

## ENIGMATIC SAYINGS OF JESUS

(Mysterious Sayings of Jesus)

HELL FIRE FOR INSULTING!

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DAILY PRAYER INTENTION OF THE BISHOP FOR THE MONTH

Prayers for Free, Fair and Peaceful Elections in Nigeria



# THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

...Keeping Spiritual Watch Over Esanland

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# BISHOP OGUN'S CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Dear Brothers and Sisters, it is Christmas again, the Birth of the Saviour. A notable characteristic feature of Christmas is that, it is all about choices. The word choice explains the entire mystery of salvation, beginning with the creation of the first man and woman: *Let us make man*, (Gen 1:26), said the good God. The fall of our first parents into sin was also an expression of choice, just as God's decision to redeem fallen man, the supreme choice of God (cf. Gen 3). This ultimate choice was realised in the choice of the Blessed virgin Mary at the Immaculate Conception. God's choice continued in the selection of Mary to give birth to His Son, Jesus Christ. At the Annunciation, God's choice of the Blessed Virgin Mary, there was a decision by the Blessed Mother also to repair the wrong choice of Eve, Mary's definitive yes, *her fiat* (Lk 1:38) was redemptive in character, but also a decision for the good of God and humanity. Every human choice blocks off every other possibility. To be the Mother of God, which embraced becoming the mother of all created beings, means that her previous dreams of spousal love were redefined to fall with the plans of God. The reality before our eyes is that life affords us endless choices and opportunities. Thus we could say that, God made the primordial choice, and Mary made a choice at the fullness of time

(Gal. 4:4) to accept God's offer, and God became Man. The action of God is to correct the first wrong choice of our parents, who had the choice and chose sin. Ever since, the good God has not ceased to offer choices to humanity. Some of our choices have created the rather difficult socio-political quagmire we find ourselves enmeshed in. As we approach the next general elections, we are given a fresh opportunity to make choices that would shape the future of our nation. It is an opportunity offered us to pre-exist our leaders, a form of *creationism*, i.e. to give birth to our own parents. Whoever Christ frees, is free indeed! (Jn 8:36). The Birth of Jesus Christ is the celebration of the freedom God won for us through the Incarnation (Christmas), life and redeeming death of the Saviour. Therefore, as true children freed by God, we should choose only the best candidate for governance after a prayerful and careful observation. We cannot blame the Church or insist that the Church should select for us, this is done through the regular catechesis to inform our choices in life (cf. Mt. 11:6). God chose to save us because of His goodness, and demands that we make choices to improve on creation. May the Birth of the Lord which we celebrate at Christmas give us the courage to choose

only the best for a better Nigeria. *Owesena*  
Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.



A Picture view of Most Rev. Donatus Ogun

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## EDITORIAL

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Season's greetings dear friends in Christ.

Indeed, gratitude is the fairest blossom that springs from the soul. Moreover, man's efficiency without God's sufficiency only leads to deficiency. Thus, our song is of joy and gratitude to the Almighty and Ever-living God, the giver and sustainer of our lives. For in Him is found the very essence of our being and in Him we live, and move and have our being. To Him be glory, honour and praise forever. May He who is always faithful direct our steps, guide and guard our paths and purposes this new year, and bring them to a successful end. Amen.

Dearly beloved in Christ, as we continue the New Year, we must keep justice and do acts of integrity/righteousness especially as we prepare to exercise our franchise. Let us learn to choose and vote wisely, shun bribery and corruption especially in terms of vote buying and vote selling in the coming general elections. We cannot afford to sell our consciences and remain in darkness.

Very importantly, we must not forget to pray for our dear country, commending her to the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We also continue to pray for free and fair elections that will guarantee a credible, transparent, capable and competent candidates emerging in the different political offices of our country.

Let us remember to set our priority right this year. Our new year resolutions should and must have Christ Jesus at the center. And may this year be blessed beyond all imaginations.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen and Patroness of Nigeria continue to intercede for us. Amen.

Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.  
Shalom

## FR. CORBEAU GROUP OF SCHOOLS, UKONI-UROMI CELEBRATES END OF YEAR CLOSING CEREMONY

It was indeed a great and memorable day for the staff, parents/guardians and pupils of Fr Corbeau Group of Schools as they held their end of year activities/ceremony which was organized by the management of Fr. Corbeau Group of Schools, Ukoni-Uromi.

The ceremony, commenced with a Mass celebrated by the Rector of the school, Rev. Fr. Francis Abubokhale. At the socials, after

education to the children and encourage parents and guardians to enroll their children and wards in the school as they will never regret their decision.

High point of the ceremony was the lessons and carols presented by pupils of the school. The ceremony also featured presentations by the Holy Childhood Association (HCA), ranging from songs renditions to cultural dance (igbabornelimin) which added



A Cross Section of some of the Pupils during the Closing/Christmass Celebration the mass, Rev. Fr. Abubokhale expressed appreciation to the invitees for honoring the school's invitation and pledge for their continuous support in order to actualize the school's goals for the benefit of the pupils and society.

In an opening remark, the chairman of the occasion, Mr. Anthony Akue reiterated the importance of education and the need to give sound education to our children, which is the best legacy parents can give their children. He further emphasized that Fr. Corbeau Group of Schools offers high quality

beautiful colours to the whole celebration. The pupils also received gifts from Father Christmas who visited the school. While giving a vote of thanks, Sir Augustine Amanfoh commended the management of the school for putting such a ceremony together.

The assistant parish priest, Rev. Fr. Ferguson Ukebor and other dignitaries were present at the ceremony.

## VESSEL OF HONOUR CURIA, UKONI HOLDS HER ANNUAL GENERAL REUNION

By Lady Augusta Egualeona, LSM



In keeping with the rules and regulations guiding the Legion of Mary, a pious society in the Catholic Church and with the spirit of profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Vessel of Honour Curia, St Theresa of the Child Jesus, Ukoni held her Annual General Meeting on Sunday 11th of December, 2022.

The parish priest, Rev. Fr. Dr. Fidelis Arhedo welcomed the legionaries to the parish. He admonished them to always pray the rosary, saying that the rosary prayer is very powerful. He also encouraged them to seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary through "The 54 Days Miraculous Novena".

The guest speaker, Rev. Fr. Francis Abubokhale, having welcomed the legionaries across the various presidia, spoke extensively on the spirit of the legion using the following excerpts from the Legion Handbook:

The spirit of the legion of Mary is that of Mary herself. Especially those the Legion aspire after her profound humility, her perfect obedience, her angelic sweetness, her continual prayer, her universal mortification, her altogether spotless purity, her heroic patience, her heavenly wisdom, herself sacrificing courageous love of God, and above all her faith, that virtue which has in her alone been found in its utmost extent and never equaled. Inspired by this love and faith of Mary, her legion essays any and every work and "complains not of impossibility, because

it conceives that it may and can do things (imitation of Christ, Book 3:4).

Rev. Fr. Francis Abubokhale, enjoined all the legionaries to imbibe the beautiful attributes of our Mother Mary as the legion has no other spirit than that of the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

The Curia president, Lady Augusta Egualeona LSM thanked all present and encouraged them to remain faithful in their devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Vessel of Honour Curia comprises 9 presidia Viz. St. Fatima, Ukoni; Seat of Wisdom, Efandion; Mother of Mercy, Ebhoiyi; Mirror of Justice, Atani; Our Lady Mother of Perpetual Help, Uwalor-Oke; Holy Family; Most Holy Rosary, Ubueremu; Queen of Virgins, Idumu-Oza and Ark of the Covenant, Onewa. The meeting was well attended by legionaries from across the presidia.

The meeting was very enriching and spiritually rewarding as it featured various activities which included among others, recitation of the Holy Rosary, cultural dance display, presentation of presidia's annual reports, legion prayers and blessings.

It was indeed a memorable event as the legionaries were able to share their experiences during the year, air out their challenges and proffer the possible ways of tackling them.

AVEMARIA.



## PRAYING WITH THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE An Elementary Approach To LECTIO DIVINA

By Noble D.D.O. Eraga (KSJI)

**G**od our Father, help us with the Spirit living in us, so that our hearts become saturated with our Father's love, peace, joy, patience, and with other fruits of the Spirit as they manifest themselves. Lord, help us to receive more wisdom and strength that we can muster on our own, so that we sense God faithfully, and our brothers and sisters in Christ sincerely. Jesus, help us to become a stable foundation for God to build on, so that the fruits of the Holy Spirit will be manifested in our words and actions in our journey through life. We pray O' Lord!

**L**ord Jesus, help us to know that Jesus has more for us – more knowledge, more wisdom, more understanding, more love – He wants them to be ours – in our spiritual journey through life. Lord, help us to face the prospect of life without Jesus' physical presence, so that the Holy Spirit will



guide us as He once guided the apostles and encourage us with the promise of leading us in the truth. Father, help us to experience the Spirit whispering in the privacy of our thoughts. We pray O' Lord!

**H**oly Spirit, help us to know that Jesus promised that we would do even greater things than He – so that by bringing the gospel to our families, friends and neighbours – and even strangers – is part of Jesus' promise. Lord, help us to know that through the Holy Spirit we can reach out to people and offer them the hope that is found in Jesus. Father, help us to imitate "St Paul" by spreading the gospel in ways both large and small to the "Athenians" in our neighbourhoods. We pray O' Lord!

**G**od our Father, help us to celebrate Jesus' ascension into heaven – as we join the disciples in lifting our hearts and minds heavenward as we pray – that nothing can remove us from Jesus' loving protection. Lord, help us to exult in Jesus, because He rules over history itself – past, present and future – nothing is outside His loving gaze and His powerful intervention. Jesus, help us and pour your immeasurable grace to help us overcome our sin and to live in love with our neighbours. We pray O' Lord!

**L**ord Jesus, help us to know that you have invited us to rejoice in the new life your victory over sin and death has won for us in the glorious life you have secured for those who believed in you. Lord, help us to know the new life which is ours in Christ Jesus – "the hope to which He called us" "His glorious inheritance in the saints" and "the immeasurable greatness of power in us who believe". Holy Spirit, help us in our hope as Christian because it rests on Jesus' death and resurrection. We pray O' Lord!

**H**oly Spirit, help us to know that we have been reconciled to God – as we can now live in confidence knowing that God Himself is with us to strengthen and comfort us into the inheritance Jesus won for us. Lord, help us to know that the inheritance that tells us that we will be with our father forever – filled with all His splendour and beauty. Father, help us to live every day of our lives with the hope of our eternal inheritance, so that we can begin to taste the blessings here and now. We pray O' Lord!

**G**od our Father, help us to hold on to the faith that the Holy Spirit which is in us is helping us to fight Satan's temptation – as we put our faith in the words of our Lord's prayer – "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". Lord, help us to know that Jesus has already conquered Satan, and He wants us to step into the freedom He has won for us. Jesus, help us and deliver us from evil harassment, so that we can know the "great joy" that comes when we resist Satan's temptations. We pray O' Lord!

**L**ord Jesus, help us to know that conversion is a transformation with two main ingredients – grace from God and our response to God's grace which "Lydia" received when she listened to the word and responded to it. Lord, help us and open our hearts to Jesus, so that we can receive an outpouring of God's grace which will lead us to a powerful transformation, like "Lydia and her household". Holy Spirit, help us and offer us God's grace, so that we can take His word deeper into our hearts as we respond to it. We pray O' Lord!

**H**oly Spirit, help us to know that the very nature of conversion is where God touches our hearts and makes us aware of His love, our sinfulness and our need for His mercy. Lord, help us in our awareness that Jesus wants us to turn towards Him, so that He could start the process of teaching and empowering us to embrace His goodness and reject the glamour of evil. Jesus, help us, like "Lydia" so that lives will be characterized by a loving, life-giving relationship with God, our Father. We pray O' Lord!

**G**od our Father, help us and deepen the conversion of our hearts, so that we can experience greater intimacy with you the experience which will inspire us and strengthen us to love and serve others in the name of your only begotten Son – Jesus Christ. Lord, help us as we leave behind marks of our old life of selfishness which gives way to selfless service as wasted time become opportunities for prayer. Holy Spirit, help us and remold us into Jesus' beautiful image and likeness. We pray O' Lord!

**L**ord Jesus, help us and make our hearts like yours, so that we can easily find Jesus in our lives – as "St. Francis reminds us that the Spirit, as Jesus said, will teach us everything" and "is as Jesus said, will teach us everything" and "is the living presence of God in the Church". Lord, the living presence of God in the Church". Lord, help us with the light of the Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle the fire of Jesus' love, so that we shall rejoice in His consolation as He renews the face of the earth. Holy Spirit, help us in the same Spirit to be truly wise – as we rejoice in Jesus' conversion. We pray O' Lord!

**H**oly Spirit, help us as we invite you into every area of our life – since Jesus is not walking with us in the flesh, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts about who Jesus is. Lord, help us to know that the Holy Spirit comes to show us our sin, and not to condemn us – as he reveals Christ to us in the Scripture, in communion and in our prayer – about Jesus' Justice, His mercy His compassion and His power. Jesus, help us and inspire us to live differently with the Spirit at work in our lives. We pray O' Lord!

## KNOW YOUR FAITH AND DEFEND IT (The Catholic Faith at Your Doorstep) IS MARY TRULY THE MOTHER OF GOD?

Rev. Fr Isidore Ose Omondeagbon

**A**t the beginning of every year, the Church's liturgy presents to us the solemnity of Mary, the mother of God; an opportunity for us to present our plans into the hands of God through a sure means (the hands of His mother). Unfortunately, some of us miss this opportunity because we do not know or believe that Mary is actually God's mother. Here is a brief explanation of this reality.

Jn. 1:1 says, "In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And verse 14 says, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us." This Word who is God became flesh in the person of Mary and was given birth to by her. Gal. 4:4 also corroborates this point when it notes thus, "when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman."

Drawing from another evidence, the name, 'Lord' which has its Hebrew etymon as 'Adonai' was used to refer to God in the Old Testament. In the New Testament whose original language is Greek, it is 'Κόριος'. In both Old and New Testaments, 'Adonai' and

'Κόριος' were respectively the titles used for God instead of 'YHWH' (Yahweh). This is simply because, 'YHWH' was held very sacred, and to maintain reverence and avoid profanity of the name, the other two names were used. Thus, when Elizabeth said in Luke 1:43, "And why has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord (Κόριος) comes to me?", she addressed Mary as the Mother of God. Mary is truly *Theotokos* (the Mother of God – God bearer) as the Council of Ephesus pronounced in A. D. 431. If we are to go by logic, it is simple as presented in the following syllogism: if you believe that *Mary is the Mother of Jesus Christ* and that *Jesus Christ is God*, then you cannot deny the conclusion that *Mary is the Mother of God*. It is as simple as that. MARY MOTHER OF GOD: PRAY FOR US.

I AM PROUD TO BE A CATHOLIC (Please, share this and spread the Faith)  
Have a Blessed Year.

## EMAUDO CELEBRATES PATRON FEAST DAY IN GRAND STYLE

By Mr. Paul Okoh



**I**t was a huge fun and pageantry for Parishioners of St. Ambrose Catholic Church Emaudo, Ekpoma, as they celebrated their Patron Feast day. The event which was slated for four days commenced on the 7th of Dec. at 5pm with Rosary and Baptism for couples preparing for group marriage. On Thursday 8th was Adoration / Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament by 5pm coupled with Praises and Worship, and concluded with the Holy Mass. Friday 9th were Talks by three Speakers. Talk 1: Home Management By Sis. Doris Osueke.

Talk 2: Communication in Christian Marriage By Pa. Patrick Ikhine.

Talk 3: Raising God fearing children for

the future church By Pa. Monday Roman.

The events were well planned by the Patron Feast day committee, ably chaired by Dr Mrs Esther Ebhota, Secretary Mrs Roseline Oriere financial secretary Dr. Mrs Gloria Eifediyi were educative and thought provoking.

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> of Dec., the Grand Finale was coupled with Baptism and First Holy Communion for Catechumens, and a group of 16 couples, who received the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. High point of the event was a General Thanksgiving by all Ambrosians for a successful Feast day celebration.

To God be the glory.



# THE SAINTS: Our Companions on the Journey to Heaven

Prof. Felix Ehimare Enegho

## SAINT FELIX OF NOLA: THE AVENGER OF PERJURY

### Introduction

The year 2022 is now behind us, but many are not likely to forget all the failures and successes, disappointments and appointments, sickness and good health, birth and death of friends and loved ones etc that characterized the year. Since life is not a bed of roses especially as Christians in these trying times in Nigeria, there is a need for everyone to continue to run the race of life in so many ways. As we commence yet another year 2023, let everyone not lose focus on the aim of our being created by God, which is clearly expressed in the Catholic Catechism, that "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next" From this clear perspective, please accompany us on a journey of knowing more about God and His saints in January 2023 as we examine the life and works of Saint Felix of Nola. Happy New Year and happy reading!

### An assessment of Saint Felix of Nola

Felix was the elder son of Hermias, a Syrian soldier who had retired to Nola in Italy. After the death of his father, Felix sold all his property and possessions and gave the proceeds to the poor, and embraced the priestly life. After his ordination by bishop Maximus of Nola, Felix stayed and worked with him. In 250 Emperor Decius' ferocious persecution against Christians made bishop Maximus settle in a desert hiding place from where he safely administered the affairs of the church. Since the soldiers could not find Maximus at Nola, they captured, jailed and tortured Felix in his place.

Felix escaped miraculously and he was guided by an angel to rescue his bishop Maximus, who was close to death. After a while, the whereabouts of St Felix were discovered and the Roman soldiers were in close pursuit of both Felix and his bishop Maximus, and were determined to capture, torture and even kill him if he should renounce his faith, St Felix hurried around a corner of an old ruined wall and as he rushed passed a crumbled wall, he suddenly saw there was a hollow place among the stones. He followed an instinctive inspiration and quickly hid in it. It was not long before St Felix

crawled through the opening that a spider appeared from the cracks in the wall and gracefully spun a web over the entrance to his hiding place.

Another version of the account of Saint Felix opines that till the death of Decius, Felix stayed under cover, but he reappeared people had difficulty recognizing him. No sooner had he reappeared in the public with all his zeal, than his persecutors started to hunt after him, thus forcing him to remain between the ruins of two houses where not even enough water was available. Later, peace was restored, and Felix



re-emerged in public. He began to till his land which was left for him after the confiscation of his property by his persecutors

The soldiers of the Emperor, thinking that it was a long abandoned building left without finding Felix and his bishop. Both of them were able to escape from the authorities until the persecution subsided in 251. When bishop Maximus died, the people were prepared to name Felix as bishop, but he turned down the offer and instead retired to a small farm, where for the rest of his life he planted crops to feed himself and provide alms for the poor. Felix died at about 260 CE. Quintinus was elected successor to Maximus. Felix incidentally died at a very old age and St Paulinus of Nola built a basilica in his honour. Several miracles are attributed to Saint Felix of Nola's intercession. St Felix is involved in finding lost articles and also as the avenger of perjury

### Lessons from the Life and Works of St Felix

### of Nola

1. After the death of his father, Felix sold all his property and possessions and gave the proceeds to the poor, and embraced the priestly life. We pray that many in Nigeria today should embrace the priesthood and religious life. Even those whose vocation may be different from the priestly life, may they through their vocation as lay faithful glorify God in every one of their actions, so that their example of godly living may draw many to God.

2. After his ordination by bishop Maximus of Nola, Felix stayed and worked with him.

Priests and religious should continue to work closely with their bishops and superiors. May the obedience and zeal displayed by the priests and religious within their various communities propel many to obey not only the bishops but all those saddled with leadership positions in the Church. For the lay faithful, may they never feel that because they are endowed with some charisms, they should disrespect the leaders within the Church, because such an attitude is simply a sign of arrogance and pride capable of bringing anyone down from whatever position he/she has been given by God.

3. Felix escaped miraculously and he was guided by an angel to rescue his bishop Maximus, who was close to death. This shows that our priests and bishops need assistance from those they lead in their parishes and dioceses. Oftentimes, many expect the priests and bishops to assist them in so many ways. The example of Felix of Nola is an indication that at all times, the Christian faithful must

continuously watch the backs of their priests and bishops who in contemporary Nigeria are also vulnerable to all forms of attacks and intimidation.

### Conclusion

As we round off this work, let us continue to reflect on the salient words of St Jerome: "Not only does the shedding of blood constitute martyrdom, but the perfect service of a soul devoted to the Lord is a daily martyrdom." We can deduce from the life and works of St Felix of Nola that the life of a Christian is not easy in any way as it is a life so full of several challenges which oftentimes may discourage people from focusing on the power and grace of God to assist all His children.

The challenges faced by everyone today including Christians show that there is a need to continue to depend on God. Like St Felix of Nola, may we be more interested in the things of God than the self-centred nature of many today. Lord, we learn that when you help us, a spider's web becomes a protecting wall, and without your help, a wall is no more protection than a spider's web, grant us the grace to be steadfast in proclaiming our faith in you through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen!

**Felix Ehimare Enegho, PhD, ffnacham** is a Professor of Church History and Mission Studies, at the Department of Religious Studies, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Nigeria. He is a Research Fellow at the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa, Pretoria. He is the Secretary-General of the Nigerian Association of Church History and Missiological Studies (NACHAMS), and a Foundation Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Church History and Missiology (ffnacham). He is a member of the following associations/societies: The Catholic Missiological Association of Nigeria (CAMISAN), Nigeria Anglican Roman Catholic Commission, International Association of Catholic Missiologists (IACM), International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) since 2004, the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), and the Historical Society of Nigeria.

## ENIGMATIC SAYINGS OF JESUS: MYSTERIOUS SAYINGS OF JESUS

### HELL FIRE FOR INSULTING!

It seems unbelievable and unthinkable that Jesus Speaks harshly of simple abusive language like "fool." Why would Jesus give a penalty such as hell fire to this kind?

To understand the significance of the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:22, we need to put in context the preceding verse, (Matthew 5:21). Here, Jesus made an outstanding connection between anger and murder. He says that they begin in the heart. A murderer and anyone who is angry with his brother will be called to judgment. Also, He warns

against name calling, using "raca." Raca comes from Aramaic word "reqa." It is a derogatory term, meaning empty headed, referring to a person's stupidity.

The obvious fact is that Jesus notices that the people reduce Judaism to a matter of external looks. For example, when you act the right way, and perform the right rituals, you are a good Jew. Matters of the heart are written off and not checked. Now, Jesus makes it known that God's standard involves not really outward acts (as the Pharisees imagine) but what happens in the inside.

*"Whosoever says, you fool! shall be liable to hell fire," (Matthew 5:22).*

So, when Jesus talks about hell fire for insulting, whether "raca" or "fool," He means a sign of hatred lurking inside. The hatred that causes one person to hurl insults is the same hatred that causes another person to commit murder. Malicious slandering is a poison that kills secretly.

A heart full of anger towards someone can lead to insults, name calling and even murder. Hence, the attitude of the heart is the same, because behind the offending word lies the hostile thought, and this is what

makes one to be guilty, involving hell fire. "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve," (Jeremiah 17:10). For Vima Dasan, "a christian is not a person who is trying to do something but one who has received something interior, a person to whom something has happened within. A blanket is no longer a blanket if it does not keep you warm. So too, a religion you and I profess, is no religion if it does not lead to an inner transformation in us."

## A DATE WITH POPE FRANCIS

# MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 56th WORLD DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 2023

No one can be saved alone.

Combatting Covid-19 together, embarking together on paths of peace

"Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians, 5:1-2).

1. With these words, the Apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonian community to remain steadfast, their hearts and feet firmly planted and their gaze fixed on the world around them and the events of history, even as they awaited the Lord's return. When tragic events seem to overwhelm our lives, and we feel plunged into a dark and difficult maelstrom of injustice and suffering, we are likewise called to keep our hearts open to hope and to trust in God, who makes himself present, accompanies us with tenderness, sustains us in our weariness and, above all, guides our path. For this reason, Saint Paul constantly exhorts the community to be vigilant, seeking goodness, justice and truth: "So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober" (5:6). His words are an invitation to remain alert and not to withdraw into fear, sorrow or resignation, or to yield to distraction or discouragement. Instead, we should be like sentinels keeping watch and ready to glimpse the first light of dawn, even at the darkest hour.

2. Covid-19 plunged us into a dark night. It destabilized our daily lives, upset our plans and routines, and disrupted the apparent tranquillity of even the most affluent societies. It generated disorientation and suffering and caused the death of great numbers of our brothers and sisters.

Amid a whirlwind of unexpected challenges and facing a situation confusing even from a scientific standpoint, the world's healthcare workers mobilized to relieve immense suffering and to seek possible remedies. At the same time, political authorities had to take measures to organize and manage efforts to respond to the emergency.

In addition to its physical aspects, Covid-19 led to a general malaise in many individuals and families; the long periods of isolation and the various restrictions on freedom contributed to this malaise, with significant long-term effects.

Nor can we overlook the fractures in our social and economic order that the pandemic exposed, and the contradictions and inequalities that it brought to the fore.

It threatened the job security of many individuals and aggravated the ever-increasing problem of loneliness in our societies, particularly on the part of the poor and those in need. We need but think of the millions of informal workers in many parts of the world left without a job and without any support during the time of the lockdown.

Only rarely do individuals and societies achieve progress in conditions that generate such feelings of despondency and bitterness, which weaken efforts to ensure peace while provoking social conflict, frustration and various forms of violence. Indeed, the pandemic seems to have upset even the most peaceful parts of our world, and exposed any number of forms of fragility.

3. Three years later, the time is right to question, learn, grow and allow ourselves to be transformed as individuals and as communities; this is a privileged moment to prepare for "the day of the Lord". I have already observed on a number of occasions that we never emerge the same from times of crisis: we emerge either better or worse. Today we are being asked: What did we learn from the pandemic? What new paths should we follow to cast off the shackles of our old habits, to be better prepared, to dare new things? What signs of life and hope can we see, to help us move forward and try to make our world a better place?

Certainly, after directly experiencing the fragility of our own lives and the world around us, we can say that the greatest lesson we learned from Covid-19 was the realization that we all need one another. That our greatest and yet most fragile treasure is our shared humanity as brothers and sisters, children of God. And that none of us can be saved alone. Consequently, we urgently need to join together in seeking and promoting the universal values that can guide the growth of this human fraternity. We also learned that the trust we put in progress, technology and the effects of globalization was not only excessive, but turned into an individualistic and idolatrous intoxication, compromising the very promise of justice, harmony and peace that we so ardently sought. In our fast-paced world, the widespread problems of inequality, injustice, poverty and marginalization continue to fuel unrest and conflict, and generate violence and even wars.

The pandemic brought all this to the fore, yet it also had its positive effects. These include a chastened return to humility, a rethinking of certain consumeristic



excesses, and a renewed sense of solidarity that has made us more sensitive to the suffering of others and more responsive to their needs. We can also think of the efforts, which in some cases proved truly heroic, made by all those people who worked tirelessly to help everyone emerge from the crisis and its turmoil as best they could.

This experience has made us all the more aware of the need for everyone, including peoples and nations, to restore the word "together" to a central place. For it is together, in fraternity and solidarity, that we build peace, ensure justice and emerge from the greatest disasters. Indeed, the most effective responses to the pandemic came from social groups, public and private institutions, and international organizations that put aside their particular interests and joined forces to meet the challenges. Only the peace that comes from a fraternal and disinterested love can help us overcome personal, societal and global crises.

4. Even so, at the very moment when we dared to hope that the darkest hours of the Covid-19 pandemic were over, a terrible new disaster befell humanity. We witnessed the onslaught of another scourge: another war, to some extent like that of Covid-19, but driven by culpable human decisions. The war in Ukraine is reaping innocent victims and spreading insecurity, not only among those directly affected, but in a widespread and indiscriminate way for everyone, also for those who, even thousands of kilometres away, suffer its collateral effects – we need but think of grain shortages and fuel prices.

Clearly, this is not the post-Covid era we had hoped for or expected. This war, together with all the other conflicts around the globe, represents a setback for the whole of humanity and not merely for the parties directly involved. While a vaccine has been found for Covid-19, suitable solutions have not yet been found for the war. Certainly, the virus of war is more difficult to overcome than the viruses that compromise our bodies, because it comes, not from outside of us, but from within the human heart corrupted by sin (cf. Gospel of Mark 7:17-23).

5. What then is being asked of us? First of all, to let our hearts be changed by our experience of the crisis, to let God, at this time in history, transform our customary criteria for viewing the world around us. We can no longer think exclusively of carving out space for our personal or national interests; instead, we must think in terms of the common good, recognizing

## Pope's prayer

Intention for December

Volunteer not-for-Profit Organizations

*We pray that volunteer non-profit organizations committed to human development good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation*

that we belong to a greater community, and opening our minds and hearts to universal human fraternity. We cannot continue to focus simply on preserving ourselves; rather, the time has come for all of us to endeavour to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and to commit ourselves seriously to pursuing a good that is truly common.

In order to do this, and to live better lives after the Covid-19 emergency, we cannot ignore one fundamental fact, namely that the many moral, social, political and economic crises we are experiencing are all interconnected, and what we see as isolated problems are actually causes and effects of one another. Consequently, we are called to confront the challenges of our world in a spirit of responsibility and compassion. We must revisit the issue of ensuring public health for all. We must promote actions that enhance peace and put an end to the conflicts and wars that continue to spawn poverty and death. We urgently need to join in caring for our common home and in implementing clear and effective measures to combat climate change. We need to battle the virus of inequality and to ensure food and dignified labour for all, supporting those who lack even a minimum wage and find themselves in great difficulty. The scandal of entire peoples starving remains an open wound. We also need to develop suitable policies for welcoming and integrating migrants and those whom our societies discard. Only by responding generously to these situations, with an altruism inspired by God's infinite and merciful love, will we be able to build a new world and contribute to the extension of his kingdom, which is a kingdom of love, justice and peace.

In sharing these reflections, it is my hope that in the coming New Year we can journey together, valuing the lessons that history has to teach us. I offer my best wishes to Heads of State and Government, to Heads of International Organizations, and to the leaders of the different religions. To all men and women of good will I express my prayerful trust that, as artisans of peace, they may work, day by day, to make this a good year! May Mary Immaculate, Mother of Jesus and Queen of Peace, intercede for us and for the whole world.

## CELEBRATE WITH YOUR PRIESTS

### BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARIES

Fr. Jude Uhomoibih  
07 January

FR. Mark Okoh  
07 January

Fr Paul Abhulimhen  
15, January

Fr. Christopher Ojeaga  
18, January

Fr. Francis Abubokhale  
20 January

Fr. Paul Akhere  
25, January

Fr JohnBoco Ezehi  
26 January

Fr. Fredrick Asuelimen  
26 January

### ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

# SUNDAY REFLECTIONS

## Reflections for the month



Rev. Fr. Amos Okhuelegbe

### A BRIEF REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY, JANUARY 8, 2022

The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on the Twelfth Night of Christmas, or on the Sunday closest to January 6 annually

The feast unites three events in the life of Christ when His divinity shines through His humanity: the adoration of the Magi; the baptism of Christ in the Jordan; and the first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana.

It is customary to replace the images of the shepherds in the manger scene with the three Magi and their gifts. On the morning of the Feast of the Epiphany some children wake up to see what gifts have been left by the Magi.

At Mass, there is a blessing of gold, frankincense, myrrh, Epiphany Water, and after Communion, a blessing of chalk in some region of the world. Now, the word Epiphany is from a Greek word which means to "show forth" or "to manifest".

At Christmas, Jesus is made visible to the Jewish people mostly represented by the Shepherds and today, which many best refer to as the \*Christmas of the nations\*, Christ is revealed to the whole universe. This is the sense on which the Church holds that the Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires Israelitica dignitas (is made "worthy of the heritage of Israel") [CCC 528].

#### \*Messages\*

1. God uses different means to speak to different people. To the shepherds, God used the angels, to the Magi he used the star, to Herod he used the magi and to the priests, the scriptures. Look inward and be able to know how God speaks to you.
2. The star which God assigns to each of us is an unsetting one, we miss or mix it when we begin to assume and pre-empt God's ways but if we fix our eyes on him, we will safely arrive out port.
3. Those who follow God's lead take home the way of safety. No one meets God and remains the same for the bible says they followed another way home. Thus, we may grope while in search of God, but having met him, we are bound to go home through the path of safety.
4. There is in every Child some thing more than the Ordinary, only those with the sight of faith can see the infinite in time. For although they met a child they gave him gifts which alluded to his kingship, priesthood and "savourhood"
5. Mary and Joseph presented the child to the Magi who represented the nations. This responsibility is still incumbent on us, to show Christ to all we meet and who search for him.
6. They followed the star of peace and justice and the Orient

became wedded to the Jewish world, the East to West. The call and person of Christ ought always to be a uniting force both for those far and near.

7. They met the baby in a manger and in faith worshipped Him. We, like the Wise men, in faith meet Jesus on the Altar and in the Tabernacle, let us not treat Him with irreverence.

8. There is no culture where it is customary to approach a king without a substance. Let our familiarity with the Church not make us forget that the God they worshipped with the substances of their time is the same whom we approach daily.

9. God is not through with humanity, close not your mind like Herod who never saw Jesus but be like the wisemen who opened up to God and we able perceive the sound of the moment and beheld the ancient of Days.

10. What we do give us names, the virgins lacked sense and they were termed foolish but the wisemen saw the sign from God and searched for the God of the sign. Search for God and you will never be forgotten.

11. If we allow the lead of faith, just as the Maggi looked at the babe of Bethlehem and saw a king and God, when ever we look at the tabernacle and the altar, we will see Jesus..

Peace be with you.

### REFLECTION FOR THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD, FEBRUARY 2, 2022

Today is the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, today is the Universal Day for Consecrated Life, today is the 40th day after Christmas.

Among the Jews since gestation and parturition result from erotic expression it was termed unclean and as such required purification. This, added to the passover experience where the reasons for the presentation of first Sons in Israel. (Leviticus 12, Exodus 13:12-15, etc.).

As Catholics, this practice continuous amongst us but with a mistaken conceptualization. Babies are presented in Catholic Church and to God on the Day of their baptism. There is nothing like baby dedication in Catholic Church per se. To be dedicated is to be set apart, thus, if the baby is dedicated to God, he/she should be left in the Church after the Mass or be redeemed with a token, rather what we do is what is called \*Churching\*.

What is Churching?\_ This is the blessing given by the Church to mothers after recovery from childbirth. Only a Catholic woman who has given birth to a child in legitimate wedlock, provided she has not allowed the child to be baptized outside the Catholic Church, is entitled to it. \*It is not a precept, but a pious and praiseworthy custom\* (Rituale Romanum), dating from the early Christian ages, for a mother to present herself in the

Church as soon as she is able to leave her house (St. Charles Borromeo, First Council of Milan), to render thanks to God for her happy delivery, and to obtain by means of the priestly blessing the graces necessary to bring up her child in a Christian manner. The prayers indicate that this blessing is intended solely for the benefit of the mother, and hence it is not necessary that she should bring the child with her; nevertheless, in many places the pious and edifying custom prevails of specially "dedicating" the child to God. For, as the Mother of Christ carried her Child to the Temple to offer Him to the Eternal Father, so a Christian mother is anxious to present her offspring to God and obtain for it the blessing of the Church. This blessing, in the ordinary form, without change or omission, is to be given to the mother, even if her child was stillborn, or has died without baptism (Cong. Sac. Rit., 19 May, 1896). The rite was dropped by the Catholic Church after the second Vatican Council of 1967-65.

If the above was the Case, was it necessary that Christ be presented in the temple? No doubt, as we pray in the \_Te Deum\_ \*When you became man to set us free, you did not spurn the Virgin's womb\* Thus, there was no impurity in Mary. Rather, as the introduction to today's ceremony puts it \*Today is the blessed day when Jesus was presented in the Temple by Mary and Joseph. Outwardly he was fulfilling the law, but in reality he was

coming to meet his believing people\*. Indeed, the Lord of the temple was coming to his temple, therefore, the aged both male and female, represented by Anna and Simeon are present, the young, represented by Mary and Joseph are not absent. So, on this day, when the Son of God comes to the House of God, the old see their dreams fulfilled and the young realized their mission and vocation. Truly, there were no mere onlookers. The tender mother presents to the world, the light, the Salvation which she has long awaited and at once, the light from on high dawns upon us.

Amidst all these, what lesson does this day have for us:

1. At the time of God's visitation, it is those who faithfully wait on him that will discern the signs of the moment. Many were in the temple, but only Simeon and Anna knew him (What adults see in sitting the young can not see even in climbing).
2. God is forever faithful. It may take years, but sure and certainly God will do what he says he will do. Hear the sigh of Simeon, at last all-powerful master....
3. Christ is the light of the World. Not only the one to reveal the truth to Israel but one to enlighten the Gentiles.
4. Every child is a child of destiny. For not only are children gifts of God, they are God's vessels for ordering the world. They carry the future of humanity.

5. Like Christ, Christians are the light of the World. We at the beginning of this Mass had burning candles in our hands and chanted \*Lumen ad revelatione gentium\* If we can not maintain our light, at least, let us not quench the already smoldering flames of others.

6. There is no state in life that can not be developed into a spirituality, for in Anna we see the spirituality of widowhood and in Simeon, we see the glorification of old age. These are models for us.

Finally, since twenty- five years now, the Church has designated the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Candlemas Day, as an appropriate moment to thank God for the gift of consecrated life. Jesus is manifested as 'light of revelation for the Gentiles' and 'glory for God's people, Israel.' Consecrated men and women reflect this light as witnesses of Jesus in a world that is often shrouded in shadow. They are the glory of God's people. We pray for the perseverance of consecrated men and women and ask God to continue enriching the Church with their unique vocation."

The celebration of the World Day of Consecrated Life is a festive occasion, as well as one of commitment to pray the Lord for the gift of new vocations, which will renew the face of the Church and the world, by announcing the joy of the Gospel and the love of God which gives meaning to our existence.

Peace be with you.



Rev Fr. Ferdinand E Ovienloba

# "EVANGELII GAUDIUM": ITS IMPLICATIONS ON LITURGICAL HOMILIES AND EVANGELIZATION

## • SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION OF THE CHURCH

To evangelize is to make the kingdom of God present in our world (176). Pope shares his concerns about the social dimension of evangelization. Without it, risk of distorting authentic and integral meaning of evangelization will be high. The *kerygma* has a clear social content; at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others. The content of the first proclamation has an immediate moral implication centered on charity (178). The social dimension of the Church's mission is very important in this our time when the joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.

Scripture highlights the inseparable bond between message of salvation and fraternal love. We often take this for granted and lose zeal for fraternity and justice. Others are prolongation of incarnation; Jesus identifies with our treatment of them. We are called to be merciful to others as God is, to go forth with love and show compassion toward others. Charity is as constitutive as the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. Gospel is not just about our personal relationship with God, but also about the kingdom, loving God reigning in the world. Charity is not about easing our consciences. If God reigns in us, our life and preaching will seek universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Jesus' mission is to inaugurate kingdom of our Father. This kingdom engages us at every level of our being. Evangelization requires man's concrete life, personal and social, to bring all things to one in Christ. Redemption of creation involves redemption of every aspect of human life. Mission of charity encompasses all dimensions of existence and generates history.

The Church has to continue but go beyond the celebration of sacraments and charitable services in her evangelizing mission in order to embrace and exercise socio-political role in the world so as to offer to humanity an integral salvation. Evangelization has to focus itself on the promotion and the defence of the fundamental human rights of persons in order to ensure quality life and health care, justice and equity in the world. The Church in her evangelization has to work tirelessly for the good of the entire human society in order avoid what St. John Paul II called the

"structure of sin", a "war of the powerful against the weak" and the "conspiracy against life". These come about when the poor, the sick, the handicap, the terminally or the incurably ill and the dying etc., who should require greater acceptance, love and care are considered instead useless, or held to be intolerable burden and are rejected in one way or the other, or they are looked upon as enemies to be resisted or eliminated.

## CONCLUSION

The language of this Apostolic Exhortation is clear, immediate, free from rhetoric and insinuations. Pope Francis goes to the heart of the problems which touch the lives of men and women of today and which demand of the Church more than a simple presence. The Church is asked to actively program a renewed pastoral practice which reflects her engagement in the New Evangelization. The Gospel must reach everyone, without exception. Pope Francis leaves us in no doubt as to his position: "Not so much friends and rich neighbours, but above all the poor, the sick, those who are often ignored and forgotten. As in other crucial moments of her history, it is with a sense of urgency that the Church prepares to engage in the New Evangelization in a spirit of adoration so as to behold once again, with a "contemplative gaze", the signs of the presence of God. The signs of the times are not only encouraging, but serve as a criterion for effective witness. We are reminded first of all, of the central mystery of our faith: 'Let us not run away from the resurrection of Jesus, let us not surrender, come what may'. He shows us a Church which is the companion of those who are our contemporaries in the seeking after God and in the desire to see him. Thus he sees in need for the church to move "from a bureaucratic, static and administrative vision of pastoral ministry to a perspective which is not only missionary but is in a permanent state of evangelization."

It is pertinent here to underscore the Holy Father's call to pastoral conversion. He insists that pastoral ministry in a missionary key must seek to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way". He invites everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. Hence Pope Francis admonishes; "I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear." The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.

Here we recall some of the national, provincial and diocesan laws we have in our Church today. The great question is; how far did they reflect this directive of the Holy Father? The Church is called to see as one of her fundamental objectives, the thorough going conversion of individuals, communities and cultures; a spiritual heart transplantation to match the on-going new era of evangelization. In this way, evangelizing mission of the Church will be a Gospel of Joy, of life and hope and not the contrary. Thus in his words, Pope Francis said; "Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the "way of beauty". Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus.

Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization. We rely on the intercession of the Virgin Mary, "Star of the New Evangelization". She is the icon of salvation and of every authentic preaching and transmission of the Gospel which the Church is called to undertake in the coming decades with a strong enthusiasm and an unchanging love for the Lord Jesus. She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God's love. We implore her maternal intercession that the Church may become a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples, and that the way may be opened to the birth of a new world. So that confident in the Risen Christ and with a power that fills us with unshakeable hope his words: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5), will be accomplished in our lives and our world.

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# PHOTO SPLASH OF PROF. SYLVANUS AKHALUFO OKOGBENIN AS HE CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF TENURE AS CHIEF MEDICAL DIRECTOR





# PHOTO SPLASH OF ESTHER AND SAMUEL ON THEIR MARRIAGE SOLEMNIZATION





# CATHOLIC LAITY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA

## HEADQUARTERS:

Plot 364, Zone B4,  
Obafemi Awolowo Way,  
Jabi District,  
P.O.Box 3781, Garki,  
Abuja, FCT.  
e-mail: clcnabuja@gmail.com

## NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Hon. (Sir) Henry H. Yunkwap KSJI, JP  
C/o Catholic Diocese of Shendam,  
Box 21, Shendam, Plateau State.  
08035978645, 08188058008  
E-mail:-hon.henry62@gmail.com

## NATIONAL SECRETARY-GENERAL

Barr. Dame Chisara W. Egwim-Chima (LSM, JP, DSS)  
St. Ita Catholic Church Parish Ibeme Ugiri,  
Isiala-Mbano L.G.A.,  
Okigwe Diocese,  
Imo State.  
08033399310  
E-mail:-chisaraegwim@yahoo.com

## RESOLUTION OF THE 49<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE CATHOLIC LAITY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA (CLCN) HELD AT ABBE LOUIS BAUTAIN RETREAT, CONFERENCE AND CATECHETICAL CENTRE, ITELE-IJEBU OGUN STATE BETWEEN THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> AND SUNDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> OF DECEMBER, 2022

### Preamble

At its 49th Annual Conference with the theme *Who is my neighbour?* the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria after exhaustive deliberations and reflections at different plenaries, resolved as follows:

1. It is imperative to remember as lay-faithful, that *a neighbour is anyone in need of our help at any time or under any circumstance*. The world, nature and the whole of creation are also our neighbours that need our love, attention and action.
2. Love of neighbour being an inevitable injunction, task, vocation, command and an unending aspiration for every believer in Christ, laity is enjoined to invest in other people through services that would better their lives.
3. For a peaceful neighbourhood to be realized, lay-faithful must endeavour to know, tolerate and care for those who live around them as well as being mindful of such personal activities that could adversely affect their neighbours.
4. Fraternal charity is necessary in transforming the world for the reign of God, therefore, layfaithful are charged to relate cordially with others in the society and the world around them.
5. Lay-faithful are urged to contribute to the welfare of the entire Church and constantly emphasize their indispensable role in the overall mission of the Church and strive to awake the sleeping giants in their local churches for collective participation towards achieving common good.
6. The Council remarks the effort of President Buhari for signing the Electoral Act 2022 into law towards ensuring a smooth and credible transition. Nevertheless, the Council calls for holistic implementation of the Electoral law in line with goodwill, transparency and equity to engender credible candidates that will gainfully transform the nation. In the same vein, Council commends Nigerians for coming out to register and encouraged them not to only collect PVC but utilize the rare opportunity to vote wisely and pray for God's choice for the nation.
7. On the State of the Nation, Council decries the worsening security challenges in Nigeria and condemns in totality, the unchecked activities of terrorists, kidnappers, rapists, bandits, armed robbers and herdsmen who constantly attack innocent citizens.
8. Passing its resolution on ASUU Strike, the Council applauds the Academic Staff Union of the Universities for suspending their prolonged industrial action in sympathy of the innocent students, therefore, the Council calls on the Federal Government to fulfil its part of the obligation in the agreement/memorandum with ASUU to avoid another industrial action.

### Conclusion.

The entire members of the National Laity Council continue to express immense gratitude to God almighty for the grace to hold a successful 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and prays for peaceful, free and fair elections in the forthcoming year 2023.

Hon. (Sir) Henry H. Yunkwap KSJI, JP  
National President,  
Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria

Mrs. Anthonia Ogunbiyi  
National Assistant Secretary-General  
Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria

# UROMI JDPCI CONTRIBUTES TO THE MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL POPULACE IN THE FIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF EDO CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICTS IN EDO STATE

## INTRODUCTION

The unequivocal love for humanity spurred Uromi Justice Development Peace and Caritas Initiatives (Uromi JDPCI) into promoting integral development and peaceful coexistence amongst members of the rural populace within the Diocese of Uromi through her multifaceted interventions via Human Rights Education/ Paralegal Scheme and Prison Apostolate.

## HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND PARALEGAL SCHEME

*Uromi JDPCI calls on the unity of all and sundry to end violence against Women and Girls*

Uromi JDPCI commemorated the 2022 World Human Rights Day to mark the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the activism against gender-based violence. The high-level delegation meeting was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 at the Catholic Chancery Complex Uromi with the theme: "Promoting Unity amongst key actors in response to sexual and gender-based violence: The Roles and Duties of Law enforcement Agencies".

The Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI Very Rev Fr Dr Fidelis Arhedo in his keynote address emphasized the need to reawaken the consciousness of all people on the value of humanity and the uniqueness and equality of all people irrespective of race, sex and disability status; taking cognizance of the need to promote human rights by protecting such rights against abuses.

Uromi JDPCI through this event called on all stakeholders including Community Leaders, religious leaders, the family unit, Health workers, Law enforcement Agencies, the Judiciary and the media, to join hands and synergize in the fight against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence whilst assisting survivors of human rights violations in accessing Justice.

Notable recommendations during the event in addressing sexual and gender based Violence includes: the need for Traditional Authorities to redress customs and traditions that support violence against women and girls such as harmful widowhood practices, Legislators to formulate policies that will help in the eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against women as well as amend provisions that seek corroboration during proceedings in cases involving rape; Security Agents to enforce legislations against sexual offence, Trafficking in Persons, child labor etc. and promote effective awareness of these Laws while the Judiciary should ensure adequate attention to cases of human rights violations

without compromise.

High level delegation at the event were the Divisional Police Officer of Ugboha who represented the Police Area Commander of Uromi and guest speaker, Divisional

Uromi JDPCI in the spirit of the Christmas season extended her arms in love to the inmates at the Ubiaja Correctional Centre by celebrating it with 9 Lessons and Carol. Words of exhortation and scripture readings

corrections.

Rev Fr. Ferguson Ukpebor while acknowledging the effort of the prison management and staff in making the Correctional Centre neat and conducive enough for the inmates also recognized that it is not easy to be locked up and deprived of privileges associated with freedom; however he encouraged the inmates to invest their time in prayers and resolution to become the best of themselves in the end of their prison terms in the Correctional Centre. Rev Fr. Ferguson encouraged them to keep hope alive, trust in God and hold steadfast to their dreams in life as their present situation is only but a moment of their lives.

"Uromi JDPCI has you at heart and that is why we have come to celebrate the Christmas with you" said the Assistant Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI as he wished the inmates a merry Christmas and prosperous new year in advance.

Engr. & Mrs. Amedu took turns to encourage the inmates after the Assistant Executive Director's exhortation. In conclusion, Deputy Controller of Prison Ubiaja Correctional Centre showed his sincere appreciation to Uromi JDPCI for their unique gesture and encouraged other well-meaning Nigerians and organizations to do likewise.

"END"

For more information please contact: Very Rev Fr Dr Fidelis Arhedo, Executive Director, Uromi JDPCI, Email: [uromijdpci@gmail.com](mailto:uromijdpci@gmail.com), Mobile-08034930414

**For Sponsorship and Support, please use the account details below:**

**Bank Name:** Eco Bank  
**Account Name:** JDP Caritas Uromi Diocese Project.  
**Account Number:** 4961003536

Note to Editors

Uromi JDPCI is a Faith-based Non-Governmental Organization borne out of the Catholic Diocese of Uromi with a mandate to promote Justice and Peace, encourage meaningful development and to provide succor for the less privileged. Our activities cover the geographical area of the Catholic Diocese of Uromi, which comprises the 5 local Government Areas in Edo Central Senatorial District.



Officers; NSCDC Ubiaja, Igueben, and Ekpoma, representatives of the DSS, the Director of Citizens Right Department Ministry of Justice, representatives of Heads of Local Government Administration for Esan Central, Esan North East and Esan South East Local Government Areas, High Chiefs from across 30 communities in Edo Central Senatorial District, Community Human Rights Club members and the Curve Newspaper.

## PRISON APOSTOLATE

*Uromi JDPCI Shared the Joy of Christmas with Inmates*

The Christmas season is a time to make merry and share gifts of love as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ who left the immeasurable glory of heaven, came to earth in the flesh of humankind to reconcile humanity back to God.

were shared with the inmates, after which the Christmas Carol songs were played, sang and danced to by the inmates. It was indeed a merry moment and experience for the inmates!

Various essential Drugs for the treatment of most common ailments and mats were provided as gifts from Uromi JDPCI to the Correctional Centre. Also refreshments for all the inmates and staff were made available with support from Engr. & Mrs. Amedu.

The homily at the carol was taken by the Assistant Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI, Rev Fr. Ferguson Ukpebor, during which he exhorted the inmates in the Correctional Centre to be transformed positively as they await their freedom. He encouraged them to see the Correctional Centre as a place of solemn reflection on the implication of their past decisions and further develop renewed minds as they take



# FIDES QUÆRENS INTELLECTUM

(FQI) **(Faith seeking Understanding)**

Rev. Fr. Francis Abubokhale (Franciscus Magnus) email [efabusabusmagnus@gmail.com](mailto:efabusabusmagnus@gmail.com)



## THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS: ITS THREE DEGREES.

St. Ignatius of Antioch charged the faithful: "Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the Senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them, one cannot speak of the Church". (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Trall.* 3, 1:Sch 10,96).

The above statement made by St. Ignatius of Antioch captures the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders which are: Episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate.

**The Episcopate as the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders:** Without doubt, the bishops have the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. They are entrusted with an exalted mission of caring for God's people. This is the case because of their close link with the apostles through an unbroken succession from the ancient times of the Church. Accordingly, the Second Vatican Council teaches:

In order to fulfill such exalted functions, the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them and, by the imposition of hands, they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration. (Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21.).

Moreover, the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, and in the liturgical tradition of the Church as well as in the language of the Fathers of the Church, this fullness is called the high priesthood, the acme of the sacred ministry. (Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 21). Furthermore, with respect to function, episcopal consecration confers the office of sanctifying, and the duty of teaching and ruling. Nevertheless, these functions, by their very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college of Bishops. By the imposition of hands and through the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that bishops, in a resplendent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd and priest, and act as His representatives (*in eius persona*). (Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 21).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the *solicitude for all the Churches*." (The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1560, hereafter referred to as CCC).



**The Presbyters as co-workers of the bishops.** The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council avouch: "The function of the bishops' ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of the Priesthood and be *co-workers of the episcopal order* for the proper fulfilment of

the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ". (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2, hereafter referred to as PO).

By virtue of their ordination, that is, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, priests become co-workers of the episcopal order and share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. Accordingly, they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office, in the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful and there they act in the person of Christ the head and at the same, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head by proclaiming His mystery.

The priests are prudent cooperators of the episcopal college and its support and instrument. They are called in a unique way from among the faithful and ordained for the service of God and His people. They constitute, at the same time, together with the bishop, a unique sacerdotal college (*presbyterium*) with variety of distinct duties.

### The Deacons- in the Order of service

Holy Mother, the Church, holds in her teaching that: "At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found deacons, who receive the imposition of hands 'not unto the Priesthood, but unto the ministry'" (CCC 1569). The deacons are ordained to serve at the table of the Holy Eucharist and the table of the Word of God. They have a special attachment to the bishop in the exercise of their Order, hence, only the bishop lays hands on the diaconate candidates at their ordination.

They share also, in a unique way, in Christ's mission and grace. The sacrament of Holy Orders, by imprinting in their souls a character which cannot be removed, configures them to Christ who made himself a servant to all. Thus, among other tasks, the deacons assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching. They also preside over funerals, and dedicate themselves to the various ministries of charity.

Like the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the sacrament of Holy Orders confers on the recipient (candidate) or ordinand, a sacramental character, an imprint, which can never be erased or removed from the ordained.

*To be continued*



## THROUGH MARY OUR MOTHER, WE SUCCEED

John 2:1-12

Rev. Fr Leonard Ilunamien Elomien  
[saintleolomien@gmail.com](mailto:saintleolomien@gmail.com)

09060201278 (Whatsapp messages only)



## MEDITATION

### A Spiritual Exercise to Treasure, A Habit to Cultivate

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight,  
O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. (*Psalms* 19:14)

Beloved reader, Merry Christmas to you. May the newness of life that the birth of our Saviour brings to humanity, be yours both now and always. Being also the beginning of the year 2023, **our year of a closer walk with Jesus**, I heartily wish you a very happy New Year! Accompanied by Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, may we enjoy the saving presence of God even as we strive to glorify God in all our endeavours throughout this year.

There is a spiritual exercise that is also a dimension of prayer which is very helpful in our spiritual growth, meditation. This exercise is so important in our spiritual life because it helps us to be sensitive to the presence of God in our lives and in human history. Meditation, likewise, helps us to enjoy the saving presence of God in the various ways through which God manifests Himself to us and accompany us on our life's journey. Our focus this year will be a

To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" CCC 2706.

The immediate effect and natural consequence of this dimension of meditation is that it deepens our prayer life. When we know the meaning of the words with which we pray, there will be a unison between our mouth and our hearts. The second effect (the third value of meditation) is that meditation helps us to enjoy our prayer, our relationship with God, the more.

### 2. A devotional exercise of, or leading to contemplation.

Meditation as a devotional exercise leading to contemplation is the silent, wordless, non-vocal prayer of the heart. "Meditation is a way or form of mental, silent prayer."<sup>1</sup> Meditation, as St Ignatius of Loyola teaches in his *Spiritual Exercises*, is a method of prayer; a way of lifting our heart and mind to God which is the essence of prayer. Contemplation is intimacy with God; a very close union with God. It is being immersed, being absorbed in the mystery of God who is love. Contemplation "is the expression of true love and upright trust in the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

The way to contemplation is no other but that of meditation. While in meditation, the soul acts in a natural way/manner, in contemplation, God acts on the spirit, making it surpass its natural mode in order to enter the supernatural mode of God.

### The specificity of meditation as a form of prayer

The specificity of meditation as a form of prayer lies in the object of meditation. Meditation is an admirable way of progressing in mental prayer. It is a transitory stage. Its importance lies in its capacity to dispose the person in prayer for a deeper, a more intimate relationship with God. It leads to "a more copious communication and communion with God and with all creation, forming a being more unified and intimate"<sup>2</sup> with God.

Meditation helps us to realise that God is always present with us; and is present to save.

**God is present in us; God is present among us** God is always present in us and among us. We discover this presence through meditation. This perpetual presence of God in our lives is attested to by St Augustine's assertion that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Likewise, his presence among us is concretised in an extraordinary way through the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Emmanuel, God with us. He, the Eternal Word, was made flesh and dwelt among us. This is the great mystery we celebrate at Christmas. *Continued on page 15*



Christmas Crib, Church of Saints Anne and Joachim, Lido di Lavenio, Italy.

meditation on the Holy Rosary Prayer and on some Marian hymns. The articles we will be publishing in this column will be on these.

### What is meditation?

Meditation can be done for several purposes. Our consideration of meditation in this article is on its practice as a spiritual exercise. Hence, our working definitions are those which speak of Meditation as a "careful and thorough thought;"<sup>1</sup> and as "a devotional exercise of, or leading to contemplation."<sup>2</sup>

**1. A careful and thorough thought:** This entails focusing our attention on words, phrases or sentences so as to arrive at a (deeper) comprehension, a profound understanding of the meaning therein. This spiritual exercise is fundamental to our understanding and appreciation of the content and beauty of our faith which is the purpose of Theology as *fides quaerens intellectum* (Saint Anselm).

Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history the page on which the "today" of God is written. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (after now referred to as CCC), 2705.

# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PILES

Medically reviewed by Avi Varma, MD, MPH, AAHIVS,  
FAAFP By Adam Felman

## What are Piles?

Piles is another term for hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the lower anus and rectum. This swelling can cause localized inflammation of other tissues.

Many people have piles, but the symptoms are not always obvious. [Hemorrhoids](#) cause noticeable symptoms for at least [50% Trusted Source](#) of people in the United States over 50 years of age.

Piles are the result of swollen veins in the lower anus and rectum. They can cause tissue growths in and around the anus and can lead to significant discomfort. These growths can vary in size and location.

**Internal vs. external:** Internal piles occur within the rectum and are usually not visible during an external examination. However, in some cases, an external pile may grow to protrude outside of the anus. The medical term for this is prolapsed hemorrhoid.

Medical professionals grade internal piles on a four-point scale.

**Grade I:** The growth does not cause symptoms and does not protrude out of the anus.

**Grade II:** The piles may prolapse from the anus but return inside independently.

**Grade III:** The piles prolapse and only recede within the anus with manual intervention.

**Grade IV:** The piles prolapse outside of the anus and a person cannot push them back in.

External piles form small lumps on the outside edge of the anus. They are very itchy and can become painful if a blood clot develops because the clot can block blood flow. Thrombosed external piles, or hemorrhoids that have clotted, require immediate medical treatment.

**Symptoms:** In most cases, the symptoms of piles are not serious and resolve on their own.

An individual with piles may experience the following symptoms: Painful lumps in and around the anus; Itching and discomfort around the anus; Discomfort during and after passing stools and Bloody stools.

Piles can escalate into a more severe condition. These include: Excessive anal bleeding, possibly leading to anemia; Infection; Fecal incontinence; Anal fistula and Strangulated hemorrhoid, in which anal muscles cut off blood supply to the hemorrhoid.

However, many people with piles may not experience any symptoms.

**When to contact a doctor:** A person should seek medical assistance if their piles persist for more than one week [Trusted Source](#) of home treatment or if they experience consistent bleeding from their rectum.

**Causes:** Piles result from increased pressure in the lower rectum.

The blood vessels around the anus and the rectum will stretch under pressure and may swell or bulge, forming piles. This may be due to:

- Chronic constipation
- Chronic diarrhea
- Lifting heavy weights
- Straining when passing a stool
- Risk factors
- Certain factors may increase a person's risk of developing piles, including:

**Pregnancy:** Up to [50% Trusted Source](#) of people experience hemorrhoids during pregnancy. This is due to increased pressure on the pelvis, a person having a higher blood volume, and a higher incidence of constipation.

**Age:** Piles are more common in older adults. Around half [Trusted Source](#) of people over the age of 50 develop piles.

**Weight:** Research suggests that being overweight may increase [Trusted Source](#) a person's chance of developing piles.

**Diet:** Eating a diet low in fiber may increase the likelihood [Trusted Source](#) of a person having piles.

## Diagnosis

A doctor can usually diagnose piles after carrying out a physical examination. They will examine the anus of the person with suspected piles.

The doctor may ask the following questions:

Do any close relatives have piles?

Has there been any blood or mucus in the stools?

Has there been any recent weight loss?

Have bowel movements changed recently?

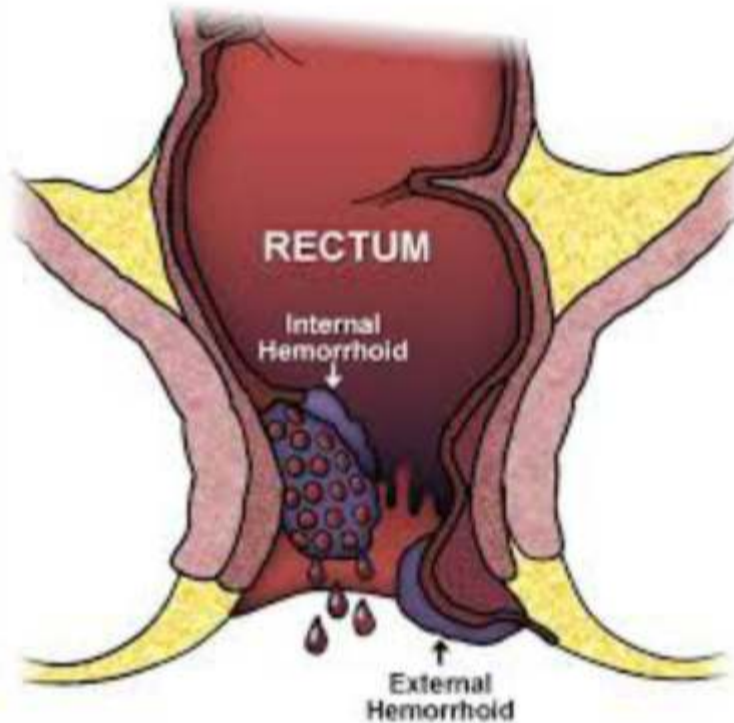
## What color are the stools?

For internal piles, the doctor may perform a digital rectal examination (DRE) or use a proctoscope. A proctoscope is a hollow tube fitted with a light. It allows the doctor to see the anal canal up close. They can take a small tissue sample from inside the rectum for analysis.

The physician may recommend a colonoscopy if the person with piles presents signs and symptoms that suggest another digestive system disease, or they are demonstrating any risk factors for colorectal cancer.

## Treatments

In most cases, piles resolve on their own without the need for any treatment. However,



some treatments can help significantly reduce the discomfort and itching that many people experience with piles.

## Lifestyle changes

A doctor will initially recommend some lifestyle changes to manage piles.

Piles can occur due to straining during bowel movements. Excessive straining is the result of constipation. A change in diet can help keep the stools regular and soft. This involves eating more fiber, such as fruit and vegetables, or primarily eating bran-based breakfast cereals.

A doctor may also advise the person with piles to increase their water consumption. Losing weight may help reduce the incidence and severity of piles.

To prevent piles, doctors also advise [Trusted Source](#) exercising and avoiding straining to pass stools. Exercising is one of the main therapies for piles.

## Medications

Several medicinal options are available to make symptoms more manageable for an individual with piles:

**Pain relievers:** Over-the-counter pain relievers such as aspirin and ibuprofen can reduce discomfort.

**Stool softeners:** Stool softeners and laxatives can make passing stools easier, which can reduce pain from piles.

**Corticosteroids:** Corticosteroid creams and ointment can reduce inflammation, pain, and itching.

## Surgical options

If a person has severe prolapsed piles or internal piles that are bleeding, surgery may be necessary. Surgical procedures for piles include:

**Banding:** The doctor places an elastic band around the base of the pile, cutting off its blood supply. The hemorrhoid will typically fall off within a week [Trusted Source](#).

**Sclerotherapy:** A doctor will inject medicine into the hemorrhoid to make it shrink and eventually shrivel up. This is effective for grade II and III hemorrhoids and is an alternative to banding.

**Infrared coagulation:** During this procedure, a surgeon will use an infrared light device to burn the hemorrhoid tissue.

**Hemorrhoidectomy:** This type of surgery involves the total removal of hemorrhoid tissue. It is the most effective [Trusted Source](#) option for completely removing piles, but there is a risk of complications, including difficulties with passing stools.

**Hemorrhoid stapling:** During this procedure, a surgeon will use staples to block blood flow to the hemorrhoid tissue.

viewed on Monday 12th December, 2022 at about 12:05pm

# MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is the season of celebrating God's love, harmony, and spreading awareness.

Christmas is celebrated every year on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December as it is considered to be the day on which Jesus Christ was born.

Christmas celebration is a symbol of peace and love. It is celebrated around the world with Joy and happiness.

It is considered to be the time of the year when friends and families come together to celebrate it with joy and spread happiness around them.

Christmas is celebrated as the day of birth of Jesus Christ. He was born in the world that was full of hatred, anger, and hypocrisy. Inspire of all these conditions, Jesus Christ was able to change people's heart and taught all how only love and gratitude can spread peace around the world.

There are runs around the celebration of Christmas i.e. decorating of trees and houses with light which symbolize hope and Joy.

It remains to be the most enjoyable holiday of the year. It is time to be grateful for what you have. It is the period to spend time with family and friends and also share food and gifts with poor people



By Ilenbalumen Michaela Obehi

## 2ND SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

### God's Eyewitness News!

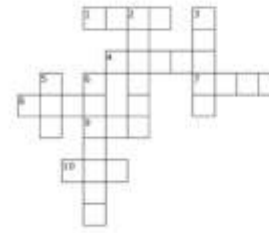


*Edited and Compiled by Dr. Anita Alikah*  
**I**t is important for us to keep up with what is happening in the world, isn't it? One of the best ways to keep up is by watching the news on TV. A typical news broadcast may have several live, on-the-scene reports. The announcer might say something like, "Fire destroyed a shopping mall today at Abuja. Channel 13 Eyewitness News reporter, Becky Madojemo, is at the scene. Becky?" "Thank you, Frank Olize. I am talking to Peter Bankole who witnessed the fire. Peter, can you tell us exactly what you saw?" The eyewitness will then tell everyone what he saw. It really helps us to understand what happened when we have an eyewitness report, doesn't it? Even though there was no TV during the time that Jesus lived, eyewitness reports were still

very important. One day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him. He said to the people with him, "Look! There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one I told you about. I didn't know he was the Messiah, but when I baptised him, I saw the Holy Spirit coming down from the heavens like a dove. It came down and landed right on his shoulder. I saw it with my own two eyes and I tell you, this is the Son of God." When the people heard John's eye-witness report, it helped them to understand and believe that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Most people come to know about Jesus because someone else tells them about him. Perhaps it is their parents, a Sunday School teacher, their Parish Priest, or a good friend. They give an eyewitness account how Jesus came into their heart and changed their life. God wants all of us to be a part of his "Eyewitness News Team." What would you say about what Jesus means to you? Perhaps you would say, "Since Jesus came into my heart, sadness has turned to joy;

doubt has turned to faith; worry has turned to

tell them about Jesus. We can tell them about



- ACROSS**
- The man who baptized Jesus
  - A clear, colorless, odorless, and tasteless liquid: H<sub>2</sub>O
  - A young sheep
  - A bird that is a symbol of peace
  - A male descendant
  - To break one of God's commands
- DOWN**
- The place where God is
  - The earth and everything on it
  - The creator of heaven and earth
  - To make a statement based on personal knowledge

B X Z U N N I T U W J I A N K  
 W Z C M E J M X L T T Z R Z N  
 N P L V C D W N O Z B C P T O  
 I V A D G N S C S E N T U J W  
 M E R Z E E E N R L P X Z J L  
 H Q G N K L B J E S U S S H Y  
 O C Y A V W X A T X E P D R I  
 Q L T D O V E O P Q I S I N R  
 W S L O O K D K W T C D U P I  
 G A P D T Q I E J D I L J W S  
 G T T I W O R L D O R Z A R R  
 Z V Y E R O H A B N H U E M T  
 Q R V G R I K Z K H F N W D B  
 N P X T E S T I M O N Y X U F  
 B R Y W A H S Q Q B A F T A F

WORLD SENT TESTIMONY	BAPTIZE JESUS LOOK	LAMB KNOW SPIRIT	WATER SIN DOVE	JOHN HEAVEN TAKES
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rust; fear has turned to confidence." Whatever Jesus has done for you, tell others so they can know him too. We can show others about Jesus by doing the things that Jesus taught us to do -- things like loving one another and being helpful and kind. Then people will see that we know Jesus and that will give us a chance to

what he has done for us and what he wants to do for them. Dear Father, thank you for sending your Son. Help us to be witnesses so that others will come to know his love as we do. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

## 3RD SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

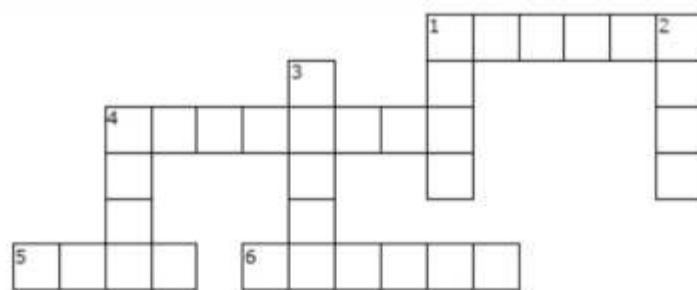
### You have a message!

Ah, the telephone... I don't know how we would get along without it. It is so important to us in our day-to-day life. We use it to stay in touch with friends and loved ones; we use it to make appointments; we use it to carry out banking transactions. Today's phones are amazing! Most cell

phones will do much more than just make a phone call. Some will let you send text messages and email. Some will even let you take a picture and send it to a friend. One important feature of today's phones is that a friend can call and leave a message. When that happens, your phone lets us know by saying, "You have a message." One thing

that really bugs me is to call a friend and leave a message and they never return my call! What kind of friend would do that? You and I have a friend who has left us a message. He has invited us to go fishing with him. Oh boy! I love to go fishing, don't you? I wonder if you can guess who that

Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon Peter and Andrew—throwing a net into the water because they fished for a living. Jesus called to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" The Bible tells us that they immediately dropped what they



- ACROSS**
- To move along behind someone
  - Two or more males who have the same parents
  - Open fabric made of threads or cords used to catch fish. (Plural)
  - Men, women, and children; human beings
- DOWN**
- An animal without legs that lives in water
  - To move along by putting one foot in front of the other
  - The land along the edge of the sea, lake, or wide river
  - A small vehicle for traveling on water

BOAT SHORE	PEOPLE WALK	FISH FOLLOW	NETS BROTHERS
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friend is? That's right! Our friend, Jesus, left us a message that he wants us to go fishing with him. This fishing trip will be quite different. Instead of catching fish, Jesus has invited us to go fishing for people! Jesus didn't leave his message on the phone, he left his message in the Bible. One day as Jesus walked along the shore of the Sea of

were doing and followed Jesus. As Jesus, Peter, and Andrew walked along the shore, they saw two other brothers—James and John—sitting in their boat mending nets. They called and invited them to come along too. They dropped their nets, left their boat behind, and followed Jesus. If you have ever been fishing, you know what a thrill it

M D A E W B C W P E T E R G F  
 J L M S L A R P A G N E T S F  
 U O K L U W T R E L F I S H K  
 C Y J T O P K J B O K B C Y I  
 X O H L R G K T R G P I O C A  
 X W L E S C H L O A N L N A S  
 Z O T E B A H B T L M W E G T  
 F A M U W T I O H I B L N T Q  
 W A B E H I N D E L Q M K J S  
 J T H J O H N B R E Z Z Q Y L  
 J S Z M D I V E S E W L E J I  
 P E O A N D R E W X W C J W V  
 B N S L D O L E A V I N G H I  
 D X B U H Y B S I T T I N G N  
 N C F S S C B W B U W E F Y G

BROTHERS	JAMES	NETS	COME	GALILEE
BOAT	PETER	WATER	FOLLOW	BEHIND
ANDREW	LIVING	JESUS	SITTING	FISH
WALKING	PEOPLE	JOHN	SHORE	LEAVING

message from Jesus that he wants us to go and make disciples. Will we return his call? What will our answer be? Dear Jesus, just like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, we want to join you and go fishing for people. Amen.

## CYON 2022 ANNUAL END OF YEAR PROGRAMME: A Call to Dedication

By Blessed

Rev. Fr. Precious Martin Umahonlen has charged the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria, Uromi Diocese to a more committed life's growth. This he said during the 2022 Annual End of the Year Programme. The event which took place on December 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 at Ufua Memorial Catholic Education Centre, with about 122 persons in attendance, was a huge success.

The events/activities were Day 1: Opening Mass, Rosary/candle light procession. Day 2---

--morning Mass, Talk 1--- election matters/vote wisely by Sir A.A. Idonin. Talk 2--- symposium on ACTON /getting rich quick syndrome by Rev.Fr. Precious Martin Umahonlen and Rev .Fr. Michael Akhighu, Games /sports, Get together /dinner part. Day 3---All the youths moved to St Patrick Catholic Church Ebhoiyi for Thanksgiving at 8am Mass and evangelization..

It was a great celebration, as youths of the Uromi Diocese appreciates entrepreneurship more and more as hard work pays.



A Cross Sections of Rev Fr Martin, Sir A.A. Idonin and some of the Youths during and after a talk session

## ALTAR SERVERS ASSOCIATION OF UROMI DIOCESE 2022 RETREAT AND CAMP

By Anefi Junior

The Altar Servers Association of Uromi diocese had a 4 day retreat camp. The program which held at Lumen Christi International High School Uromi started on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 and ended 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2022. It was spiritually refreshing as several facilitators were present during the 4-day program to educate the altar servers on morality and on liturgical practices. There was sporting competition of which Uromi deanery emerged as winner.

The last day of the program experienced the presence of His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Donatus Ogun, OSA who celebrated the Holy Mass.

In a homily, Bishop Ogun admonished all altar servers to strive to avoid distractions during the liturgy.

The Altar Servers remain grateful to God, to his Lordship, Bishop Ogun, and to all the Priests for their continuous support.

Benedicamus Dominus.



## A Spiritual Exercise to Treasure, A Habit to Cultivate

Continued from page 12

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God; <sup>3</sup>all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. *John 1:1-5, 14.*

God knows how much we need Him. For this reason, while the time of his direct physical presence in the world was coming to end, He promised not to leave us orphans, but to send the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who remains always with us. Cf. *John 14:15-18.* In *Matthew 28:20*, Jesus says: "I am with you always, even to the end of the world." God's perpetual presence is a saving presence.

### The saving presence of God is all we need

God, out of his immense love for us, makes Himself present in our lives to bless us with his saving presence. Nothing happens by chance. What some persons sometimes call coincidence is, in reality, divine incidence or providence. God orders the world towards the end for which He made it, its "ultimate perfection" through his providence. This end is salvation, the eternal well-being, the salvation, of all his creatures. Divine providence is "the dispositions by which God guides his creation towards this perfection." CCC, 301.

### Discovering the saving presence of God through meditation

There is a song version of the mystery of faith we sometimes use in proclaiming the mystery of our faith during Mass. Its lyrics are:

Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us,  
and he's risen from the dead.  
He is our saving Lord,  
He is joy for all ages

At every Eucharistic celebration, Catholics profess the mystery of faith. The mystery of faith is a summary of the Paschal Mystery of Christ, the mystery of our redemption: the blessed passion, saving death, glorious resurrection and ascension of Christ into heaven. I so much love the song version of the mystery of faith because of the exhortation it begins with: **Keep in mind...**

To keep in mind is to be mindful, thoughtful, of something very important, to remember, to be attentive, to be cautious and conscious of that thing. God is the source of goodness. Every good we experience in situations and in persons is a manifestation of the saving presence of God. We can connect with God by taking this to heart.

The ultimate focus or aim of meditation as a spiritual exercise is connection with God. The reflection above exposes the inherent values of meditation, reasons for which meditation can rightly be considered as a spiritual exercise to treasure.

How can one cultivate this exercise so as to make it a habit?

### How to cultivate the habit

Your beliefs become your thoughts,  
Your thoughts become your words,

Your words become your actions,  
Your actions become your habits,  
Your habits become your values,  
Your values become your destiny.<sup>6</sup>

This quote is attributed to various authors including Mahatma Gandhi, the great Indian sage. Some others are Lao Tzu and Fraank Outlaw. Though the authorship is debateable, the content is inspiring for it sheds light on the need to be mindful of our beliefs. Beliefs are the foundation of every other thing, including our destiny.

Whatever we believe, we can achieve. The way to cultivate habit of meditation is to follow the counsel of this sage. It is important to begin by believing in its importance. If we do, it will occupy our thought, we will treasure words, articles, and books that speak about it, look for them so as to read them for more enlightenment on this important subject.

The next stage is to put into action, to practise what we know about this spiritual exercise. One learns to meditate by meditating. When we are committed to this exercise, over time, it will become a habit. This new habit will become an added value in our life. Since values transform the life of those who subscribe to them, meditation, as a value, a treasure, will positively impact our destiny.

In this season of Christmas, I will like to conclude this introductory reflection with the first verse of the hymn, "Let all mortal flesh keep silent," that underscores meditation while unveiling the mystery of the incarnation.

Let all mortal flesh keep silence,  
And with nothing fear and trembling stand;  
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,  
For with blessing in his hand,  
Christ our God to earth descendeth,  
Our full homage to demand.

### Endnotes

- "
- Meditation" in *English Dictionary - Offline App (Version 6.2).*
- *Ibid.*
- M. Herráiz García, "Preghiera mentale" in C. Rossini e P. Sciadini (eds), *Enciclopedia della preghiera*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 298-306.
- M. Herráiz García, "Preghiera vocale" in C. Rossini e P. Sciadini (eds), *Enciclopedia della preghiera*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 291-297.
- M. Herráiz García, "Preghiera mentale."

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/50584-your-beliefs-become-your-thoughts-your-thoughts-become-your-words>. Accessed on 18/12/2022



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...Keeping Spiritual Watch Over Esanland

## REFLECTION FOR THE MONTH

*No one is more hated than he who tells the truth.*



The People of God Praying during the Stations of the Cross

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By Patrick Uhomoibhi

# MARIAN PILGRIMAGE: MAY GOD GIVE US REASONS TO INCREASE OUR JOY, BISHOP OGUN PRAYS FOR HIS FLOCK

By Staff Reporter

As a tradition, the Catholic Diocese of Uromi gathers in her Marian Shrine annually. During the 2022 Marian Pilgrimage held recently, the Catholic Bishop of Uromi Diocese, Most Rev. Donatus Ogun

has prayed God to give his flock reasons for their joy to increase. The 2022 annual Pilgrimage was spiritually enriching as it featured Moments of Confession, Stations of the Cross,

Benediction, Holy Mass and others. Parishioners came from all over the Diocese. It has become a norm that people go home blessed in unique ways after every Annual Marian Pilgrimage.

The Diocese is grateful to God for the successful day with Mary and looks forward to another celebration in the New Year. Have Maria

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Editor in Chief: Rev. Fr. Precious Martin Umahanlen (08130724353)

Associate Editor: Rev. Fr. Francis Abubokhale (08136584396), E-mail: ecclesialingua@gmail.com / All correspondence to Chancery Complex or to the Witness Printing Press.

**THE WITNESS**  
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Tel: 110 Wabokwa Road, Uromi, Edo State, Nigeria.  
TEL:- 0903 659 3334