

THE CONSTITUTION OF
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC
LAWYERS,
LAGOS ARCHDIOCESE

(SLOGAN: CATHOLIC LAWYERS, ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE)

Article 1: PREAMBLE

We, the National Association of Catholic Lawyers, Lagos Archdiocese in recognition of our common faith and profession and conscious of our manifest obligation to put our knowledge, talent and professional skills to the service of the Catholic Church and the society at large; aware of the need to organize ourselves into one body for the promotion and propagation of the ideals, tenets and teaching of our Christian faith, do hereby make and give ourselves the following Constitution, which shall govern our affairs:

Article 2: NAME

The Association shall be known and called the “**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC LAWYERS, LAGOS ARCHDIOCESE**”.

The slogan of the Association shall be “**Catholic Lawyers, Advocates for Justice**”

Article 3: SUPREMACY CLAUSE

This constitution is supreme to any bye-laws or rules guiding any branch of the Association in the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos, hereafter referred to as “**the Archdiocese**”.

Article 4: SECRETARIAT

- i. The Secretariat of the Association shall be situated in Lagos.
- ii. There shall be branches of the Association in Parishes or churches with resident Priests in the Archdiocese.

Article 5: MEMBERSHIP

- a) Any lawyer called to the Nigerian Bar and is of the Catholic faith shall be eligible for membership provided that proof of same is furnished to the Executive.
- b) There shall be kept and maintained at all times an up-to-date Register of Members, which shall be in the custody of the Secretariat.

Article 6: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- a) To promote and foster the spirit of oneness, co-operation and to create an atmosphere and forum for mutual and better understanding among members.
- b) To promote intellectual, social and spiritual interests of members.
- c) To take up the many legal issues and constitutional challenges facing the country and to engage in corporate actions that have substantial and positive bearing on the moral, spiritual and social development of Nigeria or any of the constituent parts as may from time to time arise or be spelt out by the Holy See, Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (**CBCN**) or the Archbishop of Lagos.
- d) To place our expertise and professional experience at the disposal of Nigerians and the Catholic Church in its mission of evangelization and spread of the social teaching of the church.
- e) To promote the spiritual growth of members of the Association and help members live out the Gospel Values, which should be reflected in their lives and work.
- f) To strive to learn from one another with humility things that are of benefit to mankind.
- g) To encourage and contribute to charity and other welfare funds for the benefit of the needy.
- h) To speak with one voice through resolutions passed at General Meetings or through the Executive Committee on:
 - i. The many contentious matters of law, constitutional processes and developments in the country.
 - ii. The challenges facing good governance and the sustenance of democratic principles for the endurance of the Nigerian state.
 - iii. The need to preserve lives, human dignity and to oppose any form of termination of life as may be decided by the church
 - iv. The need for dialogue in resolving all forms of conflicts among the diverse people of Nigeria.
 - v. The need to preserve and promote the freedom of expression for all Nigerians and the practice and adherence to the rule of law and due process through the courts.
 - vi. The need for the Church to run and maintain its own schools and ensure that moral and religious teachings are given pride of place in the school curriculum.
- i) To ensure that no member of the Church, clergy, religious or the laity is maltreated in any part of the country, and to rise up in support where such is the case.
- j) To respond to the call by the Church for transparency and accountability in government and the fight against corruption in all facets of Nigerian society.
- k) To support and work towards strengthening of the Security Agencies and demand adequate funding of same through provision of effective welfare, equipment, regular training and re-training to make them effective in the discharge of their obligations and duties to the country and all citizens.
- l) To provide legal aid to prisoners and other persons in need.

Article 7: MEETINGS

- a. Quarterly General Meetings of the Association shall be held at the Secretariat, No 19 Maye Street, Yaba, or at the premises of Holy Cross Cathedral, Lagos Island or as may be decided by the President in constitution with Executive members from time to time.
- b. All members should endeavor to attend any general meeting whilst it is compulsory for all Archdiocesan Officers/Executives, Chairmen and Secretaries of all inaugurated Parishes.
- c. In the absence of the President or the vice-president at any general meeting, members present shall appoint any member to preside over the meeting of the day.
- d. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association shall be held on the day of the Legal Year Mass after the church service.
- e. An Emergency General Meeting to deliberate on specific issues may be summoned at such times and places as may be decided by the Executive Committee.
- f. Any question or issue proposed for decision at any meeting shall be decided upon by the votes of a simple majority of members present at any material time.
- g. The President or any person acting in that capacity shall have a casting vote provided that he/she shall not invoke this power or right unless and except there is an equality of votes cast or a tie thereof.
- h. Any reference to General Meeting in this Constitution shall include "Emergency General Meeting".
- i. COMMITTEES: The Association recognizes the effectiveness of the committee system in carrying out its functions. Standing or Ad-Hoc Committees may therefore be set up to undertake assignments of either general or specific nature. For this purpose, the following committees may be set up by the Executive Committee:
 - I. Social Welfare Committee
 - II. Pro Bono Committee
 - III. Human Rights Committee
 - IV. Professional Development/Continuing Legal Education Committee
 - V. Finance Committee
 - VI. Legal Year Mass/ Annual General Meeting Committee

Article 8 (A): OFFICERS:

The officers of the Association shall be:

- i. The President
- ii. The Vice President

- iii. The General Secretary
- iv. The Assistant Secretary
- v. The Financial Secretary
- vi. The Treasurer
- vii. The Publicity Secretary/P.R.O
- viii. The Welfare Officer
- ix. Patrons

Article 8 (B): QUALIFICATION TO HOLD OFFICES

- i. He/She must be a registered member of the Association who has paid his/her annual dues to date and has paid at least 2 years.
- ii. He/She must be a practicing Catholic.

Article 9: DUTIES OF OFFICERS

A. THE PRESIDENT

Shall:

- i. Act as the principal spokesperson of the Association.
- ii. Preside at all meetings and in his absence, the vice president shall preside.
- iii. Direct the summoning or convening of all meetings of the Association.
- iv. Liaise with the officers of the Association in the performance of their duties and coordinate the activities of the Association viz-a-viz that of the National body.
- v. Act as the liaison between the Association and the Archdiocese in respect of all activities of the Association and how same can be harmonized with that of the Archdiocese for more adroit effectuation of the aims and objectives of the Association.
- vi. Ensure effective running of the Secretariat.
- vii. Provide direction and leadership to all members of the Association.
- viii. Present to the Annual General Meeting of the Association and address highlighting the affairs of the Association for the preceding year.

B. THE VICE PRESIDENT

Shall:

- i. Assist the President in the performance of the functions of his office.
- ii. Deputize or act in the absence of the President
- iii. Perform all other duties as may from time to time be assigned to him/her by the President.

C. THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Shall:

- i. With support of his/her Assistant, record or keep the minutes including the attendance register and summary of all decisions taken at all meetings.
- ii. Manage the Secretariat in line with the visions and aspirations of the members and the Executive
- iii. On the direction of the President, issue notices of meetings, circulars and other correspondence of the Association.
- iv. Furnish an annual report of the activities of the Association at the Annual General Meeting.
- v. Perform all other duties as may be assigned to him/her by the President.

D. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Shall:

- i. Carry out duties of the General Secretary in the absence of the latter.
- ii. Assist the General Secretary in the performance of the functions of his/her office.

E. THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Shall:

- i. Constantly liaise with members of the Association to ensure prompt payment of all annual dues and subscriptions to the Association.
- ii. Compile and circulate the list of all those who have complied or defaulted.
- iii. Collect from members all dues or other payments and handover monies collected to the Treasurer and issue receipts for monies so collected.
- iv. Keep accurate records of all cash collected and submit monthly and yearly report of the Association's accounts to the Executive committee.

F. THE TREASURER

Shall:

- i. Receive all moneys collected on behalf of the Association or paid to the Association from any sources whatsoever and pay same into the Association's bank account.
- ii. Carry out decisions or directives of the General Meetings in matters relating to the budget and finances of the Association.
- iii. Effect any payments and keep record of same as may be authorized from time to time.
- iv. Be a signatory to the operation of the Association's bank account.

- v. Submit to the Annual General Meeting an audited Financial Report of the Association for the relevant financial year.
- vi. Perform any other duties as may be assigned to him/her by the President of the Association.

G. PUBLICITY SECRETARY/ PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

Shall:

- i. Be responsible for publicizing activities of the Association, expounding and defending the policies of the Association when necessary.
- ii. In conjunction with the General Secretary, originate and circulate circulars and notices of activities of the Association.
- iii. Perform all other functions as may be assigned to him/her by the President or the Association.

H. THE WELFARE OFFICER

Shall:

- i. Be responsible for the welfare of members at social functions of the Association including General Meetings, Annual General Meetings and retreats;
- ii. Keep records of dates of birth and anniversaries of members and patrons of the Association and circulate congratulatory messages to that effect, monthly;
- iii. Announce bereavement of members and organize condolence visits to such members
- iv. In the event of the death of a member or patron of the Association, liaise with the family to ensure full participation of members at the wake-keeping, interment and funeral rites.

Article 10: ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- i. This shall take place in during the Annual General Meeting of the Association in an election year.

Article 11: VOTING

- i. All elections shall be by secret or open ballot as may be decided by the general meeting and candidates shall be eligible to vote at elections.

- ii. All members present who have paid their Annual Dues shall be eligible to vote at elections.
- iii. There shall be a returning officer and an assistant who shall be nominated at a General Meeting or at the Annual General Meeting. The returning officer shall not stand for any elective position and where nominated shall step down as returning officer.

Article 12: TENURE

- I. Elected officers shall occupy/serve in an office for a single term of 3 years in accordance with the directives of the Archdiocese.
 - ii. Each outgoing officer of the Association shall prepare his/her handover notes and present same at the Annual General Meeting/New Legal Year Mass or shortly thereafter to the new Executives. Provided that no handover shall exceed 30 days from the date of vacating office.
 - iii. Handover under this Article shall include delivering of/accounting for all the Association's properties/assets in possession of the affected person handing over same.
 - iv. Any breach/noncompliance of this Article may be referred to the new Executives of the Association by any member of the Association or may be raised, suomotu, by the new Executives. The Executives may take such disciplinary action that may be expedient against such person, subject to ratification of same by members in general meeting.

Article 13: VACANCIES

- i. Offices shall become vacant by resignation of the affected officer which shall be communicated by notice in writing to the President and in case of the President, by notice in writing to the Secretary.
- ii. An office shall otherwise be vacant by expiration of time, removal, death or any other reasonable cause.
- iii. An officer of the Archdiocesan body or of the parish branch may be removed from office by the general meeting if he or she fails to attend meetings of the Association for three (3) consecutive times or five (5) times within a legal year without reasonable cause.
- iv. An officer may be removed from office by impeachment if a motion to that effect is supported by 2/3rd (two-third) majority of members present in a general meeting; or
- v. An officer may also be suspended or removed by a simple majority where the motion is presented by the Executive provided that said officer is not the President, Secretary or Treasurer.

- vi. An officer may also be suspended by the Executive pending ratification by the General Meeting, provided same is ratified within 3 months of the said suspension.

Article 14: THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This shall consist of:

- i. The officers of the Archdiocesan body of the Association.
- ii. The past Presidents and Secretaries of the Archdiocesan body of the Association or the National body.
- iii. The current serving officers of the National Body
- iv. Such other members as may be co-opted by the committee.
- v. Executive Committee shall meet at such time and place as it may decide or be designated by the President.

Article 15: APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY

The Executive Committee shall appoint an Administrative Secretary or a Programme Officer whose functions shall include, but not be limited, to the following:

- i. Oversee the day to day running of the secretariat under the direction of the President and supervision of the General Secretary;
- ii. Report to the Executives, President or Secretary of its activities, programs or events on daily, weekly or monthly basis as directed by the President or Secretary.
- iii. Generate and Maintain accurate data base of members and keep proper records of the Secretariat in the manner directed by the President or Secretary.
- iv. Propose, plan and execute programmes and events of the Association with a view to promoting the ideals of the Association.
- v. Carry out any other duty as may be assigned by the Executive, President or Secretary.
- vi. The Administrative Secretary or Programme Officer shall earn monthly remuneration to be fixed by the Executive Committee.

Article 16: FINANCE

A. Funds shall be raised by the Association through:

- i. **Annual Subscription** : Every registered member shall pay through his parish or pay directly to the Financial Secretary or any person designated to collect such fund or pay into the bank.
- ii. Dues, Grants, Fines, Levies and Donations.
- iii. Levies on the Archdiocesan branches.

B. BANKS OF THE ASSOCIATION

- i. The Association shall open and operate an account with a recognized bank to be approved by the Executive Committee of the Association.
- ii. The Custodian of the bank instrument shall be the Treasurer.
- iii. The signatories to the account shall be the President, Treasurer and Representative of the Archbishop.

C. The financial year of the Association shall be from August 1st to July 31st.

D. The Association shall have an annual auditing committee to be nominated at any general meeting of the Association. The report of the Audit Committee shall be presented to the Executive Committee and thereafter laid before members at the Annual General Meeting.

Article 17: RULES AND REGULATIONS

(A) MISCONDUCT

Any member who engages in side-talks, noise making or any other distraction at meetings, shall be warned after which he/she may be fined **N200.00, or as may be agreed by the Meeting** if he/she persists in his/her misconduct, may be sent out of the Meeting by the presiding officer.

(B) DERELICTION DUTY

Any member, who fails to carry out duties as specified and contained in this Constitution, shall be cautioned and if there are no signs of positive changes, the duty shall be withdrawn and given to a more committed member.

(C) REFUSAL TO PAY FINE/DUES

Any member, who fails to honour or pay any fine/dues shall as a consequence forfeit his/her benefits as a member of the Association until the sums are redeemed.

(D) DISPUTE BETWEEN MEMBERS

It is within the jurisdiction of the Association to adjudicate on any dispute between two or more members. Members shall not institute legal proceedings against their fellow members without first seeking the intervention of the Association.

(E) OTHERS:

Any member who engages in any action inimical to the interest and image of the Association including such matters that are mentioned herein, the Association at its general meeting shall have power to impose any sanctions as deemed appropriate.

Article 18: ANNUAL YEAR MASS

- i. There shall be an Annual Legal Year Mass to be held on the 3rd Sunday of September every year or Sunday preceding the day of the commencement of the Lagos State Judiciary's Legal Year or as may be decided by the Executive.
- ii. It is mandatory for all members to attend the Legal Year Mass professionally dressed and fully robed and on such other times as may be approved by the Executive Committee.

Article 19: BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

(A) WEDDING/MARRIAGE CEREMONY

- i. All members are expected to attend the Christian wedding ceremony of a member, if invited.
- ii. A purse of Ten Thousand Naira (N10,000.00) shall be given to the member in addition to whatever the member's parish may give him/her.
- iii. Member's Child: All members are expected to attend the Christian wedding ceremony of a member's son/daughter in Lagos, if invited. If the wedding is outside Lagos State, the Executives shall sponsor at least (2) representatives to attend the wedding, if invited. In any event, the Association shall present a gift to the member's child.

(B) Death

- i. On the death of a member, all members shall attend the wake-keep if in Lagos. All members shall attend the burial if it would take place in Lagos. If

the burial would take place outside Lagos State, the Executives shall mandate each inaugurated parishes to nominate at least 2 representatives to attend/participate in the burial.

- ii. The Association shall send representatives to a member that loses a parent or child for condolence in Lagos.
- iii. A donation in the sum of Twenty Thousand Naira (N20,000.00) would be made to the next of kin of a deceased member.

(C) Donations/Levies

- i. Donations may be made by and levies may be imposed on members for the realization of the aforementioned events.
- ii. The Executives shall determine the amount to be imposed as levy with regards to the above mentioned events.

(D) All benefits due to any member shall only be paid or observed if the member is in good standing. A member is in good standing if he does not owe the Association any dues, fine or levy in the last 2 years preceding the date of the event and has attended meeting or other events of the Association at least twice in the 12 months preceding the date of the event.

Article 20: AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

This Constitution shall therefore be subject to *further* amendment or review if two thirds of members at any monthly meeting indicate by their collective votes an intention to so amend or review any part of the Constitution provided notice to that effect *has beengiven* for a minimum of 14 days or where an amendment is proposed by the Executive Committee, it is supported by two third of members at a General Meeting provided the required Notice is given.

The Constitution was last amended and approved at the General Meeting of Members held at St. Dominic's Catholic Church, Yaba this day 22nd day of March 2015.

Signed:

MR. CHUKWUMA EZEALA
President

MR DENNIS EZIKA
General Secretary