “owns” the party. This is what Party owners or warlords fight or work hard to possess and control. This is the structure that the church community does not know

about, and it is this lack of knowledge that makes them mere voters. If we desire to rescue the country from the current crisis and change the whole system, this is the structure we must build or hijack or infiltrate or partner with.

Before the 2019 general election, some Pastors and General Overseers from their pulpits asked their members to register, collect voter's card and prepare to vote. The question politically educated people like me would ask is: to vote for who - the fake and puppet candidates propped up by the moneybags or those who bought their ways to become candidates? What a confusing lack of understanding. It is a pity the church has allowed the country degenerate this badly due to its lack of involvement in the affairs and management of the country.

In reviewing the State of the Church at the Exponential Conference 2019, held on Tuesday, February 26, 2019, Mr. Leke Alder, a cerebral leader of men and ideas vehemently challenged the church to rise and abandon the path of tokenism that the church has always tread. He enjoins all to get involved with the task of deliberate and appropriate nation-building

without which the society would crumble along with the church. His emotionally laden and intellectually deep submission on the way forward for the church resonated with me and I am compelled to extensively reference excerpts of the presentation. According to him,

“Outside the church was grinding poverty, hopelessness and despair. There are few economic opportunities for youths. They feel buried alive in the concrete tombs of our national misfortune. Youths constitute more than half of the population. There are no jobs. The unemployment rate is high. Many of those who have jobs are underemployed. In this kind of situation any flagrant or boastful display of ostentatious wealth is bound to attract acrimony. Unfortunately Nigerian pastors tend to display prosperity as affirmation of technology of faith.

Let me show you the enormity of the problem. Here are the poverty statistics: Zamfara 91.9%, Yobe 90.2%, Jigawa 8.4%, Bauchi 86.6%, Kebbi 86.0%, Sokoto 85.3%, Katsina 82.2%, Taraba 77.7%, Gombe, Kano 76.4%, Borno 70.1%,

Kaduna 56.5%.

The average poverty rate for the North (minus the Middle Belt) is 79.3%. With the Middle Belt it's 72.6%. Little wonder we are regarded as the poverty capital of the world. This is the enormity of the problem we face. We have compound interest poverty.

The crisis brought out the following facts:

1. Pastors are generally unaware of context. This is why we underwent the State of the Church research, to give pastors insight into society.
2. Many pastors are insensitive to the socio-economic context in which they operate even if they're aware.
3. The church is unaware of her political status, despite copious amounts of scripture. The church stubbornly sees herself as a social intervention organ; not a political entity.
4. The church is not strategic in approach to issues. It tends to be responsorial, acting only when things begin to boil over. And the responses are mainly prophetic proclamations and prayers. There's no pre-emptive

strategy.

5. The fast-food theology favoured by Pentecostals finally caught up with the church. It became evident there was no theological depth in the church. For instance many did not know the relationship between the old and new testaments during the tithe controversy.

6. The ministerial class does not have a strategic framework for political engagement outside the purview of political endorsement and request for personal favours from state actors.

7. The church despises her rational assets. She considers them unspiritual. This deprives the church of an intelligent approach to national problems.

What the church does to tackle poverty, is social intervention – we feed the poor, take care of orphans and widows, get street urchins off the streets, repurpose “area boys”, build schools, offer scholarships, facilitate workshops for skill acquisition, etc. This is all well and good. Our faith demands we take care of the socially disadvantaged. But we are merely ameliorating human condition we are not solving the problem of poverty in

our land. That can only be done at the policy level, which means some Christians have to get into power and use the instrumentality of state policy to crack the poverty challenge. We need policy missionaries.

That doesn't mean the church should stop social intervention but national problems sometimes require national implements. If we don't resolve our human development challenges as a nation, sort out our educational system as well as healthcare system, stimulate the economy and encourage enterprise development, poverty will remain with us, even if we pray till kingdom come. There's a reason God asks us to pray for those in government. It is to foster peace. A nation full of poverty cannot know peace. Without peace there can be no development.

...If we want to effectively tackle the issue of poverty in Nigeria we need to get into government.”

I am therefore using this opportunity to call on all sincere and patriotic sons and daughters of our great country particularly church leaders to rise up to this generational challenge by rallying and deploying all

necessary resources to reinvent the fortune of the country, improve the lives of the populace and bring joy to our entire country. We must all resolve to get involved and contribute our quota to the success story of our commonwealth by getting involved with governance and political activities. The church should not just be involved in the election but in the selection of political candidates to be voted for. We must not wait for political parties to give us candidates to vote for. We must be part of the process of identifying and selecting the persons to be voted for at all levels.

The church is the only group that can get in there and sanitize the system. Leadership is calling on us all. Let us stand to be counted when it counts most. We have the number, reach and network. Let us deploy them to save Nigeria.

Merely praying while isolating ourselves from taking over the grass root structure will spell doom for the Church and the entire country.

CHAPTER 04





FATHERING THE CHURCH AND THE NATION



Like it is often said, evil will reign where the good is resting. It is time to wake up; it is time for the good people to show what they are made of; it is time for our fathers in faith to do the needful to save this beleaguered country from complete destruction.

Fathers of faith



People of faith

Instructions move from top to bottom

The church leaders need to understand the urgency of the current situation so that Nigeria will not become another Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or Rwanda before it dawns on them.

Let us stop asking the tired and frustrated Nigerian people who have been for six decades, the unfortunate victims of the highhandedness, wickedness and ruthlessness of the political leaders to pray for them. Pray for whom? Pray for people whose minds are irreversibly made up to continue to commit tyranny and inhumanity against the country and the people? These people's minds are already made up to continue to do whatever they desire, to keep the people enslaved and to unleash evil on the entire country. Indeed, they are very set and prepared now to continue their reign of terror by enthroning their likes and their children on the nation after them. They are already creating the space and wherewithal for their children to forcefully and corruptly take over power. If we do not react now, the worst is yet to come.

The duties and responsibilities of the church fathers is coming to this understanding, imbibing and

internalizing it, and allowing this truth to percolate down to the last person within and outside the pyramid so that this important message can transcend beyond this generation to the next. I can confirm that within two years of this intervention once this full understanding has been achieved, the entire system will change. Thereafter, the politicians and the godfathers who have hitherto taken our church fathers for granted will cry to the church. By the time these political entrepreneurs get to the grassroots and discover that God has already gone ahead of them and that power has changed hands, they will become sober and the whole story will begin to change for the better.

This was what I did in my own little corner way back in 1990/91. All I did was identify my own constituency after I had been thoroughly defeated. I learnt, recouped and I relaunched. I redirected my energy and within a short time, I became the political godfather of Ibadan North 2 State Constituency simply because I now understood the game and its dynamics. I was able to effectively mobilize the people to see into my own belief and cause, and they keyed into it.

I simply mobilized my people into caucuses at the ward level and the business started against the thinking of a lot of observers who believed that it could not be done, because I had no big man to rely upon to support me and fund me. The masses of our people are still waiting for credible direction now. Indeed, the opportunities are even much better now than they were over thirty years ago. It is time for the incontrovertible truth, it is time to engage.

When the power brokers of Ibadan politics saw the sign of a growing movement, they actually came because they didn't want to take anything for granted, and they activated their own caucuses. When the ward elections were held, my people emerged. This was the foundation of my eventual emergence as an Honourable member and later, as the Deputy Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly. If I was not there and I didn't participate in the politics of that era, how could I have ever emerged? It is the same principle and process of participation that threw up our own Professor Yemi Osinbajo also as the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The only regret is that

it was not the church or his own political platform that threw him up, it was someone else's platform – and we are all alive to see what is happening today. Of course, our constitution also – sets limits on vice presidents and deputy governors.

This process that I activated can be replicated in several places across the country if not in all the constituencies across the country. The alternative to this template would have required that I go around seeking, and begging for the support and endorsement of the godfathers before I can even be recognized as a party member. There's really no way they can all be easily convinced and pacified to support me when they know so well that we have different agendas which are mutually exclusive. In addition, what would they do with their stooges that have been waiting in line for their turn to come and “chop”, because it's all about “chopping”? They would simply have scornfully asked me to wait for my time after they must have fleeced me to the bones and rendered me destitute. These politicians can really be as cold-blooded as can be.

Some days ago, I heard Professor Pat Utomi lamenting

about his experience in Delta State when he went there to try his hands once again politically in the state during the 2019 General Elections. In the course of his aspiration to become the state governor, he found out that unless you're appointed or endorsed by the political godfather in the respective region and you are fully approved, you are going nowhere. To his dismay, he said though people sympathized with him and confessed to his capacity, honesty, credibility and creativity, they still made it clear that he didn't stand a chance until he is recommended by the lords of politics in the south and across the country. Not believing that his people could still send him back to seek for the endorsement of those he is trying to rescue them from, he ended up being traumatized and devastated. The major reason is that the learned professor probably went to the wrong crowd and played the game the same old way.

Up until now, the players of power and politics to the dismay of Professor Utomi and other Nigerians are not concerned about who can get the job done, but who the political godfather has sent to them. It is noteworthy that these political actors have amassed so much

money and wealth mostly criminally and inappropriately from the commonwealth that they can virtually buy anything and anybody. Certainly, this is not what would happen in the church. While I am not saying that the church is completely made up of saints, I am not in doubt that the church can never be as flagrant and as brazen as these politicians are, who don't care if the country sails or sinks.

If it is the church that is mobilizing the people, recommending a candidate or sponsoring a party, the influence of money and pecuniary influence will be minimal and the current level of corruption and political brigandage will not be demonstrated. If the church is involved from the level of the grassroots, the climate will definitely be saner. We, as people of God and the concerned cannot continue to stay back and expect angels and spirits to come and do all these things for us. We honestly cannot continue to lay back and expect miracles to happen. We must stop thinking that somehow, the good person will emerge and the society will suddenly transform. We are the ones that will produce them.

The society does not transform by itself, it is transformed by people.

This transformation is the special duty and responsibility that the church fathers owe Nigeria and our faith now. We need to wake up and realize that except we are the ones paying the pipers financially, structurally, ideologically and administratively, we cannot dictate the tunes. Even if we adamantly dictate the tunes without getting involved like some Christian leaders have been doing up until now, we would only be talking to ourselves and shouting ourselves hoarse. Except we are the ones to mobilize those who will not just seek political offices, but those who will elect and manage the process of nomination, the situation will not change for the better. This is because the strongest power in our current political dispensation is located at the grassroots. These people however go to only where their sponsors direct them to. That is what the church should seek to achieve.

We already have our own distinct and powerful grassroots; we only need to release, train, mobilize, encourage and structure them for expected and

guided participation.

Except this rigorous mission is embarked upon, while I am not intent on sounding like an unbeliever or a faithless pessimist, there is really no other way out for this country and the church. And the threat looms so very large today than ever before. In order not to take the grace of God for granted, the church fathers must rise and take up this responsibility. If they refuse to rise; the situation would only degenerate and get worse. And very soon the lingering anxiety and tension would result in an explosion and a mighty conflagration.

Conversely, if I am allowed the full latitude of my passion, I may be tempted to hold these fathers of the faith responsible for how bad the country and the fortune of the faith has deteriorated. Everything got this bad because our leaders, of which I am one, allowed it. I am even more culpable and guilty because I was there, I know the way things are and I should know how they would turn out eventually. But like our fathers, I chose to pursue my dream and abandon the church and nation to their fates. The inactivity of the church, the lack of interest, the nonchalance, the

dearth of understanding, the indifference, the religious piety, the anxiety and fear or caution towards the unknown by us is responsible for the mess the country has become. Invariably, it would require the exact opposite for both the church and the nation to be rescued, recovered and be repositioned again.

The truth is that I may not be too proud to make this accusation and charge against the fathers of the faith. This is because in one way or the other, depending on individual perception, I am one of them. As it is defined in social psychology, this may amount to class suicide. However, this is the truth and somebody must establish it. This sitting-on-the-fence has cost the country, the church and all of us as individuals a lot more than we can ever imagine. The prayer is that we shouldn't have to lose much more before we secure everything that is ours in this land that it has pleased God to grant unto us, our ancestry and offspring.

So help us God!

This booklet, ***Urgent Need To Save Nigeria***, by Pastor Femi Emmanuel, summarizes the need for the church leadership in Nigeria to step into practical political relevance and impact to salvage Nigeria from disintegration.

The author's years of political experience have been distilled into this small booklet, thus it is a manual of action, a roadmap and blueprint of things to do in the immediate to arrest our nations sinking ship and turn it around to the safe harbour of socioeconomic progress, grassroots development, strong and robust institutions, rule of law, and true democratic practices, and above all, freedom of press and religion.

This booklet is a must-read and a needed and handy companion for everyone who desires to see significant transformation in Nigeria.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Pastor Femi Emmanuel is a servant of God who has served the Body of Christ in diverse capacities as an interpreter, an early member of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), a Christian Publisher and a Political Gladiator in the politics of Oyo

State and now the setman of the Living Spring Chapel International. His passion for the preservation of the church and the continuity of Nigeria as a democratic nation is legendary. An author of several books like *The Law of Success* and *You Can Be An Achiever*. This current booklet is culled from a bigger volume that is about to be published: ***RESCUING NIGERIA - THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF THE CHURCH***.