



## *Committee on International Justice and Peace*

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December 27, 2011

Most Reverend John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan  
Archbishop of Abuja  
Archbishop's House  
Area 3. Section 2  
P.O. Box 286  
Garki, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria  
Sent Via Email

Your Excellency:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to express the solidarity of our Conference with the Church in Nigeria in the wake of the heinous attacks on Christian churches which took place on Christmas. In union with our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, we reject these senseless acts of violence. We pray for all those who have been killed or injured, as well as their families. With our Holy Father we affirm, "Violence is a path that leads only to pain, destruction and death; respect, reconciliation and love are the paths to peace."

According to press accounts, you indicated that Church leaders have urged the government of Nigeria to "identify and eliminate the dens of these terrorist groups." We support you in this call for accountability. The White House has indicated that our government has contacted Nigerian officials regarding these terrorist acts and has pledged "to assist them in bringing those responsible to justice." Please be assured that we will contact White House officials to thank them for this commitment and to affirm the importance of honoring this pledge.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Church in Nigeria at this time of loss and sorrow. We pray that the New Year will bring peace to your beloved country.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

+ *Richard E. Pates*

The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines  
Chairman