

**ARCHBISHOP AUGUSTINE AKUBEZE ADDRESS TO THE YOUTHS AT THE  
NATIONAL YOUTH DAY IN CALABAR 8 AUGUST 2018**

**THEME: FOR GOD AND FOR YOUTH: THROUGH CHRIST!**

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests and our dear Youths. *For God and for Youth! Through Christ!* It is indeed a thing of great delight to have the opportunity to speak to the leaders of the future generation. I welcome all of you who have travelled from across Nigeria to be here to experience God in a new way amongst your fellow youths. May the blessings and graces of this gathering not depart from you. May the blessings of this gathering follow you back to your dioceses and accompany you wherever you go through Christ our Lord. I will like to reflect briefly on your slogan: For God and for youth! Through Christ!

My dear Youths, remember whenever you say *“For God and for Youth through Christ!* you are making some form of a vow, an oath, a promise and a commitment. This declaration points to the fact that you are for God. It points to the fact that you go to God through Christ. This is the most important connection. You must seek to have a personal relationship with God. Closeness to Christ will surely bring you abundant blessings. Christ is in love with you, remember *“for God so loved the world that He sent his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Do you know you can re-phrase this to mean for God so love me, Augustine, John, Judith, Joseph, Alexander, Agatha etc. You are the reason for God’s love of the world. We are the reason why God sacrificed His only Son for our salvation. Let us be connected to God always.

What does it mean to be connected to God? What does it mean to have a personal relationship with God? It means that you love God with all your being. **Your love of God should move you to work hard to please God. Be prayerful. Be active in the Church. Frequently use the sacrament of reconciliation to receive God’s forgiveness. Frequently receive the Holy Eucharist. Pray your rosary regularly. Avoid allowing the**

**desire to satisfy the flesh to ruin your life. Keep your bodies holy by striving for holy purity. Avoid bad company. Engage in daily examination of conscience to evaluate your spiritual growth. Love everyone with the true love of Christ. Never allow yourself to be used as an instrument of violence.** Dearly beloved in Christ, this is what it means to be connected to God. When you do this, you can be assured that God will bless your efforts and make them bear fruits.

I will like to reiterate again that to be holy is what we are called to. To be perfect as God is perfect. Do not seek only what gives momentary excitement or pleasure. We sometimes hear some of our youths say, the Mass is so boring. It is not fun. It is very unlike the praise worship in the Pentecostal churches. Where there is singing and dancing. I have heard some youths tell me that, we need to make the Mass lively. Well, I do not object to celebrating the Mass in a manner that is attractive to the Youths. We love our youths and we want them to be in the Church. But our love for you will not allow us to permit or allow anything that you ask for that we know is not good for you. When you love someone, you want only the best for the person.

The Church loves you. Christ loves you. We the Bishops and priests love you. It is precisely because we love you that we want only what God wants for you. Sometimes, you may decide to give a person what the person doesn't want but what the person needs. Sobriety in prayer is necessary for everyone. I want you to know that we often discover God in silence. Our world is filled with so much noise. We need interior silence and exterior silence. Therefore, do not consider the Mass as boring. It is the most important prayer that can ever be offered to God. As Youths I want you to learn to discover God in silence. Learn to develop the culture of reading the Bible and meditating on the passage. Apply the passage to your life. God speaks to us through the scripture.

In conclusion, do not be afraid to seek holiness of life. God is in love with you. He invites you today to show him some love by doing good all the time. Do not

be discouraged by the challenges and problems presently being experienced in our country. We have placed our country in the hands of God through Mary when we consecrated our Nation to Her Immaculate Heart at the National Marian Congress in Benin City last year. God will turn around things for our country Nigeria. God is good all the time. We too must be good all the time. Thank you for your attention. May God bless you and may our Mother Mary intercede for us all.

For God and for Youth. Through Christ!