



PAX Newspaper

...Peace on earth to men of goodwill

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Wisdom Corner

“Evangelize the youth,
and you'll shape the future.

They are the catalyst for change,
ignite their passion for God.

The youth are the church
of tomorrow, invest
in them today.

Reach them, and you'll
reach the world.

Investing in youth is
investing in eternity.”

Ikot Ekpene Diocese Hosts Calabar Provincial C.M.O.N. On Annual Convention

... Comfers Awards Of Excellency To Deserving Members



By Barnabas Avule

The members of the Catholic Men Organization of Nigeria (CMON) Calabar Ecclesiastical Province congregated at St. Anne Cathedral Ikot Ekpene Diocese in their numbers for their Annual Provincial Convention. The occasion was characterized by the celebration of the feast of their Patron Saint (St. Joseph, Husband of Mary) and the Fathers' Day. The event which lasted for three days featured a courtesy visit to the Diocesan Bishop, concelebrated Holy Mass and seminars.

The event began with the courtesy visit to the host Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Camillus R. Umoh. Here, The Provincial President of the CMON, Mr. Emmanuel Nicholas Akpanuso, with the host Diocesan Chaplain of the Organization, Rev. Fr. Linus M. Idio, who served as the moderator, thanked the Bishop for granting the permission for the Provincial CMON to host their Annual Provincial Father's day celebration in his diocese.

Speaking on behalf of the Organization, the President expressed his gratitude to all the Bishops within Calabar Province for supporting and making

sure that the CMON in the Province continues to strive. He presented a passionate appeal to the Bishop and by extension, all the bishops of the Province for a substantive Provincial Chaplain, explaining that it is only the Province of Calabar that is without a substantive Chaplain.

In his fatherly response, the Chief Shepherd thanked the Provincial CMON for finding his Diocese worthy of such visit. He mentioned that he would extend their request to the Provincial Bishops Conference even as he expressed the hope that



before their next general meeting, the Bishops would appoint a substantive Chaplain for the Organization.

The Bishop reiterated the need for Catholic men to rise up and act with dignity and determination,

stressing that over time, men seem to have relinquished their roles to women and could not do much for the Church and the society as well. He further admonished them to be responsible and to lead their children to the upright

virtues of Christian life. He further advised them to be patient with their wards irrespective of their attitudes, characters or impediments. The Bishop advised all men on the need to live

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Ikot Ekpene Diocese Hosts....

exemplary life in their families and in the society, especially in whatever Government positions they find themselves. They should spend quality time with their families so as to impact positively on the lives of their family.

The actual opening ceremony of the Convention began with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the second day. In his homily Bishop Umoh charged all Men to emulate St. Joseph whose

story though not much documented in the Scriptures, based on his role and actions in the Holy Family, is seen as a silent achiever and a man who listened to God's message and discerned it accordingly.

The Bishop utilized the opportunity to itemize the responsibilities of fatherhood. He taught that fatherhood is about transmitting, teaching and maintaining faith and virtues in the Church, the society and at home. Stating

that the position of a father is a position of authority, he warned that they have responsibilities beyond the family to both the Church and the society at large. Umoh stressed that authority is a call to service and not to be served, as such fathers should use their position in the Church to transmit faith to the younger generation and participate fully in service for the growth of the Church and the society at large.

Catholic Fathers" also featured Seminar/Paper presentation on the topic *Blessing of Gays: A Clarification on Fiducia Supplicans* by Rev. Fr. Peter Egim Monkpuk

According to the paper presenter, every true Catholic needs to stand up and defend the Church. He maintained that the Declaration, *Fiducia Supplicans*, by Pope Francis does not change the true teaching and theology of the Catholic Church concerning marriage which states that marriage can only be contracted between "One Man And One Woman". Fr Monkpuk stated that the document can be properly understood when read alongside other documents and declarations issued by the Church on Marriage to get the true and authentic teaching of the church on the subject. To achieve this, the presenter insisted that the fathers and the leadership of the laity should be appropriately advised. He therefore advised that, "When in doubt it is better to seek directions from our pastors or moral theologians who are vested in this areas and are always ready to guide us".

In his closing remarks, the Provincial CMON President Mr. Emmanuel Nicholas Akpanuso expressed his appreciation to the Archbishop of Calabar, His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Ekuwen and all the Bishops in the Province. He thanked the Chief Host, Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, Most Rev. Camillus Raymond Umoh for their fatherly support towards the success of the Convention. He acknowledged the Diocesan Chaplains; Rev. Frs. Linus Idio of Ikot Ekpene, Peter Egim of Uyo and Patrick Okuta of Ogoja for their wonderful support and show of commitment toward the activities of the CMON.

St. Vincent De Paul Parish:

Cate Udoma Returns Home Amidst Eulogies

By Augustine Mendie

For the former Rector, Queen of Apostles Seminary Afaha Obong, and former Formator St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene, Very Rev. Fr. Patrick Xavier Ekutt and entire members of St. Vincent De Paul Parish, the death of Catechist Paulinus Isonguyo Udoma, is a loss of monumental proportion, because Udoma was not only a religious teacher of note, he was an evangelizer of Diocesan and National repute.

Catechist Paulinus Udoma died on May 6, in a road traffic accident along Ikono road, in front of his station church while going to perform his religious duty. He was rushed to the general hospital where he gave up the ghost.

In his homily, during the funeral mass, Fr. Ekutt said the news of the passing of the gentle Catechist and frontlin

catechist was the least but even at that, the deceased had known the value of education; thus he worked hard and schooled his children to university level.

The homilist further called on all Christians to always be ready so that when the day of recompense comes, it will not take them by surprise.

He said the day of the Lord is used in two senses;

state of proper readiness". Reason for readiness, Fr. Ekutt said, is that one must finish one's work to its logical conclusion like Jesus did. "The coming of Christ can meet any Christian at anytime, anywhere, anyhow. Be prepaid", the Senior Cleric concluded.

Earlier during the requiem mass, Rev. Fr. John Maisor exhorted all

to watch over one another in times of pains and suffering. This they must do by rallying around to do something good in order to alleviate peoples suffering.

The Children of the deceased went into praises for their unpretentious religiosity which they were admonished to uphold while Udoma's widow was advised to be strong more than ever before, as she now combines her role as father and mother to the family.

Catechist Paulinus Isonguyo Udoma, 61, was born on June 23, 1963, to his parents in Ikot Ankan village, Essien Udim Local Government Area. He started his primary education in 1972 and passed out with distinction in 1978. Udoma learnt and became a professional tailor and specialised in suit sewing together with other corporate wears. He later got married to Catechist (Mrs) Regina Udoma, and the union was

blessed with four children left to mourn him.

The occasion was blessed with heavy attendance of priests, catechists, Sisters, Evangelizers, many faithful across the Diocese, and, a clement weather.

Christians to bear their suffering patiently saying, pains, suffering, persecutions are proper part of life. He said he who bears them in patience to the end will wear the crown.

Referring to the Late Catechist as his ally and collaborator, Maisor agreed that the deceased did his work in great humility, patience so unflaggingly and well. He said the family should be consoled since Udoma died not only in active service but on duty.

He called on Christians



evangelizer came to him as a rude shock which he could hardly recover.

Describing the deceased as a humble man and teacher of faith, Ekutt said he was certain the fateful day did not take Udoma by surprise because he lived a full cycle, whether as a catechist, an evangelizer, or as a leader and head of his family. "He died on duty and God has called him out of this wicked world to peace", the Cleric assured.

He said in terms of education, the humble

first it refers to Christ second coming which is the narrow sense, while the wider sense refers to the fact that this day will certainly come to everybody.

The former Formator further explained that the day of the Lord has suffered procrastination, and this is so because God wants to give Christians enough time to do proper preparation.

"God wants us to make heaven and so he carries so that the elect can be in a



Pentecost Celebration: Fr. Udo Harps On The Church's Mission Mandate - Eleven Inducted As Altar Servers

By Anselm Akpan

The Parish Priest of Assumption Parish, Ikpe Annang, Rev Fr Stephen S. Udo has called on the faithful to key into the Church's Mission Mandate. The Clergymen stated this in his homily on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 2024.

Delving into a Catechesis on the Christian Feast of Pentecost, the preacher man maintained that the Jews had been celebrating the feast of Pentecost before the advent of Christ. Fr Udo taught that Pentecost was a day of joy for the harvest that God had given his people; and therefore it was known as Harvest Feast or Day of First-fruits. He noted that the Jews celebrated the feast of Pentecost fifty days after the celebration of the Passover, hence the name "Pentecost" which means fifty. Fr Udo taught that it was on the day of the celebration of this Jewish feast that the disciples of Jesus received the Holy Spirit which Christ had promised to send after his Ascension. He further

explained that the Ascension of Christ is celebrated 40 days after the resurrection, and the 10 days before Pentecost.

The homilist taught that Pentecost reveals truly the power of the Holy Spirit that came to rest on the disciples and at the same time gave them utterances in different languages. He noted that the event of Pentecost was the authentication of the commission of Christ to the Apostles and disciples "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you". Fr Udo said that Pentecost also marked the formal beginning of the mission of the Christian Church. he noted that by virtue of Baptism, all Christians are called to share in the missionary mandate of Christ.

The clergyman noted that the celebration of Pentecost by the Christian Church re-echoes that missionary mandate and reminds every Christian of

their responsibility for mission. He therefore said that by virtue of the sacrament of Baptism, every Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit and is sent on mission just as Christ sent his disciples on mission. He defined the mission of the Christian as that which is carried out by living the life of the Gospel values and cultivating the fruits of the Holy Spirit, noting that it is only by these that we can truly be Christians by word and by name. For him therefore, a Christian is not truly Christianized until he becomes a Christianizer, one is not truly evangelized unless he becomes an evangelizer.

The Homilist maintained that the mandate to evangelize

begins from the family. He called on parents and teachers to make the family a training school for mission. He admonished the family to maintain their faith so as to avoid the situation where children leave the Church in droves to other denominations, stating that this is to a large extent due to the inability of the parents to implant what he called "the Catholic character" in their family. Fr Udo also encouraged the parents to

train their daughters to resist marriages outside the Catholic Church noting that it is easy to marry into the Catholic Church.

As part of the day's celebration, ten young boys received induction as Knights of the Altar (Altar Servers) while Mr. Bartholomew I. Udo was reappointed as the Assistant Chief Sacristan to help in assisting in the Liturgical Celebration; while six young persons received First Holy

Communion. The Parish Priest admonished the altar servers to allow the effects of the sacraments they are to assist in celebrating have effects in their lives even as he admonished the parents to encourage them to be ever ready to serve at the altar. The priest called for decorum and discipline always in the Church and at the sanctuary even as he banned the use of slippers by Altar servers to Church.



Assumption Parish Celebrates Their Church Wardens

By Anselm Akpan

History was made in Assumption Parish Ikpe Annang as the Church Wardens received ovation appreciation from the Parishioners for the first time after a very long while. The occasion was the Church Warden Day Celebration which featured the launching for the installation of glass windows by the Association.

In his Homily, the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Stephen Udo reflecting on the scripture in John 3:16, admonished the faithful

that love is suffering, that it was because of love that God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to die on the Cross for the salvation of mankind. The Homilist further explicated that love as sacrifice can be seen in the life style of responsible parents, who would sacrifice themselves to put food on the table for their children even as they go hungry that the children may eat. Furthermore, inspiration was drawn on the qualities of love which could exist among Christians in the Society as noted in the Scripture 1chorinth 13:4-8.

In reflecting on the Gospel of the day, the homilist admonished the family of Christ's own people not to abandon the communal love that God established among us. In concluding, he prayed God to grant us the grace to have the love of God for ourselves and our neighbours.

At the second part of the celebration, the Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Stephen Udo thanked God for the grace and blessings bestowed on the Church wardens of the Parish and our Diocese. He further presented the

wardens to the faithful calling on total supports to them during the Launching.

The event featured among other thing, a noble parade by the Church Wardens and a well rendered welcome song

In his welcome address, the Chairman of the Association in the Parish, Wdn. Joseph Akpan, appreciated the presence of all for waiting behind to support the Church wardens. He thanked the Parish Priest for his untiring efforts to see to the welfare of the wardens even as he called

for cooperation and supports from all to help them contribute positively to the ongoing Church project of the Parish for the greater glory of God.

The chairman of the occasion, Hon. Cyril Peter Udo, who was represented by the Laity president, Knight Emmanuel Umoh(KSM), thanked the Church wardens of Ikpe Annang for their selfless contribution in keeping the Church clean and tidy and also help in bringing orderliness in the Parish during public worship. He further prayed God to bless and reward them.

Wadn Peter Dominic Akpan, the Chairman, Central Planning Committee, in his vote of thanks, thanked the Parish Priest, the Laity council, members of the Church warden and all faithful of the Parish for their kind donations and supports given to them especially for setting aside, a day for Church Warden's celebration after a long period of time. He promised the Association's support to the church in her ongoing projects.



Pentecost Sunday: 27 Young Men Declare For CMON In St. Dominic Parish

By Paul M. Akpan-Nnah

History was made in St. Dominic Parish, GRA on the Solemnity of Pentecost Sunday 2024 as 27 adult youths declare for CMON. The occasion held great significance for the Parish even as it boosted the strength of the Catholic Men Organization.

The young men, dressed in white garments were called out and presented before the congregation by the Parish Laity President, Mr. Donatus M. Akpan to the admiration of the congregation.

The joys of the Parish Priest, Very Rev. Fr. Moses P. Ibok and the entire parishioners knew no bounds as they witnessed this unprecedented transition of the young men to the Parish Catholic Men Organization of Nigeria (CMON). These "able youths" of the parish, mostly married ones,

transited freely and without any reservation to a more fitting arm of the laity, the C.M.O.N.

Receiving them, on the behalf of all the men in the parish, the CMON President, Engr. Augustine Nkondouk expressed profound gratitude to the newly "transfigured" members not only for their zeal and enthusiasm in taking up their fatherly roles in the church, but also for boosting the morale of the Parish CMON. He equally thanked the Parish Priest and the laity executive for their initiative, patience and proper guidance of the young people in reaching this historic cum pastoral height. All CMON members present were urged to step forward to accord the "27" a welcome handshake and embrace.

Among those who said farewell to the CYON were: Mr. Daniel Useh, the

immediate past Diocesan Youth President, now the Vice President of the Parish Laity Council. Mr. Paul Akpan-Nnah, the immediate past Parish CYON President, now secretary of the Parish Laity Council and Mr. Godwin Inyang, the immediate past Diocesan Secretary of CYON. Others are Mr. Patrick Okpokpo, Mr. Sylvester Udomah, Mr. Uduak Ebi, Mr. Nsikak Akwaibit as well as Mr. Richard Ebere and Pharm. Andrew Inyang-Etoh.

The Parish Priest, Fr. Ibok in his remarks, congratulated the brand new CMON members and formed a new society for them called "ALL SAINTS"; making a total of four (4) societies in the Parish CMON. He then blessed, inaugurated and sent them forth to preach the Good News.

Speaking on behalf of the members, the President of the ALL SAINTS society – Mr. Daniel Useh thanked God for safely guiding them through the CYON into the CMON in his time. He then pledged the society's commitment to collaborate with leadership of the Parish CMON for effective service delivery to

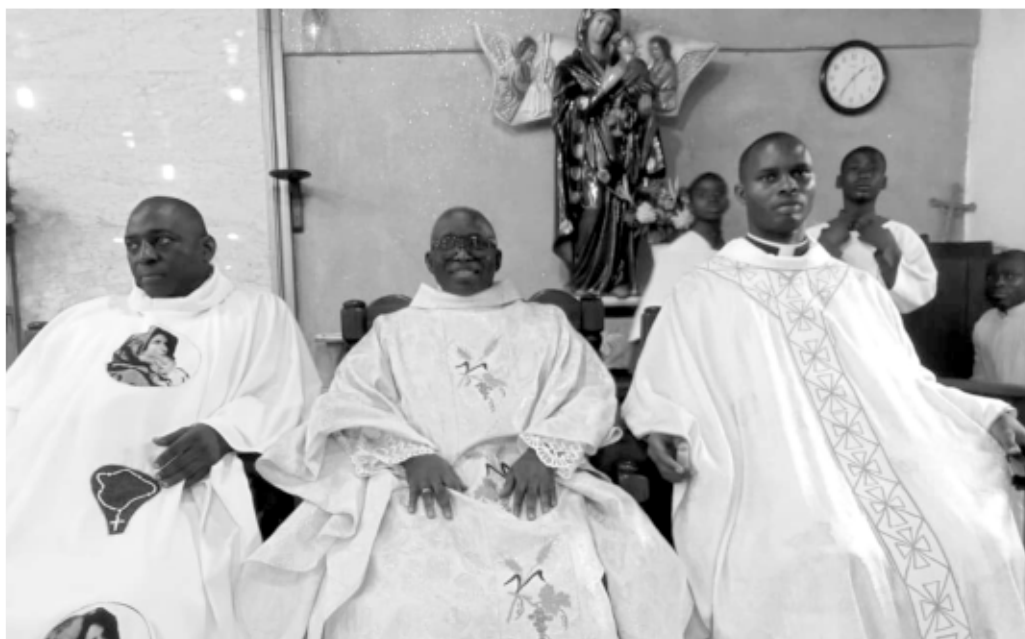
the greater glory of God.

In all, we could see the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday as a veritable tool for this historic transformation among the young people in our Parish. No doubt, the exit of these able youths from the Parish CYON has a negative impact on the Parish youth apostolate as they constituted more than

50% of the financial members. At the same time, it has created a positive effect on the Parish CMON which was at the verge of collapse due to more aged and sick members. It is our believe that this bold step by the Dominican youths would inspire other youths across the diocese to emulate same.



Fr. Moses Ibok Thanks God For Supremacy Over His Life



By Susana Clement

The Parish Priest of St. Dominic Parish G.R.A. Ikot Ekpe, Very Rev. Fr. Moses Ibok celebrated a thanksgiving Mass to God over His healing upon his life after two major surgeries. The celebration attracted Christians from all works of life within and outside the Diocese who came to thank God with and for their son for bringing him back to life and to receive God's blessing from the resurrected priest.

In his homily, Rev. Fr. Canice Ekpo thanked God for the gift of life of all the priest of Ikot Ekpe Diocese especially as he proves his supremacy over the life of Fr. Ibok who had two major surgeries within five days. The Homilist mentioned that, priesthood is not an achievement, but a gift from God to whom he

has chosen and not just a mere privilege and as such, it should not be used as status symbol.

He also reminded the celebrant of the core duties of a priest thus; blessing, breaking and sharing of bread to God's people, practicing charitable works and reconciling people to God among others.

Fr. Ekpo maintained that, all Christians are Disciples of Christ and as such are the light of the world. According to the homilist, there is a mandate to use the light Christian have in them to light up the dark world and to diminished the darkness of today's world. He also admonished all faithful to have a Christ like heart, "a heart to forgives and care for the church, humanity and the entire society at large". He further stressed on the need to build a just society through

our words and actions pointing out that, where there is blackmailing, backbiting, condemnation, segregation and the likes, the togetherness that Christ prayed for cannot be realized.

The Diocesan Bishop of Ikot Ekpe Diocese Most Rev. Camillus Umoh, who was represented by his Vicar General, Very Rev. Fr. Anselm Etokakpan, thanked God for sustaining the life of the celebrant. He in a special way thanked Rev. Frs. Gerald Akata and Canice Ekpo who were tireless in visiting Fr. Ibok during the period of his Hospitalization. The Bishop extended his appreciation to all priests and religious present as well as all the lay faithful most especially the worshipping community of St. Dominic Parish all those who came far and near to

celebrate with the Fr. Ibok.

The vicar used the occasion to charge the students at higher institutions of learning and those on entrepreneurial work to be serious, diligent and strive for expertise in their work just as the doctors who were in charge of Fr. Moses at the hospital.

In his response, the chief celebrant, Fr. Moses Ibok, expressed profound gratitude to God almighty that brought him back to life. He also thanked the Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Camillus R Umoh, for his love and care towards him. In the same vein, he

thanked the Vicar General, Very Rev. Fr. Anselm Etokakpan, and Fr. John Ebebe, for coming to visit him in the hospital. He thanked in a special way, his two best friends, Very Rev. Frs. Gerald Akata, and Canice Ekpo for being there for him. He used the occasion to explain what friendship means, saying Fr. Akata and Fr. Canice showed him what friendship means.

Fr. Ibok extended his appreciation to the Doctors that worked on him in the hospital, Dr. Clement Essien and Dr. Marshal

Ekpo. He thanked the devotees of the precious blood of Jesus, the Evangelizers, the Gamis choral group and the entire faithful of St. Dominic parish and the host of all others for their constant prayers.

The celebrant who suffered from partial intestinal blockage undergo two major surgeries in five days at a specialist hospital Abak. He revealed that God brought him back to life to be a living testimony to his active presence in the midst of people in the Holy Eucharist.

Immaculate Mothers Celebrate 2024 Mothers' Day

... Cleric Exhorts Faithful To Love One Another

By Victor Enwenwen

A Call has gone out to Christian Mothers the world over to always love one another for the love of motherhood.

Very Rev. Fr. Anthony Mbat made the call recently at Immaculate Conception Parish, Ikot Ekpe during the 2024 grand finale of Mothers' Day celebration. Fr. Mbat who is the Parish Priest, in his homily admonished faithful to cultivate true love. According to him, if we find true love, our hearts will be at rest, but if we find fake love, we are

finished.

"If you find true love today, your hearts will be at rest. If you find fake love, you are finished. Learn to love and let the love be real. God loves us and what we are doing is to respond to the love of God."

The clergyman further stated that when the love of a mother is death in the family then the family



is broken. He described the mothers as the holders of the family.

In his words, "When the love of a mother is death in the family, the family is broken. The mothers are the

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THE TRANSITION FROM THE CYON TO THE CMON: A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT?

The Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria has come a long way since its foundation in the early 80s. It is on record that Ikot Ekpene Diocese is one of the first Dioceses in Nigeria, if not the first, to create the CYON as an organization to build Christian commitment in young people. Prior to 1985 when the CYON was formally inaugurated by the CBCN during the celebration of the International Youth Year, Ikot Ekpene Diocese had already a vibrant youth organization (CYO).

At that time, the proposed age bracket for membership in the Organization was 15-40 years. However, it was also the case that people even above 40 could still be found in the Organization. The agitation for the Organization to be left for those who are constitutionally regarded as youths is as old as the Organization itself. Many have found this agitation as an unnecessary demands while still many have welcome it as a laudable demand so that the so-called able youths can contribute meaningfully as men in the development of the Church. It was in order to assuage this situation that the first Bishop of the Diocese, His Eminence Dominic Card Ekandem gave a novel definition of the youth as "anyone who is young at heart".

But who is a youth? The United Nations defines youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. This definition was endorsed by the General Assembly during the preparations for the International Youth Year in 1985. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as persons up to the age of 18. However, the age range that defines youth often varies from country to country, depending on various socio-cultural, institutional, economic and political factors.

In Nigeria, the definitive age bracket regarded as youths is typically 15-30. This definition is based on the National Youth Policy of Nigeria 2009, which was later revised in 2019. This is the target population for various youth-related programs, policies and initiatives in Nigeria including education, employment healthcare and political participation. This is the generally accepted standard definition of the age range for youths in Nigeria.

Within the Catholic Church in Nigeria, the CYON has its Constitution which is approved by the CBCN. Within this Constitution the acceptable age bracket for membership in the Youths Organization is 15-35, five years above that of the NYP and sixteen years above the UN. This is the constitution that guides the activities of the CYON within the Nigerian Church. Members of the CYON all over the nation are very much aware of this constitution.

However, it is observed that in some Parishes within Ikot Ekpene Diocese, some grown up adults, especially the men have opted to remain almost perpetually in the CYON refusing to transmit to the CMON at appropriate time. This has had adverse effect on the CMON which is most bereft of active and agile young men that can help in moving the organization forward. It became a general concern, not only in Ikot Ekpene Diocese, but in other Dioceses as well. It was precisely in order to check this trend that the CBCN defined the age bracket for the Organization as enshrined in their Constitution.

Back home in the Diocese, the concern could not escape the deliberations of the Second Diocesan Synod. Upon conscientious deliberations on the issue with questions, workshops and interventions, the Synod participants unanimously agreed that the stipulated age bracket by the National Constitution of the CYON be followed in the Diocese and that those who are above the age of 35, and those who are married should vacate the CYON and opt for the CMON and the CWON. As it is, this decision has been gazetted in the Acta for the Second Synod Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, 2023 thus: The Diocesan CYON, which is an instrument of instruction for youths and young adults, should only welcome youths up to 35 years of age. Beyond 35 years, the adult youth should

embrace the CMON or the CWON. At weddings, the couple should be received into the CMON and the CWON respectively. With the publication of the Acta, it is expected that Stations, Parishes and the Diocese should begin the implementations of the Propositions of that Synod, including the proposition of membership of the CYON. It is worthy of commendation that some Parishes have adopted this recommendation of the Acta.

It is also to be noted that the movement of the class of youths concerned to either CMON or CWON may have adverse effect on the financial contributive power of the CYON because most of the financial members of the Organization were likely from this group. However, it is to be noted that the essence of the establishment of the CYON from the Station level to the National level was not particularly for financial contributions. As a matter of fact, financial contribution was never a consideration in forming the youths organization. The organization was for the education of young Catholics and their interaction with the Church in the language they could understand.

On the other hand, it has been opined that those who refuse to leave the organization on expiry of their membership do so to avert levies and contributions. This finds credence in the fact that in most parishes in Ikot Ekpene Diocese, youths are hardly levied and when levied, their contribution falls at the very bottom of the table. Be that as it may, it is important that these young men transit to the CMON and assist in contributing to the growth and development of the Church and their families.

In this edition of the PAX Newspaper, three articles stand out in relation into the CYON and the CMON. In one, 27 former members of the CYON were received amidst great joy to the CMON in St. Dominic Parish, GRA, Ikot Ekpene; in another, Fr Gerald Akata took time to emphasize the responsibility of the father in inculcating traditional and religious values to the children. His article is at the backdrop of the homily of the Bishop during the Eucharistic Celebration at the Convention of the CMON, Calabar Province which was hosted in the Diocese. The detail of that hosting is the front cover story of this Paper.

The Paper mentions these to encourage the youths who are qualified to transit to the CMON and the CWON. It can only be imagined what the young men and women stand to gain in registering in these organizations to learn their roles as mothers and fathers in the family.

How does this group of youths feel if they and their children sit together in a CYON meeting? Supposing their presence intimidate their children from making any meaningful contribution at the CYON meeting or from interacting freely with other youths because "daddy or mommy is staring at..."

One thing is certain, if these youths transit to the senior organizations, they would learn a lot for the management of their families and for the contribution for the development of the family, the Church and society at large. This is a clarion call for those concerned to respond to the invitation to join hands as men and women to contribute to the development of their families, the Church and the larger society. The CMON and CWON are organizations with unique apostolate of the laity to season the society where they find themselves be it in business or politics with the leaven of the Gospel. Can the senior youths respond to the call?

St. Charles Lwanga And Companions, Martyrs Of Uganda



St. Charles and many other martyrs for the faith died between November 15, 1885 – January 27, 1887 in Namugongo, Uganda. St. Charles and his companions were beatified in 1920 and canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1964.

In 1879 Catholicism began spreading in Uganda when the White Fathers, a congregation of priests founded by Cardinal Lavigerie were peacefully received by King Mutesa of Uganda.

The priests soon began preparing catechumens for baptism and before long a number of the young pages in the king's court had become Catholics.

However, on the death of Mutesa, his son Mwanga, a corrupt man who ritually engaged in pedophilic practices with the younger pages, took the throne.

When King Mwanga had a visiting Anglican Bishop murdered, his chief page, Joseph Mukasa, a Catholic who went to great length to protect the younger boys from the king's lust, denounced the king's actions and was beheaded on November 15, 1885.

The 25 year old Charles Lwanga, a man wholly dedicated to the Christian instruction of the younger boys, became the chief page, and just as forcibly protected them from the king's advances.

On the night of the martyrdom of Joseph Mukasa, realizing that their own lives were in danger, Lwanga and some of the other pages went to the White Fathers to receive baptism. Another 100 catechumens were baptized in the week following Joseph Mukasa's death.

The following May, King Mwanga learned that one of the boys was learning catechism. He

was furious and ordered all the pages to be questioned to separate the Christians from the others. The Christians, 15 in all, between the ages of 13 and 25, stepped forward. The King asked them if they were willing to keep their faith. They answered in unison, "Until death!"

They were bound together and taken on a two day walk to Namugongo where they were to be burned at the stake. On the way, Matthias Kalemba, one of the eldest boys, exclaimed, "God will rescue me. But you will not see how he does it, because he will take my soul and leave you only my body." They executioners cut him to pieces and left him to die alone on the road, which took at least three days.

When they reached the site where they were to be burned, they were kept tied together for seven days while the executioners prepared the wood for the fire.

On June 3, 1886, the Feast of the Ascension, Charles Lwanga was separated from the others and burned at the stake. The executioners slowly burnt his feet until only the charred remained. Still alive, they promised him that they would let him go if he renounced his faith. He refused saying, "You are burning me, but it is as if you are pouring water over my body." He then continued to pray silently as they set him on fire. Just before the flames reached his heart, he looked up and said in a loud voice, "Katonda! – My God!," and died.

His companions were all burned together the same day all the while praying and singing hymns until they died.

There were 24 protomartyrs in all. The last of the protomartyrs, a young man named John Mary, was beheaded by King Mwanga on January 27, 1887.

The persecutions spread during the reign of Mwanga, with 100 Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, being tortured and killed.

St. Charles Lwanga is the Patron Saint of African Catholic Youth Action.

Feats Of The Month

Solemnity Of The Most Holy Body And Blood Of Christ

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

"FOR MY FLESH IS TRUE FOOD,
AND MY BLOOD IS TRUE DRINK."



The Bishop consulted with Pope Urban IV, formerly Archdeacon Jacques Pantaleon, to whom St. Juliana had confided her vision. The miracle was affirmed, and the Host and corporals remain in Orvieto for veneration to this day.

In 1264 Pope Urban IV issued a papal bull establishing the feast of Corpus Christi for the universal Church. He commissioned St. Thomas Aquinas to compose the Office of the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours for the new feast.

This feast calls us to focus on two manifestations of the Body of Christ, the Holy Eucharist and the Church. The primary purpose of this feast is to focus our attention on the Eucharist. The opening prayer at Mass calls our attention to Jesus' suffering and death and our worship of Him, especially in the Eucharist.

At every Mass our attention is called to the Eucharist and the Real Presence of Christ in it. The secondary focus of this feast is upon the Body of Christ as it is present in the Church. The Church is called the Body of Christ

because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with his disciples. He expresses this in the gospels by using the metaphor of a body in which He is the head. This image helps keep in focus both the unity and the diversity of the Church.

The Feast of Corpus Christi is commonly used as an opportunity for public Eucharistic processions, which serves as a sign of common faith and adoration. Our worship of Jesus in His Body and Blood calls us to offer to God our Father a pledge of undivided love and an offering of ourselves to the service of others.

The full name of this feast is *Corpus et Sanguis Christi* or The Body and Blood of Christ. "The feast of the Blessed Sacrament was established in 1246 by Bishop Robert de Thorte of Liege at the suggestion of St. Juliana of Mont Carvillon. It was extended to the universal Church by Pope Urban in 1264. While the feast itself is well recognized, relatively little is known about its origins and history, including its connections to a thirteenth century mystic.

St. Julianna of Cornillon lived in 13th Century Belgium. From an early age, she had a deep devotion to the Eucharist. While living in the town of Liege Belgium, St. Juliana had a vision of the full moon darkened in one spot.

She heard a heavenly voice state that the moon was the Church and the dark spot showed that there was a missing feast, that of a feast to honor Corpus Christi (The Blessed Sacrament). She reported the vision to the Arch deacon of Liege, Jacques Pantaleon. In 1246 the Bishop of Liege establish the feast of the Blessed Sacrament and it was first celebrated June 5, 1249. The celebration remained local to this diocese. In 1263 near the town of Orvieto, Italy, a priest doubted the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. When next he celebrated Mass, at the moment of consecration, as the host was elevated, it began to bleed. Many witnessed this. The priest wrapped the bleeding Host in corporals and brought the Host and corporals to the Bishop at Orvieto.

Catechism Lesson For The Month Of June, 2024

The Possibility Of Losing The Christian Identity As Salt And Light

In our Catechesis in May, we discussed on the mission of the Christian as Salt and light of the world. We taught that by being salt and light, the Christian is sent on mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ by living the life of witness. As Christians, we are called to be a positive influence in the world. We should strive to bring joy, hope, and goodness to others. To carry out his mission, the Christian is called to live a life of integrity, kindness, and compassion. It is only by such virtuous living that the Christian can carry out this command and remain faithful to Christ.

In this Edition, we shall discuss the possibility of the Christian to lose his identity as salt and light. We begin with asking the question: Is it possible for the Christian to lose his identity as salt and light? The answer is an unequivocal 'yes'. If so what are the possibilities? What can make the Christian to lose his precious identity? What are the implications of losing such identity? These are the questions we hope to address in our catechetical lessons for the month.

When Jesus Christ gave his disciples and by extension all Christians the identity as salt and light of the world, he also pointed at the remote possibility of salt losing its taste and lighting a lamp and putting it under s bushel. "But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matt 5:13b). This is a warning to Christians about losing their identity as missionaries and their mission effectiveness. Salt was a valuable commodity in Jesus' time, used for preservation, flavor, and purification. When salt loses its saltiness, it becomes useless and is discarded.

On its own, salt cannot lose its taste. For salt to lose its saltiness, it would have to become something other than salt, which it is not naturally going to do. However, it may be possible for some natural salt to lose its saltiness, not because the salt becomes unsalty, but because the salt itself becomes too diluted with other substances to be of any use. However, abuses of the substance would automatically lead to its being useless even if it still tastes like salt.

Light shouldn't be hidden; salt shouldn't be diluted. Because hiding the light and diluting the salt means avoiding the life of salvation, walking away from God's love rather than toward it. But in Matthew, Jesus highlights a concern that goes beyond our individual salvation: he's concerned with what light and salt do in the world. We know what light does: it illuminates; it reveals; it may even give warmth. What does salt do? Well, it provides flavor, for a start. It makes things taste better.

Salt is useful and good not primarily on its own, but on or with other things. And so whatever we are on our own as Christians, part of our calling in this world is not just to be on our own, but to bring a kind of flavor enhancement and even preservation to the society we find ourselves.

For a Christian, "losing saltiness" could mean inability to preserve and influence the society we find ourselves. This means to lose sight of Jesus Christ, the source of our salt and light. The Church also teaches that to

lose one's saltiness is to lose the gift of salvation.

A. Living as Salt and Light:

Most of our discussions about being salt and light have highlighted how the Christian should live as salt and light of the world. The Church in different documents has taught that Christians should be missionaries and witnesses. It is through witnessing that we can truly be Salt of the earth and light of the world.

1. Here are some of the ways we can live as salt and light according to the teaching of the Church; Witness to Christ through your words and actions (Evangelii Gaudium, 120).
2. Share your faith with others, especially those who do not know Christ (Redemptoris Missio, 42).
3. Live a life of charity and service to others (Deus Caritas Est, 18).
4. Be a light in the darkness, standing up for truth and justice (Veritatis Splendor, 4).
5. Bring hope and joy to those around you, especially the poor and marginalized (Evangelii Gaudium, 64).
6. Use your talents and gifts to serve others and build up the Church (Lumen Gentium, 33).
7. Be a leaven in the world, transforming society and culture through your faith (Gaudium et Spes, 43).
8. Practice forgiveness and mercy, showing others the love of Christ (Dives in Misericordia, 14).
9. Be a beacon of light in the midst of darkness, standing up against sin and evil (Veritatis Splendor, 4). We can become a beacon of light, illuminating the darkness and guiding others towards the love and truth of Christ.
10. Live a life of prayer and worship, nourishing your faith and drawing others to Christ (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 10). By living a life of prayer and participating actively in liturgical celebrations, Catholics can deepen their faith, grow in holiness, and become more fully the salt and light that Christ calls them to be.

B. The Consequences of losing the salt and light identity

The Catholic Church teaches that to lose one's identity as salt and light is to lose sight of Jesus Christ, the source of our salt and light. This can happen when we allow our relationship with Christ to become diluted by other priorities or when we fail to live out our faith in our daily lives. The Church also teaches that to maintain our identity as salt and light, we must strive for personal holiness and work to help others achieve holiness as well.

The main way that we can lose our saltiness, or hide our light, is to lose sight of the source of our salt and light, which is Jesus Christ. The salt and light that he speaks of is not a generic goodwill to the world, but a goodwill that makes sense only in relation to him.

The greatest danger to our identity as salt (our Christian witness and influence) is not necessarily a complete loss of our faith, but rather a gradual dilution of our faith by allowing worldly influences and priorities to mix in and weaken our distinctiveness as followers of Christ. Just as

salt can become diluted by other flavors, making it lose its potency and effectiveness, so too can our Christian identity become watered down by:

- a) Compromising our values and beliefs
- b) Allowing worldly priorities to take precedence over our faith
- c) Failing to live out our faith in our daily lives
- d) Allowing sin and complacency to creep in.

When this happens, our witness and influence as Christians become less effective, and we risk losing our distinctive flavor and aroma as salt. We become indistinguishable from the world around us, and our ability to preserve and transform the world is diminished.

This is a warning to remain vigilant and mindful of the influences we allow into our lives, ensuring that our faith remains strong, pure, and uncompromising, and that our saltiness remains potent and effective in a world that desperately needs the flavor and light of Christ.

C. How To Maintain The Christian Identity Of Salt And Light

The Church teaches that Christians have a duty to be "salt and light" in the world. The Church also teaches that to do this, Christians must be holy and be willing to share their faith with others.

Here are some Catholic perspectives on how to maintain the Christian identity of salt and light:

1. Prayer and Worship: Regularly participate in Mass, prayer, and devotions to deepen your relationship with God.
2. Scripture Study: Read and reflect on the Bible to understand God's word and apply it to your life.
3. Sacraments: Frequent reception of the Eucharist and Reconciliation to nourish your spiritual life.
4. Community: Engage with your parish and Catholic community to support and encourage one another
5. Service: Serve others through acts of charity, volunteering, and works of mercy.
6. Evangelization: Share your faith with others, especially those who do not know Christ.
7. Moral Living: Embrace Catholic teachings and strive for holiness in your daily life.
8. Spiritual Direction: Seek guidance from priests, spiritual directors, or mentors to discern God's will.
9. Catholic Formation: Engage in ongoing faith formation through classes, workshops, and retreats.
10. Witness: Boldly witness to your faith in your daily life, even in the face of challenges or persecution.
11. Humility: Recognize your own limitations and sinfulness, and humbly seek God's grace and mercy.
12. Gratitude: Cultivate a sense of thankfulness for your faith and the blessings in your life.

By embracing these practices, we can maintain our identity as salt and light, living as a positive influence in the world and drawing others to Christ.

Vatican News

Pope: Liturgy Is A Personal And Communal Encounter With God

By Deborah Castellano Lubov

Pope Francis receives liturgists from Spain and encourages them in their sanctifying work to bring God's closeness to all through the sacred Liturgy.

The sacred liturgy is a personal and communal encounter with God, Pope Francis marveled as he received professors and students of the Athenaeum University of Saint Pacian of Barcelona in the Vatican on Friday.

In his remarks, the Holy

Father underscored the incredible value of the liturgy, and recalled his having declared this year ahead of the 2025 Jubilee of Hope as a Year of Prayer. "It is important," the Pope stressed, "that in your studies, you reflect on the need to seek this union with the Lord, and on the means that He, through the Church, has given us to achieve it."

An encounter which belongs to all

"The liturgy also reminds us," he underscored, "that

this encounter around God belongs to all."

The Pope went on to underline the importance of the connection between God and man in liturgy.

"Man is for the liturgy because he is for God; but a liturgy, without this union of man with God," he warned, "is an aberration." He gave an example: "an aberration, would be a liturgy enslaved to rubricism, which is not conducive to union with God."

In this context, the Holy

Father called on those before him to always epitomize fraternal love and humility, and to embrace the Cross.

Being shaped by God

Moreover, the Pope stressed the need "to allow ourselves to be shaped by God and touching the open wound of the Lord in the members of his Mystical Body," before asking them "to work to make our daily liturgy



alive, so that it may express, question, and nurture this relationship. "In this way," the Holy

Father concluded, "our communities will be tabernacles of God among men."

Calabar Provincial C.M.O.N. Annual Convention Held In Ikot Ekpene Recently



Memories From 2024 Pentecost Sunday At Assumption Parish, Ikpe Annang



2024 Ikot Ekpene Diocesan C.W.O.N. Thansgiving



Pictures From CYON Outreach At Ikpe Annang



Catholic Values For Catholic Families

By Fr. Gerald Anietie Ignatius Akata

Last Saturday 1 June 2024 – Memorial of Saint Justin Martyr, after sitting down on my seat at St. Anne Cathedral Ifuho thirteen steps away from the Podium, I wanted to listen to the homily of His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Camillus R. Umoh. Because I listened, I understood what was preached in the Church. I was shocked to discover after listening to His Lordship's homily that I was not drawn before now, to think more deeply on the fact that traditional values and Catholic values become long-lasting in families when they are transmitted by parents in families. At least I listened to my parents in various ways as a kid, especially by going to catechism classes, which they loved. Still, something was awakened in my heart last Saturday, so I decided to have an encounter with the five Presidents of the Catholic Men Organization of Nigeria (CMON) from the five dioceses in the Calabar Ecclesiastical Province on Catholic values for Catholic families. The encounter captured my interest immediately because the five men agreed that Catholic values become long-lasting in Catholic families when parents make themselves present and available to "transmit" the Catholic values in Catholic families.

What excited me the most about the Catholic values encounter for Catholic families was that the theme of this year's Fathers' Day Celebration was **"Enhancing Spirituality and Christian Virtues in Catholic Fathers."** Mr. Anthony J. Eboh was there as the CMON President from Uyo Diocese. He came with other fathers from Uyo Diocese. Mr. Friday B. Abam was there as the CMON President from Ogoja Diocese. He came with other fathers from Ogoja Diocese. Sir Kingdom O. Chujor was there as the CMON President from Port Harcourt Diocese. He came with other fathers from Port Harcourt Diocese. Hon Justin Asuquo was there as the CMON President from Calabar Archdiocese. He came with other fathers from Calabar Archdiocese. Then, Obong Godwin Etokakpan, Esq., was there as the host President from Ikot Ekpene Diocese. He also came with other fathers from Ikot Ekpene Diocese.

My experience as a Roman Catholic Priest for thirty years proved to me how important Catholic values have been in Catholic families. In Calabar Ecclesiastical Province parents (fathers and mothers) are revered in Catholic families. They are held in high esteem. Parents all lived with their kids in their families, and kids would seek out their parents to listen to their life stories, folktales, folksongs, ballads, and legends. For example, my father who was a retired Primary School Headmaster was the one who taught me as a kid the song about Aristotle (*Who do you know! I know Aristotle, he was a great teacher, who taught Alexander!*). My father was also the one who told me one of the stories – *seven yams and seven days in a week* – that I used as an adult during my first Apostolic Work as a Senior Seminarian in 1985 at St. Theresa's Parish, Nko. He had to have been a father, teacher and transmitter of traditional and Catholic values. Not thinking more deeply before now that traditional values and Catholic values became long-lasting in families when they were transmitted by parents in families really shocked me.

The first fact that I learned in my encounter for Catholic families having long-lasting Catholic values was the importance of praying everyday as families. This was from the CMON President of Uyo Diocese. In his own words, "Praying everyday as a family and reading the Bible in the cause of the prayers," were Catholic values. The second fact was the importance of retention of the values we learned from parents in families. This was from the CMON President of Ogoja Diocese. In Abam's own words, "Retention and transmission of values," were important. Sir Kingdom O. Chujor, the CMON President from Port Harcourt Diocese was delighted to be part of the encounter. The third fact that came from him, was on the importance of teaching Catholic Catechism in families. In his own words, "Catholic families should teach every member of the family the Catholic Catechism." Hon Justin Asuquo - the CMON President from Calabar Archdiocese shared with us the fourth lesson when he talked on the importance of devotions in families. According to him, "Family morning

and evening devotion to be inculcated into the children," were important Catholic values. The fifth fact that I learned in my encounter for Catholic families having long-lasting Catholic values came from Obong Godwin Etokakpan - the CMON President of Ikot Ekpene Diocese. Etokakpan stated, "Let your yes be yes. Let your no be no. These should be demonstrated by your actions." I had good news for these five CMON Presidents of the Calabar Ecclesiastical Province. The good news was that when they came into office in their various dioceses, to serve as CMON Presidents, they also came as fathers with both Catholic values and traditional values. Those fathers might not be obligated to transmit traditional values, but they are obligated to transmit Catholic values for Catholic families.

Catholic values can end up not being transmitted when the transmitters (parents) of these values in themselves do not know and do not remind themselves of what those Catholic values are. Catholic values are "gifts of the Spirit. Based on the Book of Wisdom, Clement of Alexandria speaks of four, namely, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance." St. Ambrose was the first to give these four the name "cardinal." Then, in medieval Christian thought, these four were called the "cardinal virtues." Starting with Plato and Aristotle, prudence (wisdom), courage (endurance), temperance (self-control) and justice were regarded as the classic virtues. These four are also known as "four fundamental moral virtues," and

Catholic families several values, ranging from instrumental to terminal values, religious to traditional values, core to global values, to enable these families identify or clarify the values they hold regardless of rewards that come with those values. Every family's value differed depending on which background each family got its values transmitted. Catholic Christian religion taught Catholic values to Catholic families in various ways. The celebration of daily Masses was one of the ways of teaching and transmitting Catholic values. Without any doubt, the celebration of daily Masses turned out to be one of the good means of transmitting Catholic values to Catholic families. We might not have known this as kids and altar servers. As kids, we constantly struggled to keep our eyes open during morning and evening prayers in our families with our parents. However, this was the case during those times we rang altar bells during the consecration. The joys in our hearts were without description.

In addition to knowing and reminding himself or herself of what Catholic values are, a Catholic parent (father or mother) needs to make himself or herself present and available in his or her family to transmit these Catholic values in his or her family. In my thirty years as a priest, I have experienced that most parents (fathers and mothers) cherished punctuality, honesty, dedication, hard work, integrity, forgiveness, friendliness, courage, humility, patience, love, respect, and generosity. These became the values these parents desired to transmit in their families to their children and loved ones. At various places, and over the years each parent had attended workshops, conferences, symposia, seminars, retreats that would reflect themes such as prayer, Bible reading, retention, catechism, devotion, and trustworthiness – that is, letting one's yes be yes and one's no be no. Because values and "The moral virtues are acquired by human effort," and because Aristotle suggested "that virtues can be developed through practice (as by an apprentice), as well as exhortation and education," our lessons from our Scriptures are apt and fitting. Our Scriptures implore us to put into practice the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that we preach, and rightly says "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). Because I had not been drawn before now until last Saturday, to think more deeply on how traditional values and Catholic values became long-lasting in families when they were transmitted by parents, I created an encounter with the five Presidents of the Catholic Men Organization of Nigeria (CMON) from the five dioceses in the Calabar Ecclesiastical Province.

At the end of my encounter with each of the five Presidents on Catholic values for Catholic families, I had to evaluate their recommendations. Was I impressed after the encounter? I felt the recommendations of these five fathers pointed to the necessity of Catholic values for Catholic families in our own times. If my father was still alive, I would have shared with him the stories he had told me when I was a kid and young adult. When I listened to Most Rev. Dr. Camillus Umoh's homily on the Memorial of Saint Justin Martyr, last Saturday I discovered that I was not drawn before now, to think more deeply on the fact that traditional values and Catholic values became long-lasting in families when they were transmitted by parents, in families. After His Lordship's homily and my encounter with the five Presidents of the Catholic Men Organization of Nigeria (CMON) from the five dioceses in the Calabar Ecclesiastical Province, I could now think more deeply on the Catholic values. I could think of what those Catholic values are. Finally, I could think of what Catholic values do for Catholic families. In conclusion, I am so proud of what I have confirmed namely, that not only traditional values but that Catholic values became long-lasting in families when they were transmitted by parents first and foremost, in families. Catholic families are beneficiaries of Catholic values. In the next generations, Catholic families can continue to be beneficiaries of Catholic values. These can be possible because parents who are transmitters of these Catholic values, are present and available in Catholic families. Through stories, traditions, liturgy, spirituality they become present as transmitters of Catholic values for Catholic families.



are "cardinal" "since on them, like hinges, the whole moral life hangs, and all other virtues may be regrouped around them." The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "all the others (virtues) are grouped around them." These four human or moral virtues are rooted in the virtues that are known as "Supernatural virtues" or "Theological virtues." The supernatural or theological virtues are "faith, hope and charity" (1 Cor 13). "From the perspective of medieval Christian thought, faith, hope, and love are human acts based on "virtues" or capabilities inspired or infused by God and oriented toward God, transforming a person and all of his or her actions. According to the New Testament and especially Paul, faith, hope, and love do not have to be based on the cardinal virtues; they are fruits produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), indeed the greatest gifts (graces) of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:31)." Gregory the Great called faith, hope, and love "virtues."

Once a Catholic transmitter (father or mother) of Catholic values knows and reminds himself or herself of what Catholic values are, he or she needs to practice the Catholic family's obligation. Because acquisition of Catholic values comes by human effort, which is the perfection that comes from practice, no father or mother has to be an expert in the teachings on virtues or their theology to get started in the transmission of those Catholic values. A Catholic family which practices Catholic values shows those values in its good deeds when the family can practice them freely, wherever and whenever a need arises. What makes Catholic values to be present in Catholic families is not necessarily the size of good deeds, but the number of times family members practice good deeds freely, no matter how little. Several companies, organizations, institutions, schools, groups, traditions, cultures, careers, beliefs and professions taught

Alleged Supernatural Phenomena

-Vatican Publishes New Norms

-Church's Authority Will No Longer Define The Supernatural Nature Of Phenomena

-Dicastery For Doctrine Of Faith Must Approve Local Bishop's Decision

By Vatican News

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has released a document detailing new norms regarding cases of reported supernatural phenomena. Henceforth, as a rule, neither the local bishop nor the Holy See will declare that these phenomena are of supernatural origin, but will only authorise and promote devotion and pilgrimages.

A new document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith published recently has updated the norms for discerning alleged supernatural phenomena. The norms came into force on Sunday, May 19, the feast of Pentecost. The document is preceded by a detailed presentation by Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery, followed by an introduction and six possible conclusions. The procedure allows for faster decisions while respecting popular devotion. As a rule, the Church's authority will no longer be engaged to officially define the supernatural nature of a phenomenon, a process that can require large amounts of time to thoroughly study an event.

Another new norm involves the explicit involvement of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, which must approve the local bishop's final decision and which has the authority to intervene *motu proprio* at any time. Many cases in recent decades have involved the former Holy Office, even when individual bishops have expressed themselves. However, the interventions have usually remained behind the scenes and were never made public. The Dicastery's new explicit involvement also relates to the difficulty in circumscribing phenomena, which in some cases reach national and even global dimensions, "meaning that a decision made in one Diocese has consequences also elsewhere."

Reasons For The New Norms

The document originates from the long experience of the last century, which saw cases where the local bishop (or bishops of a region) rapidly declared a phenomenon's supernatural nature, only for the Holy Office to express a different decision later. Other cases involved a bishop saying one thing and his successor deciding the opposite (regarding the same phenomenon). Each event also required lengthy discernment periods to evaluate all elements, in order to reach a decision on the supernatural nature or non-supernatural nature of the phenomena. These time periods sometimes contrasted with the urgency to give pastoral responses for the good of the faithful. The Dicastery began revising the norms in 2019, leading to the current text approved by Pope Francis on May 4.

Spiritual fruits and risks

In his presentation, Cardinal Fernández explains that, "many times, these events have led to a great richness of spiritual fruits, growth in faith, devotion, fraternity, and service. In some cases, they have given rise to

shrines throughout the world that are at the heart of many people's popular piety today." However, there is also the possibility that "in some events of alleged supernatural origin," serious issues that harm the faithful may arise. These include, cases where from the alleged phenomena, "profit, power, fame, social recognition, or other personal interest" (II, Art. 15, 4^o) are derived, even to the point of "exerting control over people or carrying out abuses (II, Art. 16)." There may be "doctrinal errors, an oversimplification of the Gospel message, or the spread of a sectarian mentality." There is the possibility of believers "being misled by an event that is attributed to a divine initiative but is merely the product of someone's imagination, desire for novelty, tendency to fabricate falsehoods (mythomania), or inclination toward lying."

General guidelines

According to the new norms, the Church will exercise her duties of discernment, based on the following: "(a) whether signs of a divine action can be ascertained in phenomena that are alleged to be of supernatural origin; (b) whether there is anything that conflicts with faith and morals in the writings or messages of those involved in the alleged phenomena in question; (c) whether it is permissible to appreciate their spiritual fruits, whether they need to be purified from problematic elements, or whether the faithful should be warned about potential risks; (d) whether it is advisable for the competent ecclesiastical authority to realise their pastoral value" (I, 10). However, "it is not foreseen in these Norms that ecclesiastical authority would give a positive recognition of the divine origin of alleged supernatural phenomena" (I, 11). Therefore, as a rule, "neither the Diocesan Bishop, nor the Episcopal Conferences, nor the Dicastery will declare that these phenomena are of supernatural origin, even if a *Nihil obstat* is granted. It remains true, however, that the Holy Father can authorise a special procedure in this regard" (I, 23).

Possible conclusions regarding an alleged phenomenon

The discernment of an alleged supernatural phenomenon may reach the following six conclusions.

– *Nihil Obstat*: Without expressing any certainty about the supernatural authenticity of the phenomenon itself, many signs of the action of the Holy Spirit are acknowledged. The bishop is encouraged to appreciate the pastoral value and promote the dissemination of the phenomenon, including pilgrimages;

– *Prae oculis habetur*: Although important positive signs are recognised, some aspects of confusion or potential risks are also perceived that require the diocesan bishop to engage in a careful discernment and dialogue with the recipients of a given spiritual experience. If there were writings or messages, doctrinal clarification might be necessary;

– *Curatur*: Various or significant critical elements are noted, but the phenomenon is already spread widely, and verifiable spiritual fruits are connected to it. Therefore, a ban that could upset the faithful is not recommended, but the local bishop is advised not to encourage the phenomenon;

– *Sub mandato*: The critical issues are not connected to the phenomenon itself, but to its improper use by people or groups, such as undue financial gain or immoral acts. The Holy See entrusts the pastoral leadership of the specific place to the diocesan bishop or a delegate;

– *Prohibetur et obstruatur*: Despite various positive elements, the critical issues and risks associated with this phenomenon appear to be very serious. The Dicastery asks the local bishop to offer a catechesis that can help the faithful understand the reasons for the decision and reorient their legitimate spiritual concerns;

– *Declaratio de non supernaturalitate*: The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith authorises the local bishop to declare that the phenomenon is found to be not supernatural based on concrete facts and evidence, such as the confession of an alleged visionary or credible testimonies of fabrication of the phenomenon.

Procedures to follow

The new norms then indicate the procedures to be implemented. It is up to the diocesan bishop to examine cases and submit their judgement to the Dicastery for approval. The bishop is asked to refrain from making public declarations about the authenticity or supernatural nature and to ensure there is no confusion or sensationalism. If the elements of the case "seem sufficient," the diocesan bishop will then set up an investigative commission, which should include at least one theologian, one canonist, and an expert chosen based on the nature of the phenomenon.

Positive and negative criteria

The document lays out several positive criteria to evaluate the alleged supernatural phenomenon. These include: "The credibility and good reputation of the persons who claim to be recipients of supernatural events or to be directly involved in them, as well as the reputation of the witnesses who have been heard...; the doctrinal orthodoxy of the phenomenon and any messages related to it; the unpredictable nature of the phenomenon, by which it is evident that it is not the result of the initiative of the people involved; and, fruits of the Christian life" (II, 14).

The negative criteria involve: "The possibility of a manifest error about the event; potential doctrinal errors...; a sectarian spirit that breeds division in the Church; an overt pursuit of profit, power, fame, social recognition, or other personal interest closely linked to the event; gravely immoral actions...; psychological alterations or psychopathic tendencies in the person that may have exerted an influence on the alleged

supernatural event; and, any psychosis, collective hysteria, and other elements traceable to a pathological context" (II, 15). Finally, "the use of purported supernatural experiences or recognised mystical elements as a means of or a pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses" (II, 16) is considered of particular moral gravity. Regardless of the final approved determination, the diocesan bishop "must continue to watch over the phenomenon and the people involved, exercising his ordinary power" (II, 24).



• Pope Francis

C.W.O.N, Ikot Ekpene Diocese Celebrate Mothers

...Bishop Umoh Confers Award Of Honor To Deserving Members

By Susana Clement

The 2024 edition of the Diocesan Mother's Day celebration in Ikot Ekpene Diocese concluded in style with a call on mothers to consider their role not only as home builders but the heart around which the progress of families and the Church resolves. This was contained in a homily delivered by the Catholic Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, Most Rev. Camillus R. Umoh at the Eucharistic celebration on the occasion of Pentecost Sunday and Mother's Day Celebration.

According to the Bishop, women are to regulate their homes and serve as agents for stabilization of the family. He stressed that when families are happy and peaceful, the Church and the society at large are better. In view of this, He urged the CWON members to remain virtues, provide warmth, joy, peace and at the same time emulate the footsteps and examples of godly women as stated in the scriptures.

Drawing reference from the days reading, the clergyman enjoined the faithful to make use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit wherever they find themselves. In his words: "The Holy Spirit is one, but the gifts are different. As mothers, you are make good, the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit that God has given to you in whatever you do".

Speaking on the Solemnity of Pentecost, Bishop Umoh mentioned that Pentecost is a day that the Universal Church was born and a day the people of God gather to pray and to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

The local ordinary however, reminded the faithful that the work of the holy spirit is not to destroy, condemn nor kill anyone but to transform, protect, guide, purify and evangelize us and even make us one family as well as teach us to know the truth so as to teach others what is true.

In her welcome address, the Diocesan C.W.O.N President, Mrs. Rosemary Idiong, expressed gratitude to God for protection and grace to the women of the diocese adding that the occasion was exceptionally unique to members of the organization whom she described as mothers of God's children.

Mrs. Idiong further stated that the event was a special opportunity for them to appreciate God for the gift of womanhood to the world, and strengthened their commitment to God and their homes and unreserved commitment in sustaining the mission, vision and mandate of womanhood entrusted to them. This according to her will be possible through Mary our Mother through whom all succeed.

She thanked the Chief Shepherd of the Diocese, Most Rev Camillus Umoh, the Cathedral Administrator, Very Rev Fr Christopher Umoh, all priests present at event for their commitment and show of support to the women.

Mrs. Rosemary Idiong equally, lauded the steady

strides made by the women of the Diocese over the years towards the growth and development of the Church.

The event featured the presentation of the ambassadorial award of faith to three women by the Bishop. The women performed well during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Among them were the two psalmists and the choir director respectively. The bishop observed that the award was due to their distinctive performances in chanting the psalm with joy and happiness and the stylish way with which the choir director conducted the singing. He noted that these demonstrated a huge commitment to the faith. The clergy admonished all women to emulate the steps taken by the three awardees whenever the need arise.

Present at the event were the Chairman of Ikot Ekpene Local Government, Hon. John Clenton Etim and the wife of the Honorable Minister of Petroleum, Mrs. Esitmbom Ekperekpe Ekpo among many others who graciously graced the occasion.

Meanwhile, the weeklong event which had as its theme "Motherhood, a call to perform our sacred and supreme vocation", also witnessed several competitive activities such as quiz, match past, drama, cultural dance and paper presentations among others.



JAMB And Nigeria Educational System, What The Future Holds

By Barnabas Avule

Shama once posited that the development and sustainability of every nation hinges strictly on the level of its educational system and that of the human mind. Among the twelve pillars of development, education is the bedrock with which other developmental strategies can be built upon. Nelson Mandela is one man accredited with the statement "Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations by students."

Since independence, Nigeria as a nation has adopted its education strategies in different dimensions based on changes in administrative ideologies. These changes and ideologies are often meant to guide the operations of all sectors including education.

Nigeria adopted the 6-3-3-4 basic educational model in 1983. This new model was introduced nation-wide by the Federal Government in answer to the agitations for a more functional and qualitative educational system. The system is planned in such a way that a child spends six years in Primary School, three years in Junior Secondary School, another three years in Senior Secondary and four years in tertiary institution.

The 6-3-3-4 plan as rightly adopted overtime was thought to be a good plan based on its impact to some extent. The primary focus of the system was meeting the educational needs of its citizenry and equipping the youths with sellable skills that will make them to be self-reliant. Today, there is an uproar that the educational objectives of the 6-3-3-4 system of education have not been fully realized. There is also a growing apprehension that the system is not that successful due to general lack of consistency in Nigeria's educational policies and national objectives.

It was expected that the 6-3-3-4 system would prepare the growing child for career choices in one field of endeavor or another even as it would give room for diversification of careers through the sciences, arts, technology, trade or commerce. A student who have been so prepared would have not much challenges in gaining admissions into the university through the Unified Tertiary and Matriculation Examinations (UTME).

The UTME was introduced into the Nigerian Education system as a method of selection of students seeking for admission into Nigerian universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

But the constant upward and downward review in the JAMB cut off points challenges the system so much that the results of students sitting for the Exam continue to depreciate. As if that is not enough, results of WAEC and NECO as well as internal exams in the Universities also continue to depreciate

There arise pertinent questions as per the standard of Education in Nigeria. What is the hope for the future? What can be done to turn around the clock? WHO IS TO BLAME? The students, the parents or the Examination Board? These among others are the frequently asked questions in the mind of stake holders.

Any educational policy that seeks to achieve its goal should seek an overall implementation of each item of the

policies passionately. It should give students focus and predetermined goal as well as ginger them to pursue their individual goals with passion. But constant changes give students an idea of relaxation and encourages examination malpractice which is the bane of education.

The entry requirement in our universities and other institutions of higher learning should be standardized. Examination malpractice has so affected the system that parents now even help their wards to engage in it. The cut off mark is lowered every year and the system itself seems weak and only the university lecturers can appropriately, be able to explain how possible someone who scored 150 marks, in JAMB is offered admission to study education in University, and someone with 170-180 marks at most is allowed comfortably to study Economics, Accounting and Administration and other courses, and 120-150 marks in polytechnics and colleges of education respectively. To what extent can such a person who as admitted with a low pass mark or through exam malpractice and related means, handle or sustain and as well improve upon the economy of a nation?

Narrowing the focus down to JAMB the examination body and the UTME who are responsible for admission and other related matters, the expectation will be on the administered tests and checks on the learning parameters of these candidates.

A perfunctory look at the percentage score this year as sourced from the Punch Newspaper reveals that 1,940,000 million candidates took the examination. Out of this number, a total of 94.97% results have been released while 3.33% are withheld.

Further analysis shows that 0.5% of the candidates scored 300 marks and above. 4.2% scored 250 and above, 24% scored 200 and above, while a whopping 76%b scored below 200 marks.

The high rate of failure calls for critical review of what was examined, if the questions were above the cognitive capabilities of the candidates or if the ICT equipment that were deployed were not friendly that could drive away candidates' courage and confidence, let alone the level of timing on each question.

In other dimension, one could easily ask if the secondary educational system is not doing the veracious thing or could it be the condition of learning milieus, syllabus or teaching methods? what could be the cause as well as the remedy for this abnormality hence this has a negative impact on our overall sectors as a nation. It should be noted that, if this situation is not properly addressed, in the long run, the system will be completely destroyed and the value for education will be less assured.

The role of JAMB in checking, controlling and screening qualified candidates for the entry into the higher institution of learning as well as its examination exercises, was highly recommendable when the body introduced CBT base examination intake against the manual or hand writing. The effort made was to eliminate the level at which candidates and centers deliberately engaged in malpractices during the exercise.

We can also agree that the efforts made by jamb were positive to some extent. Another lake of the argument is whether these methods introduced by jamb are yielding any positive results. Why then the poor performances over time

and in recent outcome of the exercise? We can see that in the line of malpractice jamb has done more than enough but then, what happens to its standard of cutoff mark as a prerequisite, the admissibility for getting admission? Why the continuous depressing of the cutoff points by Jamb?

As quoted earlier the words of Nelson Mandela that Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long range missiles, are well structured. lowering the quality of education which JAMB and UTME are relentlessly guilty of, and if secondary educational system has failed, the last hope should be the jamb. The candidates to be accessed in to the universities should be able to withstand a consistent and competent body as Jamb. The Jamb should be able to conserve and espouse the standard and quality of evaluating the candidates going into the university or institution of higher learning.

The way forward.

Pleasingly, education is for everyone and every person must have access to formal education but to an extent, if the standard is jettisoned utterly or is being bargained on a daily basis, the value for such will be wholly distorted and the aimed result won't be attained. Consequently, the government and it relevant agencies should prioritize education and it customary so as to save the system that is in comatose.

The deleterious effects of this can be seen in the failed system backed up with corruption in most of the Ministries, Department and Agencies of government. This is an indication that knowledge is not attained but rather bought. The application of the acquired knowledge while dealing or managing certain position of thought and critical sectors of economy is essential and need skilled and well experienced man power, but as it appears in our educational system it implies that such persons may have had upper hand to be there without any assessment or qualification. Therefore, our system is failing continuously and this can be stressed to the downward nature of our educational system (failed system).

Education as a bedrock of development and transformation functioned as a system theory, if a part is affected, the whole system mal-function and the targeted result cannot be attained. The problem now needs all hands on desk to save our educational system, both the parents, students themselves, schools and most importantly the actors are to see how their impact will revamp education and knowledge acquisition among the youth and peers.

Conclusively, the government should not have considered depressing the standard e.g. Jamb cut off marks as a solution for many candidates to be admitted in the universities and institution of higher learning. Formal Education should be for the qualified.

Education should not be the only apparatus to be adopted in Nigeria, vocational and skill acquisition should also be adopted predominantly for candidates who may not have qualified for formal education, this will as well reduce the concentration on the latter. This will also help to solve the lingering threat of unemployment of the said graduates. Jamb should be consistent and focus to espouse and revamp our educational system that is already in comatose.

News

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Immaculate Mothers Celebrate 2024

holders of the family. There is nothing like love when there is no sacrifice. Those who have love in the family should hold on to it. The heart is the departure point of love."

Fr. Mbat noted that where there is love, there is the Holy Spirit. Exhorting, love and do what you like. Love is very strong because where there is love, you don't need to fear. He advised the faithful to learn to nurture love and let the love in the church extend to their homes.

The chairman of the occasion, Mr. Andrew Umoren described the mothers as asserts from God. He thanked the women for the week long activities which he was a witness to the events. He called on everyone to support the mothers to achieve their set goals.

The

CWON President, Mrs. Ofonmbuk Hanson in her welcome address, thanked the mothers for their support she had enjoyed from them. She appealed for more supports in the years ahead.



Leadership Requirements For Effective Lay Apostolate Work

Introduction

Leadership can be defined as a process by which one individual influences others toward the attainment of group organizational goals.

In the following sections, Christian leadership and leadership requirements for effective lay apostolate work will be described.

Christian Leadership

The first and the most important requirement for Christian leadership is to be a man or woman of prayer. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1).

As a Christian leader, you are held to high moral, ethical and social standards. As a leader, you are held to high standards, but as a Christian leader, that bar is raised even higher. Why? Because both the Christian and non-Christian social environment has tended to expect that Christians measure up to their self-proclaimed moral and ethical standards, as they rightly should. Therefore, your conduct should be commendable and exemplary. A good leader should be trustworthy so that people can follow him. He/she should live his life with honesty and integrity. He/she should live a life such that nobody can question his character.

What can you do to be sure you 'stand up to the test' in the area of Christian Leadership?

- 1) Next to regular and authentic prayer life, probably the most important thing you can do as a Christian leader is to clean up your act – if there is anything in your life, moral or ethical, which would not stand up to scrutiny if the entire world found out – you must eliminate it immediately. Do not give anyone an occasion to think that you are a hypocrite.
- 2) Be sure that every decision you make is honest and ethical. You cannot effectively lead as a Christian when your decisions and actions are not above-board, fair and honest.
- 3) As a Christian leader, commit to telling the truth no matter what. As a Christian leader, when you lie or tell half-truths, people tend to feel that your entire faith is a sham. In fact, if you are habitually lying and telling half-truths, your faith may indeed be a sham.
- 4) Have a good knowledge of the apostolate work you are doing. Be familiar with Catholic Doctrine and the social teachings of the Church. Have a mastery of Vatican II documents and papal encyclicals relating to the role of the laity in the Church and in the modern world. Learn everything you can about the tasks at hand. No one likes to be led by someone who has never done what they are doing. This doesn't mean you have to become an expert. One benefit to this is, when you have actually done the work, you can more effectively brainstorm solutions to challenges when they arise.
- 5) Another important factor that makes a good leader is good example. A great leader sets a good example for his or her subordinates. If you are very particular about tardiness, then you have to make sure that you are always on time, if not earlier than others. If you have strong feelings against cheating then you yourself should not be tempted to cheat. Set a good example for the people in your team. Actions speak louder than words.
- 6) Learn to delegate without completely losing touch with the work at hand. By doing some of the work, not only do you gain the respect of those under you, but also you keep in touch with the flow of things.
- 7) Constantly reevaluate your own performance. Often, you may spend so much time correcting the actions of others and solving crises you didn't create, that you develop a sense that others aren't as capable as you. Consequently, you may not recognize when you are falling into bad habits that also need to be corrected. Be the first to recognize and correct your own short-fallings.
- 8) Avoid pride. Once in a position of leadership, especially if you are good at what you do, it is easy



By Prof. Michael Ogunu

to begin to feel that you are invincible. Once that occurs, you become vulnerable to pride, and may make decisions you would frown on if your subordinates made the same decisions.

- 9) Learn to manage your time. When you are in a position of leadership and find yourself delegating away most of the time-consuming tasks, it is easy to lose control of your time. Again, when the workers under you see you wasting your time, they will tend to do the same.

How can you become an effective lay apostolate leader?

To be an effective lay apostolate leader, you must, in addition to all that have been stated in the preceding sections,

- 1) Learn to motivate those working with you. As a leader, it is your job to motivate your subordinates to deliver better results. You can do this by keeping them posted on the fruits of their labour and by giving them a pat on the back each time they contribute to the success of the organization. It would also help if you can reward them for their hard work from time to time.
- 2) Make your subordinate feel that they are needed and that they are crucial part of your organization or apostolate. You can do this by simply keeping them informed, making them proud for all their achievements, allowing them to grow, and by sincerely complimenting them once in a while. Recognize their contributions and make special mention of their accomplishments in front of their colleagues or fellow workers in the Apostolate. You can help people reach their full potential if you work on improving their self-esteem. Doing this is relatively simple; start by asking for their advice on certain situations to make them feel that their opinions and ideas are valued. Make it a point that you remember their names so they'll feel important. Avoid arguing with them; instead, discuss things with them in a conversational tone. Sincerely compliment them for all the good things they do and be willing to listen to them actively.
- 3) Build good human relationship with your co-workers. If you want them to be more open to you, you must treat them as friends (with boundaries) instead of just co-workers. Mingle with them from time to time. Through this, you'll be able to know them better and you'll easily find out how you can bring out the best in them.
- 4) Be a good listener. A great leader listens. Make sure that you are ready to listen before you start a conversation with the people that you lead. Stay alert with your facial expression, posture, and other non-verbal cues. Make it a point to eliminate bias in your thoughts about the individual that you are talking to

otherwise, you will not surely understand what he is trying to get across. Take a mental note of the keywords that were used to easily recall the conversion a lot easier. If leaders are isolated from what is going on around them, they'll have shut themselves down to the flow of vital information about what is going on in the organization. Apart from simply being aware of the day to day operations it is imperative to be able to listen to what is "not" being said i.e. the general mood state of one's fellow workers in the Lord's vineyard. Being a leader doesn't always mean knowing everything and always being right. You'll become a more effective leader if you let your subordinates speak out their mind from time to time. Encourage them to talk about their struggles in performing their job and ask them for feedback. Through this, you'll be able to easily create a plan of action on how you can improve things to help your subordinates perform better.

- 5) Learn to communicate effectively: Relationships that leave out the ability to communicate effectively are doomed to fail. Communication skills however often start with the ability to be open and receptive to the attitudes, ideas and opinions of others as well as the ability to empathize and understand another's circumstances. When these fundamental building blocks are in place the probability of conflicts, misunderstandings and lowered performance are significantly reduced.

Conclusion:

From the foregoing, the leadership requirements for effective Lay Apostolate work can be summarised as follows:

- Be a man or woman of prayer and of integrity – This is the most important quality to your success as a leader. You must learn to live by the highest standard of honesty and integrity. More than anything else, followers want to believe that their leaders are ethical and honest. Avoid corruption and dishonesty.
- Have good human relations.
- Be disciplined.
- Be a good communicator. Effective communication – vertical/horizontal is essential for success. Keep your workers informed. Know how to communicate with not only them, but also seniors and other key people.
- Be able to motivate those working with you.
- Be ready to make sacrifice – sacrifice of time, talent and treasure.
- Be humble – Humility is an important characteristic in the life of a leader.
- Be honest with money.
- Be a team builder (Don't do it alone). Learn to involve others and learn to work with others, accommodating their weaknesses. You need to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of your team. You need to support them and be concerned for their well-being. Treat them with dignity.
- Be dedicated/hardworking.
- Give people who work with you encouragement. Show appreciation. Learn to say thank you. Learn to recognise the good others have done. Be willing to give good credit to them.
- Be a good role model for those you lead. They must not only hear what they are expected to do, but also see.
- Above all, let Paul's admonition to the Colossians in Col. 3:23-24 be your guide: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as though you were working for the Lord and not for men ... for Christ is the real Master you serve".

Ami Ndi Eyen Katholik Series

EHB 99: ***Yak Nnyin Mi IkomObong***

Chorus:

*Yak nnyin mi ikomObong
KeediwakmfonEsie
KeedingEyenEsie
Edikpak'idiok-nkponnyin*

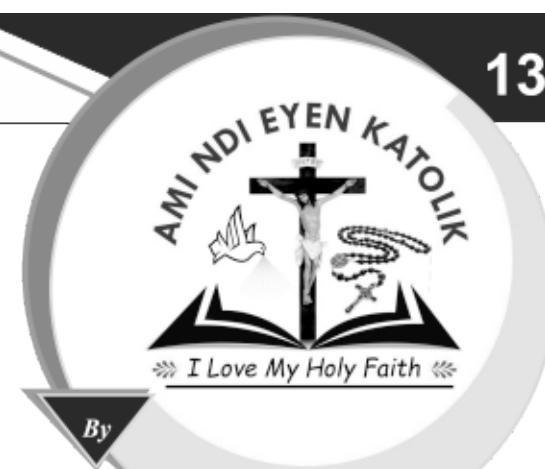
1. Mme nsoñkpokeafo
Ada 'di ndikomObong
KeuwakmfonEsie
Emi Enyeonode fi?
2. Obongon fi uwem
Udiañko ye nsoñ-idem
Enyeon fi edim
Ndidiñnsatisoñ

3. Keakakan Ima Esie
EnyeonikpofEyesie
Qsuhreedik'isoñ
Manedikpak'ibuotnnyin
4. Mme nsoñkpokeafo
EdinamongObong
Keutomfonemi
Enyeonode fi k'isoñ?
5. Se-dediemiafo
AdadeedindikomObong
Amakamony'idaresit
Obongyediñ fi.
6. Keidakimafo
Nnyinibeñe fi ite:
Yak obomm'enqemi
Ye oyohinemesit

The structure of the hymn is interesting. The hymn has 6 inter-connected stanzas of four lines each, including the chorus. A careful look at the hymn reveals that there are some patterns of repetition. Stanza 3 is simply, though not strictly, a repetition of the chorus as the themes of incarnation and death of Christ for our sake are repeated. Moreso, in stanzas 1 and 4, the author asks the worshipper what he wishes to give and do for God in appreciation of God's gift of graces. And the word 'happiness' is repeated in stanzas 5 and 6 – though with two Efik Synonyms (*idaresit, inemesit*). Importantly, it should be noted that the way the hymn is presented here above is slightly different from the way it is in the *Efik Hymn Book*. In the Hymn Book, the chorus comes last. But here, the chorus is intentionally put first. This is because, in most cases, and in some places, the hymn is usually begun with the chorus and as such some persons seem to be more familiar with the chorus.

The title of the hymn (*Yak Nnyin mi ikomObong*) can beliterally translated in English as: *Let Us, here, thank the Lord*. It is a call on all the faithful gathered in worship to give thanks to the Lord. The Lyrics show that it is typically a hymn of thanksgiving. Having given the summon for thanksgiving, the chorus goes on to explain why God deserves our thanksgiving viz: because of His bountiful graces (*KeediwakmfonEsie*), and because of the coming of Christ, His Son, who became man and died for our sins (*KeedingEyenEsieedikpak'idiok-nkponnyin*). Many other reasons for thanking God are given in vs. 2, and these include God's gift of life (*Obongon fi uwem*), food and health (*Udiañko ye nsoñ-idem*), and rain to nourish the earth (*Enyeon fi edimndidiñnsatisoñ*).

Significantly, also, the hymn has a biblical background. The lyrics of stanzas 1 and 4 re-echo the words of David in Psalm 116:12 "What can I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?" In the psalm, David gives thanks to God who saves him from afflictions. And we, too, share in these thankful sentiments whenever we sing the hymn. Apart from being a hymn of thanksgiving, *Yak Nnyin mi ikomObong* is



By
Fr. Dominic Isaac Akpan

also an offertory hymn. It is one of the traditional hymns commonly and correctly used during offertory collection. In the first two lines of stanza 1, the author asks a fundamental question: "What have you come with to thank God?" Unlike some offertory hymns, the author does not stipulate nor suggest what the item(s) of offering should be. Rather, he states something very profound in stanza 5: **"Whatever you have brought to thank God, once you give it with happiness, God will bless you."** This sentence seems to be the nub and best bit of the hymn. It summarises the entire theology and logic of gift-offering – especially offering to God. The author shifts the attention from the material worth of the item(s) to be offered, not just by 'refusing' to specifically name what can be offered, but also by using the categorical word "*se-dedi*" (whatever). This could mean that whether your gift is money, edible or non-edible items, dance, song, clap or even the gift of the heart (as in during the *sursumcorda*), the most important thing is to give ('whatever' it may be) with joy and happiness.

The last stanza is presented as a simple petition. This seems to flow from the 5th stanza. Hence, because the people have offered with happiness, they can, thus, plead with God (*Nnyinibeñe fi ite*) to accept their gifts with happiness and joy (*Yak obomm'enqemi ye oyohinemesit*). This simply underlines the fact that the happiness is reciprocal. When one gives joyfully and cheerfully, God receives it joyfully. This last stanza, therefore, re-echoes a part of Eucharistic Prayer I where the priest asks God: "...be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them, as once you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just..." This shows that the catechetical import of the hymn is consistent with the church's Eucharistic theology.

Feature

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Nigeria, A Nation Of Lucrative Politics....

power. The hungry only craves for food, he would do anything to have momentary satisfaction, even killing for the politician. And the politician knows this. Therefore he must do all he can to keep them poor so that by the next election, he would not be bereft of allies.

The ongoing minimum wage standoff between the government and organized labor is an outcome of insensitivity of government to the plight of the citizens. It gives credence to the fact that there is conscious and consistent effort to continue in weaponizing poverty. In a country where politicians go home with humongous packages in term of allowances aside from their basic salary every month; in a country with overblotted executive personnel with the highest

number of ministries since independence, each with retinue of staff ranging from secretaries, special assistants, personal assistants, special assistant to the personal assistants, personal assistants to the special assistants etc. members of boards and commissions, all in the bid to settle cronies when civil servants continue to lament, it becomes worrisome when fixing comfortable minimum wage amidst harsh economic realities become a reason for labor government standoff.

A situation like this cannot allow growth and prosperity in any nation. The economic reality of the nation is evident result of corruption in both the political space and the public services not excusing the civil servants. There is need for

measures to bridge the gulf between the rich politician and the poor masses. I therefore recommend the following measures:

1. Asset declaration: The Nigerian Constitution as amended requires the declaration of assets and liabilities for the following public officers.
 - Ministers of the Government of the Federation
 - Members of the House of Assembly
 - The President and Commissioners of the Government of a State
 - The Governor of a State
 The declaration is required before taking the oath of office and assuming duties. Thus public officers should be made to adhere to the provisions of the

Nigerian constitution as regards asset declaration both before and after tenure of office.

2. Salary reduction: There is need to reduce politicians' salaries and benefits to align with the country's economic reality
3. Civil service reform: Improve civil servants' working conditions, pay, and benefits. This is what organized labor is still fighting for.
4. Progressive taxation: Although the Nigeria's tax system is progressive, meaning the rich are taxed at a higher rate than the poor. However, there is need for effectiveness of this system through proper tax administration with effective

enforcement mechanisms.

5. Social Security and safety Program for the masses such as unemployment benefits, health insurance, and poverty reduction initiatives, especially during this period of economic hardship occasioned by improper thought out policies. Etc.
6. Ensure transparency and accountability of political and public office holders as well as civil servants.
7. Above all make politics less lucrative so that aspirants see in it a call for duty rather than a moment of self aggrandizement.

There is also need for Nigeria to strengthen her institutions. When the institutions are strong, it would be poised to check and promote

accountability and transparency. Unfortunately, Nigeria is a country with strong political leaders and very weak institutions that are easily manipulated by the political leaders. When the institutions are strong, they cannot be manipulated. A strong institution would ensure the diversification of the economy and investment in human development. It would address issues of corruption and inequality and foster inclusive political representation. Such institution prioritizes citizen welfare over political patronage. Only through concerted efforts can Nigeria break the cycle of lucrative politics and impoverished citizens, building a more equitable and prosperous future for all.

Five Implications Of AI To Humanity: Bishop Ajang Breaks Down Pope Francis 2024 Wcd Message



In the wake of the evolving Artificial Intelligence technology and its potential effect on humanity, the Episcopal Chairman on Social Communications, Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), Most Rev David Ajang, pointed out 5 lessons and its implications on humanity from Pope Francis message for the 2024 World Communications Day (WCD)

celebration on the theme: "Artificial intelligence and wisdom of the heart for a fully human communication."

In his homily at the Mass for the World Communications Day celebration at St. John Parish, Mararaba, Catholic Diocese of Lafia recently, Bishop Ajang who is also the Local Ordinary of Lafia Diocese, noted that from the Holy Father's message,

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the world of information and communication, affecting everyone, not just professionals, and called for necessary precaution in its applications even with the excitement and confusion that comes with rapid innovation.

On the other hand, the Prelate observed the Pope's emphasizes on the importance of the human heart, symbolizing

freedom, decision-making, integrity, and unity, and encouraged all to engage their emotions, desires, and dreams, and encounter God in the inward place of their heart.

Consequently, Bishop Ajang pointed out that the wisdom of the heart enables humans to integrate various aspects of life, by

putting God first above all things. He maintained that in this way, one can become truly and fully human and be guided toward a purposeful life and authentic communication.

Furthermore, the homilist appealed that as technology advances, one must not lose sight of humanity, but that all should rather engage AI with openness and sensitivity. Emphasizing that AI must never replace human beings, he admonished that all must strive to become a new kind of human being with deeper spirituality, freedom, and maturity by putting humanity first in all things.

On a final note, the Cleric affirmed that Artificial Intelligence is a tool that can effectively build community if properly deployed, even as it remains subject to the Almighty Intelligence (God), and to His creatures (human beings who are made in His image).

The Mass for the 58th World Communications Day celebration, also commemorated the conclusion of the 3rd edition of the Communications Week (ComWEEK) celebration; a week-long media literacy programme for the church in Nigeria.

Ikot Ekpene Diocesan CYON Holds Evangelization Outreach

By Anselm Akpan

The Holy Trinity Sunday at Assumption Parish Ikpe Annang was marked by a joyful and a spirit filled experience for the youths of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, as they gathered for their usual Diocesan CYON Evangelization outreach.

The occasion began with a Holy Mass with the Diocesan CYON Chaplain I, Rev. Fr. Cletus Okon as Chief Celebrant and assisted by Rev. Fr. Akaninyene Umoh (Diocesan CYON Chaplain II) and the Parish Priest of Assumption Parish Ikpe Annang, Rev. Fr. Stephen Udo.

In his homily, Rev. Fr. Stephen S. Udo called on the youths to do their best in uniting with their parents and the Church for the purpose of evangelization.

Reflecting on the readings of the day, drawing inspirations from the first reading, the homilist admonished all the youths to always ask and go back to history on how things were done and carried out in those days both from the individual families, the church and the society for "the youths are the nation".

The homilist further explained the three different stages of life to all youths thus;

Stages of inquisitiveness: He explained that this is a stage where one is trying on what he or she wants to achieve in life which starts from birth through puberty.

The second stage being "the stages of choice", where one is deciding on what he or she wants to be in life which starts from the age of adolescence and builds from the stage of inquisitiveness. Fr. Stephen enthused that for a youth to make the right choice in life he has to go back to history and to God, building his or her trusts on

God.

He further noted that the third stage is "living by the choices you make". He admonished the youths to make a proper and fruitful choice for a better tomorrow. He noted that now is the time for them to make proper choices to be good or bad, successful or failures. The homilist admonished them not to allow their physical strength to be used negatively by the society and some bad politicians, rather

youths of Ikot Ekpene Diocese the grace to use their strength both physically, intellectually and spiritually to contribute positively to the growth and development of both the Church and the society at a whole.

Mr. Victor R. Abia, the Host CYON Parish President in his welcome address received the youths into the church. he urged the to be orthy Ambassadors of Christ in the catholic Church.

In his welcome address to the youths,

Assumption Parish, Ikpe Annang. He noted that the day was remarkable, admonished the youths to feel at home.

The Patron and Patroness of the CYON of the Parish in the persons of Mr. Paul S. Nkanta and Mrs Mary I B Ekpo, thanked God for the youths and at the same time welcomed the youths to Ikpe Annang Parish, noting that the youths should make a good and fruitful choice of decision for the success of tomorrow.

Furthermore, the Deanery CYON President, Architect. Linus Archibong in his speech, thanked God for the youths apostolate in Ikot Ekpene Diocese. He admonished the youths that this is a time to uplift their spiritual life for there will be no other opportunity again.

The Diocesan CYON Preasident, Mr. Samuel Ibanga, appreciated the Bishop, Most Rev. C. R. Umoh, for the opportunity given to the youths to reach out to people through the outreach. He charged the youths to continually let their light shine as the motto of the CYON stipulates. He wished the youths the very best in their various endeavours.

The Diocesan CYON I, Rev. Fr. Cletus Okon, thanked Rev. Fr. Stephen Udo, other Clergies and the faithful of Assumption Parish, Ikpe Annang, for their development strides in the Parish

Fr. Okon submitted topic for discussion "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary".(Isaiah 40:31) and thereafter, the youths shared their perspectives on the topic. The outreach featured: intercessory prayers as well as fund raising for the Parish and the Host CYON. The Parish entertained members of the CYON to the rich hospitality standard of Ikpe Annang. Attendance at the outreach stood at about 4,500. The outreach ended with a final blessing by Rev. Fr. Akaninyene Umoh.



to walk in ways of God for long life.

Fr. Udo seized the occasion to admonish the young Catholic female children to make themselves suitable for marriage within the Church noting that it is very possible and in fact easier for the female to marry men into the Church than to be married out. He also encouraged the male youths to look inward so as to marry what they know for the faith of their family even as he frowned at young men going outside to look for wives when there are abundance of marriageable young ladies who are well trained through the various youths apostolate in the Church.

Finally, he prayed to God to grant the

the Parish Priest, thanked all for their presence at the exercise. He noted that he is convinced, there was hope for the Church because looking at the entire youths of the Diocese, there are people who will pilot the affairs of the Church in future

Furthermore, the Deanery Laity President, Mr. Anthony John Effiong, welcomed the youths of the Diocese to Assumption Parish, Ikpe Annang under Ukana Deanery, even as he admonished them to be serious in their future career decisions so as to keep being the pride of the Church.

In his speech, the Parish Laity President, Kgt. Emmanuel Umoh,(KSM), welcomed members of the Diocesan youths to

FIFA World Cup 2026: Five Games To Watch Out For As African Qualifiers Resume

European club finals match-winners Ademola Lookman and Ayoub el Kaabi turn their attention to 2026 World Cup qualifying in Africa from Wednesday with 52 fixtures scheduled over seven days.

Lookman scored a hat-trick as Atalanta won the Europa League last month, and ended a 51-match unbeaten run by Bayer Leverkusen in domestic and international competitions.

The London-born 26-year-old could lead the Nigeria attack at home to South Africa in Uyo in a repeat of the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations semi-finals won by the Super Eagles on penalties.

A week after Lookman stole the show in Dublin, Moroccan El Kaabi nodded the extra-time winner for Olympiakos against Fiorentina in the Europa Conference League final in Athens.

He will be a contender for a place in the Atlas Lions attack against Zambia in Agadir in another Cup of Nations repeat with Morocco winning 1-0 in the Ivory Coast last January.

Meanwhile, Kenya are among 17 nations who must stage home matches at neutral venues due to sub-standard venues,

stadium renovations or security issues.

Here, AFP Sport highlights five matchday three showdowns that include shock 2022 World Cup semi-finalists Morocco and reigning African champions the Ivory Coast.

Nigeria v South Africa

A powerful Nigerian attack will lack its biggest star — 2023 African Footballer of the Year Victor Osimhen — through injury and Nathan Tella is absent for undisclosed personal reasons.

But with Lookman, Victor Boniface, Kelechi Iheanacho and Samuel Chukwueze to choose from, coach and former star Finidi George is not short of talent as he prepares for his competitive debut.

South Africa welcome back forward Lyle Foster from demoted Premier League club Burnley, who missed the Cup of Nations due to mental health challenges.

Egypt v Burkina Faso

Prolific Liverpool scorer Mohamed Salah is set to represent Egypt for the first time since an injury against Ghana in a group match cut short his AFCON campaign.

“Mohamed is one of the best footballers in the



world and there is no rift between us,” said coach Hossam Hassan, who replaced Portuguese Rui Vitoria after a last-16 exit in the Ivory Coast.

When Salah was injured, Hassan said the star should remain with the national squad in west Africa, but the forward returned to his club for treatment.

Morocco v Zambia

A Hakim Ziyech goal separated the teams at the latest AFCON, where Morocco suffered a shock last-16 loss to South Africa and Zambia failed to make the knockout stage.

Key Moroccan figures in the 2022 World Cup run in Qatar, including goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, defender Achraf Hakimi and forward Youssef-Nesyri remain.

Coach Walid Regragui also called up Brahim Diaz, an attacking midfielder at European titans Real Madrid for the clash with Zambia, who are on the back foot after a surprise away loss to Niger.

Senegal v DR Congo

Defending champions and among the favourites to win the 2024 AFCON, Senegal only reached the round of 16 before falling

to hosts Ivory Coast after a penalty shootout.

Stalwarts like goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly and forward Sadio Mane — all based in Saudi Arabia — remain as the Teranga Lions seek redemption in World Cup qualifying.

The Congolese exceeded expectations by finishing fourth at the AFCON this year and hope Yoane Wissa can replicate his form with Premier League outfit Brentford.

Ivory Coast v Gabon

Coach Emerse Fae has given maiden call-ups to a

France-based trio — defender Christopher Operi and forwards Mohamed Bamba and Evann Guessand — for a Korhogo clash with Gabon.

But there are no places in the Cup of Nations title-holders squad for defenders Serge Aurier and Eric Bailly due to a lack of club game time, and winger Wilfried Zaha remains out of favour.

Star Marseille forward Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang — voted the outstanding African after the 2023-2024 Ligue 1 season — has been recalled having missed the first two matchdays.

Tobi Amusan Leads Strong Contingents Of Nigerian Athletes To New York City Grand Prix



World Record holder Tobi Amusan will be leading a strong contingent of Nigerian athletes to the New York City Grand Prix on June 8-9 as preparations continue for the Paris Olympic Games.

The world leader in the women's 100mH event at 12.40s will headline a star-studded field that features

former WR holder Kendra Harrison, 60m champion Devynne Charlton, reigning world champion Danielle Williams, and world No2 Tene Marshall.

With the stakes high for the bragging rights of such a world-class field, Amusan is in the form to aim for and claim another memorable

victory. Consequently, Favour Ofili will be gunning for that top performance against Olympic champion Elaine Thompson-Herah as she hopes to secure a Paris automatic qualification in the women's 100m event. In her last attempt at the Edwin Moses Legends meet, the talented

speedster fell short by clocking 11.2s and a fifth-place finish.

Hopefully, a loaded field that included training partner Aleia Hobbs, US star sprinters Gabby Thomas and Morolake Akinosun can spur her into securing her Paris ticket.

In the men's 100m event, Udodi Onwuzurike will have his hands full against former world champion Fred Kerley as he targets his first win of the season and a sub-10s time.

He performed impressively at the Racers Grand Prix last weekend by finishing second in the 200m event, so perhaps can give a better performance in New York. Finally, National Record holder in the women's Discus Chioha Onyekwere has another opportunity to get her season rolling when she competes against a respectable field, which she'll be focusing on sealing her Olympic ticket.



World Athletics Launches New Biennial Championship

World Athletics on Monday launched a new season-ending three-day global championship starting in 2026 in Budapest to fill the gap between Olympics and world championships.

The World Athletics Ultimate Championship will take place every two years and aims to attract the biggest names in track and field from September 11 to 13, 2026.

Gold medallists are set to receive \$150,000 each from an overall prize fund of \$10 million (9.2 million euros), the largest ever prize pot in the history of the sport.

The event will be held every two years — in other words, in the years in between outdoor world championships.

It will feature up to 16 of the world's top-ranked

athletes per discipline, with a total of around 400 athletes taking part.

“With only the best of the best on show and cutting straight to semi-finals and finals, we will create an immediate pressure to perform for athletes aiming to claim the title of the ultimate champion,” World Athletics president Seb Coe said in a statement.

He said the timing of the event would “ensure for the first time that athletics will enjoy a moment of maximum audience reach on an annual basis”.

World Athletics have chosen to return to Budapest, which hosted the 2023 World Championships in front of near-capacity crowds for the evening sessions.



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...Peace on earth to men of goodwill

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Nigeria, A Nation Of Lucrative Politics, Impoverished Citizens

There is no gain saying that Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is a nation blessed with rich natural and human resources. If Nigeria could manage her resources well, she would have moved from the label of developing nations and be counted among the developed nations of the world. As it is, sixty-four years after independence, the nation is still dabbling with economic, political and social problems.

One of the major challenges that this nation is facing, which could be said to be the contributing factor to insecurity and political thuggery is the survival level of most of its citizens. The greater majority of the populace falls below poverty line. And the higher percentage of this is among the youths who are supposed to be the production hub of a nation in terms of economics, agriculture, science and technology, etc. The youth demographic (ages 15-35) is typically the most productive and energetic segment of a nation's population, driving economic growth, innovation, and progress. However, in Nigeria, a significant portion of youths are disengaged from the formal (economy, agriculture, science, and technology) production sector due to unemployment.

Nigeria as a nation now faces a paradoxical situation where politics is lucrative, but citizens remain impoverished; a situation where politics yields wealth for politicians, but citizens remain poor, due to corruption, mismanagement, and misplaced priorities. Thus there is a disconnect between political prosperity and national well-being. It is the case that in Nigeria, the political elite thrive financially, accumulating power and wealth, while the majority of citizens struggle with poverty, lack access to basic necessities like healthcare and education, and face a declining standard of living. This disconnect between political prosperity and national well-being is fueled by systemic issues like corruption, mismanagement of resources, and misplaced priorities, which perpetuate inequality and hinder economic growth, leaving the most of the country's potential untapped.

On the other hand, political office holders and politicians tend to feed fat on the resources of the nation through humongous salaries, estacodes and allowances. For instance the basic salary of a seating senator in Nigeria is said to be \$310,000 P/A. This is excluding retinue of allowances, which the scope of this write-up cannot enumerate. But suffice it to say that the least Nigerian senator gets not less than fifteen different allowances (not counting estacodes) some as high as 400% of the basic salary. As a matter of fact, the least of the allowances is ward rope allowance at 20% of BS while motor vehicle allowance is 400% of BS. In the same vein, the take home pay of the least worker in Nigeria is \$250 P/A which is 0.08% of that of the least

paid senator. (cf Prof Sam Amadi at AIT Kakaki, 4th June, 7.30 a.m.). The story is not different in the House of Representatives, or the Executive. I can go on and on. However, the general scenario shows a nation of lucrative politics and poor citizenry.

Afe Babalola hit the nail on the head when he stated that "The only business in this country today which is lucrative is politics". He stated this during the 11th convocation ceremony of Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti (AFBAD). Babalola believes that politics has become less ethical and more focused on personal gain than serving the public good. Because of the level of corruption evident in Nigerian politics Afe Babalola lamented that education is being relegated to the background as politics takes center stage, because of the fact that Nigerian politics has been turned into business by the corrupt politicians. This has made the youths to believe that when they come out of university, they should go and work or alternatively, go into politics.

There is no gainsaying that politics is a very lucrative venture in Nigeria. This is due to a combination of factors. For starters, today, a typical councilor of a political ward in Nigeria earns more than the university lecture. The amount of public funds embezzled by public and political office holders as well as other illicit activities like bribes which political office holders are often accused of finds credence in the saying that politics is lucrative.

Again, political offices are now used to dispense favors, contracts, and other benefits to loyalists, supporters, and cronies. And so there is no transparency and accountability. Political office holders are rarely held accountable for their period in office except by the EFCC, and even at that, in certain situations, some see it as witch hunting political opponents.

Most of the Nigerian population is virtually poor. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) released the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) survey results on November 17, 2022. The survey reported that 63% of Nigerians (approximately 133 million people) suffer from multidimensional poverty, meaning they lack access to healthcare, education, and basic living standards, and suffer from unemployment and other economic shocks. This is as a result of the disparity in wealth creation and distribution between the political office holders and his cronies on one hand and the general citizenry on the other. This is characteristic of Nigerian politics and the effects are very obvious: The circumstance of the present age – insecurity, as a result of political strife, terrorism and militancy, economic down turn experienced in the last decades in the country.

In October 2015, Citizens Wealth Platform (CWP), a Platform of non-governmental and faith based organizations, professional associations and other citizens groups analyzed the take home pay of the public, political and judicial officers in Nigeria noted as follows:

1. Provision of a constituency allowance of 25% of the basic salary for the President and Vice President. Are

they expected to open constituency offices and where should the offices be s i t e d considering that the entire nation is their constituency?

2. The provision of hardship allowance for the President and Vice President when virtually all the necessities of life are provided for them at the public expense.
3. The provision of free medical services to the public, political and judicial office holders most of whom undertake indiscriminate foreign medical trips.
4. It notes further, the fact that this category of officials who make policy and who should ensure that the health system works are entitled to overseas medical treatment at the public expense provides a disincentive to fix the Nigerian health system. This raises issues of social justice and the relativity of their remuneration to that of other workers in the same Nigerian economy.

Because of the level of poverty of the ordinary citizen, he is ready to do anything, however inimical and criminal in order to survive. He becomes an easy prey to be recruited for nefarious activities like kidnapping, terrorism, ritual killing, cultism, etc. not excluding corrupt practices by civil servants who seek ways of escaping from the cold hands of poverty. Unfortunately, the youths (and even the elderly) dispose themselves to be used as political cronies and thugs to snatch ballot boxes and kill and maim for the ambitious politician during election.

Through the exploitation of the poor, the rich politician would continue to device various means to consolidate his power over the poor; he constitutes himself master and provider of the poor, the self-acclaimed salvation of the poor insofar as the food and maintenance of the poor comes from his 'benevolence'. As one without choice, the poor must accept this benevolence without any opportunity to aspire. Accepting his dependency on the rich, the poor are made even poorer. Thus, the divide between the rich and the poor continues to grow in an abysmal proportion. This is the weaponization of poverty.

The poor helps the rich to consolidate and exercise political power. This is the reason for successful vote buying and other monetary settlements as well as the fight of the poor by all means to ensure that the political master, who manipulates them remain in



By Fr. Stephen S. Udoh

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