

THE CHAIRPERSON OF PROCMURA RECEIVES AN EXCEPTIONALLY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FOR HIS WORK IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS



PROCMURA Chairperson, The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon (right) receives the 'Cross of St. Augustine' from the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby



The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon

The Chairperson of PROCMURA, The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, Anglican Bishop of Kaduna Diocese of the Church of Nigeria, (Anglican Communion) has received a distinguished service award for his exceptional and extensive work in Christian-Muslim relations/dialogue within and outside the Worldwide Anglican Communion; indeed for his invaluable contribution to promoting peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Africa in general and the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

Announcing the award, the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby said: “One of the awards I am able to grant to people who have given long and exceptionally distinguished service to the Anglican Communion is the Cross of St. Augustine.” The Archbishop described the PROCMURA Chairperson as a tireless servant of the Lord who has displayed courage and vision in often the most difficult circumstances.

The award ceremony took place at Lambeth Palace on Thursday, June 20th 2013, where several dignitaries from Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States of America travelled in to witness this important event in the life of the Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, and indeed PROCMURA, which Archbishop Idowu-Fearon diligently serves as Chairperson since 2003.

Reflecting on the presenting of the Cross of St. Augustine to the PROCMURA Chairperson, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that this was a “huge day of privilege;” a day that we are reminded of the complexity of Christian-Muslim relations to “listen to the wisdom



The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon displays the Award after receiving it from the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby (left)

of God and not the foolishness of humankind;” to be increasingly aware of God’s radical demand that we “forgive otherwise your Heavenly Father will not forgive you.”

In making the presentation, The Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby said to Archbishop Josiah Idowu Fearon, “you have worked indefatigably on Christian-Muslim relations displaying extraordinary courage and vision in often the most difficult circumstances.”



Cardinal John Onaiyekan (left) congratulates The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon after receiving the Award

Cardinal John Onaiyekan, Archbishop of Abuja, and co-President of the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL) who was one of the distinguished guests at the ceremony praised the PROCMURA chairperson for his work in promoting peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria emphasising that the challenge is massive and seemingly insurmountable; “it takes people

of strong faith and resilience such as Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon to persist against all odds that peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims is possible” he said. Cardinal Onaiyekan briefly recounted his own experience and how he and the Archbishop are brothers dedicated to the same course. He lauded the Anglican Communion and the Archbishop of Canterbury for the award which he said, provided encouragement not only to the chairperson of PROCMURA but to everyone involved in the ministry of peace and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims.

The Archbishop of the Kaduna Province, Most Rev. Edmund Akanya told the gathering that when Archbishop Idowu-Fearon informed him of the award, he was most pleased that the unyielding commitment of his brother Archbishop Idowu-Fearon to promote peace between Christians and Muslims in very telling circumstances was finally recognised with an award. He thanked the Archbishop of Canterbury for the award and applauded all those from Nigeria who travelled to Lambeth to witness the honour done to one of the distinguished sons of Nigeria.



From right to left Most Rev Edmund Akanya (The Archbishop of the Kaduna Province), Cardinal John Onaiyekan, The Most Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah pose for photo with The Most Reverend and Rt. Honourable Justin Welby.

In a message from the Governor of Kogi State read by Prof. Olugbemino Jegeder, Secretary to the State government, the governor praised Archbishop Idowu-Fearon for his courage and unyielding commitment to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue for peace. He praised the Archbishop of Canterbury for the award given to their son who tirelessly works for peace in situations where the faint hearted would otherwise give up.



From left to right Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, Comfort Idowu-Fearon and Dr. Bunmi Olayisade in solidarity with Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon after receiving the award.

The last but not the least of the speakers was the General Adviser of PROCMURA, the Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah. He told the August gathering that he was lost for words as to what to say. He recalled the excitement and joy at the PROCMURA

Central Office when they received the news of the award. He wondered how the wider family of PROCMURA in Africa and beyond and the Muslim Community of Nigeria, Africa and beyond who know the commitment of the Archbishop for peace and between Christians and Muslims will react when they receive this very welcome Breaking News.

Turning to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the General Adviser simply said to him: “Thank you Archbishop of Canterbury for making Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon and by extension PROCMURA, to feel that their reward and award is not only in heaven but also here on earth.”

“We have always in our work for peace and reconciliation said to the Christian and Muslim communities that God who created the heavens and the earth recognises life before death as important as life after death.”

The General Adviser acknowledged the presence of the European Liaison Committee of PROCMURA in the person of Dr. Bunmi Olayisade who is the Partnership Coordinator within the Methodist Church in Britain.

Dr. Mbillah specifically appreciated Cardinal Onaiyekan and thanked him for walking along with the PROCMURA chairperson in their collective determination to bring about peace and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and the African continent. He thanked the dignitaries and distinguished guests for accompanying PROCMURA in its journey of Christian-Muslim relations.

Other distinguished guests who came to grace the occasion were Mrs Bola Obasanjo, wife of the former president of the Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Olusugun Obasanjo who represented her husband, Bishop Praises Omole - Ekun, Dean of the St Francis of Assisi Theological College, Rev. Canon Tom Furrer, Rector of Trinity, Tariffville, Connecticut among others.



Group Photo