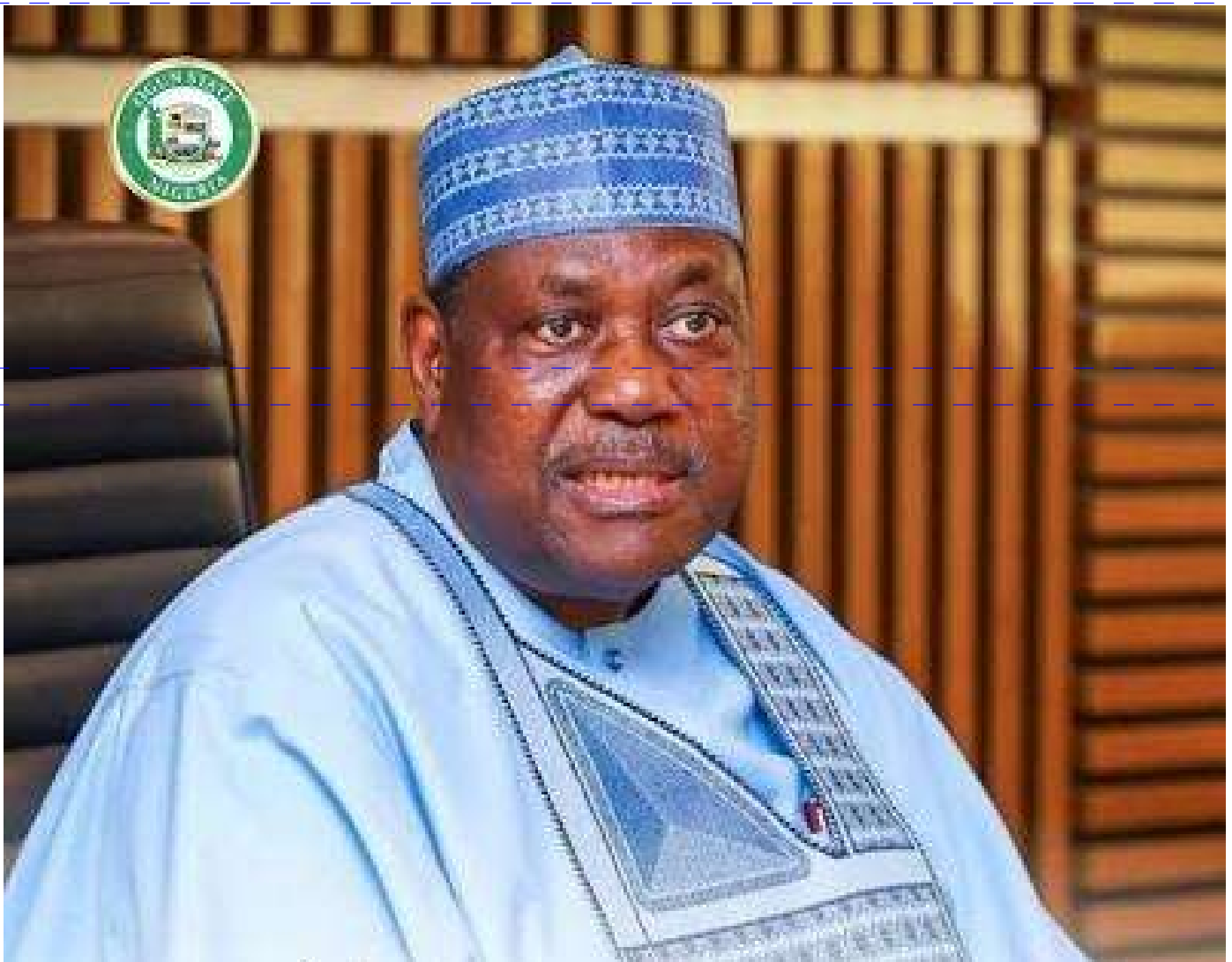


Tinubu's Bishopsgate – A George comes to Judgement,

By Ikeddy Isiguzo



GEORGE Akume, CON, former Governor of Benue State, former Senator Majority Leader, former Minister, with titles stretching almost as long as the River Benue, has an inscrutable visage that could make you put anything requiring clarity beyond his ken. Akume, 72, expected to think like Tinubu, was the only one, in the hordes of presidential panjandrum around Tinubu who told him he was wrong to manage the fall out of his meeting with the Conference of Catholic Church Bishops the way he did. He said so without fear or favour. The Secretary to the Government of the Federation supervened the narratives not fearing if he would lose his job in the midst of the administration's wolves, who are glad to be tagged “attack dogs”, a reflection of their furious, unreasoned attacks on anyone who tells Tinubu that Nigerians are living in exacerbated misery sustained by Tinubu's policies. Akume in measured tone, tune, and intonation acknowledged Tinubu's errors in a lengthy

message that had adequate friendly fires. The same treatment he gave Catholics and their bishops. Some said he acted that way because he was Catholic. I don't think so. He saw a situation that deserved an immediate dousing of the tension when other presidential aides thought their duty was to abuse the bishops out of existence. The Akume intervention halted the counter-attacks on Tinubu, moderated those who still attacked, the explanation being that George had intervened, and apologized without allowing the President to totally lose what was left of his face to the angst of those who thought they would dig their way out of the deep abyss they had dragged the President into without realizing the implications. “Many of the challenges confronting our nation require partnership. Faith communities, traditional institutions, civil society, the private sector and citizens all have indispensable roles to play in promoting peace, strengthening social cohesion and advancing national development.

Constructive engagement between Government and these institutions is therefore not only welcome but essential," Akume's message read. "The Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation will continue consultations with the leadership of the Catholic Bishops Conference, other faith-based organizations and relevant stakeholders on the issues raised during the meeting and on areas where greater collaboration can advance the national interest," in what sounded like a suggestion that the President would not be involved in future engagements. Relief. Would anyone miss him? According to Akume, the Federal Government had noted public reactions to the meeting between President Tinubu and the Catholic Bishops and reaffirmed its respect for the Catholic Church, describing it as one of Nigeria's foremost development partners through its contributions to education, healthcare, humanitarian services, peace-building and moral guidance. Had the public not reacted the way it, the Federal Government would have thought the abuses its hired hands heaped on the bishops were the right responses in a public engagement? Is it defensible that public officials maintained at cost to the could be so bereft of basic manners in public communication? Akume gave the public a hint to hold governments more accountable. If it worked with the bishops, who knows where next the government will pay attention? He said discussions between the President and the bishops were candid and constructive, covering issues including security, economic hardship, public services, education, electoral credibility, political pluralism and religious freedom. According to Akume, both sides acknowledged progress recorded under the administration, including the student loan programme and recent security operations that secured the release of abducted schoolchildren and teachers.

On the economy, Akume acknowledged the hardship facing many Nigerians but described it as temporary, saying government reforms were designed to correct structural weaknesses and place the economy on a sustainable path. "The Federal Government neither sought nor supported a one-party state," he said, adding that the administration respected the legal independence of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, and would continue to provide resources required for the commission to carry out its constitutional responsibilities. "Our diversity is our source of strength. In spite of many, we are one people," Akume said. He expressed confidence that continued collaboration between government, and the Catholic Church would help build a stronger and more resilient Nigeria capable of delivering greater opportunities for future generations. Great speeches cannot cover Tinubu's desperation to win the 2027 election. The only way to support Tinubu is to key into this desperation. Many of his people understand this. What is the rumpus in Osun State about other supporting the President even if he does not need it? While there was a denial of the bishops' charge that the democratic space was narrowing, EFCC had the guts to freeze the bank accounts of Osun State Government. Are

we not to believe this was not related to an election that is only days away? These occurrences confirm that the likes of Akume are on the fringes of the Tinubu administration, useful to put a veneer of human face when its policies come under heavy public bombardment. Akume's statement saved Tinubu but be sure that Tinubu never believes in his presidency being about listening to the public or those who claim to represent the people. Once you offer a contrary view, you are deemed an opposition to Tinubu's dictatorship that masquerades as a democracy. Tinubu's indifference to democracy is clear, unless it is a democracy in his own terms which is his departing point from the people.

Finally...An Embarrassed President? Tinubu was not aware that EFCC obtained a court order to freeze the Osun State Government's bank accounts. Nobody believes Tinubu was unaware. His orders that EFCC vacates the order means that he should have known. Tinubu said the EFCC move embarrassed him. Nigerians don't believe that too. Where is the proof of the President's embarrassment? Who did he query? Who has been suspended? Who will be fired? The "embarrassment" claim was made in one of those times of momentary presidential wakefulness. Still unanswered, what are the consequences of acting "to please the President", to the point of embarrassing him? Where's Nigeria and Its Football. DID anyone hear any reaction from Nigeria on the planned commercialization of the FIFA World Cup to the point that individuals and organizations would own the company that owns the World Cup? The matter may have not been discussed in Nigeria because those who run our football are mired in an election that would return the same administrators who could not qualify for the World Cup in a year that Africa had 10 slots. When Nigeria first qualified for the World Cup in 1994, Africa had only three slots. There is urgent need to rescue our football before it disappears. The first step is to postpone the election – and reorganize the rules to make football administration more inclusive. Goodluck Super Falcons. THE stakes are higher than a WAFCON quarter-final tie. A victory over Cameroun in Rabat today, earns Nigeria a place at the FIFA Women's World Cup next year. As the Super Falcons soldier on burdened by unkept promises, and officials who have girded themselves with lies, I wish them good luck. Celebrating Gbaja's 'Not Involved' Verdict. REPORT that the presidential panel on the "fake federal agency" returned an expected "not involved" on the President's Chief of Staff Femi Gbajabiamila is unsurprising. In summary, he knew nothing about the setting up of the agency. What is there to celebrate? Who included the agency in the budget? From where did it get funds to operate? Why was Gbajabiamila consistently mentioned? More action seems to be at the House of Representatives investigation from which we learnt that the Federal Road Safety Corps, FRSC, allocated official number plates to the "fake agency's". We still don't know who allocated government vehicles to the agency.

ISIGUZO is a major commentator on minor issues