



AFRICA/NIGERIA - "The existence of many Pentecostal churches is no impediment to the evangelization mission of the Catholic Church", said Cardinal Onaiyekan

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - The existence of many Pentecostal churches is no impediment to the evangelization mission of the Catholic Church in the Country, neither is it a cause for panic. This was declared by Cardinal John Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, in a paper entitled "The phenomenon of Pentecostal Churches in Contemporary Nigeria" presented at the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Germany and the Pontifical Council for Promotion of Christian Unity, held recently at the Casa Pastor Bonus in Rome.

The cardinal pointed out that "the flourishing of Pentecostal Churches is itself questionable. There go up and down. And the constant splitting means that we cannot be sure where they are heading, and what future they have. In fact, we are still to see what happens when the founders die and succession takes place. Some cases have shown that it is a problem that they still have to deal with".

"Therefore" - said the Cardinal - we need not panic or think that we shall all become Pentecostals sooner or later". In his report, the Cardinal traced the genesis of the Nigerian Pentecostal Churches from the early beginning of the classical Pentecostals in England and America to the present day groups.

Cardinal Onaiyekan also identified some "strong points in their fellowship which can be of value to the Catholic Church, especially young people who are insecure and are looking for a breakthrough especially in jobs and employment". But he concluded, "there is much talk about losing members to these churches. But there are no statistics in this matter, nor have we tried to get any such figures. What we can say is that if the Catholic Church is losing members, other Churches are losing more than we are". (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 22/11/2013)