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Wisdom Corner

**“Positions
Are Temporary,
Ranks And Titles Are
Limited.
But The Way You
Treat People Will
Always Be
Remembered.”**

Abiakpo Creates New Station



By Patricia Essiet

The Church in Abiakpo Ikot Essien recently witnessed a tremendous increase as the Parish in conjunction with Diocesan Evangelizers opened a new Outstation for the people of God in Itak Ikot Udo Village.

This was made possible by the unflagging house-to-house evangelization outreach in the village. The Parish is already blessed with three vibrant stations, namely: Abiakpo, Ibiakpan, and Ikot Akpan Ndiya Stations.

Borne out of a burning desire to create an outstation with the aim of bringing the Sacraments closer to the people, the Diocesan Evangelizers thronged in their numbers

for an outreach on the theme “When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you” (John 14:18).

The powerful and sprit filled occasion began with the Holy Rosary at 12:30pm, which gave way to house to house visitation outreach that lasted through 3:00pm, where all participants returned to the centre for reports of possible follow-up in subsequent outings. The congregation enjoyed a beautiful presentation by the Diocesan Chief Servant, Evangelizer Grace J.P. Akpan on the topic: “Come to Jesus now, tomorrow may be too late” (Cor 6:26).

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist followed

with the Parish Priest, Very Rev. Fr. Gerald A. Akata, as the Chief Celebrant. In his homily, Very Rev. Fr. Moses P. Ibok, the Diocesan Chaplain of the School of Evangelization, explained that God is love and faithful in all he does. He maintained that the Gospel passage of the day taken from John 14:18 focuses on the promise of Jesus Christ's presence and the Holy Spirit guidance, comfort and empowerment in the life of believers. Jesus was assuring his disciples that even though he leaves, he will not abandon them. Jesus referred to his death and resurrection and how he would send the Holy Spirit to empower

believers after he had gone back to heaven.

Drawing inspiration from the Scriptural text of 2 Kings 24:8-17, “There will be a destruction of everything evil in the world”, the Chaplain prayed: “For the glory of your name, free us, Oh Lord” Psalm 79:1-9.

The highlight of the occasion was the intercessory prayers for different categories of people: The Village Head, Ette Idung David Akpan Inyang, a Lutheran Church member and council, some converts, Parish officers and the evangelizers in attendance from Abak and Ikot Ekpene Areas.

Not less than thirty persons declared to convert to the Catholic Faith.

Delivering the vote of thanks at the occasion, the Diocesan Secretary of the Evangelizer, Evang. Peter Ikpe, thanked the Parish Priest for his Pastoral initiative and for collaborating with the Chaplain, to make the day a huge success. He thanked the Chaplain of the Evangelizers for his selfless sacrifice to see to the growth of the Association. He thanked the parishioners of St. Anne Abiakpo for their determination to see to the growth of their Parish. Ikpe extended his appreciation to the Evangelizers, who despite the harsh economic realities came out en masse to do that which their promised God on the day of their commissioning. In the

same vein he poured encomium on the Village Head who did not consider that a different Church came for evangelization in his village but opened his doors to receive them.

This is the fruit of the 60th anniversary celebration and its emphasis on evangelization. While new parishes have been created at the end of the 60th Anniversary, these parishes and existing ones have the obligation to bring the Church closer to the faithful by creating more Outstations. This is a pastoral obligation that is demanded of the Church today.

**Pilgrims Of Hope:
Pope Francis Declares 2025
A Year Of Jubilee**

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**Why Parishes Should
Establish Out Stations**

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Ifuho Deanery Meet: Dean Applauds Fr. Umoh, Ors.

- Says Catechists Are Grassrooters

- Inaugurates Cathedraticum Planning Committee

By Augustine Mendie

The Dean of Ifuho Deanery, Very Rev. Fr. John Bosco Ekanem, has poured much encomiums on one of his colleagues, Rev. Fr. Akaninyene Umoh, describing him as a man of practical Christianity, because he translates what he preaches into action. He made this plausible remark, Sunday at St. Joseph Parish, Abiakpo Ntak Inyang during the July deanery meet.

Going down memory lane Ekanem revealed that it was Fr. Umoh who used the whole of proceeds accruing to him during his tenth priestly anniversary celebration to tile the church at Holy Rosary Parish, Ikpe Ikot Nkon/Itu Mbon, where he serves as parish priest. He said it was not surprising to him nor to his admirers when Fr. Umoh called on all the faithful present to donate generously for the church at Abiakpo Ntak Inyang adding, "Umoh matches his words with actions." The dean expressed the hope that Christians will learn from the practical pastor.

The senior priest further expressed appreciation and love to all the priests in the deanery for their brotherly love and collaborative spirit towards him and the flock of the deanery.

Pertaining to Catechists, the dean pointedly appreciated them for the good works they have done in parishes within the deanery saying Catechists are grassrooters working in the middle between the priests and the faithful. From their advantage position, he said Catechists often liaise with the flock and bring out converts, teach them and hand them over to the priest in order to minister the Sacraments on them. This accolade was well received by the Catechists who smiled in approval expressing the conviction that for doing their work well, they were

only unworthy servants.

The faithful of St. Joseph, Abiakpo Ntak Inyang were not left out in the praise galore. The dean thanked the parish priest and the faithful for erecting a giant church structure with the most spacious altar in the deanery, a feat which the dean agreed, was an object of admirable jealousy. He emphatically called on the faithful of the deanery not to only admire the spacious church building but to also donate generously in order to effect its completion in record time.

Earlier, Rev. Fr. Akaninyene Umoh, who preached the homily elucidated that in life three conditions stand out to assail man. They are death, sickness and poverty as enunciated

down to them by their forebears. "Do we still practice the nitty gritty of the Catholic faith?, the homilist probed, wondering whether Catholics still imbibe religiously Catholic practices as going for confession, saying the Rosary, undertaking Stations of the Cross, works

hope in God for their restoration and total healing." He exhorted any sick person not to be distracted from his focus on God.

Alluding to the gospel periscope, the homilist taught that the two sick people healed by Christ hoped in God with the sole

your problems, then you will continue to be in dire lack."

He warned the faithful against being led astray because of apparent physical and spiritual challenges but admonished they should turn to God in prayers within the rich doctrine, practice and tradition of the Catholic Church that even the protestants have attested to.

Fr. Akan, who is direct nephew to catechist Justin Umoh, Catechists coordinator/secretary of catechist commission, was full of praises for Abiakpo Ntak Inyang for their sacrifices in erecting a spacious church for God in the parish which some might consider too big for the place. "Some may think and wonder why it is so spacious forgetting that God is not small but a very big and large God."

Spurred up by the

place in Ifuho Cathedral, the Bishop's church and headquarters of the Deanery.

Swearing in the committee members, the Dean, Very Rev. Fr. John Bosco Ekanem exhorted them that the planning and celebration of the occasion should be both creative and innovative as well as befitting and worthy of the mother of all Deaneries.

Those sworn in were the chairman, Hon Sylvester Okon. Dr Idongesit Udo and Hon Kenneth Ekong were to serve as vice chairman and secretary respectively, while Mr Edwin E. Udoh, Mrs Beatrice Ikono and Warden Lawrence Usungurua became members.

Other members inaugurated include Mrs Ofonmbuk Hanson, Comrade Ekikere Christopher, Miss Blessing Edet, and Warden Etiowo Udofia. Also sworn in were Mrs Agnes Asuquo and Miss Sussan H. Paul while Rev. Fr. Stephen Udoh

would serve as coordinator. He was also appointed as the official Deanery Master of Ceremony.

Highpoint of the event was solidarity addresses, speeches and donations. In the freewill donation the chief launcher become the most generous individual donor with a cash donation of One hundred and twenty thousand Naira while St. Vincent De Paul beat all other parishes to soar as the most generous parish having donated a cash of One hundred thousand Naira.

The Deanery Combine rose to reconvene again at Holy Rosary Parish, Ikpe Ikot Nkon/Itu Mbon Uso in two months.



in the readings of the Sunday.

According to him, no man can run away from these phenomena in life. Taking them in turns, Fr. Umoh stressed that death will come to man at the opportune time, and death comes from satan as a result of sin adding, it is sin that alienates man from God and leads the sinner to scary punishment in hell.

Faith in God, Umoh said, is the only way to escape from sin and untimely death. He wondered if Catholics still practice the faith as handed

of charity and the like, which go a long way in staying away from sin and occasion of sin.

He stated that today the world is infested with deceit, prostitution, lies, persecution and hatred, among other vices, saying all these constitute sin which Christians must refrain from.

For sickness, he reminded there is no one who can safely say that he cannot or has not been sick before. He called therefore on the sick not to despair but call on God who alone is the healer, "Let the sick

trust that only God heals and they went to the right source; God, for their healing. He said there is no way one can see the sun rise by looking in the West, it is East for sun rise and west for sun set. It is God that heals not darkness or sin that causes sickness, warning people should detach themselves from the crowd and collaborate with God for solutions to their problems. Hear him, "unless you detach yourself from sin, running from one diabolical tent to another, and unless you run to God for healing and solutions to

bold steps of the Abiakpo Church, the homilist called all faithful to employ their spirit of kindness more than ever before by donating generously towards completing the building. "We should be givers not takers," the bold preacher declared.

The occasion also marked the appointment and inauguration of the Deanery Cathedraticum Planning Committee. The twelve-man committee was charged with the planning and execution of the 2024 Cathedraticum in the Deanery which will take

Knights Of St. John International Celebrates Patron Saint Feast Day

---- Gives Award To Deserving Members

---- Cleric Urged Faithful To Set Boundaries

By Victor Ewenwen and Barnabas Avule

The Ancient and Noble Order of the Knights of St. John International, Holy Trinity Commandery, Ikot Ekpene had celebrated their the 2024 Patron Saint Feast Day/Temple Fundraising & Nobel Award

Presentation/Thanksgiving recently. The event which took place at the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Anwa Udo Akai, Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State began with the celebration of the

Holy Eucharist by the Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev Camillus Raymond Umoh. In his homily, the Bishop tasked Christians the world over to always set known boundaries in everything they do.

The Chief Shepherd noted that if there are no

boundaries, the world would be in trouble and there would be confusion. He stated that God puts all his energy to make sure that what he created know their boundaries.

Bishop Umoh said, we are living in a world where people are eroding boundaries. "We are living in a world where people erode boundaries, we are living in a world where

people don't want other people to infringe on their rights but don't want to respect others rights."

The Chief Shepherd lamented that even Children don't respect their parents boundaries anymore. He then advised the faithful to learn to respect the right of others. He said the knight of St.

CWON Nto Edino Parish Celebrates Mothers' Day In A Grand Style

By Udem Thomas

The Catholic Women Organization of Nigeria, Nto Edino Parish took their week-long women rally to a conclusion on the 1st Sunday of May, 2024. The event kicked started earlier in the week with a road show where women, dressed in Parish uniform, took to streets singing and marching to create awareness of the 2024 Mothers' day celebration.

Acknowledging the mothers for the role they have played over the week, Rev Fr Solomon Uko, the Assistant Parish Priest and Chaplain of the CWON congratulated the women for the dexterous spirit they showcased, noting that they were not found wanting in any score. He therefore challenged the youth to emulate the pragmatic spirit of their mothers even at old age.

Fr Uko, who delivered the homily on the occasion, harped on the value of women and their roles in the home, Church and the society at large. He called on the husbands to always appreciate their wives as God's gifts to them by loving and caring for them and valuing them as treasures.

The homilist further encouraged husbands and wives to put love in the center of their relationship stating that if love is lacking among them, marriage would turn out to be master and servant relationship.

Reflecting on the readings of the day, he noted on how Peter entered the house of Cornelius the

scripture states that they were at once baptized. He maintained that the implication of this for the Sacrament of Baptism is that anybody, babies, young and old persons can be baptized and that the three forms of baptism (immersion, sprinkling and pouring) lead to valid Baptism. He drew the

baptized, thereby giving Scriptural credence to infant baptism.

Fr Uko maintained that all these prove God's love to mankind whether big or small, black or white, insisting that his love is unconditional and never selective. He therefore charged husbands and wives to let their love for

mentoring them to be good wives to their husbands, good Catholics and Christians. She saluted the effort of the husbands for being their backbone. She further thanked all invited guests for honouring the women with their presence even as she solicited their support so that they can actualize their project of

Highpoint of the celebration was presentation of awards of honor to immediate past station CWON presidents of the 16 stations in the Parish. Prizes were also given to stations that stood out in the various competitive events. In overall result, St Patrick Station Ikot Eyem took First position, while St Mary Catholic Church Ibong Uruk came second with the third position going to St Michael Station Ikot Imo. In the category of couple acquaintance where couples were questioned on the level of knowing their spouses, Mr and Mrs Aniedi John Udofa received the best couple of the year award.

In his closing remark, Fr Uko thanked the Parish Priest for his support to the women. He congratulated the leadership of the CWON for the successful celebration of the mothers' day even as he expressed his appreciation to all women of the parish for their co-operation, selflessness and support towards the affairs of the Church especially for making 2024 Mothers day a unique and pomp celebration.



Gentile and preached the Gospel to him and his household and then baptized them. He used the opportunity to catechize on Baptism, teaching that what is needed in the Sacrament is water and the words spoken by the minister as mater and form respectively. The clergyman noted that there was no stream in the house of Cornelius and that the

attention of the congregation to the Scripture where immediately after Peter preached to Cornelius and his family, the Holy Spirit descended on them and they got baptized instantly. They did not go to any river. He maintained that being a family there was a possibility of one or two who were infants being

each other and for the children be practical and to extend same to the rest of humanity.

The CWON President, Mrs. Margaret Michael Ekerette, in her welcome address thanked the Dean and Parish Priest of Nto Edino, Very Rev Fr Cyril Udouo and his Assistant, Rev Fr Solomon Uko for standing by the women and

ceremony. Activities women competed for prizes were March past, quick bible opening, bible recitation couple acquaintance and football match. the football match was between women of Nka I'ma/ Nto Ide and Ibong Combine which Ibong "Old Babes" as they tagged their team won 4-0.

Africa's Christians, Muslims Must Uphold "mutual Respect, Cooperation"

By Silas Isenja

Abuja, 29 June, 2024 / 9:20 pm (ACIAfrica).

Lasting peace in and rebirth of Africa are only possible if Christians and Muslims on the continent go beyond their differences and decide to uphold "mutual respect and cooperation", John Cardinal Onaiyekan has said.

The Nigerian Cardinal, who was speaking during the three-day Global Peace Leadership Conference in Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, reflected on the 2019 Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb.

Cardinal Onaiyekan said that the two global religious leaders provided a clear path to lasting peace and rebirth in Africa.

"If Christianity and Islam in Africa do not organize themselves to bring their numerous adherences to live in peace with mutual respect and cooperation, it will be

For Possible Peace, Rebirth: Nigerian Cardinal

difficult if not impossible for peace to reign on our continent, and then any talk of a renaissance will be pursuing a mirage," he said during his Thursday, June 27 presentation at Radisson Blue Hotel in Nairobi.

The Archbishop emeritus of Nigeria's Catholic Archdiocese of Abuja added, "For so long, these two faiths are largely important and largely responsible on our continent. These two faiths have engaged in a futile game of rivalry for the domination of the continent."

The rivalry amounts to "a futile game" because there will never be a day when all of Africa will be either entirely Muslim or entirely Christian, he explained at the conference that the Global Peace Foundation, the Interreligious Council of Kenya, and the Chandaria Foundation organized.

The Nairobi conference that brought together delegates from

Africa and around the world to explore and discuss ways to promote peace, development, and cooperation aimed to promote an African Renaissance that draws on Africa's unique heritage and the strength of its

that would see an end to wasting time in "heated and sometimes violent and blood rivalry to increase membership" of respective religious groups.

"We should be competing to excel in bringing our membership

and wars claiming to be holy", the Nigerian Cardinal lamented, and added, "It's my conviction derived from my Catholic faith that our almighty and merciful God is moving us to a paradigm shift in our long entrenched exclusive religious attitudes."

"We can and should take this positive inclusive position and we can do that while maintaining our conviction in the truth of our faith as a valid guide to Godliness and righteousness," said the Cardinal, who started his Episcopal Ministry in January 1983 as Auxiliary Bishop of Nigeria's Catholic Diocese of Ilorin.

He said that the hope for Africa's reawakening lies in its spiritual values, which he said need re-evaluation.

"We have the basis for hope in our native African spiritual values which have remained resilient and relevant despite the natural eroding influence of the passage of time and

generations and the strong impact of both Arabian and European cultures," the 80-year-old Nigerian Cardinal who retired as Archbishop of Nigeria's Abuja Archdiocese in November 2019 said

The African spiritual values, he went on to say, "now need to be rediscovered, re-evaluated, showcased and effectively deployed for the building of the Africa of our dreams."

"Africans recognize their basic spiritual values in the religions and willingly accepted conversion; this is because these basic values have one common source in God who makes Himself known to all humanity despite their religious values, organizations, and structures," Cardinal Onaiyekan said.

He added, "Spiritual African values that have retained their validity even until now also deserve attention as we look forward to a future African renaissance not only for Africa but as a global catalyst for freedom, peace, and access to sustainable development."



Cardinal Onaiyekan

spirituality and traditional values; to grow African leadership; to strengthen intra continental partnerships, and to cultivate ethical global citizenship.

In his June 27 presentation, Cardinal Onaiyekan called for "a drastic change of attitude"

to embrace the African and global spiritual values sacred to our religion as well as our traditional religion and culture for a true human fraternity," he said during the three-day conference that started on Tuesday, June 25.

The struggle to make more membership "has led to many conflicts

Fr. Idoko Admonishes Youth Chaplains To Embrace Shepherd-Pastor Role To The Youths

By CSN Media



The National Youth Animator, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), Rev. Fr. Boniface Idoko, has reminded youth chaplains that their role requires sacrificing themselves to satisfy the youths in their care. He emphasized that chaplains should see themselves as both pastors and shepherds, accompanying the young souls entrusted to them in their life journeys.

Speaking on "Apostolate of Presence: A Unique Dimension of Being a Youth Chaplain"

during a capacity-building training for Catholic youth chaplains on June 28, 2024, at the CSN conference room, Fr. Idoko urged chaplains to be available, accessible, and approachable to the youths, enriching and nourishing them with their presence.

"Accompany them in their life journeys as groups and individuals. In their spiritual experiences, in their struggle to find meaningful life, in their struggle to earn a living, in their fears and anxieties, in their successes and

celebrations. Bless them with your presence; enrich and nourish them with your presence. Encourage them with your presence. Even when you have nothing to say, be there; even when you don't understand, be there; even when you don't enjoy it, still be there. Your presence makes all the difference. Be accessible, be approachable, and be available for their programmes," he stressed. In his presentation on the topic "The ministry of the chaplain in the life of the church," Fr. Augustine Okochi, Director of Pastoral Agents Department, CSN, emphasized the importance

of the virtue of integrity and honesty among the chaplains in carrying out their duties. He elaborated on the role of chaplains as representatives of the bishops, and reminded them of their responsibility to embody the qualities of a



good shepherd. He urged them to guide, teach, sanctify, admonish, exhort, mentor, comfort, and reprimand, thereby ensuring the ecclesiality, fidelity, and vitality of the lay group under their care.

On his own part, Fr. Michael Nsikak Umoh, National Director of Social Communications, CSN, appealed to the directors to

prioritize media development, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) technology, among the youths, both at diocesan and parish levels. He noted that the church's future would largely depend on how effectively the gospel message is communicated to young people through emerging technologies like AI. Other presentations made at the training include "The role of the chaplain in protecting the minors and vulnerable persons" by Rev. Fr. Christopher Nnubia;

"Understanding common mental health issues affecting the youths for effective

ve youth ministry in Nigeria" by Dr. Raphael Aguanunu; and "Resource mobilization for effective youth ministry in Nigeria" by Ivy Odia Basil-Ofili, amongst others.

The training, organized to sensitize and revitalize chaplains on their duties and pastoral demands, brought together chaplains from the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON), the Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students (NFCS), the National Association of Catholic Corpors (NACC), as well as Young Catholic Students of Nigeria (YCSN), from across the country.



Pilgrims Of Hope: Pope Francis Declares 2025 A Year Of Jubilee

Jubilee Year 2025 Theme: Pilgrims Of Hope

Pope Francis officially declared 2025 a Year of Jubilee with a papal bull, titled "Spes Non Confudit," meaning "Hope Does Not Disappoint." The Jubilee Year will begin with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve 2024.

"Hope is also the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years," said Pope Francis in his papal bull. "My thoughts turn to all those 'pilgrims of hope' who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches."

The theme of the jubilee is "pilgrims of hope" as the pope is calling on all Catholics to renew in the hope of Christ, using St. Paul the Apostle as a guide for this special year.

"Everyone knows what it is to hope," said Pope Francis. "In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things

to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness.

"For all of us, may the Jubilee be an

opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope. Taking it as our guide, let us return to the message that the Apostle Paul wished to communicate to

the Christians of Rome," continued the pope.

The Year of Jubilee follows the Year of Prayer in 2024, which was declared by the Pope on Jan. 21. Since then, Pope

Francis has urged the faithful to pray for peace, especially amidst the wars in Ukraine, Israel, and Palestine. The Dicastery for Evangelization released a free "Teach Us to pray" guidebook for the Catholic faithful.

In the papal bull, Pope Francis also decreed that on Sunday, Dec. 29, in every Cathedral and Co-Cathedral, Diocesan Bishops are to celebrate Mass as the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year.

Jubilee years have a historical and Biblical precedent, which can be found in the Book of Leviticus. In the Old

Testament, part of the celebration included the freeing of slaves and prisoners, as well as the forgiveness of debts as manifestations of God's mercy.

Pope Boniface VIII reestablished the jubilee tradition in 1300. Instead of focusing on freeing slaves, the Christian version offered liberation from sins, and from the punishment due to sin that must be faced in Purgatory.

"A pilgrimage that sets out from a church chosen for the 'collectio' and then proceeds to the Cathedral can serve to symbolize the journey of hope that, illumined by the word of God, unites all the faithful," said Francis.

The Jubilee will officially come to an end with the closing of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica on Jan. 6, 2026, the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

"During the Holy Year, may the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all!" said Pope Francis. "And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!"



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IN LIEU OF THE CBCN PLENARY IN IKOT EKPENE DIOCESE

It is no longer news that come 2025, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria will hold her Second Plenary in Ikot Ekpene Diocese. It also the case that a Local Organizing Committee has been set up, headed by no less a personality than His Lordship Mr Justice Pius Idiong, to see to the organization and successful hosting of the Nigerian Shepherds and Modern Day Apostles of Christ. What is expected of the LOC is to ensure that everything is in place: all the 'i's are dotted and the 't's crossed in a hosting that brings multiple and diverse benefits to the faithful and to the Diocese as a whole.

It is a timeless tradition of the Church that National Bishops Conferences meet periodically to address various issues affecting the Church and the nation. The CBCN is not an exception to this timeless tradition as she has been meeting in plenary twice a year. While the CBCN holds her First Plenary at the Federal Capital Territory Abuja, which is also the seat of the CBCN, her Second Plenary is often rotated among the different Provinces; and the Provinces in turn rotate it among the Dioceses.

Calabar Ecclesiastical Province is billed to host the 2nd Plenary of the CBCN come 2025. Within the Province, Ikot Ekpene Catholic Diocese has taken the turn as the only Diocese within the Province yet to host the Plenary after 60 years of existence. His Lordship Most Rev Camillus R. Umoh, the Local Ordinary is privileged to be the first Bishop in the Diocese to garner such a crowd of God's Apostles in one place within the Diocese. Indeed, the faithful who will be alive to witness the coming of the Bishops are blessed.

The term "plenary" comes from the Latin word "plenus," meaning "full," and indicates that all members are present and fully engaged in the proceedings. A plenary therefore is a full meeting of a conference, assembly, or organization, where all members or delegates are present and participating; where all participants are gathered together to discuss, debate, and make decisions on important issues. In the context of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), a plenary session would involve all the bishops coming together to discuss and address matters of importance to the Church and the country. Thus by the very word plenary, it indicates that the Diocese is hosting ALL the Catholic Bishops in Nigeria, numbering not less than 88 in addition to other prelates occupying very senior Ecclesiastical offices.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) rotates their plenary sessions among different dioceses for several reasons: By holding plenary in various dioceses, the Bishops demonstrate their connection and solidarity with different parts of the country and the Church. Again, rotating the plenary sessions allows the Bishops to engage with local clergy, religious, and laity, understanding their concerns and challenges. It is also the case that rotating the plenary enables the bishops to address specific issues and concerns unique to those areas.

By visiting different dioceses, bishops gain a deeper understanding of the diverse cultural, social, and economic contexts within the country; even as it allows dioceses to showcase their hospitality and share their resources, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. The plenary sessions can serve as an opportunity for evangelization, as the bishops engage with the local community and share the Church's teachings.

By rotating the plenary sessions, the CBCN demonstrates its commitment to unity, outreach, and pastoral care, while also fostering a sense of national unity and shared purpose among the bishops and the Church in Nigeria.

Hosting the CBCN plenary session brings numerous spiritual and pastoral advantages to the host diocese. For one, the plenary session offers a unique opportunity for spiritual revitalization and rejuvenation for the clergy, religious, and laity in the host diocese. The presence of the bishops and delegates can revitalize pastoral activities, inspiring new enthusiasm and dedication among the faithful. The plenary session can serve as a catalyst for evangelization, spreading the Gospel message and attracting new followers.

Hosting the plenary fosters a sense of community and solidarity among the faithful, promoting unity and cooperation. The presence of such a great number of Bishops in one diocese offers guidance, inspiration, and mentorship to the local clergy and faithful and rekindle vocations. The plenary session can spark or reignite vocations to the priesthood, religious life, or lay ministry.

The plenary session is often accompanied by special blessings, indulgences, and graces, enriching the spiritual lives of the host diocese. Such brings about spiritual rejuvenation with a renewed sense of purpose and spiritual energy to the diocese, revitalizing its mission and apostolic activities. Truth be told, hosting the plenary can give the diocese a fresh perspective and renewed sense of purpose in its mission to spread the Gospel.

By hosting the CBCN plenary, the diocese can experience a profound spiritual and pastoral revitalization, benefiting the faithful and enhancing the Church's presence in the region.

But what is expected of the Diocese? There is no doubt that the hosting of the Bishops is very demanding, but it comes with lots of blessing as has been highlighted. When considered the blessings attached to it, the demand is made easier. There no doubt too that in Nigeria today, life is very difficult as a result of the present economic reality which has come to impoverish a greater population in the nation, and the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene is not immune to the challenging situation. But we cannot afford to fold our hands and dwell on self pity. The enormous task of hosting such a great company of apostles comes with enormous reward to individuals and the diocese as a whole. But thanks to God, Ikot Ekpene Diocese is noted for its culture of solidarity and hospitality. And definitely, these are bound to play out during the period. So far a lot of sacrifice has gone into it from the faithful. More sacrifice is needed. And it is not over until it is over!

The LOC had been properly briefed on the task ahead, sub committees have been formed to provide the needed hospitality, organize logistics, facilitate and ensure effective communication as well as provide security. It is also expected that the Diocese showcase her unique cultural, religious, and historical heritage to the visiting bishops. By hosting the plenary, the diocese has the opportunity to showcase its unique characteristics and demonstrate its commitment to the Church's mission and values.

One of the necessary responsibilities of the Diocese is to provide the finances for so great an event through local contributions and donations. The Diocese is also expected to oversee the general financial aspects of hosting the plenary. In this area, there will be need to liaise with civil authorities, such as government officials.

It is on the Diocese to provide a welcoming atmosphere by creating a warm and welcoming environment devoid of threats for the bishops and delegates, making them feel at home. It is here that the value of the Retreat Center presently under construction is revealed. There is also need to liaise with the law enforcement agencies, to ensure a smooth and successful event.

While appreciating the courage of the Bishop, Most Rev Camillus Umoh for accepting this onerous task, the PAX Newspaper extends same appreciation to the clergy and the laity who have started working assiduously towards the success of this mother of all pastoral visits. The Newspaper lends her voice and pen to call on the faithful, Catholics and non Catholics alike as well as the State Government to join hands and make the visit a resounding success.



St. Ignatius Loyola

required visualizing oneself in the presence of Christ during the episodes of His life. The book would inspire Ignatius' own spiritual exercises.

As he lay bedridden, Ignatius developed a desire to become a working servant of Christ. He especially wanted to convert non-Christians.

Among his profound realizations, was that some thoughts brought him happiness and others sorrow. When he considered the differences between these thoughts, he recognized that two powerful forces were acting upon him. Evil brought him unpleasant thoughts while God brought

him happiness. Ignatius discerned God's call, and began a new way of life, following God instead of men.

By the spring of 1522, Ignatius had recovered enough to leave bed. On March 25, 1522, he entered the Benedictine monastery, Santa Maria de Montserrat. Before an image of the Black Madonna, he laid down his military garments. He gave his other clothes away to a poor man.

He then walked to a hospital in the town of Manresa. In exchange for a place to live, he performed work around the hospital. He begged for his food. When he was not working or begging, he would go into a cave and practice spiritual exercises.

His time in prayer and contemplation helped him to understand himself better. He also gained a better understanding of God and God's plan for him.

The ten months he spent between the hospital and the cavern were difficult for Ignatius. He suffered from doubts, anxiety and depression. But he also recognized that these were not from God.

Ignatius began recording his thoughts and experiences in a journal. This journal would be useful later for developing new spiritual exercises for the tens of thousands of people who would follow him. Those exercises remain invaluable today and are still widely practiced by religious and laity alike.

The next year, in 1523, Ignatius made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. His goal was to live there and convert non-believers. However, the Holy Land was a troubled place and Church officials did not want Ignatius to complicate things further. They asked him to return after just a fortnight.

Ignatius realized he needed to obtain a complete education if he wanted to convert people. Returning to Barcelona, Ignatius attended a grammar school, filled with children, to learn Latin and other beginning subjects. He was blessed with a great teacher during this time, Master Jeronimo Ardevol.

After completing his primary education, Ignatius traveled to Alcala, then Salamanca, where he studied at universities. In addition to studying, Ignatius often engaged others in lengthy conversations about spiritual matters.

These conversations attracted the attention of the Inquisition.

In Spain, the Inquisition was responsible for ferreting out religious dissent and combating heresy. The Inquisition was not as it has long been depicted in the media.

The Inquisition accused Ignatius of preaching without any formal education in theology. Without this training, it

was likely that Ignatius could introduce heresy by way of conversation and misunderstanding.

Ignatius was questioned three times by the Inquisition, but he was always exonerated.

Ignatius eventually decided he needed more education, so he traveled north, seeking better schools and teachers. He was 38 years old when he entered the College of Saint Barbe of the University of Paris. This education was very structured and formalized. Later, Ignatius would be inspired to copy this model when establishing schools. The ideas of prerequisites and class levels would arise from the Jesuit schools, which here heavily inspired by Ignatius' experience in Paris.

Ignatius earned a master's degree at the age of 44. When he subsequently applied for his doctorate, he was passed over because of his age. He also suffered from ailments, which the school was concerned could impact his studies.

While at school in Paris, Ignatius roomed with Peter Faber and Francis Xavier. Faber was French and Xavier was Basque. The men became friends and Ignatius led them in his spiritual exercises. Other men soon joined their exercises and became followers of Ignatius. The group began to refer to themselves as "Friends in the Lord," an apt description.

The circle of friends, shared Ignatius' dream of traveling to the Holy Land, but conflict between Venice and the Turks made such a journey impossible. Denied the opportunity to travel there, the group then decided to visit Rome. There, they resolved to present themselves to the Pope and to serve at his pleasure.

Pope Paul III received the group and approved them as an official religious order in 1540. The band attempted to elect Ignatius as their first leader, but he declined, saying he had not lived a worthy life in his youth. He also believed others were more experienced theologically.

The group insisted however, and Ignatius accepted the role as their first leader. They called themselves the Society of Jesus. Some people who did not appreciate their efforts dubbed them "Jesuits" in an attempt to disparage them. While the name stuck, by virtue of their good work the label lost its negative connotation.

Ignatius imposed a strict, almost military rule on his order. This was natural for a man who spent his youth as a soldier. It might be expected that such rigor would dissuade people from joining, but it had the opposite effect. The order grew.

The Society of Jesus soon found its niche in education. Before Ignatius died in 1556, his order established 35 schools and boasted 1,000 members. The order was responsible for much of the work of stopping the spread of the Protestant Reformation. The Society advocated the use of reason to persuade others and combat heresy.

Today, the Society of Jesus is known for its work in educating the youth around the world. Several universities have been founded in the name of Ignatius and in the traditional Jesuit spirit. The Jesuits also perform many other important works around the globe.

Ignatius' passed away on July 31, 1556, at the age of 64. He was beatified by Pope Paul V on July 27, 1609 and canonized on March 12, 1622. His feast day is July 31. He is the patron saint of the Society of Jesus, soldiers, educators and education.

Born Inigo Lopez de Loyola in 1491, the man known as Ignatius of Loyola entered the world in Loiola, Spain. At the time, the name of the village was spelled "Loyola," hence the discrepancy. Inigo came of age in Azpeitia, in northern Spain. Loyola is a small village at the southern end of Azpeitia.

Inigo was the youngest of thirteen children. His mother died when he was just seven, and he was then raised by Maria de Garin, who was the wife of a blacksmith. His last name, "Loyola" was taken from the village of his birth.

Despite the misfortune of losing his mother he was still a member of the local aristocracy and was raised accordingly. Inigo was an ambitious young man who had dreams of becoming a great leader. He was influenced by stories such as The Song of Roland and El Cid.

At the age of sixteen, he began a short period of employment working for Juan Velazquez, the treasurer of Castile. By the time he was eighteen, he became a soldier and would fight for Antonio Manrique de Lara, Duke of Najera and Viceroy of Navarre.

Seeking wider acclaim, he began referring to himself as Ignatius. Ignatius was a variant of Inigo. The young Ignatius also gained a reputation as a duelist. According to one story, he killed a Moor with whom he argued about the divinity of Jesus.

Ignatius fought in several battles under the leadership of the Duke of Najera. He had a talent for emerging unscathed, despite participating in many battles. His talent earned him promotions and soon he commanded his own troops.

In 1521, while defending the town of Pamplona against French attack, Ignatius was struck by a cannonball in the legs. One leg was merely broken, but the other was badly mangled. To save his life and possibly his legs, doctors performed several surgeries. There were no anesthetics during this time, so each surgery was painful. Despite their best efforts, Ignatius' condition deteriorated. After suffering for a month, his doctors warned him to prepare for death.

On June 29, 1521, on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Ignatius began to improve. As soon as he was healthy enough to bear it, part of one leg was amputated which while painful, sped his recovery.

During this time of bodily improvement, Ignatius began to read whatever books he could find. Most of the books he obtained were about the lives of the saints and Christ. These stories had a profound impact on him, and he became more devout.

One story in particular influenced him, "De Vita Christi" (The life of Christ). The story offers commentary on the life of Christ and suggested a spiritual exercise that

Youth Corner

Youths, Make Your Dream A Reality

By Dominic U. Dominic

From the moment we gain the ability to think and dream, most of us begin to speculate about the future. We craft elaborate visions of what our lives will be, fueled by our desires, ambitions, and the narratives we absorb from those around us. As children, our speculations are grand and

boundless. We envision becoming astronauts, world-renowned artists, or groundbreaking scientists. Each one of us carries within us a unique dream, a vision that fuels our passion and defines our purpose. But how do we transform these dreams into reality? How do we bridge the gap between what we envision and what we achieve?

Steps that can help you actualizing Your Dreams: A Journey from Vision to Reality

Dream Big and Believe

First and foremost, dare to dream big. Don't limit yourself. The greatest achievements in history started as dreams that seemed impossible. Believe in your dream with every fiber of your being. Belief is the cornerstone of

any great endeavor. It is the force that propels you forward when the going gets tough.

Visualize Your Success

Visualization is a powerful tool. Picture yourself achieving your dream. See it in vivid detail. Feel the emotions of success. Visualization creates a mental blueprint that guides your actions and keeps you

focused. It transforms abstract ideas into concrete goals.

Set Clear, Achievable Goals

Dreams are the destination, but goals are the roadmap. Break your dream into specific, manageable steps. Set clear, achievable goals that act as milestones along your journey. Each goal accomplished is a step

closer to your ultimate dream.

Take Bold Action

Dreams remain dreams without action. Take bold, decisive action towards your goals. Don't wait for the perfect moment; create it. Every step, no matter how small, brings you closer to your dream. Embrace the journey and take action every day.

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Catechism Lesson For The Month Of July, 2024

Laity As Salt And Light

Introduction: The national dictum of the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria is "Salt of the Earth, Light of the World". To say that the laity is the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" is to emphasize their crucial role in infusing the world with Christian values and illuminating it with the teachings of Christ. As we have consistently expressed, these metaphors are drawn from the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13-16). They convey significant responsibilities and implications for both the laity and the Church's mission.

Let us refresh our minds on the meaning of the metaphors:

1. Salt of the Earth:

Preservation and Flavor: In ancient times, salt was primarily used as a preservative and to enhance flavor. As "salt," the laity are called to preserve the goodness and moral integrity in the world, preventing societal decay by living out Christian virtues. They add "flavor" by making the teachings of Christ tangible and appealing through their actions and way of life.

Purity and Sacrifice: Salt also symbolizes purity and the sacrificial aspect of discipleship. The laity are expected to maintain purity in their personal and communal lives, acting as a moral compass in society. It is by this that they can lead people to Christ the Saviour of mankind.

2. Light of the World:

Guidance and Revelation: Light dispels darkness and provides guidance. As "light," the laity are to illuminate the world with the truth of the Gospel, providing moral and spiritual guidance to others. Their lives should reflect the light of Christ, revealing God's love and truth.

Visibility and Witness: A light is meant to be seen. Laypeople are called to be visible witnesses of their faith, living openly as Christians in all aspects of their lives so that others may see their good works and be inspired to glorify God.

A. The Role of The Laity as Salt and Light

The role of the laity in the Catholic Church as the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" is a profound calling rooted in scripture and articulated in various ecclesiastical documents and writings of prominent theologians. This role underscores the mission of laypeople to influence the world positively and illuminate it with the light of Christ.

The biblical foundation for this role is found in the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven..." (Matt. 5:13-16). When Jesus described His followers as the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world," He was commissioning them to have a transformative impact on society. He was emphasizing their crucial role in influencing and transforming the world through their faith and actions. By calling His followers the "salt of the earth," Jesus implied that they were to preserve the moral and spiritual fabric of society. Therefore Christians (with particular reference to the Laity) are called to bring out the best in the world by living out their faith.

The Church has consistently defined the role of the laity in the Church within the context of salt and light. Pope Benedict XVI notes that "Being the salt of the earth and the light of the world means that Christians must make the earth conform to God's commandments and bring the light of God's truth into all human relationships. This involves a commitment to witness to the truth in all areas of life." (Source: Benedict XVI. *Jesus of Nazareth*. Doubleday, 2007).

Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful

People) notes: "The lay faithful, in fact, 'are the salt of the earth' and 'the light of the world.' They are called to allow the newness and the power of the Gospel to shine out every day in their family and social life, as well as to express patiently and courageously in the contradictions of the present age their hope of future glory even 'through the framework of their secular life'" (*Christifideles Laici*, 17). The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, emphasizes that the laity are called to sanctify the world from within by living out the Gospel in their daily lives, thereby making Christ known through their witness.

The Role Of The Laity In The Mission Of The Church

Lay people have an important vocation to make a difference in the world. The Vatican II document, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium* (Light Of All Nations) has a great deal to say about the role of the laity by virtue of their baptismal call. Through their baptism all the faithful are seen to have a common call to share in the mission of Christ. All are called to be priest, prophet and king. All share in the common priesthood and the call to holiness based on love of God and love of neighbour.

Within this general baptismal call there are different roles and specific ways of living out the call such as the ordained ministry, the laity, and religious. No particular way is seen to be better or more holy than others. Each part of the Church shares in the mission in its own way. Lay people are shown to have their own vocation in their ordinary family and working lives. This reclaims the rightful place of lay members of the Church as among the People of God.

The role of the laity as equal members of the Church is woven through much of *Lumen Gentium*. Chapter four looks specifically at the laity. As well as sharing in the common baptismal call of all the faithful, the laity are seen to have a particular role in the Church. Rather than being lesser because of their place in the secular world, the laity are seen to have their vocation in helping to bring about the kingdom of God in the world. 'Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.' (LG 33)

The laity are to find their holiness in their ordinary married and family life, in their work and social life. All of their lives give a witness to Christ to the world. They are also called to be active in caring for creation and promoting justice and peace and the common good. Making a difference out in the world is the primary call. The laity are also seen to have spiritual and practical gifts to offer within the Church. The ordained and lay people are encouraged to work more closely together to share the responsibility of ministry and management.

Lay people are active in liturgical and pastoral ministries for building up the Church. They perform leadership and management functions for the Church. They are particularly involved in education in Catholic schools and catechetical work. There has been a huge increase in interest in studying the Bible and theology, and in lay led movements. Laity are involved in issues such as social justice, peace, protection of life, and the dignity of all people. They are also involved in politics and the media. These are ways of carrying out the Church's mission in the world.

During the years since *Lumen Gentium* was promulgated there have been many church documents dealing with the role of the laity. These have affirmed the primary vocation of the laity is to take the light of Christ to the world, in order to sanctify the world. Marriage and family life are seen as very important and fundamental way of sharing in the life and mission of the Church. The phrase the 'domestic Church' (LG 11) was reused in *Familiaris Consortio* 1981 (FC 21) and by The Pontifical Council for the Family in 2001. Pope John Paul II calls lay people to 're-evangelise our culture' and to be involved in the world in a new way in *Christifideles Laici*, 1988.

The Laity are to give witness to Christ to the world by their lives. They are also called to be active in caring for creation and promoting justice and peace and the common good. Making a difference out in the world is the primary call. The laity are also seen to have spiritual and practical gifts to offer within the Church.

Different documents of the Church define the role of the Laity in the mission of the Church:

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, 1964): "The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven." (LG, 31)

Salt and Light: "Christ confers on them the apostolate of the laity; he appoints them to this, that by their personal, family, social and national lives they may bring the light of the gospel to the world." (LG, 33)

Christifideles Laici (Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, 1988):

Mission of the Laity: "The lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil." (CL, 14)

Transforming the World: "Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society, and economics, as well as the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media." (CL, 23)

St. John Paul II:

On the Laity: "The vocation and mission of the faithful can only be understood in terms of their radical newness in Christ. Through their Baptism and Confirmation, all are called to a profound and radical participation in the mission of Christ." (*Christifideles Laici*, 10)

St. Josemaría Escrivá:

Sanctifying Daily Life: "Your duty is to be an apostle in every walk of life, as a farmer, as a worker, as a businessman, as a teacher, as an artist, as a professional man, as a craftsman. What matters is that you must be an apostle and make the spirit of Christ present in everything." (Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 25)

Pope Benedict XVI:

Witness in the World: "It is the lay faithful's particular vocation to illuminate and organize these realities so that they may always be carried out and developed according to Christ's will, to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer." (*Deus Caritas Est*, 29)

Practical Applications

1. Family and Community Life: Laypeople are called to bring Christian values into their families and local communities, fostering environments of love, justice, and peace. "The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children." (LG, 11)

2. Work and Professional Life: Laypeople are to integrate their faith into their work, striving for ethical integrity and excellence. "Work is a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth. Participation in human work is a key, perhaps the essential key, to the whole social question." (*Laborem Exercens*, 3)

3. Social and Political Engagement: The laity should actively participate in social and political spheres, advocating for policies that reflect Christian values. "It is necessary for the lay faithful to take an active, conscientious, and responsible part in the mission of the Church in this great task. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society, and economics." (CL, 42)

Conclusion

The role of the laity as the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" is integral to the mission of the Church. Grounded in Scripture and affirmed by ecclesiastical documents, this calling challenges laypeople to influence every aspect of society with the light and love of Christ. By embracing their vocation, laypersons can bring about a transformation that reflects the kingdom of God in the world.



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Thanksgiving of Knight of St. John Intl. At Ikot Ekpene Parish Recently



Photos From The Mothers' Day Celebration Nto Edino Parish



Nigeria Running an "Economic Apartheid" Society: Catholic Priest Faults Leaders on Proposed Minimum Wage

By ACI Africa Staff

As the debate over the new minimum wage in Nigeria continues to generate reactions across the country, a Catholic Priest in the West African nation has warned of an "imminent revolt" should Nigerian leaders continue oppressing the poor in what he has termed "economic apartheid".

The Nigerian government has offered to double the minimum wage to 62,000 naira (\$41.89) a month against labor demands of 250,000 naira.

The wage bill has been highly contested, with many saying that it plunges the poor into deeper misery as the country grapples with the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades.

In his homily on Sunday, June 9, Fr. George Ehusani said, "More than 60 years after independence, we are still

running an apartheid society. This time it's not racial apartheid, it's economic apartheid."

Fr. Ehusani explained, "We are running an apartheid society of people of conspicuous consumption, flying in private jets around at government expense, people who are riding four, five, six, seven SUVs with pilot vehicles chasing the poor out of the road, and the same people are debating and discussing what the poor should earn."

The Executive Director and Lead Faculty of the Lux Terra Leadership Foundation that deals with leadership training likened Africa's most populous nation to the "Animal Farm", the satirical allegorical novel in which the author, George Orwell, recounts a fable story of a group of anthropomorphic farm animals that rebel against their human farmer in the hope of creating a

society where the animals can be equal, free, and happy.

"Nigerian society is like the animal farm, a society where we have conspicuously rich people, people who are living in conspicuous consumption and others who are in deplorable, dehumanizing poverty," the Nigerian Catholic Priest lamented.

He went on to decry the huge economic gap in the West African country, with some earning over 1 million Nigerian naira a month (US\$665.00) while others earn just about 60,000 Nigerian naira (US\$40.00).

The founder of the Psycho-Spiritual Institute (PSI), a Catholic entity that specializes in psycho-trauma healing, said he found it unfair that someone who earns over 1 million Nigerian naira "can open his mouth to be part of a discussion about the poor getting 60,000 naira."

"I say anyone who earns up to 1 million naira in the month should keep his or her mouth shut when he hears them debating about the poor taking 60,000 (naira) for a month!" Fr. Ehusani, a member of the Clergy of Nigeria's Catholic Diocese of Lokoja said.

He further raised concern over the economic challenges the poor people face in the country and the big salaries paid to members of the parliament, describing the contrast as "crime against humanity".

About Nigeria's few elite, Fr. Ehusani posed, "How can they go to sleep in good conscience every day? How can they go to sleep in good conscience and come out to sit down in a boardroom to discuss paying 60,000 naira to the poorest of workers?"

The Abuja-based Catholic Priest further lamented, "How wicked! You give 60,000 naira to a



Fr Ehusani

poor worker who may have a family of two or three or four, for his feeding, for his accommodation, for his house rent, for his medical care, for his children's school fees."

"How wicked! How blind! How can we do that? And we think that God will bless our country?" he further decried.

Fr. Ehusani went on to echo other Catholic Church leaders criticizing Nigeria's shift to the old national anthem used during the country's independence, questioning, "We think that it is by bringing a new

national anthem that God will bless our country? How can you commit this crime against humanity?"

"For me, this is a crime against humanity, because there are poor people who cannot afford to buy garri (Nigeria's staple food) ... People are dying because they have no money to cure malaria," he said on June 9. Fr. Ehusani warned, "I say we are committing a crime against humanity, and if we do not repent and retrace our steps immediately, the revenge of the poor is at the corner."

"Democracy Has To Be An Instrument Of Development": Catholic Bishop In Nigeria

By Jude Atemanke

On the occasion of Democracy Day in Nigeria marked annually on June 12, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese has underscored the importance of democracy, saying it should be "an instrument of development."

In his address to The Platform Special Edition on Wednesday, June 12, Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah said, "Our democracy is in recession, in decline, precisely because it is evident to us that what we are working with is not something that has come from our own historical, cultural or even anthropological experiences."

"The only way democracy can work is that democracy has to be an instrument of development," Bishop Kukah said during the event that was held under the theme "Democracy and the Free Market Economy."

He added, "If we use democracy to develop, then we'll be developing democracy."

The Nigerian Catholic Bishop emphasized, "If we are going to go on the part of democracy, there needs to be some kind of clarity about really what we want for our nation."

"It is important we understand that democracy has its ideals. But those

ideals must be enunciated by intellectuals," Bishop Kukah said.

He added, "There needs to be a much more firmer foundation and finding a place for the moral guard rails that can protect our people. Otherwise, those who dismiss religion forget that even if religion didn't exist, it will be invented, because there are so many things we cannot explain in life."

The Local Ordinary of Sokoto said, "What we need is a clean society where we measure our progress not by the presence of the rich, but by the absence of the poor."

The vocal Nigerian Catholic Bishop, who is also known for good governance advocacy went on to reflect on Nigeria's economy which he said is facing a "recession."

In Nigeria, he continued, the impact of the recession has been aggravated by mismanagement. He said the situation could be avoided if legislators lived to their constitutional responsibilities. Instead, he said, the legislators are "preoccupied with determining their salaries, fringe benefits, and unnecessary foreign travels."

"As a result of our inability to cultivate the financial discipline and prudent

management of our economy, we have come to depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects," the Bishop said. "The corrupt, inept, and insensitive leadership in the last years have been a source of immorality and impropriety in our society," Bishop Kukah said.

He said the challenge for many countries in Africa, beginning with Nigeria, "is how to restrain the greed of the political elite. Not only the political elite, but the greed and the appetite of ordinary Nigerians,

cont'd from page 6

Embrace Failure and Learn

Failure is not the opposite of success; it is a part of success. Embrace failure as a learning experience. Every setback is a setup for a comeback. Analyze your mistakes, learn from them, and use that knowledge to move forward with even greater determination.

Stay Resilient and Persistent

The road to your dream will have its share of obstacles and challenges. Stay resilient. Persistence is the key to overcoming adversity. When you feel like giving up, remember why you started. Keep pushing forward with

because it is feeding this beast that has made it impossible for this country to grow."

"We cannot talk about people being corrupt when it is clear to us that the incentives for doing the right thing doesn't exist," the 70-year-old Catholic Bishop, who has been at the helm of Sokoto Diocese since his Episcopal Consecration in September 2011 said.

He continued, "Justice demands that the interests of the working classes should be carefully watched over by the

administration, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community, may themselves share in the benefits which they create."

"The challenge before us is not so much a question of how the market works. The challenge is that the human person in Nigeria must become the thermal matter for gauging whether systems are working or not," Bishop Kukah said. The Nigerian Catholic Church leader urged the government and legislators to go back to certain

provisions of the constitution and ensure they are respected.

"There are provisions, for example, encouraging us to intermarry, encouraging us to form an association, encouraging us about religious freedom. But a lot of these issues are operated by their breaches," he said. Bishop Kukah said Nigerians "must redefine what it is to be a Nigerian. But we must also make sure that the elite claim this argument and claim this space."

Youths, Make Your Dream A Reality

unwavering determination. Your dream is worth it.

Surround Yourself with Positivity

Surround yourself with people who believe in you and your dream. Positive influences can inspire and motivate you. Distance yourself from negativity and naysayers. Build a support system that encourages and uplifts you.

Adapt and Evolve

Be adaptable and open to change. The path to your dream may not always be straightforward. Be willing to adjust your approach and embrace new opportunities. Flexibility allows you to navigate obstacles and find

alternative routes to success.

Celebrate Your Wins

Take time to celebrate your achievements, no matter how small. Recognize your progress and reward yourself for your hard work. Celebrating milestones boosts your morale and keeps you motivated to continue your journey.

Inspire Others

Your journey to actualizing your dream can inspire others. Share your story, your struggles, and your triumphs. By doing so, you create a ripple effect that encourages others to pursue their dreams. Together, we

can create a world where dreams become realities.

Conclusion

My fellow youths, the journey of actualizing your dreams is one of passion, perseverance, and belief. It's about turning the invisible into the visible, the impossible into the possible. Today, I challenge you to take that leap of faith. Dream big, believe in yourself, set your goals, take action, embrace failure, stay resilient, surround yourself with positivity, adapt, celebrate, and inspire.

Your dream is within reach. The power to actualize it lies within you. So, go forth, seize your dreams, and make them your reality.

Educational Conspiracy

(What Our Silence Has Caused)

By Paschal I. Esu

Educationists can testify the general aims education envisioned for humanity and the world at large. Such aims could be summarized as; to get students imbibe morality, to get them ready for success in diverse fields of endeavors; in modern careers and vocations. According to Plato, education is aimed at turning the soul in the right direction, and save it from a life of self-deceit and delusion. Education also helps men and women to live fuller and happier lives by adjustment with their changing environment, to develop the best elements in their own culture and to achieve the social and economic progress which enables them to take their place in the modern world and to live together in peace - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Education as regards vocation, was designed to impact in people the knowledge and skills for a continuum of God's unfinished creation and makes them productive where perfect living can be earned.

Contrary to the above aims, education in the Nigerian context is a taboo. The educational planners in Nigeria are avoiding the true processes and career prospects of education. This could be an influence of the type of education long designed for Nigeria by the colonialists. The aim of this system of education as of the colonial time was for production of servants, interpreters, catechist for the white missionaries. The continued practice of this colonial system of education is as if there is no innovative thinking in Nigeria among planners. The educational managers in their own way are not adequately linking Nigerian culture into the post colonial curriculum.

The teachers on their own parts are not investing enough into the minds of the learners. This had led to lose of cultural values, religious scandal, economic meltdown, lose of moral promotion in both schools, homes and the society at large. In schools, female learners are mostly affected and are lured into prostitution with school managers, lecturers and teachers. The males are lured too into examination magic, cultism, and servanthood for good grades. These in turn influence their general well-being and creativity.

The contribution of experts in all fields of education has proven abortive. This situation is what I referred to as educational conspiracy.

Schofield (1982) quoting Lodge, says, education is equivalent to experience. Nduka (1964) refers to education as the process of transmitting the peoples' culture from one generation to the other. The Colombian Encyclopedia defined it as any process formal or informal that shapes the potentialities of the maturing person. Ajayi-Dopemu (1994) refers Education as the light of the mind. Farrant (1982) described education as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. Amale (2003) stated that education could be understood to mean the total development of the individual child, through acceptable

methods and techniques; according to his abilities and interests, as well as the needs of the society; to take his rightful place and contribute adequately to the advancement of his society. Education is purely noted to involve a desirable change in human behaviour through the process of teaching and learning. Here, do we mean positive change or negative change? To confirm the type of change I mean, let me consider the words of Good (1945) which says, education is a mean through which an individual develops his abilities, skills, capacities and all forms of behavioural patterns that are of positive value in the society he lives. Of course, education is viewed as the process of inculcating the right attitude, values, norms, abilities and skills in an individual to enable him or her be a functional member of the society he or she belongs.

Considering all the definitions stated above, none is against positive change; that is, none has stated that education inculcate bad attitude, unskilled abilities, ignorance etc. What then should be the cause of poor education, its processes, management, bad behaviour possessed by human planners, learners and the sufferings the world is experiencing? This cause is not far away from "conspiracy".

According to Scholastic Children's Dictionary, (1996), conspiracy is a secret, illegal plan made by two or more people. To complement this definition, Paschal (2017) modified it to mean a conscious force and secret plan by two or group of people to destroy God's renewed plan for man. The force applied in the administration of this act has ruined humanity in their religious beliefs, political and social actions, economic planning and educational practices.

Educational conspiracy is a set of premeditated errors purposefully implemented by the educational planners, supervisors, teachers that aimed to thwart other's (learners) physical ability to succumb to inferiority. From a survey I made, some claimed reasons that educational planners held to constitute this are that, education is for employment as was colonially termed servanthood to the whites. The educational managers held that learners are after certification; so it is a waste of resources to employ creative and innovative curriculum. The teachers collaborating with the managers believe that it is a waste of energy to diligently impact the poor and uninterested brain. Therefore, they promote malpractice to help them to get desired certificate quickly; and along the line they can make more money to complement their salary since it may not be sufficient to cater for their wants and needs.

Again, no wealthy parent ever wants to see his ward, however unfit or unintelligent without a school certificate to ensure he gets to his class. Thus they come in caput with the teachers and lecturers to ensure a certificated future for the presumably duncy ward by paying to be sure that they are certified without knowledge.

These kind of actions negatively impact educational practices, and foster negative impacts on the learners' general

behaviour and can be the source of severe danger and unstoppable sufferings in the society. When an unqualified doctor is at the surgical bed, what is the chance of survival of the patient? Some of the students would suffer undefined future with hunger for sustainability and a happy living which could only be guaranteed by proper and right education.

There exists a lot of academic confusion that even guidance counselors cannot solve; misunderstanding among parents and educational officials if their children could not achieve the paid goals; mistrust in friendship among planners or officials if money generated are not equally shared; laziness abound in learners if found that poor academic learners make Alphas while the studious ones make credits. By giving in to laziness, mass failure in examination becomes the new production in education practice; the school managers withdrew their interest in facilitating the school; learners creative faculties perish and they remain unemployed; their long term stay without a job leads to depression, vices, mental loss and perhaps suicide. We cannot afford to be silent about this.

To solve these problems, humanity should seek for God's mercy and wisdom. They should revive their interest in hopeful studies and abstain from sloth. Counselors should be well trained and assigned duties to access the right use of students' mental abilities for a choice of a course in the university. Orientation should be done at the beginning of each term or semester to assess student's ability to cope with lectures.

What Nigeria needs now more than any this is education towards entrepreneurship rather than education towards job seeking. Full entrepreneurial education should be introduced from the nursery level up to the tertiary level. Government should assist to fund unemployed graduates for a start up or operation of small scale businesses.

Corrupt educational planners, supervisors and teachers should be sacked from service and government should encourage talent and creativity from gifted learners.

In conclusion, there is no gainsaying that Nigeria's education system is tied to the colonial mindset of training for servanthood. The challenges found within the education sector are traceable to this situation. Training for servanthood cannot not attach importance to acquisition of knowledge as the aim of education. Under such situation the crave for certificate takes precedence over the desire for knowledge; since it is the certificate that would put food on your table not your knowledge. There is need to correct this perspective if we must help our students and generations yet unborn to be freed from the shackles of educational conspiracy. Our students desire proper education, fair administration and justification in teaching and learning for excellent and defendable results to be achieved. This is a general cry.

In summary, this work has attempted to spell out some points regarding the problem of education, given definitions by various contributors to education, addresses what educational conspiracy is all about, and renders few reasons and effects the problem of conspiracy has caused to educational practices. It finally suggested some possible solutions to eradicate the problems from the educational system at large.

News

cont'd from page 2

Knights Of St. John International Celebrates...

John international are celebrating their patron saint, St. John the Baptist, a man who always stand for the truth. John the Baptist always respect boundaries. He advised all to respect the right of others, respect boundaries and be honest in their dealings in life.

The highlight of the event was the Thanksgiving ceremony and awards of honor to deserving faithful of the Noble Order for their steadfastness and contributions to the growth

of the Order. Among those who received an award was Hon Dr. Patrick Umoh, the Member representing Ikot Ekpene/Essien Udim/Obot Akara Federal Constituency at the National Assembly, and a Knight of the Order of St. John International.

To exemplify his commitment to the ideals of the Catholic Church, Dr. Umoh demonstrated his generosity by contributing financially to the Church's ongoing building project.

Members of the church expressed gratitude to Hon. Dr. Umoh for his dedication to humanity and efforts to enhance the lives of the people of Ikot Ekpene/Essien Udim/Obot Akara Federal Constituency. This commitment, as articulated in his blueprint, continues to inspire hope and elevate the aspirations of many within the Federal Constituency.

The event witnessed the presence of the Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Dr.

Camillus Raymond Umoh, the Chairman of the APC in Akwa Ibom State, Obong Stephen Leo Ntukekpo, and other distinguished guests.



The Power Of The Rosary According To Popes, Saints And Blessed

In her final apparition in Fatima, Portugal on October 13, 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary declared thus:

I am the Lady of the Rosary. I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives and to ask pardon of their sins; they must not offend Our Lord anymore, for He is already too grievously offended by the sins of men. People must say the Rosary. Let them continue saying it everyday.

According to Sr. Lucia, one of the three shepherd children to whom Our Lady appeared at Fatima in 1917, "The Most Holy Virgin in these last times in which we live has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual, in the personal life of each one of us, of our families ... that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem, I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary".

Blessed Alan says that he has seen several people delivered from Satan's bondage after taking up the holy rosary, even though they had previously sold themselves to him in body and soul by renouncing their baptismal vows and their allegiance to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let all men, the learned and the ignorant, the just and the sinners, the great and the small praise and honour Jesus and Mary, night and day, by saying the most holy rosary" says St. Louis de Montfort.

"The immense good that this noble devotion [the rosary] has done to the world is well known", says St. Alphonsus Liguori ... "How many, by its means, have been delivered from sin! How many led to a holy life! How many to a good death, and are now saved!". "If we want to help the souls in purgatory", says the saint, "then we should say the rosary for them because the rosary gives them great relief".

"The rosary is a weapon in our hands with which we can overcome the devil's attacks" (St. Pio of Pietrelcina). "Our Lady has never refused me a grace through the recitation of the rosary" continued St. Pio of Pietrelcina, the famous Padre Pio. In his words, "The rosary is the weapon that wins all battles".

The Servant of God Patrick Peyton says that "The rosary can bring families through all dangers and evils".

What have the Popes said about the power of the Rosary?

The Roman Pontiffs have continuously and consistently stressed the importance of reciting the Rosary every day.

Pope St. Pius V, one of the greatest Popes who ever ruled the Church, said the rosary every day.

"Among all the devotions approved by the Church none has been favoured by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary" (Pope Pius IX). The Pope says that: "If you desire peace to reign in your hearts and families, gather together each evening to recite the rosary".

Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical "On Devotion of the Rosary" issued September 1, 1883 "earnestly exhort all Christians to give themselves to the recital of the pious devotion of the Rosary publicly or privately in their own house, and family, and that unceasingly". According to him, "The rosary is the most excellent form of prayer and the most efficacious means of attaining eternal life. It is the remedy for all our evils, the root of all our blessings. There is no more excellent way of praying". "We strongly urge all the faithful, whether it be publicly in the Churches or in private homes and within the family, to pray the Rosary and, as far as possible, not to relent in this holy exercise". Benedict XV describes the Rosary as perfect prayer "because of the grace it obtains and because of the triumphs it achieves".

"Among all the devotions approved by the Church, none has been so favoured by so many miracles as the Rosary devotion". — Pope Pius IX

"The Rosary is the most beautiful and the richest of all prayers to the Mediatrix of all graces; it is the prayer that touches most the heart of the Mother of God. Say it each day". — Pope St. Pius X

Pius XI noted with admiration the innumerable multitude of holy men of every age and every condition who have always held the Rosary dear. "They have recited it with great devotion, and in every moment they have used it as a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight, to preserve the integrity of life, to acquire virtue more easily, and in a word, to attain real peace among men". According to him, "The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin... It not only serves admirably to overcome the enemies of God and of religion, but it is also a stimulus and an encouragement to the practice of the evangelical virtues, which it develops and cultivates in our souls. Above all, it nourishes our Catholic faith... If you



By Prof. Michael Ogunu

desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labours". The Pope urged all Bishops to see it that the Rosary is more highly esteemed by all the faithful under their care. "Through your work and that of the priests who help you in the care of souls, its (Rosary's) praises and advantages shall be preached and repeated to the faithful of every social class" (*Encyclical on the Rosary, September 29, 1937*).

Pope Pius XII prayed the fifteen-decade Rosary daily. "Ever since we were raised by the design of Divine Providence to the Supreme chair of Peter we have never ceased, in the face of approaching evils, to entrust to the most powerful protection of the Mother of God the destiny of the human family; we do not hesitate to affirm again publicly that we put great confidence in the Holy Rosary for the healing of evils which afflict our times" (*Encyclical on Recitation of the Rosary, September 15, 1951*).

According to the Pontiff, "There is no surer means of calling down God's blessings upon the family ... than the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary".

Pope John XXIII who gave us Vatican II in his five years Pontificate from 1958 through 1963 spoke out 38 times on the Rosary. He prayed the fifteen decade Rosary daily. "We want to declare in complete frankness and simplicity that the years have made Mary's Rosary all the dearer to us. We never fail to recite it each day in its entirety and we intend to recite it with particular devotion during the coming month" (*Encyclical on the Rosary, September 26, 1959*).

"The Rosary, which in its entirety we never miss, even for a single day of the year, is the most fitting formula for praying and meditating". — Pope John XXIII.

"My day must be one long prayer; prayer is the breath of life. I propose to recite all fifteen decades of the Rosary every day, if possible in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament". — Pope John XXIII.

Pope Paul VI in his *Marialis Cultus* described the Rosary as "the compendium of the Gospels". And in his Encyclical — *Christi Matri* — of September 15, 1966 he instructed all the Bishops of the world to take the lead in urging and encouraging people to pray ardently to our most merciful mother Mary by saying the Rosary. "This prayer is most pleasing to the Mother of God and most effective in gaining heaven's blessings". "We exhort all Catholic families to introduce this devotion [the rosary] into their lives, and to encourage its propagation".

"From my youthful years", says Pope John Paul II, "the Rosary has held an important place in my spiritual life ... The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted a number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort ... The Rosary is my favourite prayer (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae, October 16, 2002*). He led the Rosary on Vatican Radio on the first Saturday of the month. Like his predecessors, he, on several occasions, urged the faithful to pray the Rosary to obtain God's blessings for themselves, their families, their nations and the whole world, through the intercession of the Mother of God. "To pray the rosary is to hand over our burdens to the merciful hearts of Christ and his Mother", the Pope reaffirms.

According to Pope Benedict XVI, "The rosary is a spiritual weapon in the battle against evil, against all violence,

for peace in hearts, in families, in society and in the world".

The above statements by Popes, saints and blessed on the power of the Rosary are not surprising because in her revelations to Blessed Alan de la Roche, Our Lady made the following 15 promises to all Christians who recite the Rosary devoutly daily:

- Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces.
- I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.
- The Rosary shall be powerful armour against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin and defeat heresies.
- It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
- The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary, shall not perish.
- Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him in his justice; he shall not perish by an unprovided death; if he is just, he shall remain in the grace of God and become worthy of eternal life.
- Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary shall not die without the sacrament of the Church.
- Those who recite the Rosary faithfully shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.
- I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
- The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in Heaven.
- You shall obtain all you ask of Me by the recitation of the Rosary.
- All those who propagate the Holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
- I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.
- All who recite the Rosary are my sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters of my only Son, Jesus Christ.
- Devotion to my Rosary is a great sign of predestination.

According to Sr. Lucia, "The rosary is the prayer which God, through His Church and Our Lady, has recommended most insistently to us all, as a road to and gateway of salvation".

Hence Pope Benedict XVI says: "I urge you all to recite the rosary every day, abandoning yourselves with trust in Mary's hands".

The Rosary is not simply reciting prayers from memory. It is so much more. Meditation on the mysteries must be added to the vocal recitation.

The meditations on the Rosary that accompany each mystery are the soul of the Rosary. They are what give the Rosary its life, purpose and power.

The Church grants a plenary indulgence to those who pray at least five decades of the Rosary in a Church or Chapel, or else in family, a religious community or a pious association or devoutly join in the recitation of the Rosary while it is being recited by the Supreme Pontiff and broadcast live by radio or television. The conditions are that the five decades should be prayed without interruption. Meditation on the mysteries must be added to the vocal recitation, and in public recitation the mysteries must be announced according to approved local custom. To gain the plenary indulgence, one must observe the necessary conditions for gaining a plenary indulgence in addition to saying the Rosary. The conditions include the following: go to Confession within a week before or after performing the work to which the indulgence is attached. (In this case, recitation of the Rosary as described above); receive Holy Communion and pray for the intentions of the Pope by reciting one "Our Father" and one "Hail Mary".

In addition to the three prescribed conditions, the person who wishes to gain a plenary indulgence must be completely free from attachment to sin, including venial sin.

We should therefore hold fast to the treasure of the Rosary, the inestimable gift of Our Blessed Mother and say it everyday as the Popes have done.

Ami Ndi Eyen Katholik Series

Ami Mmama Ndinam Utom Qboñ

Ami mmama ndinam utom Qboñ,
Ke adaña ini nte ndude uwem.
Nyekwọ itoro ye mfonido esie,
Ke ofuri odudu mmi.

Chorus

O Qboñ Abasi, da y'ami
Man nkeme ndinam mme utom fo
Ke eti usuñ;
Ke ini mkpa mi mbok da ukpoñ mi
sin k'idara fo. (2x)

Mmofioke nte ke mme afanekon eyedi,
Edi ke eyin Jesus nyekan mmo kpukpru.
Nyeka-iso ndikworọ ima Jesus Christ
Ye akwa Ubok esie

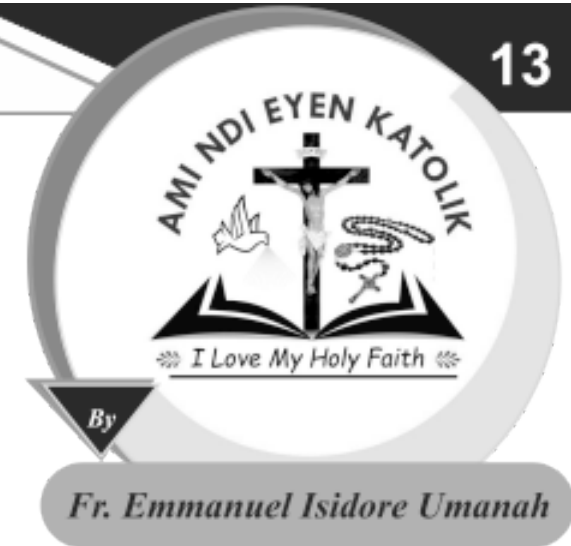
Satan eyeyom ndiwana ekon y'ami,
Edi ke enyin Jesus nyekan enye;
Mmofioke nte ke Qboñ eyeda y'ami
Koro enye amade mi.

God at the end of my earthly life.

The hymn has a simple structure. It is made up of three verses with a chorus. The composer must have been inspired by the psalmist who, in Psalm 146:2, exclaims: "I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long." This exclamation is reflected in the first verse of the hymn, although adapted to the situation of the composer as at the time of the composition: *I love (desire) to serve the Lord as long as I live; I shall sing of his glory and kindness with all my strength.* Having expressed his desire to serve the Lord, the Chorus is a plea for help: *Lord God, abide with me, so that I may serve you well. At the hour of my death, grant my soul eternal happiness.*

The second verse mirrors the words of Sirach 2:1: "My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials." Here, the sincerity of the composer is evident: he is conscious of the nature of the vocation that he has chosen; he knows that trials and temptations shall come (*Mmofioke nte ke mme afanekon eyedi*). This is not to intimidate him, but to prepare him for those moments. And indeed, he expresses his readiness to confront whatever may befall him by the Most Holy Name of Jesus (*Edi ke eyin Jesus nyekan mmo kpukpru*). He is ready and the name of Jesus is his shield; thus, *nothing can separate him from the love of Christ* (cfr. Rm. 8:31). He shall forever sing of the love of God (*Nyeka-iso ndikworọ ima Jesus Christ*) (cfr. Ps. 89:1).

The newly-ordained, in the third verse, further solidifies his desire to stand firm in the service of God,



By
Fr. Emmanuel Isidore Umanah

despite all odds. Here, he acknowledges that the devil (*dia-bolos*) may want to sow some seeds of destruction (*Satan eyeyom ndiwana ekon y'ami*), but he believes in the powerful Name of Jesus, which is above every other name (cfr. Phil 2:9). *He who is in him is greater than he who is in the world* (cfr. 1Jn 4:4). Thus, he is not afraid; rather he is convinced that the Lord will not abandon his chosen one (*Mmofioke nte ke Qboñ eyeda y'ami, koro enye amade mi*) (cfr. 1Sam 12:22; Ps. 16:10; Ps. 94:14).

Ami Mmama Ndinam Utom Qboñ is beautifully composed and it fits into different moments of the Liturgy. In Ikot Ekpene Diocese, most times, it is used at the priestly ordinations during the vesting of the newly ordained, and at the funeral of priests, during the procession to the cemetery. Quite significant! It is like a priestly anthem. On the one hand, it is used in welcoming the newly ordained to the service of God, while on the other hand, it is used in accompanying him home to eternal glory. More so, apart from these moments, this hymn is also suitable for use during the incensations at Mass, and each time, one wishes to dedicate oneself to the service of God. It can be used both publicly and privately. In fact, it is recommended as a daily prayer since it renews in us the initial desire and promise to serve God, while also praying for the grace of perseverance.

In conclusion, given its theological contents and its traditional Catholic melody, as well as, its wide usage within Calabar Ecclesiastical Province, we are proposing that this hymn be included in the next edition of the *Efik Hymn Book*. May we use this occasion to wish the composer of *Ami Mmama Ndinam Utom Qboñ* a happy anniversary while also congratulating our newly ordained priests. *Yak Qboñ Abasi odu ye nnyin, man nnyin ikpekeme ndinam mme utom esie ke eti usuñ. Amen.*

Church

Vatican Unveils Official Logo Of Jubilee Year 2025

Explanation Of The Logo For The 2025 Jubilee Year

The Vatican revealed the official logo of the Jubilee Year 2025, which it says, depicts humanity coming from the four corners of the Earth in the act of clinging to the Cross. The cross is in the shape of a sail, one of the signs of Christian Hope that carries with it the certainty of the victory of good over evil. A sail that imposes itself on the sea moved by the happenings of life. The cross ends in the shape of an anchor, another symbol of hope that brings confidence and security in life.

The logo shows four figures stylised to indicate humanity coming from the four corners of the earth. They are embracing each other to indicate the solidarity and brotherhood which joins the peoples. The figure at the head is holding onto the cross. It is not only the sign of the faith which embraces,

but also of the hope which can never be abandoned because we are always in need of hope, especially in moments of great need. It is helpful to observe the rough waves underneath; this indicates that life's pilgrimage does not always move in calm waters. Life's circumstances and the events of the world often demand a greater call to hope and because of this we see that the lower part of the cross has been turned into an anchor which stands out in the wave. As is well known, the anchor has often been used as a metaphor of hope and as a matter of fact, the anchor of hope is the name used in maritime jargon as the

name given to the reserve anchor used by vessels involved in emergency manoeuvres to stabilise the boat during storms. Do not ignore the fact that the image demonstrates that the pilgrim's journey is not individual, but communal and marked by a growing vitality leading one always closer to the cross, which is itself by no means static, but also dynamic. It turns towards humanity, not leaving it alone but going out and meeting it to offer it the certainty of its presence and the sureness of hope. Finally, the motto of the 2025 Jubilee Year: *Pellegrinantes in Spem* (Pilgrims in hope), is very visible in green.



Why Parishes Should Establish Out Stations

By Fr. Gerald Anietie Ignatius Akata

Judging from the reactions to the homily by His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Camillus R. Umoh at the concluding ceremonies of the 60th Anniversary of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, many Catholics apparently like hearing shouts of joy or watching the dancing steps of others because they have new parishes. A mainstay of these creations, from existing Quasi Parishes, Autonomous Communities to Full Fledged Parishes, is an emphasis on pastoral needs. Beyond the demographics, financial contributions, and levies, however, one fundamental need gets big attention: PASTORAL. Interestingly, that word matters not only for the Diocesan Parish Creation Committee but also for Parishes themselves as regards the establishment of out stations in their parishes. Celebration of Sacraments, care for the sick and dying, exercise of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, become more meaningful when the driving word is "pastoral." Are pastoral needs becoming more significant and meaningful to the Catholic faithful, especially when Parishes and Stations - places of worship are closer to the people? Have Catholics in Ikot Ekpene Diocese simply become lax in their faith and doctrines because of the distance of their worship places? Even His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Camillus R. Umoh affirms the fact that "Ikot Ekpene Diocese was created in 1963 with only seven parishes." Despite the small beginning with seven parishes, the current number of parishes in the diocese after 60 years shows that the number of parishes that has become closer to the people is far more than the ones that was far from the people.

Parishes are not created without taking into consideration the most fundamental needs of the people; without knowing what type of places parishes are; without knowing what type of celebration parishes would celebrate; and without knowing what kind of life parishes would express. In the case of the creation of parishes, the people's needs such as rite, race, nationality, locality, language, and custom play fundamental roles. As a result, people sometimes are made to realize the importance of the word "pastoral" instead of "nonpastoral". But "pastoral" is a word which addresses the practices. The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity refers to the "practices of guiding, healing, reconciling, sustaining, and liberating" as pastoral care. This is the summary of what parishes offer to their parishioners as "pastoral care."

Parishes are said to be pastoral, mainly because they are places established for "the care of souls" (Modern Catholic Dictionary), 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" (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, NO. 2179).

Parishioners who live far away from their parishes often feel reluctant to attend the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist because of so many challenges that long distances create: insecurity, travelling late hours, on long distance, especially for families with many children kills the spirit of concentration which makes the liturgy to be people centred. Long distances tend to make parishioners to leave before the closing of the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. Parishioners who live closer to their parishes have a walking distance to their parishes. This enhances interest, and concentration in the liturgy and other pastoral activities tend to grow on daily basis. The pastor is easily available and accessible. In contrast, parishioners who live far away from their parishes rarely have interest and concentration in the liturgy and pastoral activities, at most only on weekly or monthly basis. This express the urgent need for parishes to establish outstations. This brings the Church closer to the people.

Still, the establishment of parishes and outstations closer to the parishioners has pastoral benefits. Numerous parishioners whose parishes and outstations have the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments daily, would have positive outlook about their Catholic faith and doctrines.

Parishioners from six (6) deaneries: Abak, Ifuho, Ika, Inen, Ukan and Urua Akpan had their quasi parishes raised to the full-fledged parishes (May 2024 PAX Edition, p.7). Equally, parishioners from five (5) deaneries: Abak, Ifuho, Nto Edino, Ukana, and Urua Akpan had their sections and autonomous communities created by Bishop Umoh as quasi parishes (May 2024 PAX Edition, p.7). Then, on Thursday 27 June 2024 parishioners of St. Anne Parish Abiakpo Ikot Essien proposing to establish an out station at Itak Ikot Udo village, gathered together for an evangelization outreach at the village with Ikot Ekpene Diocesan Evangelizers from both Ikot Ekpene and Abak Areas. The Diocesan Evangelizers were led by their Chaplain Very Rev. Fr. Moses Ibok. Conducting an extensive interview with these parishioners unfolded positive testimonies about Catholic faith and doctrines. The testimonies include knowledge about feasts, memorials, solemnities, the celebration of the Eucharist, other six sacraments, and the importance of corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Establishing parishes and outstations closer to the people thereby creating close proximity for parishioners to attend and participate at the celebration of the Eucharist daily help parishioners to share in the actual life of the Church both at the parish and diocesan levels. Carefully attending daily Eucharistic

celebrations because parishes and out station centres are closer to the people will adequately attend to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the parishioners and enhance growth of faith. Certainly, if there is an effective way to address the spiritual needs of parishioners, it is by the establishment of parishes and outstations.

Establishment of parishes and outstations closer to the people can address another pastoral concern: the collaborating effectiveness of other pastoral groups. In the past decades, many parishes and outstations have been far from parishioners, making it extremely difficult to establish various kinds of pastoral groups, councils and leadership teams in these places. True, effective collaboration has been lacking between priests and lay persons in parishes and outstations because of the long distances. However, constantly being absent from parishes and out stations because of long distances means that parishioners are not gathering together and are not opening to meeting the Triune God and accepting others as brothers and sisters, their conditions or origins notwithstanding. Therefore, if we want to be able to establish effective collaboration, we need to establish parishes and outstations that are closer to the people, whatever the size. Having parishes and out stations that are within reach for parishioners whereby they attend on daily basis to their liturgical life is a way of creating effective collaboration.

Another pastoral benefit of establishing parishes and out stations that are closer to the parishioners is also a societal one: Establishing parishes and outstations that are closer to the people is better for the society. In his speech to a group of French bishops during their Ad Limina visit on January 25, 1997, Pope John Paul II stated that "The parish institution is meant to

provide the church's great services: prayer in common and the reading of God's Word, celebrations, especially that of the Eucharist, catechesis for children and the adult catechumenate, the ongoing formation of the faithful, communications designed to make the Christian message known, services of charity and solidarity and the local work of movements" (New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law, p.673).

Despite considerable benefits for establishing parishes and outstations that are closer to the people, the parish priests have to make individual pastoral decisions. There are no simple ways to develop pastoral care for the people in a definite community of the faithful and make this pastoral care closer to the people than to establish out stations. The parish is entrusted into the pastoral care of the parish priest. He is the one who is officially appointed pastor of a parish. The bishop is one who appoints the parish priest and entrusts the parish into his pastoral care.

The bottom line is that countless people are concerned these days about the long distances of parishes and out stations and insecurity in the world in which we live. It is very frustrating to know that people have priceless value for their spiritual needs and life, and yet long distances are preventing them from achieving this value. Granted that parish priests have to choose between pastoral care and non-pastoral care, the benefits of establishing parishes and outstations that are closer to the people are so enormous that this establishment has become a necessity and a vital pastoral need.

Health Matters

Peptic Ulcer

What is Peptic Ulcer?

Peptic ulcers are sores in the lining of the stomach, lower esophagus, or small intestine caused by inflammation from the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) and stomach acid erosion.

A peptic ulcer is a sore that develops on the lining of the stomach, duodenum (the first part of the small intestine), or esophagus. It occurs when the lining of the digestive tract is damaged, usually by excess stomach acid, pepsin (a digestive enzyme), or a bacterial infection. There are two main types of peptic ulcers:

- a) Gastric ulcer (stomach ulcer): occurs in the stomach lining
- b) Duodenal ulcer: occurs in the duodenum (first part of the small intestine)

Causes:

- a) Infection with *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) bacteria
- b) Overuse of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs): Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are a class of medications that help relieve pain, reduce inflammation, and lower fever. E.g. Aspirin, Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve), Celecoxib (Celebrex), Diclofenac (Voltaren), Indomethacin (Indocin), Ketoprofen (Orudis), Oxaprozin (Daypro),
- c) Excessive alcohol consumption
- d) Smoking
- e) Stress
- f) Zollinger-Ellison syndrome (rare): Zollinger-Ellison syndrome is a rare condition that occurs when there is a growth of one or more tumors in the pancreas and the upper part of the small intestine

Symptoms:

The most common symptom of a peptic ulcer is burning abdominal pain that extends from the navel to the chest, which can range from mild to severe. In some cases, the pain may wake you up at night. Small peptic ulcers may not produce any symptoms in the early phases. Other symptoms include:

- a) Abdominal pain or discomfort
- b) Nausea and vomiting
- c) Bloating and gas
- d) Weight loss
- e) Fatigue

f) Loss of appetite

g) Chest pain

h) Heart burn

If you suspect you have a peptic ulcer, consult a healthcare professional for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Tests and exams for peptic ulcers

Two types of tests are available to diagnose a peptic ulcer. They are called upper endoscopy and upper gastrointestinal (GI) series.

Upper endoscopy

In this procedure, your doctor inserts a long tube with a camera down your throat and into your stomach and small intestine to examine the area for ulcers. This instrument also allows your doctor to remove tissue samples for examination.

Not all cases require an upper endoscopy. However, this procedure is recommended for people with a higher risk of stomach cancer. This includes people over the age of 45, as well as people who experience:

- anemia
- weight loss
- gastrointestinal bleeding
- difficulty swallowing

Upper GI

If you don't have difficulty swallowing and have a low risk of stomach cancer, your doctor may recommend an upper GI test instead. For this procedure, you'll drink a thick liquid called barium (barium swallow). Then a technician will take an X-ray of your stomach, esophagus, and small intestine. The liquid will make it possible for your doctor to view and treat the ulcer.

Because *H. pylori* is a cause of peptic ulcers, your doctor will also run a test to check for this infection in your stomach.

How to treat a peptic ulcer

Treatment will depend on the underlying cause of your ulcer. If tests show that you have an *H. pylori* infection, your doctor will prescribe a combination of medication. You'll have to take the medications for up to two weeks. The medications include antibiotics to help kill infections and proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) to help reduce stomach acid.

You may experience minor side effects like diarrhea or an upset stomach from antibiotic regimens. If these side effects cause significant discomfort or don't get better over time, talk to your doctor. If your doctor determines that you don't have an *H. pylori* infection, they may recommend a prescription or over-the-counter PPI (such as Prilosec or Prevacid) for up to eight weeks to reduce stomach acid and help your ulcer heal.

Acid blockers like famotidine (Pepcid) can also reduce stomach acid and ulcer pain. These medications are available as a prescription and also over the counter in lower doses. Your doctor may also prescribe sucralfate (Carafate) which will coat your

stomach and reduce symptoms of peptic ulcers.

Complications of a peptic ulcer

Untreated ulcers can become worse over time. They can lead to other more serious health complications such as:

- **Perforation:** A hole develops in the lining of the stomach or small intestine and causes an infection. A sign of a perforated ulcer is sudden, severe abdominal pain.
 - **Internal bleeding:** Bleeding ulcers can result in significant blood loss and thus require hospitalization. Signs of a bleeding ulcer include lightheadedness, dizziness, and black stools.
 - **Scar tissue:** This is thick tissue that develops after an injury. This tissue makes it difficult for food to pass through your digestive tract. Signs of scar tissue include vomiting and weight loss.
- All three complications are serious and may require surgery. Seek urgent medical attention if you experience the following symptoms:
- sudden, sharp abdominal pain
 - fainting, excessive sweating, or confusion, as these may be signs of shock
 - blood in vomit or stool
 - abdomen that's hard to the touch
 - abdominal pain that worsens with movement but improves with lying completely still

Outlook for peptic ulcers

With proper treatment, most peptic ulcers heal. However, you may not heal if you stop taking your medication early or continue to use tobacco, alcohol, and nonsteroidal pain relievers during treatment. Your doctor will schedule a follow-up appointment after your initial treatment to evaluate your recovery.

Some ulcers, called refractory ulcers, don't heal with treatment. If your ulcer doesn't heal with the initial treatment, this can indicate:

- an excessive production of stomach acid
- presence of bacteria other than *H. pylori* in the stomach
- another disease, such as stomach cancer or Crohn's disease

Your doctor may offer a different method of treatment or run additional tests to rule out stomach cancer and other gastrointestinal diseases.

How to prevent peptic ulcers

Certain lifestyle choices and habits can reduce your risk of developing peptic ulcers. These include:

- not drinking more than two alcoholic beverages a day
- not mixing alcohol with medication
- washing your hands frequently to avoid infections
- limiting your use of ibuprofen, aspirin, and naproxen (Aleve)

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle by quitting smoking cigarettes and other tobacco use and eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains will help you prevent developing a peptic ulcer.

2026 FIFA World Cup: Sports Minister Set To Wield Big Stick If ...

The Minister of Sports Development, Senator John Enoh has given a hint that some drastic actions may soon be taken to restore the country's football which is on a nose dive.

Speaking at the weekend on Chief Segun Odegbami's Eagle7 radio programme monitored in Lagos, Senator Enoh said that he cannot continue to watch while things go bad with the country's football because of the fear of FIFA ban those running football have been drumming into his ears.

"I cannot continue to keep quiet any longer over the affairs of the NFF because of fear of FIFA ban. I will continue to walk the fine line that protects the interest and emotions of

Nigerians who expect nothing but good results and that our football be run properly, so that results posted by our teams add to their happiness and liveliness", he stressed.

The minister said that he has his reservations about the threat of FIFA ban because "we are a sovereign country, the government spent about N17bn to clear outstanding debts owed by the NFF recently, it wasn't spent by FIFA".

Continuing, the minister said, "whether we qualify for the World Cup or not may not seem a problem to FIFA but it is a problem to Nigerians.

"Football is too much for Nigerians for the minister or ministry of sports development to leave in the

hands of some people. It cannot continue to proceed as the exclusive preserve of some people because they are NFF".

He added that he had to summon the NFF big wigs recently because "the outcomes of the World Cup qualifiers against South Africa and Benin Republic were not acceptable to the sports ministry, the federal government as well as Nigerians".

While also blaming the players for not showing enough hunger and commitment in the national team, he expressed optimism that "we can still qualify if everything is done right in the remaining six matches in the qualifiers".



Athletes Raising Rights Abuses Must Be Protected, Un Says Ahead Of Olympics

Athletes must be able to speak out on rights abuses such as racism and discrimination without fear of reprisals, the UN human rights chief insisted Monday ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Volker Turk said the Games, which begin on July 26, would be taking place against a backdrop of wars, and praised the courage of athletes who highlight rights violations.

He was speaking at the UN Human Rights Council alongside International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach.

But during the subsequent debate, Russia lashed out at its exclusion from Paris 2024 over its war in Ukraine, accusing the IOC of "sordid tactics" and "collective punishment" of its athletes.

Sports, like human rights, promote fairness, respect

and equal opportunities, Turk told the rights council in Geneva.

However, sports were not immune from human rights challenges, including during landmark events like the Olympics, he noted.

"Some worrying issues are more visible than others: racist or sexist incidents, abuse, violence against women, corruption; discrimination on the basis of religion or religious attire, disability, nationality or sexual orientation and gender identity," he said.

But Turk said important progress had been made, citing the sentencing in Spain last month of three football fans for racially abusing Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior.

Turk said athletes were increasingly speaking out, either because they had been subjected to human rights

violations themselves or were denouncing systemic injustice.

"This takes tremendous courage and must be honoured," he said.

"They often speak out at great risk to themselves and their careers.

"These athletes must be supported and protected... by ensuring that they have avenues to speak out and seek redress safely and without fear of reprisals."

Bach however said the IOC could not solve human rights issues which generations of politicians had been unable to fix.

That said, "in these divisive times, with wars and conflicts on the rise, it has never been more important to build inclusive communities. Sport is the low-cost, high-impact tool for all countries to do this," he said.



Paris 2024 Olympics: Waldrum picks Ajibade, Nnadozie, Oshoala, 15 others

... Gift Monday, three others listed as alternate players

... Team departs Abuja on Thursday for training camp in Spain

Head Coach Randy Waldrum has picked captain Rasheedat Ajibade, goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie, defender Osinachi Ohale, forward Asisat Oshoala and 14 other players in his final list of Nigeria's Super Falcons for this year's Women's Olympic Football Tournament in France.

There are also defenders Oluwatosin Demehin and Michelle Alozie, midfielders Deborah Abiodun, Halimatu Ayinde, Christy Ucheibe and Toni Payne, and forwards Esther Okoronkwo, Chinwendu Ihezuo and Uchenna Kanu.

Squad members who are currently on holidays in Nigeria will join home-based players and team officials aboard an Air France flight from Abuja to Sevilla, Spain on Thursday night, with the rest of the playing body and technical team also arriving in Sevilla on Friday for a two-week training camp.

The team is scheduled to depart Sevilla for France on Thursday, 18th July.

Nine-time African champions Nigeria, who are making their first appearance at the Women's Olympic Football Tournament for the first time since 2008 in China, will tackle Brazil, Spain and Japan, in that order, at this year's tournament.

To qualify for the 12-team tournament, the Falcons edged South Africa's Banyana Banyana 1-0, with a strike from the penalty spot in Abuja by Ajibade separating Africa's top two teams over two legs in the month of April.

Their first game, against Brazil, comes up at the Stade Bordeaux on 25th July, before confrontations with Spain (28th July) and Japan (31st July). The matches against Spain and Japan will hold at the Stade de la Beaujoire in Nantes, where the Super Eagles famously defeated tournament favourites Spain 3-2 in a memorable game at the 1998 FIFA World Cup finals.

SUPER FALCONS FOR PARIS 2024 OLYMPICS:

Goalkeepers: Chiamaka Nnadozie (Paris FC);

Wrestling Federation Unveils Six Wrestlers For Paris Olympics



The Nigeria Wrestling Federation has unveiled 6 athletes who will fly the nation's flag at the 2024 Olympics in Paris, France.

The team, which comprises five female wrestlers, one male freestyle wrestler and three coaches, was presented on Monday in a colourful ceremony at the Dynamite Wrestling gym in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Wrestlers unveiled are: Tokyo Olympic silver medalist Blessing Oborodudu (68kg), reigning African champion Odunayo Adekunroye (57kg), and Military

world champion Hannah Reuben (76kg).

Also, reigning African champions and debutants, Esther Kolawole (62kg) and Ogunsanya Christinah (53kg), while Ashton Mutuwa completes the list in the (125kg) men's freestyle wrestling.

coaches, Victor Kodei, Purity Akuh, and Happiness Burutu.

The President Nigeria Wrestling Federation, Daniel Igali, in his remarks, expressed confidence that the nation's wrestlers will put up a good performance at this year's Olympics.

Tochukwu Oluehi (Shualat Alsharqia FC, Saudi Arabia)

Defenders: Osinachi Ohale (Pachucha Club de Futbol, Mexico); Oluwatosin Demehin (Stade de Reims, France); Michelle Alozie (Houston Dash, USA); Nicole Payne (Portland Thorns FC, USA); Chidinma Okeke (Mynavi Sendai Ladies, Japan)

Midfielders: Deborah Abiodun (University of Pittsburgh, USA); Halimatu Ayinde (FC Rosengard, Sweden); Christy Ucheibe (SL Benfica, Portugal); Jennifer Echegini (Juventus Ladies, Italy); Toni Payne (Sevilla FC, Spain)

Forwards: Rasheedat Ajibade (Atletico Madrid FC, Spain); Esther Okoronkwo (Changchun FC, China); Asisat Oshoala (Bay FC, USA); Uchenna Kanu (Racing Louisville, USA); Chinwendu Ihezuo (Pachucha Club de Futbol, Mexico); Chinonyerem Macleans (Locomotiv Moscow, Russia)

Alternate Players: Jumoke Alani (Nasarawa Amazons); Ifeoma Onumonu (Utah Royals, USA); Gift Monday (Coasta Adeje Tenerife Egatesa, Spain); Morufa Ademola (Rivers Angels)

"The Nigeria Wrestling Federation is a very serious Federation, the athletes have been in camp training for couple of weeks now and in my view they're prepared."

"The athletes won't be going to Paris to participate but to compete, and you know when someone competes for medals, and we are hoping that if we compete very well, the medals will come." Igali said.

Earlier, the Bayelsa State Government, through the Secretary to the State government, Prof. Nimibofa Ayawei bids farewell to the contingents with the aim to make Nigerians proud.

"Our love for the Olympics today is the reason we are here. So, I enjoin you to make the nation proud at the Games by competing clean and bringing glory back home so we all can celebrate." Ayawei stated.

The athletes and officials are expected to depart Nigeria for Spain on 3rd. July for a pre Olympic tournament in Madrid before settling in Germany for their last camping ahead of the games proper.



PAX Newspaper

...Peace on earth to men of goodwill

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THE MINIMUM WAGE BROUHAHA AND THE PLIGHTS OF THE COMMON NIGERIAN WORKERS

For months now, there have been a lot of debate and controversy about acceptable and fair minimum wage for workers in both the private and the public sector in the country. While the NLC and the TUC had clamor for the review of the current N30000 minimum wage, the government who are the principal employers decided to take no notice for the call until very recently.

At the beginning of this year, the President, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, had inaugurated a tripartite committee to negotiate a new minimum wage for the Nigerian workers. It was expected that by 1st May, during the celebration of workers day, a new minimum wage would have been announced to the delight of workers and employers of labor. But unfortunately, this was not to be so. Recall that the National minimum wage Act of 2019 introduced a five years review policy on the minimum wage. The Act was a response to extensive advocacy and negotiation between Labour Union, the government and the employers of labour. It reflected a consensus on the need for a more systematic wage adjustment. As it is, this five year tenure of the current minimum wage had elapsed since May 1st.

It is interesting to note that the ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention of 1970 had set out principles for determining minimum wages globally. Such principles demand that minimum wage should be fair and reasonable, ensuring descent standards of living for workers and their families. It should take into account the cost of living, social security benefits; and should be adjusted to reflect changes in economic conditions such as inflation, productivity and economic growth. Minimum wages should therefore be reviewed in a fair, transparent and equitable manner that promotes descent work conditions and social justice for all workers and employers.

It is no news that for years now, Nigeria has been experiencing high inflation rate. As at May 2024, Nigeria headline inflation rate recorded as high as 33.95%; food inflation has risen to 40.66%. these are the highest inflation figures in the Nation since the advent of the present democratic dispensation in 1999 (Business Insider Africa 16th June 2024, The Punch Newonline, 1 July 2024). This rise in inflation has come to pose a draconian challenge not only to the Nigerian workers but the general populace. This has severely impacted the purchasing power of workers and most household no longer afford basic and essential commodities. The inadequacy of the current minimum wage to respond to the basic needs of the least Nigerian workers (N30000 cannot feed a family of two with one minimum standard meal per day), combined with the consistent high inflation has created the need for the review of the minimum wage to a significant increase. The consistent inflationary pressures underscore the necessity of a robust and realistic minimum wage that can help workers maintain a decent standard of living amidst rising prices of goods and services. It is expected therefore that the government should balance wage increase with the present inflationary pressures to improve the quality of life of the Nigerian workers. There is no gainsaying that the consistent and rapid increase in food prices and basic necessities make it extremely difficult to maintain decent standard of living.

Viewed from the above perspective, one questions the rationale behind the back and forth negotiations on a national minimum wage. Recall that prior to his inauguration in May 2023, during the celebration of the 2023 workers day President Tinubu had promised Nigerian workers living wage even as he noted that

the current minimum wage was not enough to cater for the wellbeing of the workers. "In the Nigeria, I shall have the honour and privilege to lead from May 29, workers will have more than a minimum wage. You will have a living wage to have a decent life and provide for your families." (Premium Times Online, Friday June 14, 2024). Let us hope that the President will keep to his promise and provide a LIVING wage irrespective of the figures presented for his assent.

Perhaps it was in consideration of this Presidential promise that NLU and TUC proposed a wage of 615,000 at the beginning of the negotiation, and ended with the latest figure of 250,000 stating that by their calculations, that amount should cover for food, transportation, accommodation, education, sanitation, medicals and utilities. On the other hand, Federal and state government had proposed 47,000, and 62,000 without any breakdown, but with excuse that government and private cannot afford more than that. Government noted that they have used all necessary parameters, and also applied social, economic and political considerations, ILO convention and international based practices to arrive at the 62,000 minimum wage. To what extent this is true is a debate for another day.

What is interesting in all this is that the negotiation of the new minimum wage is carried out by those who earn living wage. The tripartite committee is made of mostly persons who take home as much as 1 million and above every month in the form of salaries, allowances and estacodes.

Considering the extravagance of the present administration, and its perceived insensitivity to the welfare of the citizens, it is questionable whether this administration has the political will to provide adequate and reasonable minimum wage for the Nigerian workers. Implementing a minimum wage requires a political will which considers the government priorities and values. A government that is more focused in perpetuating power, privileges and comforts of the political class and government officials to the detriment of the common citizens may not be inclined to make

with autonomy and agency. This colonial-era mindset has perpetuated a culture of oppression, exploitation and disenfranchisement within the civil service. The present debate about the minimum wage and the refusal of the government and other employers of labor to consider appropriate and adequate minimum for the workers can be understood within this context.

It is true that economic factors such as budgetary constraint and revenue generation can seriously impact the decision on adequate minimum wage. It is also true that Nigeria's economy faces various challenges occasioned by fluctuation in oil prices, high inflation rates and devaluation of the Naira. When considering the economic challenges of the nation, one may be tempted to conclude or accept the government position that the economy cannot adequately sustain significant wage increase beyond 62,000.

However, when we place this conclusion side by side with the reality of the government extravagance, one is wont to notice deep insincerity on the part of the government. A government that allocated 20.5bn for the renovation and building of a new office space for the Vice president cannot afford reasonable minimum wage for the workers; a government that spent 14.77bn to maintain the president fleet within eleven months and planed to purchase new aircraft for the fleet worth not less than \$623.4m or N918.7bn claims the present economic pressure cannot carry more than 62,000 for minimum wage. A government that gifted the 469 members of the National Assembly with new SUVs at the cost of about 160million each says 62,000 is not affordable for the workforce. A government that took an unjustifiably large delegation of 1,411 delegates to COP28 spending billions of naira in the process says it cannot afford more than 62,000 as minimum wage. A government with the largest number of ministries in the country since Independence with humongous retinue of appointees cannot afford a minimum wage that responds favourably to the present hash economic condition for the workforce.

These and many more proclaim the insensitivity of the government to the plight of its citizens amidst harsh economic reality. This is why the fiery priest Fr George Ehusani cried out "How can you go to sleep in good conscience and come out to sit down in a boardroom to discuss the sustainability or otherwise of paying 60,000 to the poorest of workers?" It is high time that the Nigerian government rise up to consider the plight of its citizens before it is too late.

I therefore call on Organized Labor, the Civil Society Organizations and well meaning Nigerian citizens, home and in Diaspora to continue advocating and pushing for policies that benefit majority of the citizenry, like the national minimum/living wage. We must keep demanding for fair treatment in this post-colonial era and hold the government responsible. This calls for collective action while hoping that government will do the needful and prioritize the welfare of the Nigerian workers by implementing a reasonable and acceptable minimum wage that reflects the present economic reality.



By Fr. Stephen S. Udoh

In the Nigeria, I shall have the honour and privilege to lead from May 29, workers will have more than a minimum wage. You will have a living wage to have a decent life and provide for your families."
– (Tinubu, 1st May, 2023)

decisions that benefit the working class. Extravagance spending by government indicates lack of prioritization of the workers welfare and essential services. This necessarily undermines public confidence in its commitment to addressing the challenges of poverty and improving the living condition of the majority of its citizens.

After 60 years of independence, the relationship between the Nigerian government and its civil servants tends to operate with the colonial mentality of master servant where civil servants are often underpaid and undervalued, receiving meager salaries and benefits making it difficult to make ends meet; where civil servants are overworked and underappreciated, burdened with excessive workload with little recognition and reward for their efforts. The relationship between the government and its workforce operates within the colonial mental framework where civil servants lack job security, facing constant threat of dismissal or retirement without adequate pension or retirement benefits. The Nigerian civil servant is trained to be subservient. They are conditioned to follow orders without questioning, rather than encouraged to think critical and show initiatives. They may be denied dignity and respect, treated as mere instrument of government rather than valued professionals

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