



## **Bible and Hope**

**A Communiqué Issued at the End of the 18th Annual Conference of Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria (CABAN), Held at *Domus Sancti Spiritus* Guest House, Enugu Diocese, Enugu, Nigeria**

**4th-7th November, 2025**

### **1. Preamble**

The members of Catholic Biblical Association of Nigeria (CABAN) at their 18th Annual Conference reflected on the theme, "**Bible and Hope.**" This theme was inspired by the unifying theme of "hope," that runs through the Jubilee Year of Hope (Dec 24, 2024 - January 6, 2026), inaugurated by Pope Francis in his Letter; *Spes Non Confundit*, "Hope does not disappoint," (Rom 5:5). The conference brought together many dignitaries, including His Lordship Most Rev. Callistus Onaga, the Bishop of Enugu Diocese, who presided at the opening Holy Mass. At the gathering, Biblical scholars, theologians, clergy, religious, and lay members across the nation discussed the redemptive messages of hope in the Bible. The body affirmed that the triad of faith, hope, and charity (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3) as theological virtues guides us in our relationship with God (CCC 1812). In this communiqué, we share our findings on Bible's testimony on hope. We offer recommendations from our research and the fruits of the plenary discussions which underscore the Bible as a wellspring of hope and motivation, especially in moments of difficulties.

### **2. Bible and Hope**

The theme of "Bible and Hope" is particularly relevant, especially in our country, Nigeria, that has been shaped by all kinds of socio-political, religious and economic struggles, yet with resilience and unwavering faith in God. Most communities in Nigeria today are faced with hunger, poverty, poor leadership, insecurities, and lack of basic amenities and infrastructures, including ordinary drinking water, electricity, and safe transportation networks. It is in the midst of these challenges and seeming hopelessness that we are reminded that redemption awaits those who show prayerful, individual and communal resilience, faith and hope offered us in the Bible. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. In Scriptures, when faced with suffering, individuals and communities come together and turn to God for strength and hope in prayers and action. In the Bible hope remains a confident expectation for the future. When grounded in God, hope provides us motivation to live the Christian life even in the face of trouble.

Throughout the Bible the notion of hope is often associated with God himself and the out-working of his purposes in the salvation history. In the Old Testament, hope is a cornerstone of the relationship between humanity and God, influencing both individual faith and the communal faith of Israel. Trusting in God's unwavering love sustains our hope in God, who is the ultimate deliverer from peril. The exilic period of Israel epitomized the desire for hope in their cries to God (Isa 40:25-20). Key themes

associated with hope in the Old Testament involve patiently awaiting God's intervention, restoration and renewal which embodies confidence and trust. Hope encourages believers to trust (Isa 40:31; Ps 27), to look for restoration (Ps 37:9; Jer 14:8; 31:17; Lam 3:29-31 Zeph 3:14-18; (:12; Hos 2:15), to face suffering with resilience (Pss. 22:24; 147), to face death with confidence (Ps 16:9-10; Job 19:25-27), and to live by faith (Hab 2:4).

The New Testament continues the Old Testament's theme of hope but brings a significant renewal through the Incarnation. The person and teachings of Christ offer a new direction for our hope in relation to God. Christian hope centers on Jesus and God's kingdom, which is integral to his message. This hope goes beyond the Old Testament's understanding of a favorable earthly existence; it looks forward to eternal life with God. For Christians, God has revealed the path to salvation in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and His call to conversion in light of its imminence.

Hope, as a defining attribute of Christianity, is shared by all creation (Rom 8:22). The revelation of God in Jesus affects not just humanity but the entirety of creation. Our salvation is rooted in hope (Rom 8:23-24). Abraham exemplified this hope by believing in God despite the odds—holding onto “hope against hope” (Rom 4:8). Our hope in God has the power to bring life to the dead and to summon into existence what does not yet exist (Rom 4:17). A strong hope fosters a robust faith, as illustrated by Abraham (Rom 4:18-21; Col 1:23).

The “hope of glory” refers to the presence of Christ within believers (Col 1:27), while the “hope of the gospel” (Col 1:23) highlights the blessings awaiting Christians in heaven (Col 1:5). Those who do not embrace Christ are left without hope (Eph 2:12). The Christian hope, characterized by Christ's glorious inheritance (Eph 1:18), is intrinsic to our Christian calling (Eph 4:4).

Christian hope is anchored not in fleeting riches but in God (1 Tim 6:17). It is strengthened by the Scriptures (Rom 15:4), by the work of Jesus (1 Pet 1:3, 21), and by God's present gift of the Spirit to believers. God wants all believers to wear hope around our heads as helmet (1 Thess 5:8). Christ embodies that hope (1 Tim 1:1), particularly in his return, which fulfills and completes our hope (Tit 2:3). Eternal life stands as the ultimate aim of our hope (Tit 1:2; 3:7). The Apostle Paul reminds us of hope with phrases like “The God of hope” (Rom 15:13), along with encouragement to “abound in hope” and “rejoice in your hope” (Rom 12:12; 15:13).

### **3. Church, Hope and Youth**

During our deliberation we recognized that many young people, faced with challenges like unemployment, corruption, and violence, are grappling with their faith and the promises found in Scripture. It is clear that we need to address the root causes of these problems and emphasize the crucial role faith communities play in offering support, guidance, and resources. Strengthening these communities is vital for instilling hope among youth. This can be achieved by creating spaces for open dialogue, mentorship opportunities, and community service projects that enable young people to engage actively in their spiritual journeys. We are committed to fostering hope through Scripture, especially for our youth. We urge all stakeholders - families, parishes, schools, and communities - to focus on creating environments that nurture dialogue, support, and faith-based initiatives that empower our young people to reclaim hope in their lives.

#### **4. The Nigerian Situation**

Our nation is in urgent need of divine intervention amidst the numerous challenges we face. While some leaders strive to improve our situation, others take advantage of their positions for personal gain, exacerbating the suffering of many due to poor governance. Various forms of violence are hindering livelihoods and essential sustenance. Farmers can no longer cultivate their land and reap the benefits of their hard work because of these violent disruptions. Human rights and dignity are under threat, as those who should speak out often prioritize their own safety, allowing the situation to deteriorate further. In an atmosphere of desperation, many feel compelled to survive at any cost, even if it means harming others. Kidnapping and murder have become so commonplace that fear drives many to seek refuge in other parts of the world, abandoning their nation with a deep sense of hopelessness. The theme of this Jubilee of hope continues to resonate deeply in the lives of every Nigerian. May we hold on to hope that does not disappoint (Rom 5:5).

#### **5. Recommendations**

- i. We encourage everyone to engage deeply with the Bible, as its messages provide comfort and hope during challenging times.
- ii. The Association emphasizes the importance of enhancing Bible study groups and educational programs in parishes, enabling faithful to relate the Scriptures to their daily lives.
- iii. CABAN invites the Church and its members to actively participate in social justice initiatives, demonstrating how biblical principles inspire actions that promote peace, equality, and support for those in need.
- iv. We highly recommend developing online resources such as podcasts, videos, and social media campaigns that share messages of hope rooted in the Bible, particularly aimed at younger audiences.
- v. There is an urgent call to inspire parishes to engage with local communities through service projects and outreach efforts, reflecting the Church's mission as a beacon of hope.

#### **6. Conclusion**

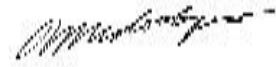
Throughout the Bible the notion of hope is closely associated with God himself and the out-working of his purposes in the salvation history. The Bible serves as a source of hope and inspiration. It provides guidance, source for strength and resilience in the face of adversities, especially in our country Nigeria. The Christian hope must motivate every Nigerian to persevere, recognizing that they are not alone and that their struggles can contribute to the collective healing and development of our nation.

Biblical messages of hope encourage all to view difficulties as opportunities for deeper faith and communal strength. It urges all to cultivate hope not as passive anticipation of relief, but as active participation in supporting one another through concrete acts of kindness. By embracing both afflictions and the hope found in Christ, we can address

the complexities of life in Nigeria with courage and grace, becoming a more resilient society. CABAN affirms her steadfast commitment to fostering a world grounded in hope and guided by Biblical principles. Christian hope extends beyond death into an eternity prepared by God himself, the reality of which is guaranteed by Jesus Christ. We pray through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Christ, "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27; 1Tim 1:1), and Saint Joseph, that all who may have experienced despair of any form in Nigeria and beyond may draw strength from the messages of hope and restoration offered by Christ as expressed in Scriptures.



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