



# PAX

## Newspaper

...Peace on earth to men of goodwill

ISSN: 2141-8586 Vol. 5 No. 5, May, 2024

Website: <http://ikotepenediocese.org>

N300

### Wisdom Corner



“People hate the **truth** for the sake of whatever it is that they love more than the **truth**. They love **truth** when it shines warmly on them, and hate it when it rebukes them.”

~ St. Augustine

# Ikot Ekpene Diocese Concludes 60th Anniversary Celebrations

## - Gives Prestigious Awards

## - Creates New Parishes

By Rev Fr Stephen S Udo and Barnabas Avule

History was made in the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene as she concluded her yearlong celebration of the sixty years of existence. The occasion which took place at the prestigious Regina Pacis Auditorium witnessed the gathering of the clergy, religious and the lay faithful from all works of life together in a milestone celebration that was characterized by award giving, books

presentation and creation of more parishes in the Diocese.

In his homily during the Eucharistic celebration at the occasion, the Prelate, Most Rev Camillus Umoh went through memory lane to recall the creation of the Diocese and its progress for sixty years. He noted that Ikot Ekpene Diocese was created in 1963 with only seven parishes with Bishop Late Cardinal

Dominic I. Ekandem as her first Bishop. Umoh mentioned that despite the brief interruption by the 1966 civil war, the first Bishop of Ikot Ekpene worked tirelessly to ensure the continuous progress of the young Diocese.

The Bishop recalled that Bishop Ekandem was raised to the rank of a Cardinal in 1976, the first in Nigeria and English speaking West Africa. He noted that in 1987, the

Cardinal was translated to Abuja newly created Territory, as the Cardinal Archbishop of Abuja. His Eminence was succeeded by Most Rev. Camillus Archibong Etokudoh who was later transferred to Port Harcourt Diocese. Bishop Umoh mentioned that Most Rev. Ephraim Silas Obot was ordained the Auxiliary Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese and was later transferred to Idah Diocese in the present day Kogi State.

The Prelate maintained that through the leadership of the first Bishop, His Eminence Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, the Diocese became renowned in Nigeria and indeed all over the world.

Umoh noted that the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese was a “Thank you” to God for the quality of people that the Diocese has produced: “My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we come to the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, let us remind ourselves of the goodness of God and what God has been doing through the Church to the people of this Land. Today as we stand here after sixty years, we can look back and simply

tell God thank you. Thank you for the quality of people that has been produced within the Catholic Church in this Diocese that has been able to wield positive influence not only within the Church environment but also in the civil society. We thank God today that the Diocese that was created with only seven Parishes has now grown to have fifty-three Parishes. We thank God for all the things He has done through us. God Himself is the one that takes all the glory not ourselves”, he stated.

The homilist taught that just as Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to go into the world and proclaim the good news,

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## 'DIGNITAS INFINITA': The Latest Document Of The Catholic Church On Transgenderism, Abortion, Surrogacy, Euthanasia, Etc.

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# Ikot Ekpene Diocese Concludes 60th....

so has He commanded the faithful in this Diocese today. Bishop Umoh said that the Good News came through the activities of the Missionaries who came to Southern Nigeria; that the Catholic Church arrived late to the territory now known as Ikot Ekpene Diocese, the area having already been occupied by Protestantism especially the Methodists. He however stated that the Diocese has so influenced the area "as if we were the first to come, we were not".

Umoh declared that "the struggles of the missionaries and the faith they came to plant in the Diocese will not perish in our hands as we strive to continue to hold on to that faith and pass it on to the

generations that will come after... Our fathers and mothers opened their hearts and received the Good News; that Good News stays with us, and as far as it stays by the greatest glory of God, we their grandchildren and great grandchildren will try to hold on to that faith".

The erudite Bishop maintained that the Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration of the Diocese was made to be more spiritual and pastoral than social: "In 2013 we celebrated the Golden Jubilee of our Diocese and ten years after, at the sixtieth year, we as a Diocese decided to go firmly by heart, we did not want to make noise, we rather wanted to look back into ourselves and see how

far the faith has grown. Thanks to God who gave us an opportunity for this occasion we have been able to look into ourselves, see how far we have gone and have noticed our mistakes and our progresses; we have noticed our strengths and our weaknesses. We are now ready for what is to come. We shall have a greater task of handing over to the generation that will come after us."

While thanking all those who have helped the Diocese in terms of resources and other endeavors, he noted that the Diocese has been blessed over the years with industrious sons and daughters who have been up and doing in assisting the Diocese. He thanked God

for the efforts of the missionaries some of whom died in the course of their missionary efforts in the area. He applauded all who labored for the progress of the Diocese: "all those who worked hard as catechists, station presidents and so on". He prayed for the repose of the dead and the continued blessing of God on the living.

The closing ceremony which kicked started Monday penultimate witnessed awards of ambassadors of faith to many people who have contributed in no small measure to the growth of faith and communion in the Diocese. Among those who were thus honoured was the Senate President, Dist. Sen Godswill Akpabio and his

dear wife, Her Excellency, Ekaette Unoma Akpabio, the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Pastor Umoh Bassey Enoh who received their awards on the d-day. Other personalities who were thus honored included the Member Representing Ikot Ekpene Essien Udim Obot Akara at the National Assemble, Hon Dr Patrick Umoh, the Transition Chairman, Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area, Hon John Cleton Etim and a host of others who received their awards Monday penultimate.

The occasion also witnessed the presentation of the much anticipated Acta of the Second Synod of the Diocese and the Second Pastoral Letter of his Lordship, Most Rev Camillus Umoh, the Catholic Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese as well as elevation and creation of parishes.

Highlights of the event were ambassadorial awards of honor for deserving members for their enormous contributions for the growth of the Diocese and the society at large, the Bishop charged them all to never relent in distinguishing themselves at all times as good ambassadors of Christ and the Diocese in order to help build a society that is truly right and just.

In his closing remarks, the Vicar General of the Diocese, Very Rev. Fr. Anselm Etokakpan on behalf of priests and religious and all Catholic faithful of the Ikot Ekpene Diocese, thanked Bishop Camillus Raymond Umoh for his good works from the time he was appointed the Chief Shepherd of the diocese till date. In his words, "My Lord Bishop, we thank you so much for having working with us all these while, thank you very much for the pastoral care you are giving to all of us. With you the church is growing stronger day by day".

The Vicar General also thanked all the bishops who were present; he further appreciates the presence of all the clergy and religious as well as the lay faithful in their different ranks for their contributions to make the day what it was.

Lastly, he expressed his appreciation to the wife of the senate president, her Excellency Mrs. Ekaette Uluoma Akpabio who

provided refreshment at the occasion. He also thanked the wife of the honorable minister of petroleum, Mrs. Esitmbom Ekperekpe Ekpo for her support and for all that she had been doing for the diocese. He said, "Thank you so very much for coming, I want you people to feel at home, this is Ikot Ekpene Diocese, our God is always faithful to us, we are here today to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our diocese and we shall continue like this".

The occasion witnessed the presence of the Bishop of Port Harcourt Diocese, Most Rev Camillus Etokudo who was represented by his Vicar General and the Bishop of Ogoja Diocese, Most Rev. Donatus Edet Akpan and the Auxiliary Bishop of Calabar Archdiocese Most Rev. Christopher Naseri. The Catholic Bishop of Uyo, His Lordship, Most Rev John Ayah was physically present on Wednesday penultimate to celebrate the Prayer Session for the Diocese and was represented on the d-day by his Vicar, very Rev Fr Donatus Udoete. Also, in attendance were and The Vicar General of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, Very Rev, Fr. Anselm Etokakpan, Priest and religious within and outside the diocese

The Senate President, Chief Dr. Godswill Akpabio and his dear wife, the Executive Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Pastor Umoh Bassey Enoh who was represented by the Deputy Governor of the State, Sen Akon Eyakenyi were fully present to grace the occasion. Also present were the Hon Minister of State for Petroleum (Gas), Hon. Ekperikpe Ekpo, the Hon. Member representing Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim and Obot Akara in the House of Reps, Hon. Dr. Patrick Umoh, commissioners as well as members of the State House of Assembly.

Leaders of Thoughts, members of the Collage of Knights, different pious societies and the entire Christian Community of Ikot Ekpene Diocese came out en mass to express their joys at the celebration.

The event featured creation of several new parishes, awards of honor as well as presentation of pastoral documents for the diocese.

## Ikot Ekpene Female Youths Tasked On Entrepreneurial And Managerial Expertise

By Susana Clement

The female youths in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area have been charged to seek in entrepreneurial and managerial expertise in business especially across the micro, small and medium enterprises. This charge was given at a three-day program organized by Enterprise Development Centre, Pan-Atlantic University and MasterCard Foundation in partnership with transforming Nigerian Youth Program. Their core objective was to transform the mindset of youths in Nigeria to become more entrepreneurial in their thinking and thus equip them to be self-employed and job creators. They were also charged to create market access and provide support service to existing businesses. The group had as their intention, to build the capacity of women to start and grow their business for a better society.

The training which was delivered both online and offline featured questions and answers by both participants and lead speakers. With such an interactive voice response method, women aged 18-35years who converged at Bishop Obot Memorial hall, St. Anne Cathedral Ifuho were indeed empowered to contribute meaningfully in their growth and that of the

society. The three-day program was aimed at helping the young women to acquire more knowledge and strategy in growing their businesses.

Presenting lectures at the event, the lead speaker Mrs. Eno-obong Etuk emphasized on the need for the women to strive after their independence by being entrepreneurs, owning their businesses. She said "We are no longer in time where we had better harmonious living in Nigeria". She mentioned that the purpose of the program was to build the capacity of women to start and grow their businesses and to enable the female youths with business ideas to put such into practice by owning at least a small scale business to grow a better society.

She took time off to explain the different steps and strategies in growing business. Mrs. Etuk noted that some businesses collapse or change when these strategies are not put into consideration. She also lectured on other topics like, marketing, Human

Resource Management, Customer Service Management as well as Operational management and many others.

Etok further encouraged participants at the program to have a rethink on their business formation with greater focus on "the ABC, Attitude, Behavior and Competence of customers service, even as she recommended awareness, interest, decision and action, the AIDA model in accessing market and encouraging the business women to register their business with Cooperate Affairs Commission and obtain a NAFDAC registration number for proper recognition and marketing as well as advertising their product on social media and through referrals to meet the target customers.

Participants at the training expressed their satisfaction and appreciation to the group for considering

the growth and progress of women youths. One of the participants in conversing with our correspondents mentioned that the function was one in a million that helps the young women in the communities. She noted that women who participated in the training have gained a lot and have no reason to allow themselves to be used in their search for assistance.

Attempts to speak with the organizers of the program was possible at the time of the publication of this paper. However, the lead speaker, Mrs. Enobong Etuk mentioned that the program was aimed at building capacity of women in business ventures and helping to grow a better society.

The event had in attendance female youths and women aged 18-35years from different villages and institutions in Ikot Ekpene and beyond.





# CMON; Organisation Under Christ Leadership

By Augustine Mendie

In the Holy Mother Church members of the Laity are segmented into three principal groups known as Organisations; these are Catholic Organisation of Nigeria, CMON, Catholic Women Organisation of Nigeria, CWON and the Catholic Youth Organisation of Nigeria, CYON. The word Nigeria shows that these organisations are indigenous to Nigeria being the Nigeria versions of the various groups as opposed to other countries of the world.

Whereas members of the CMON and CWON are mature wedded men and women respectively, CYON is made up of young boys and girls of youthful age. The CYON can be said to be a transitory organisation with members on transition after due maturity. It can be likened to a good road with "Y" junction where the individual will definitely branch off to either left or right to continue the journey. This group serves as a feeder body to the CMON and CWON after benefitting from the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. At this point, the husband joins his colleagues in the Catholic Men Organisation while his spouse joins the Catholic Women Organisation, for male and female respectfully, in order to

realise their destinations.

The sole purpose of establishing the organisations is in tandem with the Church intention to encourage collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the propagation of God's message of salvation to man. In these organisations members have learnt such virtues as love, care, charity, unity, forgiveness, communication together with divine interactive socialization.

It is gratifying to note that His Eminence Dominic Cardinal Ekandem in his wisdom, inaugurated the Catholic Men Organisation of Nigeria, in Ikot Ekpene Diocese on June 10, 1989 with Msgr. Cosmas Udomah as Director while Sir Paul Ekanem became the Pioneer President. In November that year, the CMON Executive was reshuffled. Sir D. P. A. Usungurua [KSM] was appointed President, Sir A.J. Beka became Treasurer while Mr. P.U. Udo was appointed secretary.

From available records, Sir Bernard A. Adaka was elected President of the Organisation in 1996. Since then there has been unbroken exchange of baton from one president to another until now that Obong Godwin Etokakpan is on the saddle. The present Exco was sworn-in by His Lordship Most Rev. Camillus Umoh in

November 2022.

Barely one year old in office, Obong Etokakpan has introduced salutary innovations into the organisation. Four committees have been instituted for the proper running of the organisation. They are: the Asset and Investment committee, Medical/Inter-parish Relations, Cooperative, and information and Technology/ Education committees.

Within the period under review, the new Etokakpan led executive has recorded some achievements. Apart from continuing with the second phase of their hostel project, Etokakpan has ushered in the culture of record keeping by making available all necessary books of Accounts for transparency in all financial transactions, among others. According to Obong Etokakpan, the era of verbal accountability is gone, henceforth there must be proper documentation of account in all levels.

Meanwhile the present executive has come to inherit some perennial challenges inherent within the organisation, enough to task even the heart of a lion. The challenges include absenteeism from Diocesan meetings and functions, non payment of dues, lack of financial records and lack of cooperation between members and chaplains at

the station and parish executive levels.

A cursory look at this organisation has revealed that the body suffers from very low membership strength. Paucity of the number notwithstanding, members do not attend meetings. From the station to the parish and up to the diocese, attendance at meetings can only be counted all in one hand. Those who often attend such meetings are usually a few old and aging men while young upcoming men either stay at home or refuse to join the organisation.

But is there a dearth of men in the church or in the world today? Of course NO! There are very many wedded men, from the stations to parishes across the length and breadth of the church in Ikot Ekpene diocese. Contrary to popular insinuations that the world is populated with more women than men yet one cannot safely say this is why CMON meetings in our Diocese are outrageously unpopular. There are still many men around only that many of them often readily develop anarchy or indifference towards the things of God.

Take a walk round town to various joints, beer parlours, Bet Naija shops, Bars, Hotels, Restaurants and stadiums during football matches, you will agree that our world has as

many men as there are many women. All these places are always filled with our men.

It is also observed that in our church within the Diocese, choir meetings, Knights, Catechists, and, sodality meetings are infested with a plethora of wedded couples; while their wives have found their level by enrolling in the CWON, the husbands have refused to join the CMON, they revel in hiding themselves within pious societies and sodality groups in order to shy away from responsibilities. This is a worrisome development. If all wedded or married men were to join CMON, where they rightly belong, the work would be lighter and bearable for the few old fathers who use their hand to work down their bones to sustain the body while the majority of the able bodied ones shamelessly look on.

It is pertinent for the new executive to see membership drive as a priority. This they can achieve by collaborating with the Diocesan Laity Council together with the Local Ordinary in order to determine appropriate modalities in fixing these lax men to their rightful place—the CMO.

With permission from His Lordship the laity council in each parish, in conjunction with the parish CMO Exco should prepare and issue out well designed

forms to all members of every station in each parish. Such form must contain the members' bio data, status, station, parish, membership in organisation, pious and sodality societies and associations. This form should be filled by members of all the stations while the parish Laity council will collate the information to the parish priest who is the CMON Chaplain at that level. The data so generated will be submitted at the diocese. Those who do not belong to any organization especially CMO will be asked to do so or risk serious disciplinary action.

In addition the hierarchy of CMON in the Diocese must look inward and study the activities of the Exco at the parish levels. Where they find any discrepancy, in terms of hard and selfish legislation, that could cause members to drift away in desperation, they now step in and address the situation for all to forge ahead.

The time to swell the CMON and make it workable in our diocese, is now, for as Pope John xxiii once said, "tear away the mask from this secret and subversive movement and let them appear as they really are".

This calls for our individual co-operation to succeed. CHRIST is our Leader!

## Home Call @ Longevity: Bishop Umoh, Gov. Umo Eno, Others Eulogize Ette Luke Udoibanga

By Augustine Mendie

The Catholic Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, Most Rev. Camillus Umoh has heaped praises on Late Luke Udoibanga saying the deceased was his father who always rejoiced over the successes recorded by others in his community. He stated this recently during the funeral mass in honor of the Late Ette Luke Udoibanga in Okon.

His Lordship treated the audience to reminiscences of his personal experience with the deceased as a good father of all who came across him. He recalled with enthusiasm how Ette Luke would scold any child who dared to report late to school. "If you go to school late, pray not to meet Ette Luke on the road, he will ask you why you were late, and if the explanation was

not acceptable, he will knock or scold you" the Bishop recalled.

The Chief Shepherd expressed much gratitude to the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Pastor Umo Eno for his presence at the funeral as represented by his Deputy, Senator Akon Eyakenyi saying so far, the Governor was doing well.

He said since he became the Bishop, he had passed through three generations of Governors but Governor Umo Eno is the best having succeeded where others failed by turning the search light of Government to the Villages with a view to transforming the hinterland, expressing the hope that time was ripe for Okon roads to be made better.

The Bishop was regrettably sad that Okon with eighteen villages has



only one ward thereby making the work of selection and representation

very difficult, making a veiled reference that Government should

address the situation in order to bring about equity, justice and peace.

Continuing, Bishop Umoh expressed appreciation to the deceased's children for taking good care of their father exhorting that they should extend such care and more to their widow mother too. He pointedly thanked Dr. Anthony Luke, Ette Luke's first son as well as his siblings and wives, for not labelling their father a wizard at old age instead they endured by taking good care of the deceased till the last day.

The Bishop however carpeted those Pastors who label people's parents as witches and wizards thereby causing ill feelings between wards and their old parents. This, he said, would usually poison the minds of wards against parents leading to scary neglects of such parents at old age while such

nefarious pastors take over the old people's children for themselves. "Pastors should preach only the Gospel that welds families together", His Lordship warned.

Speaking also, the Governor of Akwa Ibom State, His Excellency, Pastor Umo Bassey Eno expressed gratitude to God for making it possible to join other dignitaries in sending forth late Ette Luke Udoibanga, the father of Essien Udim Local Government Chairman, Hon. Anthony Luke.

Governor Eno who was represented by his Deputy, Senator Akon Eyakenyi, said the deceased was a great man who God blessed with long life having lived for ninety-four years. Although all the dignitaries present did not know Ette Luke in his life time, Senator Eyakenyi noted,

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# Akpabio, Umo Eno Receive Ambassadorial Awards

By Fr Stephen S Udo

As part of the concluding ceremony of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, some illustrious sons and daughters of the area, at home and in Diaspora, were honored with the title of AMBASSADORS OF COMMUNION. In recognition of their numerous contribution to the propagation of the Christian faith within and outside the Diocese.

The Senate President Distinguished Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio and his dear Wife Eka Esitmbom Ekaette Unoama Akpabio were honored as the "Grand Ambassadors of Communion", while the Akwa Ibom State Governor, His Excellency, Pastor Umoh Bassey Eno, received the award of "Ambassador of

Communion".

The Grand Ambassador of Communion award to the Senate President and his dear wife was "in recognition of their numerous and outstanding contributions to the furtherance of mission and communion in Ikot Ekpene Diocese". Presenting the award to the Senate president, the Bishop, Most Rev Camillus noted the efforts of the family in promoting the Catholic faith through their family. He encouraged the Senate President to continue in allowing the Catholic faith to influence his actions in such a lofty office as the Senate President of the Nation. The Bishop assured the Senate President and the leadership of the Country of the prayers of the Church, praying that the nation shall not collapse under his

leadership.

In addition to the award, the Bishop presented the Acta of the Second Synod of the Diocese as well as his Pastoral Letter to the Senate President. He mentioned that, "these documents are the guiding principles of the Diocese henceforth". The bishop acknowledged the strides of the senate president, assuring him of his personal supports and prayers as his bishop and as well as that of the faithful of Ikot Ekpene Diocese. He acknowledged the efforts of the senate president and his family in contributing to the structural development of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene even as he invited the third citizen of the country to join hands with the Diocese in hosting the Catholic Bishops Conference coming up in Ikot Ekpene

in August, 2025.

The Senate President expressed his delight in being nominated and given such a prestigious award by the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene. Thanking the Bishop and the Diocese for such recognition, he stated that his being a Catholic has brought many spiritual blessings to him and his family. He mentioned that his wife, Eka Esit Mbom, Ekaette Unoama Godswill Akpabio, not only brought Catholicism to his family, but to his village Ukana Ikot Ntuen. He therefore dedicated his award to her. Akpabio mentioned that he would not take the award lightly since he has been role model to many young Catholics. As a mark of appreciation to the Diocese, the Senate President said that he would send engineers to the Retreat Center at Nko to review the work so far done

in view of bringing the project to a total completion.

The Vicar General of the Diocese, Very Rev Fr Anselm Etokakpan, on behalf of the Bishop, presented the award of Ambassador of Communion to the Governor "in recognition of his outstanding and numerous contribution to the growth of faith and communion in the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene".

Responding to the award on behalf of the Executive Governor of Akwa Ibom State, the Deputy Governor Akon Iyakenyin, expressed the appreciation of the Governor to the Diocese for recognizing the efforts of the Governor and choosing him for the award. She congratulated the Bishop and the entire Diocese for the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and for

remembering the sacrifices of the founding fathers of the Diocese. She noted that the celebration was very significant to the governor as it coincided with the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Governor which was to come up in few days time. The Deputy Governor further noted that the award was very significant to the Governor as it makes the Governor a representative of the Church, being that an ambassador is a representative. She described the Governor as a friend and brother to the Bishop as well as the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene as a whole. She described Pastor Umo Eno as the call of the God, of the body of Christ and thus being made an ambassador is telling him to continue to represent the body of Christ, even in the political arena.

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## Home Call @ Longevity: Bishop Umoh, Gov. Umo Eno....

yet from the good virtues exuded by his son, Hon. Anthony Luke, one would readily infer that Ette Luke was a good man, a diehard disciplinarian who had impacted positively on his children. This, Eyakenyi enthused, could be seen often in Hon. Luke whom he described as a faithful loyal politician of no mean repute.

Though she was representing the Governor, Deputy Eyakenyi announced that all should be hopeful that the Governor would arrive at any time to meet the family saying he had asked her to give his words of condolence to Essien Udim Chairman popularly called Aluko, and the bereaved family.

Alluding to the deceased, the Deputy Governor said at 94, Pa Luke Udoibanga was sleeping not dead as he left to his Heavenly Home to behold and forever reunite with his God.

She called on all present to take a cue from the exemplary life of Late Pa Luke stating "all will lie like the deceased but all most think about when and how they will exit the world."

Pertaining to her Boss, Her Excellency stated that Governor Eno came from the pulpit to serve the people of Akwa Ibom State. So far, she reiterated that

the Governor has delivered on his campaign manifestoes by identifying with all sectors of the state; the young, the aged, the poor, men, and women within the health sector in particular as well as other sectors of the economy. "For the first time, our governor has spread appointments throughout all the wards of the state so as to reach out to the hinterland," the Deputy Governor did say.

She however called on the citizens of the state to pray for Governor Umo Eno so that he will have the strength with which to go on with his avowed good governance.

Her Excellency pointedly poured encomiums on Msgr. Kenneth Enang for appreciating the governor's development strides in the state and promised to covey the monsignor's requests to the Governor.

Msgr. Enang in his address had requested the state government to come to his aid by constructing the road leading to Saint Joseph Secondary School, Okon, which is in a serious state of disrepair. The man of God also called on government to name a street in Uyo, the capital city, in honor of Late Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, who was the first Cardinal in West Africa. This gesture, Enang said, would go a long way to

giving the Late Cardinal a place of honour and dignity and would immortalize him forever.

Earlier in his homily, Very Rev. Fr. John George Ekanem, taught that no one can claim to be an expert when death is involved. Death provokes fear down people's spines and when it strikes Christians become afraid and begin to ask why as if they are oblivious of the certainty that one day man will die.

Fr. Ekanem, who preached on the theme; there is God, stressed that God is eternally on high, God is the beginning and the end, that God is the one to fear and God's promises are new every morning.

He elucidated that everyday people acquire wealth, property, money and the like only to get joyful for what they have garnered. At the same time people suffer conflicts, diseases, persecutions which are unpalatable realities. He agreed that reactions are different according to the situations but all these things will surely come to pass.

According to the homilist in event of a dead man before us, it should call for humility adding that there is no time in this world that there will be no death or sickness or persecution. He said life and suffering are like the pains of a woman under labour but once the baby is

delivered the pains go and cannot be remembered anymore.

Going forward, Ekanem, who is the Rector of the Minor Seminary at Afaha Obong, reiterated that God is supreme, he sees everything that happens to everyman, he orders man's activities so that one who does well he rewards with peace of mind and body.

In the dissection of the Holy Scriptures the Rector held that in the book of Revelation the word "I see" appear 44 times meaning each time John saw the plan of God.

To this end, he said one could project into the future by dreaming dreams for Essien Udim and Nigeria. Like John one can project into the future and can conveniently say "I see a new Akwa Ibom State, new Essien Udim and a new Nigeria with the natural gifts from God."

Describing the deceased as a man of hard work who lived to see the fruits of his labour, Fr. Ekanem admonished that every man must work hard and stop singing such song as "Me I no go suffer," adding that suffering is indeed a proper part of life. If one must make a head way in life, one must pass through sufferings. He said Christians should use their hands and work saying whatever they do they should not consider it

menial for there is nothing like menial jobs but menial minds. Truth he said, remains that one should put in one's best in whatever he does provided at the end he can make a living from it.

He called on all Christians not to be deterred by the experience of the time where hard work is no more fashionable or rewarded. Fr. lamented over the present system which does not celebrate diligence but connection because those who work hard are always sidelined since they have no connection.

Ekanem praised the Late Ette Luke, who was not a working class man, but he was wise for he trained all his children through dint of hard work and thus today he is rewarded as a proud father of a local government chairman.

Responding on behalf of the family, the first son of the deceased and Chairman Essien Udim Local Government Area, Hon. Dr. Anthony Luke elatedly thanked the plethora of dignitaries who thronged the spacious St. Joseph Parish Church, for coming to show their solidarity at a time they need solidarity most.

He intimated that for his father to die at this point in time was a miracle of the millennium.

Aluko, who spoke with authority, informed that his

father was confirmed to die, by medical doctors within twenty four months some sixteen years ago. Based on this advice, he decided to prepare for Pa Luke's burial by procuring a casket awaiting the D-day. Hon. Luke in disbelief wondered how a man condemned by the doctors to death in two years could still live sixteen more years after.

He agreed that caring for parents at old age can be tasking, saying his father on his closing years used to feed sumptuously on pounded yam, good soup and malt, apart from buying his drugs which he took daily.

He openly thanked the immediate past Governor Mr. Udom Emmanuel as well as his successor who used to provide monetary succour for the father's upkeep. The chairman called on children of today to take good care of their parents especially at old age.

The event was well attended by the who is who in the state from the Governor who came to meet the throng at deceased compound to the Deputy Governor, commissioners, National and State Assembly Members, Civil Servants, Captains of Industries, the Clergy and other faithful, friends and sympathizers.



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Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Catholic Diocese

# PARISH CREATION: PASTORAL AND SACRAMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE

*At the conclusion ceremony of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, the Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev Camillus Umoh gifted the Diocese with new Parishes and Autonomous Communities. While this gesture met great appreciation from the faithful especially the beneficiaries of the lofty gesture, it is necessary that the faithful appreciate the significance and implication of a parish as a definite pastoral center under the guidance of a pastor.*

*The Catechism gives us some insight into what a parish is, when it says (quoting the Code of Canon Law): "A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church; the pastoral care of the parish is entrusted to a pastor as its own shepherd under the authority of the diocesan bishop." It is the place where all the faithful can be gathered together for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life: it gathers them together in this celebration; it teaches Christ's saving doctrine; it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love" (2179).*

*From what the Catechism teaches, we can conclude that the purpose of the parish is to live out the Church's universal mission at the local level. The universal mission of the Church is to bring Christ's Message to all parts of the world; to be the light to the nations and to bring God's salvation to His people, the new Israel.*

*For a parish to achieve this aim there is need for the faithful to understand this. The Parish exists so that the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) may be readily available to the faithful. The Parish is primarily a community of the faithful. As the community of the faithful it is a rallying point of growth in faith through catechesis and the promotion of good works.*

*Thus, the parish ultimately does not exist for itself. It exists to bring the message of salvation to the local area. The parish exists to evangelize the part of the world that it is in. The parish exists to make disciples of the "nations".*

*The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) describes the parish thus: "The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action, and of hope. They are where the Gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. Parishes are the place where God's people meet Jesus in word and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church's life."*

*This description is very important and necessary for the organization and administration of the parish. Today the Church is experiencing gradual loss of her children to neo spiritualist, pentecostalist and protestant ideologies which had dealt a blow to the growth of the Church. The Parish is therefore called to be a fertile ground of the growth of faith through in-depth catechesis in order to revive the faith of weak Catholics especially within the local community where it is located.*

*The parish should be a place where disciples are formed. Such formation ground as a parish would have great impact on the community it is situated. Parishioners are called in specific ways to be agents of evangelization in their neighbourhood especially through the lives they are noted for living within the community.*

*The Sacramental impact of the parish cannot be undermined. The faithful now have the opportunity for catechesis in preparation of the reception of the sacraments – baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist especially through the RCIA. There is regular attendance at Mass and the reception of the Eucharist; they can easily approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation; the sick have the opportunity for healing through the Sacrament of Anointing; and the dead are escorted home during funerals.*

*The Parish is a family, a church gathered together as a family in prayers. Hence the presence of the different pious*

*societies and devotions at the parish level where the faithful have the opportunity to share in these devotions in order to uplift their spiritual lives. The purpose of a parish is to equip us through catechesis and the sacraments to go be better disciples ready to evangelize through our lives, words and actions. The parish is for disciples living "in the world"*

*According to the Catechism just quoted, the Parish is a definite and stable community. The Parish is not just any community, but this community, which is stable. In this stable community, the faithful abide together. Having a place and a people with whom to abide is among the most precious of gifts, but it is also and at the same time the most demanding of tasks. Considering the stable nature of the parish, a place where the faithful abide together, it is a place to grow old, to struggle, to face sickness, to celebrate milestones, to change and argue, and to discern and discuss... together. Come what may, the parish is given as the definite community in which the faithful may abide. This is the place intended for people to rejoice and weep together, to speak and to remain in silence together, to praise and to repent together. The young and old are gathered together, as are the rich and the poor. This being the case, the faithful must contribute for the stability of their parish through their selfless sacrifices, unity of purpose and open handedness. This is in part the understanding of the parish as a place of evangelization.*

*Unfortunately, in our climes, the first thing that comes to people's mind when thinking of a parish is the financial contributions. Although it must be conceded that there is need for the parish to contribute financially for her growth and maintenance as well as contribute for the growth and maintenance of the Diocese, no bishop thinks of financial gains when creating parishes. The primary aim of creating a parish is to bring the Church closer to the faithful. With the parish close, the number of worshippers and those practicing true Catholic faith increases. Thus the work of evangelization continues unabated.*

*It is therefore wrong to think that parishes cannot exist because of the paucity of financial resources. What can stand in the way of creating a parish is that there are no possibilities of getting worshippers and there are no people to be converted to Catholicism. A parish cannot be created where there are no worshippers. As a matter of fact, the following are the conditions for creating a parish: growing population in a specific area, greater concern for pastoral care, request of people in the place, as well as willingness of the people to support the plan.*

*While PAX Newspaper congratulates all the communities that received the gift of Parishes and those that were elevated to the status of a full fledged parish, the paper encourages them to be sure to maintain the gift they received with joy by working tirelessly to ensure that the mustard seed given them grows to become a big tree where birds of the air can nest on. This can only be possible through developing a deep sense of unity and togetherness, sacrificing their time and resources for the welfare of the parish. They are to readily accept to follow the directives of the Diocesan Bishop who out of his benevolence has seen the need to grant them a parish at this time.*

*PAX Newspaper notes that there is also need for a catechesis of the parish. Not just catechesis in the parish but most urgently a catechesis about what the parish is and why it matters. Such a catechesis guarantees the stability and progress of the parish.*



# The Feast Of St Joseph The Worker

## Quote:

*Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the Family of Nazareth. The Gospel specifies the kind of work Joseph did in order to support his family: he was a carpenter. This simple word sums up Joseph's entire life. For Jesus, these were hidden years, the years to which Luke refers after recounting the episode that occurred in the Temple: "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). This "submission" or obedience of Jesus in the house of Nazareth should be understood as a sharing in the work of Joseph. Having learned the work of his presumed father, he was known as "the carpenter's son." If the Family of Nazareth is an example and model for human families, in the order of salvation and holiness, so too, by analogy, is Jesus' work at the side of Joseph the carpenter. ~Saint John Paul II, Redemptoris Custos, #22*

## The Story of Saint Joseph the Worker

To capture the devotion to Saint Joseph within the Catholic liturgy, in 1870, Pope Pius IX declared Saint Joseph the patron of the universal Church. In 1955, Pope Pius XII added the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker. This silent saint, who was given the noble task of caring and watching over the Virgin Mary and Jesus, now cares for

and watches over the Church and models for all the dignity of human work.

To foster deep devotion to Saint Joseph among Catholics, and in response to the "May Day" celebrations for workers sponsored by Communists, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker in 1955. This feast extends the long relationship between Joseph and the cause of workers in both Catholic faith and devotion. Beginning in the Book of Genesis, the dignity of human work has long been celebrated as a participation in the creative work of God. By work, humankind both fulfills the command found in Genesis to care for the earth (Gn 2:15) and to be productive in their labors. Saint Joseph, the carpenter and foster father of Jesus, is but one example of the holiness of human labor.

Jesus, too, was a carpenter. He learned the trade from Saint Joseph and spent his early adult years working side-by-side in Joseph's carpentry shop before leaving to pursue his ministry as preacher and healer. In his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II stated: "the Church considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide [social] changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society."

Saint Joseph is held up as a model of such work. Pius

XII emphasized this when he said, "The spirit flows to you and to all men from the heart of the God-man, Savior of the world, but certainly, no worker was ever more completely and profoundly penetrated by it than the foster father of Jesus, who lived with Him in closest intimacy and community of family life and work."



## Feats Of The Month

# Solemnity Of The Ascension Of The Lord

The Ascension is a liturgical Solemnity celebrated by all the Christian Churches. It falls on the fortieth day after Easter Sunday. Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine make reference to it, but it was probably Saint Gregory of Nyssa who influenced the propagation of the feast. Since it falls on Thursday, in many countries, this Solemnity is transferred to the following Sunday. With his Ascension into heaven, the presence of the "historical Christ" comes to an end, and the presence of the Body of Christ, the Church, is inaugurated.

Forty Days after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Acts of the Apostles records Jesus' ascension into heaven. The Ascension is an important Christian feast attesting and celebrating the reality of the God-Man Jesus Christ's returning to the Father, to return again in the future parousia. The Ascension is the final component of the paschal mystery, which consists also of Jesus' Passion, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, Descent Among the Dead, and Resurrection.

Along with the Resurrection, the Ascension functioned as a proof of Jesus' claim that he was the Messiah. The Ascension is also the event whereby humanity was taken into heaven. Finally, the Ascension was also the "final blow" so-to-speak against Satan's power, and thus the lion (Jesus) conquering the dragon (Satan) is a symbol of the Ascension. Early Christian art and iconography portrayed the Ascension frequently, showing its importance to the early Church.

The Catholic Catechism summarizes three important theological aspects (with which most Christian churches agree) of the Ascension concisely: Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf. Acts 1:11); this humanity in the meantime hides him from the eyes of men (cf. Col 3:3). Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in the hope of one day being with him forever. Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit (665-667).

Traditionally, the location of the Ascension is believed to be less than a mile east of the Old City of Jerusalem, and that spot is marked by the Chapel of the Ascension, which is said to contain a miraculous imprint of the footprints of Christ before He ascended. The event of the Ascension is found in the Gospels and Acts (Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-12). It is also alluded to in various other passages (John 6:62; Ephesians 4:7-10; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 3:21-22).

The Ascension marks the completion of Jesus' earthly mission. He first united His divine nature with human nature through the Incarnation at the moment of the Annunciation. Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches that from that moment on, Jesus, the Son of God, experienced three types of knowledge. First, being God, He had beatific knowledge, that is, a direct knowledge of His essence, the Father's essence, and the Holy Spirit's essence. Second, He had the perfection of infused knowledge, that is, a bestowal of all truths given to the angels in Heaven, especially those truths



necessary for the completion of His divine mission. Third, He began to acquire learned knowledge, or experiential knowledge. This was the form of knowledge attained through His human nature from the senses and His human reason.

As Jesus fulfilled His mission through life, His learned knowledge continued to grow until it was perfected in human form. It was never imperfect in the sense of sin, but only in the sense of growth through human experience and human love. He experienced all things, allowed the perfection of His beatific and infused knowledge to guide His human experiences and brought those human

experiences and knowledge to perfection. His free embrace of the Cross manifested the perfection of divine love in human form, and His Resurrection brought that perfect unity of human and divine love to a new and transformed resurrected state of human existence. But that was not all. Today we commemorate the fact that Jesus took His perfected human nature into the Beatific Vision, enabling humanity itself to follow. The Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to do so given her sinless state.

The final stage of the salvation of humanity will take place when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead. At that time, every human body will rise, will endure the final purification and transformation, and will share in the new and resurrected state in which the faithful will be able to stand, body and soul, before the Most Holy Trinity and experience the fullness of the Beatific Vision forever. What Jesus has already accomplished in His human form is what we look forward to in hope at the end of time.

The Feast of the Ascension was celebrated annually from as early as apostolic times. Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, and Saint Augustine all attest to this fact. When the Council of Nicaea set the date for the celebration of the Resurrection in 325, it chose to keep Easter on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox in spring. This decision also set the day for the Ascension being forty days after Easter, on a Thursday. Today, many ecclesiastical provinces transfer the Thursday celebration to the following Sunday to provide for a wider celebration.

Though every aspect of Christ's life is shrouded in mysteries which will only be fully understood by the faithful when they stand before Him and behold the Beatific Vision, today we especially ponder this beautiful and profound mystery of our faith. As we celebrate the Ascension, try to prayerfully meditate upon the perfect unity of Jesus' human and divine natures. Ponder further the truth that because the Son of God is both God and man, and He beholds His Father and the Holy Spirit as both God and man, He invites each of us to begin to share in that glorious vision. Only after we fully die in and with Him and rise to new life in and with Him will we be able to know Him clearly and share in His glorious resurrected and ascended life. Until that moment comes, it's important to ponder that which is incomprehensible. We must know that we do not know, believe what is beyond belief, hope in that which is more than we can understand. God is a mystery; the Ascension is a mystery—but they are mysteries that must be penetrated by prayer. Do so today as we commemorate this holy culmination of the earthly life and mission of Christ.



## Catechism Lesson For The Month Of May, 2024

# The Mission Of The Christian As Salt And Light Of The World

While teaching his disciples on the mountain, Jesus in a metaphoric sense gave them new identity. They are "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (cf. Matt 5:13-14). In our April catechesis, we noted that the different sacraments of the Church constitute the Christian as salt and light of the world. We concluded that the Church bears the light of Christ to the world through the sacraments by the sacraments the Church empowers her children to be salt and light of the world enlivening the world by their exemplary ways of live within the Church and especially within the larger where they are to preserve their taste.

In this edition, we look at the mission of the Christian as salt and light. The Christian is not salt and light for nothing; he is salt and light for a mission. What is this mission? This is what we seek to discover in this catechetical lesson. To understand the mission of the Christian as salt and light, we must first understand what is mission and what it entails.

### What is Mission?

Gailyn Van Rheenen in his *Missions Dictionary* defines mission as "the plans of committed believers to accomplish the mission of God". The Catholic Dictionary states that Mission expresses the idea of a going forth from one person to others in order to effect some beneficial change in their favor. The Dictionary notes that "all who are called to follow Christ are sent by Christ, in the person of his Church, to extend the Kingdom of God". The Catechism notes that "The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love" (850).

Mission implies being sent: "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:13-17).

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples and said to them, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21). Praying to the Father, Jesus also said "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17: 18). Thus mission implies being sent. Jesus was sent by the Father, Jesus sends the Church, the disciples whom he metaphorically identifies as salt and light of the world.

**Sent To Do What?** As salt of the earth and light of the world, the Christian is sent on mission. In other words, by being made salt and light through the sacraments, the Christian has a responsibility to ensure that the salt does not lose its taste nor the light darkens. There is something about the Father sending Jesus on a mission that is a model for

Christ sending us on a mission, but the question is, in what way? What is the mission that Christ gave to us, and how is it related to his mission?

Christ has commissioned us to proclaim his Word, to go into the whole world and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ (Mk 16:14). This is our mission as Christians, as salt and light. It is through such proclamation that we preserve and guide the society and individuals to salvation. This is the mission of the Church. Christ gave this directive to his Apostles as the foundation of the Church, the Church inherited this mission from them.

**By What Means?** Our proclamation is more by our lives than by our words. The world around us will not listen to our Gospel message, unless we live a life of Christian beauty. If we boldly proclaim the truth, but fail to live a life of holiness, our message is empty and has no weight. It does not affect the people we meet and they dismiss it without giving it a second thought. We cannot simply teach the truth boldly and expect that everyone will flock to the Church. We must live it out first and foremost before we can be believable and change the hearts of those seduced by the world. St Paul VI taught that "The first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 41).

The Catechism states "The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known. All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new man which they have put on in Baptism and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at Confirmation" (2472).

Considering the characteristics of salt – to preserve and flavor among others; considering that light illumines and guides, we can understand that Jesus sent his disciples today to preserve and flavor the world by their lives as well as to illumine and guide it by teaching and leading.

**Creating Impacts through Christian Witnessing:** When Jesus compares Christians to salt and light, He expects His disciples to be virtuous and just; and by their shining life, to brighten our world darkened by evil. The question now is: How do we as Christians understand, relate, and respond to the challenges of being salt of the earth and light of the world? Shining as light and tasting as

salt in the world is not an option, but an obligation, command, an imperative for Christians. This new identity challenges us to be good, committed, faithful and active Christians through our words, actions and interactions. As Christians, our light can only shine through our good deeds. We are expected to do good to others, even when it costs us suffering. As Christians, we are called to be a positive influence in the world. We should strive to bring joy, hope, and goodness to others. This means living a life of integrity, kindness, and compassion. By being a positive influence, we can make a difference in the lives of those around us. We can choose to stand up for what is right and treat others with respect and fairness. By doing so, we become a source of light in a world that can sometimes be dark and unjust.

The metaphors of salt and light represent the impact Christians are meant to have in the world. As salt, Christians are to make an impact on the world, preserving society from rot and further decay. Jesus challenges us today to inject the society with good deeds, modesty (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9), morality (cf. Eph. 5:3-12), honesty and integrity (cf. Jn. 8:44-47). In calling us "light", John 1:5 reminds us that: "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it". Therefore, the challenge before us is to shine where there is moral and spiritual darkness or even physical or environmental decay.

Jesus taught that we should let our light shine before others so that they may see our good works and glorify God. This reminds us that our actions should reflect the love of God and bring glory to Him. We are called to share the message of love and salvation with others, spreading God's light in a world that often lacks hope. For instance, when we show love and compassion to those in need we demonstrate the love of God and provide a glimpse of His kingdom on earth. By so doing, we become like a beacon of light, guiding others towards the truth and goodness found in Jesus Christ.

The importance of actively living out our faith and making a positive impact in the world cannot be undermined. We are called to be salt that brings flavor and preservation to our communities and societies. For example, by engaging in acts of services, participating in charitable activities of some pious organization like the Legion of Mary, St. Vincent De Paul, etc., and always standing for justice, sincerity and integrity, we can contribute to positive change in the world. By being salt and light in this way, we fulfill our purpose and make a difference in the lives of others. As light of the world, we reflect the Gospel message. The Gospel message is the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. This is the message the Church proclaims, it is the message the world needs to hear in order to function. We must be salt to engage the world, and we must be light to show His Light.

## News

# Ikot Ekpene Diocese @60: Bishop Umoh Raises Existing Quasi Parishes, Autonomous Communities To Full Fledged Parishes - Creates New Autonomous Communities, Quasi Parishes And Parishes

*By Cosmas Essiet*

The Chief Shepherd of Ikot Ekpene Catholic Diocese, His Lordship Most. Rev. Dr. Camillus Raymond Umoh, has raised existing Autonomous Catholic Communities and Quasi Parishes in the Diocese, to the status of full fledged Parishes, while also creating new Autonomous Catholic Communities, Quasi Parishes and Parishes.

The Bishop made this pronouncement Saturday 6th April, 2024, at the St. Anne Cathedral, Ifuho, during the Thanksgiving Mass to conclude the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Diocese.

The creation of new Parishes, according to Umoh, "takes into consideration, not only the demographics, but also the pastoral needs of the faithful... the faithful should understand that, Parish creation is not really about the financial contributions and levies, but it should be open to embrace the Grace which accompanies the exercise". The Parishes are to take off fully after their inauguration.

The following Quasi Parishes and Autonomous Communities were raised to FULL FLEDGED PARISHES:

### ABAK DEANERY

1. St. Anthony's Parish, Obong
2. St. Patrick's Parish, Moron
3. St. Theresa's Parish, Afaha Obong
4. St. Patrick's Parish, Obio Not

### IFUHO DEANERY

1. St. Joseph's Parish, Abiakpo Ntak Inyang
2. Holy Rosary, Ikpe Ikot Nkon
3. St. Francis Xavier, Ikot Osiris

### IKADEANERY

1. St. Bernard's Parish, Ikot Udom
2. St. James Parish, Ikot Osukpong

### INEN DEANERY

1. St. Joseph's Parish, Asakpa

### NTO EDINO DEANERY

1. St. Joseph's Parish, Mbat Esifon
2. St. Mary Parish, Bro EDINO 1

### UKANADEANERY

- Holy Trinity Parish

### URUAAKPAN DEANERY

1. St. Charles Parish, Uwa
  2. St. Anne Parish, Ibiakpan
- The NEWLY CREATED QUASI PARISHES, PARISHES/ACCs are:

### ABAK DEANERY

1. St. John Parish - Oku Abak
2. Holy Trinity Quasi Parish - Atai Itoro
3. St. Thomas ACC - Ikot Oku Mfang

### IFUHO DEANERY

1. St. Mary Parish - Ikot Inyang
2. St. Mary Parish - Atan Ikot Okoro

### NTO EDINO

1. St. Anthony's Parish - Usaka Annang

### UKANADEANERY

1. St. Lucy Parish - Ukana Ikot Ntuen

### URUAAKPAN DEANERY

1. Holy Cross ACC - Ikot Esse
  2. Immaculate Conception Parish - Nto Nsek
  3. St. Joseph Parish - Odoro Ikot (with. entre at Ikot Ebok)
- The Bishop congratulated all the Parishes and mentioned that they would be inaugurated within the course of the year.



**Memories From The Concluding Ceremonies of 60th Anniversary Celebration of Ikot Ekpene Diocese**





## Ifuho Deanery Combine At St. Peter Parish Ifa Nkari Recently



**Memories From The Funeral Of Late Mr. Luke Udoibanga  
The Father of Chairman of Essien Udim L.G.A., Hon. Anthony Luke**



**Memories From CSSIA Borehole And Generator  
Donation By Engr. Ifiok Robert, Recently**



## Catholic Secretariat Of Nigeria, Abuja **COMMUNICATIONS WEEK PROGRAMME**

For celebration in all parishes in Nigeria

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for a fully human communication

**Daily Programme**  
5 May - 12 May, 2024



**DAY ONE:** Sunday 5 May, 2024  
Topic: UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF  
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**DAY TWO:** Monday 6 May, 2024  
Topic: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF AI FOR  
EVANGELISATION

**DAY THREE:** Tuesday 7 May, 2024  
Topic: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE

**DAY FOUR:** Wednesday 8 May, 2024  
Topic: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE OF  
EDUCATION

**DAY FIVE:** Thursday 9 May, 2024  
Theme: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & THE RISK OF  
DEEPFAKES

**DAY SIX:** Friday 10 May, 2024  
Topic: INTRODUCING THE MAGISTERIUM AI

**DAY SEVEN:** Saturday 11 May, 2024  
Topic: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR CATECHESIS

**DAY EIGHT:** Sunday 12 May, 2024  
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# Bigard Memorial Seminary Stops Over At QAS In Centenary Celebration

By Rev Fr Stephen S Udo

Although the students were on Easter break, the atmosphere at Queen of Apostle Seminary (QAS), Afaha Obong came alive with priests and deacons, major seminarians and Seminary formators as well as alumni of the minor Seminary and Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, recently. The occasion was a stopover of Bigard, as part of her celebration of her centenary of existence, at QAS which played host to her during the challenging period of the Nigerian Civil War.

The occasion began with a concelebrated Holy Mass led by the Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Catholic Diocese, Most Rev Camillus Umoh. Welcoming the teaming visitors to the Diocese and the Seminary, the Bishop said that Bigard Memorial Seminary laid the foundation of the spirituality of most of the clergy. In the same vein, Umoh noted that QAS, which was established in 1952 has also laid the foundation for so many religious and diocesan clergy as well as laymen who have gone on to become very influential in the society. He further noted that QAS is one of the three Seminaries in what was the then Calabar Diocese. As such Priests from Ikot Ekpene, Uyo and Calabar dioceses as well as Ogoja, Port Harcourt and some parts of Okigwe and Arochuku were trained in QAS. He mentioned that the first among the priests trained at QAS to be ordained was the Late Fr Joseph Nwankwo of Okigwe Diocese. The bishop mentioned that just as Bigard has done great for the universal Church, QAS has done great for the Church in Nigeria. The clergyman invited all to join in celebrating Bigard Memorial Seminary at 100.

Very Rev Fr Cyril Udouo, himself a proud alumnus of Bigard, who gave the homily at the occasion, went through memory lane by articulating the humble beginnings and struggles of Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu. He mentioned that it is a thing of joy that the Seminary which is one to reckon with in the whole world has reached one hundred years. Fr Udouo said that the celebration was occasioned by the fact that

QAS hosted Bigard during the Civil War under the rectorship of Fr John Dally who was regarded as the civil war rector. He noted that John Dally was the last of the Europeans who were rectors in the Seminary. According to the homilist, Fr Dally would, after securing the continuous existence of the Seminary in different locations during the War, hand over the leadership of the institution to Fr John Ogbonna as the first indigenous rector of the Seminary. And from then the rectorship fell into the hands of indigenous priests. Fr Udouo poured encomium on the various indigenous rectors whom he asserted worked assiduously to promote vocations in Nigeria and other parts of the world. He said: "We give thanks to God for our black brothers who became rectors and supervised, monitored and formed the seminarians to become good priests, bishops and cardinals that they are today". The preacher, who described Bigard as "a great natural home, a family home where everybody feels welcome", noted that the seminary, which is renowned in the whole world, is worth celebrating at any time.

Appreciating the generosity of the donors of the Seminary, mother and daughter Stephanie and Jeanne Bigard, the homilist exhorted all to learn from them, noting that whereas the mother and daughter could have chosen to use their money for any selfish purpose, they showed their generosity by channeling their wealth into mission; they founded an organization and through that organization, donated for the building of the Seminary. He warned against selfishness of some priests and religious who happen to come into fortune through wills and gifts but refuse to use such for the development of the Church, "What do you do with the excess money God has granted you to have? ... But if their wealth was to be used as Bigard and her daughter did, their names would have been written in gold, even if they would not be aware of it".

Fr Udouo charged priests and religious to be generous to the Church because it is the Church that made them what they are and it is the Church that created the opportunity for them to come into whatever

wealth they may have. "Please when fortune smiles at you, be kind to this Church. This Church is good to us. This Church made us what we are today", he enthused.

The Rector of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Very Rev Fr Albert Ikpenwa expressed his joy at the possibility of the visit in the course of the centenary celebration. He thanked the Bishop of the Diocese, Most Rev Camillus Umoh for granting the permission and ensuring that the visit was possibility. He mentioned that QAS gave Bigard refuge when things were tough. Fr Ikpenwa noted that "it is very fundamental that after all these years of going up and down, Bigard should come here and say "Thank you". He counted himself privileged for being the one to bring Bigard to QAS.

The rector further thanked the host rector, Very Rev Fr John Ekanem as well as the Rector of St Joseph Major Seminary, Very Rev Fr Patrick Abem, for the parts they played to make the visit possible. He recognized the presence of the dignitaries there among whom were the president of the Alumni Association of Bigard, Prof Emmanuel Ocheh as well as past rectors and formators who graced the occasion.

Fr Ikpenwa used the occasion to remind the congregants of the grand finale of the celebration which was billed to take place between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2024. He noted that Bigard Memorial Seminary has toured the whole of old Onitsha province.

In his final remarks the Chief Celebrant noted that there are a lot of ex-seminarians who are very useful to the Church. He admonished the seminarians who may not be ordained as priests to be good Christians, supporting the Church and to do all they could to be proud of where they come from. The Bishop, himself an alumnus of the Institution said that the alumni are always very proud of the Seminary.

The occasion came to a conclusion with the symbolic planting of the Jubilee Tree by the Local Ordinary, Most Rev Camillus Umoh.

Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu started as St. Paul Seminary, Onitsha in 1914 with one student and five teachers. From

there the Seminary began its journey which lasted for several years and eventually settled at Enugu in 1951 with its present name. With the decision of Propaganda Fide to build one regional seminary for both Western and Eastern Nigeria, Archbishop Heerey got permission and fund to build one Seminary in the East. Work started at the present site and the seminary was formally opened on March 4, 1951 by the then Delegate to British

East and West Africa, Archbishop David Matthews with the name, Bigard Memorial Seminary in memory of the two French ladies, mother and daughter Stephanie and Jeanne Bigard, foundresses of *Opus Sancti Petri Apostoli* that supplied the funds for the building.

During the War, the Seminary moved to different places and eventually the philosophy students came to Queen of Apostles Seminary, Afaha

Obong. Thus between 1967 and 1968, QAS which was a refugee camp during the challenging period of Nigerian history gave refuge to Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu. Little wonder then the Rector of Bigard stated that their coming to QAS during the celebration of the 100 years of existence was a 'Thank you' visit for the role the minor seminary place in the continuous existence of the Seminary.

## COMWEEK Public Lecture: Catholic Church Partners MTN Nigeria

By Vincent Njoku

In an unprecedented collaboration, the Communications Directorate of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) has joined forces

signifies the Catholic Church in Nigeria's dedication to addressing contemporary issues through the lens of faith. The event is slated for Wednesday, May 8, 2024,

Uche Obodoechina, and Mr. Lekan Otufodunrin.

Anticipation runs high with an expected audience of over 500, encompassing industry leaders, distinguished



with MTN Nigeria, one of Africa's leading communications service providers, to host the inaugural ComWEEK Public Lecture. This year's theme, "Artificial Intelligence: Challenges and Opportunities for Evangelization and Social Development," promises to ignite a conversation at the intersection of technology and faith.

at the CSN Resource Centre, commencing at 10 a.m.. The session will be chaired by the esteemed President of the Senate, His Excellency, Sen. Godswill Obot Akpabio, CON.

The CBCN President, Archbishop Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji, is set to deliver a compelling keynote address, while His

guests, students, media professionals, technology enthusiasts, and church representatives.

According to the National Director of Social Communications for the Catholic Church in Nigeria, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Nsikak Umoh, "this strategic partnership with MTN, a company at

Left-Right: National Director of Social Communications, Rev. Fr. Michael Nsikak Umoh; Broadband Manager, MTN Nigeria, Indagiju Bangoji and Rev. Fr. Lawrence Emehel during the presentation of the 2024 ComWEEK T-shirt



The addition of the public lecture to the annual ComWEEK program

Eminence, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, graces the event as the special guest of honor. The lecture will feature Rev. Fr Prof. Anthony Akinwale, OP, as the main speaker, with insightful contributions from Rev. Sr. Dr. Florence Osho, EHJ, Rev. Fr. Dr.

the forefront of Africa's digital revolution, aims to catalyze a transformative dialogue on the role of technology in faith-based outreach and social development."



## Communion And Mission In The Journey Of Faith in Ikot Ekpene Diocese: A Pastoral letter of His Lordship Most Rev Camillus Umoh on Celebrating The Sixty Years of Existence of Ikot Ekpene Diocese

By Rev Fr Dominic Akpan

During the closing ceremony of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of existence of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, the Local Ordinary, Most Rev Camillus Umoh, presented his second Pastoral Letter, *Communion And Mission In The Journey Of Faith In Ikot Ekpene Diocese*, addressed to all priests, religious and lay people of the Diocese. According to the Bishop the Letter is a working document which shall guide the faithful of Ikot Ekpene diocese after sixty years of existence. Hence the explanatory title: *Pastoral Letter, Celebrating Sixty Years Of The Erection Of The Catholic Diocese Of Ikot Ekpene*. PAX Newspaper sees the need to summaries this Pastoral Letter for the understanding of the faithful while exhorting all to be sure

to purchase copies of the Pastoral Letter, read them with understanding and endeavor to implement the directives there from. We present below, the summary of the Pastoral Letter.

The Booklet, *Communion and Mission in the Journey of Faith in Ikot Ekpene Diocese*, is the second Pastoral Letter of his Lordship, Most Rev. Camillus Raymond Umoh, Catholic Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese. The Letter, divided into five short chapters, and within 43 pages, is addressed to the entire Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of Ikot Ekpene Diocese at the celebration of Sixty Years of the Erection of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene; and was given in Ifuho, at St. Anne Cathedral on 7<sup>th</sup> April, Divine Mercy Sunday, in the year 2024.

In the first chapter, *Sixty Years of Blessings*, the Bishop introduces the letter by calling to mind the very nature of communion and mission and emphasizes that these are "inalienable characteristics constitutive of the nature of the Church" (No. 1). He goes ahead to recount the faith journey in Ikot Ekpene for the past sixty years of her erection as a diocese. The bishop further takes time to highlight various significant events – the First Diocesan Synod in 2003, the First Diocesan General Assembly in 2017 – which formed the build up to the twin celebration of the Second Diocesan Synod and Sixtieth Anniversary celebration of the creation of the diocese. Assessing the successes of these celebrations he expresses his "earnest desire that pastoral ministry and evangelization in our diocese will be carried out with the disposition to foster and sustain ecclesial communion and renew structures and processes that will build up authentic faith in Ikot Ekpene Diocese." (No. 11)

The second chapter of the letter is titled *Communion and Mission in the Church*. It begins with a detailed etymological consideration of 'communion' from the New Testament Biblical perspectives of fellowship, participation and sharing-in; and with these, goes on to demonstrate that communion is a fundamental theme in the entire scripture. It establishes the intimate link between communion and mission of the church which existed right from the times of the early apostles and continues till our time. Significantly, the letter points out various ways of fostering communion and mission, while emphasizing that participating in the sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist, is one of the great ways of exercising and maintaining communion with the Church. Finally, the letter encourages that despite all the obstacles to communion and mission, everyone in the diocese should strive ahead to foster the much desired communion in the Church.

The third and fourth chapters present the appraisal of *Communion and Mission* in Ikot Ekpene Diocese. These chapters highlight the fact that Ikot Ekpene Diocese maintains communion with the Universal Church and among the various hierarchical and pastoral strata within the diocese. The bishop mentions very emphatically that "any pastoral ministry that breaks away from the Church's doctrines and traditions is no longer in communion with the Catholic faith since it is a deviation from what constitutes the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" (No. 29). Hence, every priest, religious, consecrated men and women living and working in the diocese, should, together with the laity, do everything possible to enhance communion in their missionary work in the Diocese. The Letter also pin-points the need for the Diocese to intensify the mission of evangelization of the youths. The Bishop notes this as "an indispensable aspect of mission for the future of the diocese" and that "the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene has a sacred duty to prepare them for the Church of the future" (Nos. 45, 46). This preparation, among other strategies, could mostly be achieved through catechesis and also training the youths in responsible use of the media.

The fifth and last chapter of the letter is a very short one. It is on *Journeying together as a Family of God*. In this very brief section, the bishop encourages all members of the diocese to continue working in collaboration. He notes that "united with one mind and heart, and working together in love as a family, every segment of the faithful will come to know that they are not competitors, each with selfish agenda, but collaborators in one church but different vocations, building up the Kingdom of God" (No. 51). He further emphasizes the need to harness the various gifts and charisms, as evident in the diverse vocations within the Diocese, such that all will be able to preserve and handover the faith given to us by our forebears. Hence, it will be a thing of great joy to hand over the same undiluted faith to those coming after us. The Bishop ends the letter by invoking the maternal protection and intercession of Our Blessed Mother Mary, the Lady of Ifuho, as well as the patronage of Saints Philip and James and the guidance of the Holy Spirit on all as the Diocese begins a new phase in cooperation and collaboration on communion and mission to the glory of God.

## 'DIGNITAS INFINITA': The Latest Document Of The Catholic Church On Transgenderism, Abortion, Surrogacy, Euthanasia, Etc.

Rev. Fr. David Okolie

Dearest friends, just early this month, precisely, April 2, 2024, the Vatican published a POWERFUL document which unambiguously affirms the position of the Catholic Church on the recent ideological trends of our world; namely: Transgenderism, Abortion, Surrogacy, Euthanasia, etc. I have decided to summarise the document so that all of us would have the knowledge of the TRUTH and also share it with many persons out there who are really searching for the TRUTH. Below is the summary of the document:

The document is entitled 'DIGNITAS INFINITA' and was published by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) with the approval of Pope Francis. It took about FIVE years (2019-2024) to draft the document. The document establishes and defends the INFINITE DIGNITY of every human person. This DIGNITY, according to the document, transcends every circumstance, situation and limitation in life.

The document goes on to affirm that this DIGNITY is hinged on the fact that every human person is deliberately and unconditionally Willed, Created and Loved by God; is further Redeemed in Jesus Christ and is destined to fellowship with God in knowledge and love of Him (cf. nn. 1, 11, 18-20). It maintains that every human person

fits into the above; thus, even an unborn child, an unconscious person, poverty stricken person, an elderly person, an outcast, the oppressed, the unlearned, the sick, the downtrodden, the imprisoned, etc. are NOT excluded (cf. nn. 9, 12).

Making allusion to the 1948 United Nations Declaration which speaks about the inherent dignity and inalienable right of the human person, 'Dignitas infinita' upholds that: \*Only this inalienable character of HUMAN DIGNITY that makes it possible to speak about human rights.\* On the other hand, the document frowns at the justification of the ARBITRARY proliferation of new RIGHTS which it traces its cause to the MISUSE of the concept of DIGNITY (cf. n. 25).

The document goes on to acknowledge the fact that FREEDOM is a marvelous GIFT from God. The Freedom of the human person is guaranteed by the DIGNITY inherent in his/her person and one's attachment to God. Thus, our Freedom becomes WEAKENED and OBSCURED when we DETACH ourselves from the Creator. The document termed as a GRAVE ERROR, the contrary view that holds that: the more we distance ourselves from God, the freer we become (cf. n. 30).

The document, in strong language, decried every human action that violates the HUMAN

DIGNITY. Thus, it goes on to address, with clear and detailed arguments the following GRAVE VIOLATIONS of the Human Dignity:

1. The Drama of Poverty
2. War
3. The Travail of Migrants
4. Human Trafficking
5. Sexual Abuse
6. Violence Against Women
7. Abortion
8. Surrogacy
9. Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide
10. The Marginalization of People with Disabilities
11. Gender Theory
12. Sex Change
13. Digital Violence (cf. nn. 32-62)

Worthy of note in the above is the the document's unambiguous affirmation that "SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD represents a GRAVE VIOLATION of the DIGNITY of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of the mother's material needs" (cf. n. 48). It goes on to declare that: GENDER THEORY intends to deny the greatest possible difference that exists between living beings, that is, SEXUAL DIFFERENCE. It sees such ERRONEOUS IDEOLOGY as amounting to a concession to the temptation to make oneself God, thereby entering into competition with true GOD (cf. n. 57). Quite timely is the document's BOLD definition of 'PROCURED ABORTION' as: 'the

deliberate and direct KILLING, by whatever means it is carried out, of a HUMAN BEING in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth". Consequently, Human Beings are ENDS in themselves and never a MEANS of resolving other problems (cf. n. 47).

In fact, the SERIOUSNESS of all the above GRAVE VIOLATIONS of the Human Dignity which a number of persons and institutions are promoting, was powerfully expressed by the document when it invokes the Word of God uttered through the Prophet Isaiah thus: "WOE to those who call EVIL Good and GOOD Evil, who put DARKNESS for Light and LIGHT for Darkness" (cf. Is 5:20, DIn. 47).

In conclusion, the document urges that Respect for the DIGNITY of the Human Person beyond all circumstances be placed at the center of the commitment to the Common Good and at the center of every Legal System. Thus, the above is the only BASIS for the existence of any society that claims to be founded on JUST LAW and not on the Force of Power (cf. n. 64).

We pray that the Blessed Virgin Mary would obtain for all of us the grace to always reject the attraction and hedonistic gains that are often the ground on which all the above GRAVE VIOLATIONS of the Human Dignity thrive. Amen.



cont'd from last Edition

# DIVINE MERCY MESSAGE AND DEVOTION

The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day are opened all the divine floodgates through which graces flow. Let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet.

My mercy is so great that no mind, be it of man or of angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity.

The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My mercy.

Our Lord's explicit desire is that this feast be celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. This Sunday is designated in "The Liturgy of the Hours and the Celebration of the Eucharist" as the "Octave Day of Easter". It was officially called the Second Sunday of Easter after the liturgical reform of Vatican II. Now, by the Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the name of this liturgical day has been changed to: "Second Sunday of Easter, or Divine Mercy Sunday".

Our Lord's promise to grant complete forgiveness of sins and punishment on the Feast of Mercy is recorded three times in the *Diary of St. Faustina*, each time in a slightly different way:

**I want to grant a complete pardon to the souls that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on the feast of My mercy (1109).**

**Whoever approaches the Fountain of Life on this day will be granted complete forgiveness of sins and punishment (300).**

**The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion will obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment (699).**

## How do we Prepare ourselves Properly for the Celebration of the Feast of Mercy?

Going to Confession is not the only way we should prepare ourselves for Divine Mercy Sunday. As Cardinal Francis Macharski, Archbishop of Cracow, Poland, explains in a 1985 pastoral letter, we are not simply called to ask for God's mercy with trust. We are also called to be merciful:

"Our own merciful attitude is likewise a preparation. Without deeds of mercy, our devotion would not be real. For Christ does not only reveal the mercy of God, but at the same time He places before people the demand that they conduct themselves in life with love and mercy. The Holy Father states that this requirement constitutes the very heart of the Gospel ethos (*Rich in Mercy*, 3) — it is the commandment of love and the promise: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Mt 5:7). Let it be a mercy that is forgiving and true, and universal, with good words, deeds, and prayer for others!" Our Lord's words to St. Faustina about this requirement to be merciful are very strong and leave no room for misinterpretation:

**Yes, the first Sunday after Easter is the feast of Mercy, but there must also be acts of**



By Prof. Michael Ogunu

mercy. ... I demand from you deeds of mercy, which are to arise out of love for Me. You are to show mercy to your neighbours always and everywhere. You must not shrink from this or try to excuse or absolve yourself from it (742).

Thus, to fittingly observe the Feast of Mercy, we should:

1. **Celebrate the Feast** on the Sunday after Easter;
2. **Sincerely repent** of all our sins;
3. Place our **complete trust** in Jesus;
4. **Go to Confession**, preferably before that Sunday;
5. Receive **Holy Communion** on the day of the Feast;
6. **Venerate the Image** of The Divine Mercy;
7. **Be merciful** to others, through our actions, words, and prayers on their behalf.

## The Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Our Lord also taught Sr. Faustina to say the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, adding that the Chaplet was not for herself alone but for the whole world. The Chaplet is said as follows, using the normal Rosary Chaplet: Begin with the **Our Father**, then **Hail Mary** and **I Believe in God**. On the large bead before each decade (of the Rosary), say this prayer:

**Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.**

On the small beads of each decade say: **For the sake of His' sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.**

After the five decades, conclude with: **Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world. (Three times)**

Our Lord told Sr. Faustina: **"Encourage souls to say the Chaplet which I have given you" (1541). Whoever will recite it will receive great mercy at the hour of death (687). Through Chaplet, you will obtain everything if what you ask for is compatible with my will (1731).**

## Novena to the Divine Mercy

On Good Friday, 1937, Jesus requested that St. Faustina make a special novena before the Feast of Mercy, from Good Friday through the following Saturday. He, Himself, dictated the intentions for

each day. By means of a specific prayer she was to bring to His Heart a different group of souls each day and thus immerse them in the ocean of His mercy, begging the Father — on the strength of Jesus' Passion — for graces (for them. (See *Diary*, 1209). Prayers of the Novena to the Divine Mercy can be found in any Divine Mercy prayer book in every Catholic bookshop.

## The Hour of Great Mercy

In His revelations to St. Faustina, Our Lord asked for special prayer and meditation on His Passion each afternoon at the three o'clock hour, the hour that recalls His death on the cross.

**At three o'clock, implore My mercy, especially for sinners; and, if only for a brief moment, immerse yourself in My Passion, particularly in My abandonment at the moment of agony. This is the hour of great mercy. ... In this hour I will refuse nothing to the soul that makes a request of Me in virtue of My Passion (Diary, 1320).**

**As often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; invoke its omnipotence for the whole world, and particularly for poor sinners; for at that moment mercy was opened wide for every soul. In this hour you can obtain everything for yourself and for others for the asking; it was the hour of grace for the whole world — mercy triumphed over justice. ...**

**My daughter, try your best to make the Stations of the Cross in this hour, provided that your duties permit it; and if you are not able to make the Stations of the Cross, then at least step into the chapel for a moment and adore, in the Most Blessed Sacrament, My Heart, which is full of mercy; and should you be unable to step into chapel, immerse yourself in prayer there where you happen to be, if only for a very brief instant (1572).**

From these detailed instructions, it's clear that Our Lord wants us to turn our attention to His Passion at the three o'clock hour to whatever degree our duties allow, and He wants us to ask for His mercy.

Little Prayers recommended for use at the Hour of Great Mercy are the following:

**You expired Jesus, but the source of life gushed forth for souls, and the ocean of mercy opened up for the whole world. O Fountain of Life, unfathomable Divine Mercy, envelop the whole world and empty Yourself out upon us (1319).**

**O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You (84).**

## Living the Message of Mercy

The devotional practices revealed through St. Faustina were given to us as "vessels of mercy" through which God's love can be poured out upon the world, but they are not sufficient unto themselves. It's not enough for us to hang The Divine Mercy Image in our homes, pray the Chaplet every day at three o'clock, and receive Holy Communion on the first Sunday after Easter. We also have to show mercy to our neighbours. *Putting mercy into action is not an option of the Divine Mercy message and devotion; it's a requirement!*



# Ami Ndi Eyen Katholik Series

## EHB, 78:Ukpōñ mi otoro Oboñ (My Soul magnifies the Lord)

Chorus: [s/ m:-, m: m/r: m: f:m :-:/  
s/ m:-, m: m/r: m: f:m :-:/]

Ukpōñ mi otoro Oboñ  
Spirit mi oyūñ adara  
Ke andinyaña mi, adara ke andinyaña mi

1. Koro enye okutde nsuhoridem ofun anwan esie  
Ndien tōñ k'emi kpukpru emana eyekot mi edisana
2. Koro Enye emi enyenede odudu anam mme akwa ñkpō qnō mi  
Ndien Enyīñ Esi eedi-Edisana (Chorus).
3. Ñko mbom Esie oto ke emana kiet tutu osim emana efen  
qnō kpukpru mmō eke efehede Enye (Chorus).
4. Enye owut odudu ke ubok Esie  
Enye asuan mbon asian ke ntañ-idem esit mmō(Chorus).

In the May 2023 edition, we reflected on the Easter Marian Antiphon *Obong awan Enyong, Dara (Regina Caeli, Laetare)*, a composition of Late Rev. Fr. Gerald Etim (1956-2010). This year, without prejudice to the Pentecost Celebration which falls within the month of May, we have decided to reflect on the Marian hymn *Ukpōñ mi otoro Oboñ (My Soul magnifies the Lord)* in a view to promoting the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary during May devotion.

*Ukpōñ mi otoro Oboñ (My Soul magnifies the Lord)* was composed in 1970 by Late Archbishop Brian Davies Usanga, Late Fr. Justin S. Ukpōng and Msgr. Dominic Ekeng Inyang, of the then Catholic Diocese of Calabar. In the Hymn Book, the hymn is signed with the code "U.I.U." which, from our research, stands to indicate the surnames of the composers: *Usanga, Inyang and Ukpōng* (U.I.U.). This same team also composed Hymn no. 79 – *Andikpon nkan Oboñ bō enō emi* (Accept this gift, Almighty God) in the same year, 1970.

The Biographical details of these three personalities could produce volumes of publications, which is, however, beyond the scope of the present reflection. Late Archbishop Usanga was born on October 24, 1928; ordained a Catholic Priest on December 8, 1956, became Auxiliary Bishop of Calabar Diocese on December 4, 1966; appointed Bishop of Calabar Diocese on February 5, 1970 and Archbishop of Calabar Archdiocese on May 26, 1994. He retired on December 17, 2003 and passed on to glory on May 26, 2005. Archbishop Usanga, a zealous composer of Efik hymns, has been described as "a man with a heart of gold for the flock of Christ entrusted to his care" (Cfr. C. O. Etim, 2021).

Fr. (Prof.) Justin S. Ukpōng, of Blessed Memory, was born on December 26, 1940. He is one of the pioneers of African Biblical Scholarship and, precisely, the pioneer of Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutics (Cfr. J. Akpan, 2021; J. Lobe-Mkole, 2007). He also composed a good number of Efik hymns. Prof. Ukpōng lectured in various continents of the world. He spent almost two decades at

5. Enye odorode mbon odudu efep ke ifum Itie mmō  
Enye ndien emenede – mbon nsuhoridem (Chorus).
6. Enye anam mbon oboñ eyuhō ye nti ñkpō  
Ndien Enye ebinm me Imo enyōñ ubok-ubok (Chorus).
7. Enye ama okot ofin Esie Israel ada  
Ke emi Enye eti-de - mbom Esie (Chorus).
8. Nte Enye eketiñde qnō mme Ete nnyin ye Abraham  
Onyūñ etiñde qnō mfri Esie ke nsi nsi(Chorus).
9. Yak itoro enyene, Ete ye Eyen  
Ye Edisana Spirit, owo ita ke Abasi kiet (Chorus).
10. Nte ekedide ke editōñ, edi ntre idaha emi  
Edinyūñ edide ntre ke nsi-nsi, nsi-nsi, Amen  
(Chorus).

the Department of Biblical Theology at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Nigeria, both as Head of Department and a Senior Lecturer. In 2007, He was appointed Vice Chancellor of Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria. He equally published numerous works both within and outside Nigeria. Prof. Ukpōng died on December 16, 2011. He lives on in his works as he continues to be a distinguished voice in African Biblical Scholarship.

Msgr. Dominic Ekeng Inyang, originally of Calabar Diocese, once the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariate of Nigeria, Lagos, is also a prominent composer of Efik hymns. He came from a Methodist family. He became Catholic, thanks to his sister who was schooling at Holy Child Convent School, Ifuho and Fr. Mahoney, then Parish Priest of Christ the King Church, Aba, who eventually directed the young Ekeng to Fr. Dominic Ignatius Ekandem (later Cardinal Dominic Ekandem) in 1950. Ekeng went further to discern his vocation to the Catholic priesthood which led him to Queen of Apostles Seminary, Afaha Obong, thanks to the inspiration of Fr. Dominic Ignatius Ekandem and Fr. Patrick Kivlehan, the then parish priest of Ifuho, commonly known as *Fr. Una Eka* (a priest without a mother) since he adopted the Blessed Virgin Mary as his mother. (Cfr. M. I. Edem, CM, 2018). Fr. Inyang was sent to Abuja by Bishop Usanga at the request of Cardinal Ekandem. He, Fr. Inyang, Fr. Matthew Kukah (now bishop) and two HHCJ Sisters (Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus) – Sr Theresa Nwanuro and Sr Mary Tuku – were among the first collaborators of Cardinal Ekandem in the Independent Mission of Abuja which was established on November 6, 1981. They joined his team in 1982. This Independent Mission was raised to the status of a Diocese on June 11, 1989 and then Archdiocese on March 26, 1994. Msgr. Dominic Inyang was the first Vicar General of Abuja.

*Ukpōñ mi otoro Oboñ*, which is one of the Efik versions of the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1:46-55), reflects Mary's song of praise at the visitation scenario. The Efik melody is very solemn and it evokes the humility of the Virgin Mary.

The composers are careful not to scatter the Scriptural arrangement of the verses; thus, each verse of the hymn corresponds to a verse in the Gospel pericope of the Magnificat. The 10 verses (46-55) of the Magnificat in Luke 1 make up the chorus and 8 verses of this hymn. The 9th and 10th verses are the doxology, rendering praises to the Blessed Trinity.

This great canticle of praise, deeply rooted in the Old Testament (1 Sam 2:1-10), also presents the Blessed Virgin Mary as the New Ark of the Covenant. Being the mother of Jesus, who is the Bread that has come down from heaven (John 6), Mary is also the new ark of the covenant. And this is one of the titles of the Blessed Virgin in the Litany of Loreto. The Ark of the Covenant was described as the "dwelling place of God on earth" (Ex. 25). It was to be made of an incorruptible wood and covered in pure gold; its contents were: the stone tablets containing the 10 commandments, the Bread of the Presence and the golden Staff of Moses. It was here that the glory of God (*Kabod*), the cloud, was to descend from heaven. Allegorically, the visitation of Mary (the New Ark of the Covenant) to Elizabeth could be read in line with the presentation of the Old Ark of the Covenant before David. Thus, just as *David arose and went to the hill country of Judah* to bring up the Ark of God (2Sam 6:2), *Mary arose and went into the hill country of Judah* to visit Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39); just as *David asked why, despite his unworthiness, he was to receive the Ark* by exclaiming: *How can the ark of the Lord come to me?* (2 Sam 6:9), *Elizabeth asked why* she was to play host to the Blessed Virgin Mary who, like the Ark, bore God's presence – the Child Jesus in her womb – by exclaiming: *And why is it granted to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Lk 1:43); as *David leaped* before the Ark as it was brought in *with shouting* (2Sam 6: 15-16), *John leaped* in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's voice and Elizabeth cried *with a loud shout* (Lk 1:41-42); and while the Ark remained in the hill country, in the house of Obed-Edom, *three months* (2Sam 6:11), Mary remained in the hill country, in Elizabeth's house, *three months* (Lk. 1:56)(Cfr. B. Pitre, 2018).

It is important that, as we sing *Ukpōñ mi otoro Oboñ*, we not only understand the background, but also become "people of the Magnificat." As Christians carrying Jesus in the world, we are to transmit joy to those we meet. More so, that this hymn is a collective work of three scholars teaches that we can achieve so much together! May this religious/cultural patrimony inspire us to collaborate and cooperate in the service of evangelisation. Amen.

## Vatican Again Commends CBCN on ComWeek, Extols CATHAN's Contributions

By J. P. Usanga

The Vatican has once again commended the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for its efforts in organizing the Communications Week (ComWeek) in Nigeria. Through a letter to the National Director of Social Communications, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Nsikak Umoh, the Vatican lauded the CBCN's dedication to enhancing media literacy among Nigerian Catholics.

While appreciating the "2024 Comweek" vest that was presented to him by Bishop David Ajang in November 2023, the Prefect

of the Dicastery for Social Communication, Dr. Paolo Ruffini, expressed his enthusiasm for Nigeria's readiness to host the third ComWeek from May 5th to 12th, 2024. The event will span Catholic parishes, seminaries, convents, schools, and other institutions. He noted that this year's theme, "Artificial Intelligence and the Wisdom of the Heart: Towards a Fully Human Communication," resonates with Pope Francis' vision of leveraging artificial intelligence to bolster human interaction.

Additionally, the

Vatican's correspondence commended the 38th Annual Conference communiqué of CATHAN, titled "Theology, Culture, and New Media in Nigeria." It recognized the pivotal role of digital media in transformation and called for a collaborative effort between theologians and communication experts to devise ethical policies for digital media utilization.

Communications Week, an initiative by the CBCN, is now in its third year and serves as an extension of the one-day World Communication Day (WCD). It begins the

Sunday prior to WCD and concludes on WCD Sunday. Participants, including parishes, seminaries, convents, and Catholic families, are encouraged to engage with the teachings provided in the manual from the National Directorate of Social Communications.

A novel feature of this year's ComWeek is a public lecture scheduled for May 8th, 2024, at the CSN Resource Center in Abuja. The lecture, titled "Artificial Intelligence: Challenges and Opportunities for Evangelisation and Social Development," will be

accessible to the public via the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria's YouTube channel. The CBCN President, Most Rev. Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji is set to deliver the keynote address, with John Cardinal Onaiye

k a n attending as the Special Guest of Honor. The e-leader paper will be presented by Rev. Fr.

Professor Anthony Akinwale, OP, with Sr. Dr. Florence Oso, EHJ, Mr. Lekan Otufodunrin, and Rev. Fr. Dr. Uche Obodoechina joining the panel discussion.





# CSSIA Smiles as Engr. Ifiok Robert Comes To The Rescue, Donates Borehole And Generator To School

*By Oliver Essien and Gabriel Ekanem*

The joys of the students, staff and the entire community of Comprehensive Secondary School Ikpe Annang knew no bounds as they witnessed the commissioning of a new Borehole project donated to the school by an illustrious son of the area, Engr Ifiok Robert of Ikot Akpan Village in Essien Udim Local Government Area.

The Principal of the School, Mrs. Ini Godwin Ibanga in her welcome address expressed her joy and gratitude on behalf of the school, and noted that the water project came at a time when the school most needed it. She lauded the effort of the donor for single-handedly providing the water borehole to the institution, noting that the gift would make life more comfortable in the school as the students would no longer have to scamper elsewhere for water for needed purposes.

Mrs. Ini Ibanga called on cable sons and daughters of Ikpe Annang to emulate the gestures of the donor and join hands to develop the school. She noted that the school still needs a computer laboratory which will go a long way to prepare the students for CBT exams like JAMB as well as reduce the cost of typing and documentation in the school. The Principal concluded her remark by admonishing the community to treasure their sons and daughters such as Engr Ifiok Robert, noting the donor is indeed a rare gem in the clan.

It should be noted that since 2018, the school had been deprived of water facilities which had contributed to challenge the welfare of both students and staff.

In his remarks, the PTA Chairman, Hon Imo Etim, himself the Vice Chairman of Essien Udim Local Government Transition Committee, described the day as a remarkable one for him and his colleagues because when they were elected as members of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in charge of the school, one of the major problems they spotted that required urgent attention was a toilet facility as he was wondering how and where the Students relieved themselves anytime they were pressed in such situation. He said that the project, executed in its uniqueness, is a testament to the fact that people who still believe in moving Ikpe Annang forward do exist and he is not, and will never be disappointed by his people. He gave God all the Glory and charged everybody to continue to pray for the Clan as a people. The Chairman went on to thank the Donor for honoring him and his team with the magnificent effort he puts into the project while pledging to give his utmost best in protecting all the facilities and in running the affairs of the institution.

The Clan Head of Ikpe Annang HRH Okuku Etim Udokong whose heart was filled with joy could not control his emotions, leading him to fervently recite biblical verses, including the affirmation that says, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life" (Psalm 26:6). He admonished capable Sons and Daughters of Ikpe Annang to emulate the kind gesture of Engr. Ifiok with the calculated approach in targeting numerous problems in the perennially struggling Community.

In his Response, Engr Ifiok Robert said that he owed gratitude to God for his achievements. In his words, "Man owes

humanity to make the environment better than he met it." He highlighted the need for individuals to impact humanity by adopting a Nazarite-like behavior, being prepared to support and endure with others in all circumstances.

He commended the project director, Arc Etoro Goodnews, who effectively utilized the available resources, leading to the tremendous success of the project even as he charged the host community, students, management, and staff of the institution to diligently safeguard every facility within the school premises for its sustainability.

Engr Ifiok Robert maintained that one does not need to hold a position in government to make a positive impact on the society and his people. He further donated a brand new generator set to be used in pumping the water as well as cash to fuel the generator for a long period. It should be noted that, barely few month back, the Engineer had donated solar lamps to the senior students of the school through his NGO, even though he himself could not be physically present.

The Parish Priest of Assumption Parish Ikpe Annang, Very Rev. Fr. Stephen S. Udo, who is also a staff of the school blessed the project before the

official hand over to the school authority amidst the joys and jubilations of both staff and students.

The donor called upon his senior colleague and friend, the Chairman NSE Akwa Ibom State Chapter. Engr. Uwem Akpan to officially commission and hand over the borehole and the generating set to the School Authority. The occasion featured entertaining welcome song by the School Choir.

The occasion witnessed the presence of the Clan Head of Ikpe Annang, HRH Okuku Etim Udokong, the Chairman of Ikpe Annang Development Association, Elder Daniel Udoh, and his vice, Elder Ebuk Idung as well as the PTA Chairman, Hon Imoh Etim alongside his Committee members. Others were Hon Anietie Ekong, member, Essien Udim Transition Committee as well as a cross section of the management, staff and



## Ifuho Deanery Combine: Help Others To Grow - Bishop Umoh Charges Christians

*By Barnabas Avule*

Ifuho Deanery in the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, held her deanery combine service at St. Peter parish Ifa Nkari recently.

Led by the Bishop, Most. Rev. Camillus R. Umoh, the Dean of the Deanery, Very Rev. Fr. John Bosco Ekanem together with other priests, religious and Lay faithful gathered at St. Peter Quasi Parish, IfaNkari for the Deanery combined Mass and solidarity visit to Nkari.

In his Homily, the Bishop, Most Rev Camillus Umoh who was also the Chief Celebrant at the Eucharistic Celebration, admonished Christian to help others to grow without the fear of domination. The Chief Shepherd laid the emphasis on the need to imitate the life of St. Barnabas who was able and humble enough to identify the gift and grace in Paul, "the new convert". He noted that Barnabas was able to help Paul grow without any prejudice by introducing him to the Apostle and the congregation of believers. The Bishop in his teaching, warned against the mentality of thinking that the Church starts and end with one individual, stating that the Church, our society, family or places of work can function with or without us. The Homilist finally, encouraged all priests and religious as well as the lay faithful to always have the will to help one another whenever the need arises. In his word; "always leave your comfort zone to identify with others and share in their pains and joys, understand them and know their plight; and most importantly, help when necessary. By our visit to Ifa Nkari, we

bring Christ here and with the present of Christ, this place will grow".

Bishop Umoh conferred the sacrament of confirmation to 14 candidates and prayed God to pour His Holy Spirit on them to help them live out the Christian calling. Bishop Umoh also, thanked the Parish Priest of St. Peter Ifa Nkari, Rev. Fr. Joseph Idiong for his patience and resilience for working tirelessly for about 10 years in the place and advised others to emulate the clergy. Finally, the Chief Shepherd appreciate all present and charge them on the need to continuously, love God in their neighbor.

In his remark, the Dean of Ifuho Deanery Very Rev. Fr. John Bosco Ekanem thanked the Bishop for coming to celebrate with them and all the clergy presents and entire Lay faithful for their show of faith and charged them to continue in this art of love.

The event featured the Holy Mass, Sacrament of

Confirmation and launching for the ongoing church building project of St. Peter IfaNkari.

Those present in the events were the Dean of the Deanery Very, Rev. Fr. John Bosco Ekanem, the Cathedral Administrator, Very, Rev. Fr. Dr. Christopher Umoh, all Parish Priests and their Assistants within the deanery, Religious as well as the Lay faithful of the Deanery.





# Finidi George Appointed As Super Eagles Coach



Development Committee to appoint former ace winger Finidi George as Head Coach of the Senior Men National Football Team, Super Eagles."

George, who served as assistant to former coach Jose Peseiro for 20 months, assumed interim leadership of the senior national team in March.

The Enyimba gaffer oversaw the Super Eagles' two friendly matches against Ghana and Mali in Morocco.

In the first match against Ghana, George's squad secured a historic victory, defeating the Black Stars 2-1 and breaking an 18-year winless streak against the formidable opponent.

However, in the subsequent game against Mali, the team faced a setback, losing 0-2.

George, a prominent figure from Nigeria's renowned 'Golden Generation,' notably clinched the Africa Cup of Nations title in 1994 and represented Nigeria in the FIFA World Cup finals in the same year, where the team emerged as the second most entertaining side in their debut appearance.

With 62 caps for Nigeria, George's illustrious career spans multiple tournaments, including the FIFA World Cup and AFCON, where he amassed gold, silver, and bronze medals across various editions from 1992 to 2002.



## Favour Ofili: Speed Sensation Threatens Blessing Okagbare's National Record With Blistering 10.78w

Favour Ofili threatened Blessing Okagbare's Nigerian Record, as well as winning the 200m and 4x100m events at the LSU Invitational.

Another meet and more great performances from Nigeria's rising track star Favour Ofili, who stormed to a world-leading, all-conditions time of 10.78s (+2.2), stadium record in the 200m, and an impressive 4x100m anchor leg run at the LSU Invitational.

Her time would have broken Blessing Okagbare's National Record of 10.79s but for the slightly excessive wind reading, thus making it illegal.

Notwithstanding, it is the second-fastest by a Nigerian female sprinter after the legendary Okagbare's 10.72s (+2.7) and ahead of Rosemary Chukwuma's 10.82s (+2.6).

The former Louisiana State University (LSU) standout college athlete matched world-renowned sprinter Aleia Hobbs stride for stride until the finish line. However, the American was given the win for a faster reaction time of 0.002s, despite both clocking the same time.

Her performance came just a few minutes after a brilliant anchor leg run in the women's 4x100m event, where she ran down the top two leading runners to claim victory for Tiger Olympians in 43.26s.

Then coming back for her third race at the same meet, the 21-year-old clocked an effortless Stadium Record of 22.34s (-0.2) to win the 200m event.

Ofili has been in impeccable form this season, starting the year with a 300m African Record (AR) of 35.99s to smash A mantle Montsho's 14-year-old previous time of 36.33s.

A few weeks later, she stormed to the second-fastest 100m season opener by a Nigerian athlete in history behind Okagbare, with a then-all conditions world lead of 10.85s - all these in her first season as a professional athlete.

And then the icing on the cake this season so far was blazing to a legal 22.33s to win the women's 200m elite event at the Tom Jones Invitational - a time fast enough to punch her automatic ticket to the Paris Olympic Games.

By doing this, she became Nigeria's first female qualifier in the sprints, and definitely in that form to qualify in the 100m as well.

Ofili is a star sprinter on a mission this season and with the progress she has been making in each of her races, she's primed for more success, which can include a Diamond League debut win to announce herself among the world's best sprinters.

Finidi George has been appointed as the new coach of the Super Eagles.

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) announced George's appointment on Monday in

a statement on its official website.

The statement reads in part, "The Board of Nigeria Football Federation on Monday approved the recommendation of its Technical and

## "The President is capable" - Ex-NFF Boss Amaju Pinnick Denies influencing Finidi George's appointment

Former Nigeria Football Federation President Amaju Pinnick has stated that he did not force the current board to appoint Finidi George as the new Super Eagles coach, Soccernet.ng reports.

On Monday, the NFF announced the appointment of Finidi as Super Eagles coach, two months after Jose Peseiro left the position.

Recall that after Peseiro left the Super Eagles coaching position, the NFF opened applications for the post and appointed Finidi as interim coach. He led the Super Eagles in the last international break when they played Ghana and Mali. At the time, it was reported that Finidi and Emmanuel Amuneke were the two major indigenous coaches in

contention for the post.

Former NFF boss Pinnick even came out to openly endorse Finidi, a move that was somewhat indicative of the NFF's decision.

Following Finidi's appointment, there have been talks that Pinnick forced the current NFF board's decision because of his bias. However, in a recent interview, the FIFA chief denied influencing the Ibrahim Gusau-led board.

"The president (Ibrahim Gusau) is very capable, always working round the clock," Pinnick told Lagos Talks FM.

"What I observed is that Nigerians don't like to see peace in

Nigerian football, they don't like synergy. If I have a good synergy with my successor, I don't think there's any reason to say that I'm the one that chose Finidi George. Why should I be? Gusau was a key member in (Aminu) Maigari's regime. Then in my own regime, he was very cardinal. He understands the dynamics, the theatrics,

the politics, the game. And he's an accountant, very prudent, so people should not just say things."

It is understood that Gusau and Pinnick have a good relationship and have worked together in the football scene for years. Meanwhile, despite announcing Finidi as coach, the NFF are yet to reveal the details of the deal.







# PAX Newspaper

...Peace on earth to men of goodwill

ISSN: 2141-8586 Vol. 5 No. 5, May, 2024

## Poverty And The Politics Of Palliatives

reliefs in the face of suffering and sickness.

In both social and the main media, we hear of palliative distributions in the form of foodstuffs or money. Government media, both at the State and the Federal levels continue to announce distributions and beneficiaries of these palliatives. Yet what percentage of the suffering masses has been touched or benefit from these measures is a talk for another day. Who and who have benefited from them are questions that one needs to research to discover.

Palliatives should address the condition of the poor civil servant whose income which depends mostly on the salary cannot meet the demands of the rising cost of living. There are also the poor unemployed citizens who may be in towns or villages struggling to make ends meet. It is this group more than any other that engages most in criminality. However, it is supposed that palliative measures aimed at this group may reduce the tendency of crimes among them. The rising cost of living is felt in all parts of the country including the rural villages. It is true that most of the agricultural produce consumed in the country comes from the rural dwellers. But the rising cost of living affects food production and in turn makes live very difficult in the rural setting.

It is proper and desirable for government to provide relief to her citizens in the form of palliatives during economic turmoil such that Nigeria is now facing. Such interventions are meant to ease the financial and social burdens, particularly for the vulnerable segments of society. The government palliative strategy should take into cognizance the different categories of people impacted by the economic challenges occasion by the indices of insecurity and subsidy removal which birth the rising cost of living, and therefore design different interventions for the different categories persons impacted.

Unfortunately, it was clear that when President Bola Tinubu came into power, and suddenly announced the withdrawal of subsidy on PMS, he had no thought-out plan on how to deal with the consequences of that action. The fallouts threw much confusion in the land and pushed many more people below the poverty line.

Nigeria has recorded instances where government palliatives appear to be more like insult and harassments than aids to the citizens. The struggling and scrambling for food which were witnessed in the nation at the beginning months of this year was an abuse that inadvertently undermining the dignity and autonomy of the very citizens they are intended to help. Bags of rice, cartons of indomie and other food items were distributed to the citizens at the beck and call of one politician or another without coherent plans not soliciting the opinions of the citizens. How could a community share few bags of rice? Who would get and who would not? How long would a share even last a household? Issues like these occasioned the looting of warehouses and the scrambling for food stuff which resulted in loss of lives of citizens.

Not only is it that the Tinubu Administration have taken a piecemeal intervention by the palliative distribution system, the administration is yet to put in place the right economic structures and systems to address the present economic challenges and poverty reduction in the nation. Governor Duoye Diri of Bayelsa State hit the nail on the head in his Easter message when he stated that the "offering of palliatives was not the lasting solution to the economic hardship in the country."

It has been reported in many quarters that some politicians hoard these palliatives and use them to settle cronies or for some selfish ends not excluding buying the conscience of the masses during electioneering periods. The Punch Newspaper reported that During the COVID-19 palliatives-sharing program, food items were thrown at Nigerians. Huge amounts

of food items meant to be shared were hoarded by government officials, politicians and their cronies, triggering looting, stampede, injuries, and deaths. The Punch further reported that In January, EFCC summoned the former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Sadiya



By Fr. Stephen S. Udoh

Faruq, for questioning over the alleged mismanagement of N37.1 billion allocated to social intervention funds during her tenure. That same month witnessed the suspension of Betta Edu, her successor on corruption allegations.

While it must be conceded that the present government of President Tinubu is doing all it can to alleviate the sufferings of the masses through the provision of these palliatives, it must be noted that some politicians and their cronies across all parties and states are thwarting the efforts of the presidency through corrupt practices. It has been opined that these palliatives are hoarded in view of future elections, where the conscience of the masses would be bought.

The truth is that electoral power resides in the masses; they hold the ace of electoral victory where elections count. But unfortunately, in Nigeria, we are yet to experience free and fair elections where the people's choice is allowed to play. Thus there is little concern about the masses except where few uncut individuals can be used as tools and weapons to seize power. The masses who truly have the electoral power, have been made to groan under heavy suppression and oppression.

There is need for the present administration of President Tinubu to recalibrate the system to focus on the welfare of the masses such that politicians and their cronies would no longer have the opportunity to rub and feed on the poor masses.

It is true that Nigeria lacks a clear welfare program as indispensable tool to address the issue of poverty. Such welfare program would enhance the efforts of government in tackling poverty. It is the role of the government to create an enabling environment for business to thrive. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (MSMEDF) which was established by the Central Bank should not only be seen to have worked but the government should ensure that those qualified to access the funds are given opportunity to properly access the funds. MSMEs are the business hobs of the masses and must be seen to be functioning credibly.

There is also need for the nation to return to manufacturing. The manufacturing in Nigeria urgently needs a rebound in order to boost production of goods and services. A country that depends on importation without production and exportation of her product is heading towards economic doom. On the other hand, productivity and exportation of products brings in revenue even to the masses.

When Nigeria addresses the problem of economic challenges, insecurity and empowers her citizens through manufacturing, then there would be no need for palliatives as citizens would be able to utilize available resources towards self-sustenance.

Nigeria as a nation has experienced challenges in recent times. The level of insurgency in the country, the Boko Haram menace as well as the activities of herdsmen in most parts of the country has made living in Nigeria a hellish experience. While Nigerians were battling the harsh security condition which has had adverse effects on the living condition of the citizens, the policy of the present government, as hopeful as it is, came to increase the suffering of the masses. The removal of fuel subsidy, the floating of the Naira as well as the sudden astronomical loss of value of the currency added to make life extremely difficult to cope.

I must commend the Tinubu administration for the efforts to stabilize the currency in the international market and thus heighten the value of the Naira. In less than three months, the Naira which had nosedived to almost 2000 per dollar bounced back to 1200 or thereabout. Although the value continues to fluctuate, at least it gives the hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

It was the removal of fuel subsidy more than any other challenges that prompted the present government to introduce palliatives as means of cushioning the effects that policy would have on the citizens. While I need not itemize the different palliative measures taken by the Government to cushion effects of suffering of the citizens, I wish to understand to what extent the measures helped the ordinary citizens.

With the removal of fuel subsidy, life became very difficult for an average Nigerian to survive. The astronomical increase in the price of petroleum products led to increase in all spheres of economics and services. Prices of food products soar so high that common citizens were forced to seek for alternative ways of survival and managing their families. Prices of transportation became unaffordable and there was observed drastic reduction in movement of persons, goods and services. Living in Nigeria became a very big challenge.

The citizens complained as there did not seem to be any end in sight; criminality set in as people's goods and warehouses were looted at will at some towns in the nation. However, the Tinubu led government decided to respond to the challenges by introducing for the second time in recent Nigerian history, the distribution of palliatives to cushion the effects of the suffering occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy. Recall that when Covid 19 ravaged nations and caused shut down of movements, businesses and services, the Buhari led administration also introduced palliatives. That administration was said to have distributed palliatives to vulnerable Nigerians affected by the Covid 19 to the tune of not less than 800 million dollars.

But what exactly is palliative? Why is it a measure used by governments to assuage a situation of sufferings of the citizens? Palliatives are measures taken to alleviate extreme pains especially in sickness. A nation that experiences severe suffering of its citizens either as a result of war, pestilence or unplanned and selfish political policies is a sick nation. Such a nation seeks palliatives as a measure to assuage the sufferings of the citizen. But by its very nature, palliatives do not provide cure to the sick situation, it only gives temporary

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Pax is published by the Catholic Diocesan of Ikot Ekpene Secretariat, P. O. Box 261, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.  
Diocesan Communication Director: Rev. Fr. Thomas Ebong, M.F.A., Ph.D, Editor-in-Chief: Rev. Fr. Stephen Udo  
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