

MORE REFORMERS AND LESS PRAISE-SINGERS, OH LORD!

Oh Lord, we've had enough of crusaders who talk and talk and take us nowhere. They keep reminding us of our problems or keep singing praises for some highly placed individual, and when they're sated, our populace is left more disillusioned than ever. Reforms are what we need now, make me the reformer of my nation.

Our people have been so betrayed by the system that many fear Nigeria is doomed for eternity. Because many of those at the top are unable or unwilling to do what's right, the lower rungs are content to wallow in inefficiency and graft. But when the reformers take their place, change, positive change will be our watchword in high and low places. The trader will refuse to swindle; the banker will resist fraud and the awarder of contracts will insist on transparency. So make me the reformer, Lord.

In the civil service, instill the revamping spirit in our hearts. Make this lazy crop of workers a group of dedicated employees who do their jobs with alacrity. Make them realize that their offices are not places to chat and trade but centres of excellence where the onerous task of governance is simplified. Oh yes, our public servants must know that the rationale for their being in service is not to sluggishly pore over sheets of endless paper but to serve Nigeria's citizenry. For the prevailing attitude in our bureaucracy is that staff are more loyal to political stalwarts and their own interests than the citizens for whose sake they were employed. So make me that reformer who will call the system to order.

Our reformer must not necessarily be one who commands a large following or portfolio, but whoever can do his/her job with dignity,

integrity and commitment. If he is a cleaner, let him do it like that's the greatest job in the world; if she's a secretary or receptionist, let her attend to visitors as if they all are her employers; and if she is a boss, let her take charge as if she is a servant and always remember that the position is held in trust for the people. After all, we call them civil/public servants, not civil masters and mistresses.

Help us, Lord, for our leaders have spent our fortune on polishing and garnishing their image. The mass media is awash with lots and lots of content advertising or praising one political office-holder or the other. Billions of Naira goes down the drain in this manner. And who pays for all that grandiosity? God save the poor tax-payer. Pray, tell me somebody: do actions no longer speak louder than words? Shouldn't a leader's good deeds speak for him? Just as you noted in the Bible book of Matthew chapter twenty-three verses one to six, worldly leaders cherish ostentation. Yet, you command us to respect them anyway. Only you can create the change we need. So make me that reformer, Lord.

Who are these people that sing praises of politicians in exchange for undeserved favours? Why do these ones agitate for the continuity in office of any leader who is closer to their pockets? Tell me: whoever told these people that festivals should be declared in honour of a politician each time he does a job he is being paid to do anyway? Does anyone celebrate an office messenger for running errands well? Whoever cares to compliment that security man for staying awake while the world snores away. Thank you, God, for men like Chibuike Amaechi of Rivers state who has dared to challenge this status quo. Make me your reformer, Lord!

We hope in you, Jesus, that the reformers are here and many more are still in the making. There's hope for us in the younger generation, but tell them, Lord, that what we need is not a violent revolution, but a renaissance that must begin in our hearts and minds.

In the private sector, we crave for reformers- those who know that they could run their businesses with integrity and still make huge profit. In our religious bodies, buy back those men and women who have sold their hearts for a mess of Naira. Help them return to tenets of their faith and reject the allure of corruption.

Reformers everywhere: that's what we need, Lord! So make me that change agent and send many more, for we pray in Jesus' name.

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