

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
SECOND SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NSUKKA AT ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,
IBAGWA-AKA ON MONDAY, 16TH JUNE, 1997**

BY

**THE RIGHT REV. JONAH CHUKWUEMEKA ILONUBA,
*M.A., Dip. Th. (Lond.) Bishop of Nsukka***

SYNOD PRAYER:

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ lived a sacrificial life leaving us an example. Let Christ be formed in us, and let us learn from him all humility of spirit, all lowliness of heart, all modesty of speech, and promptness in doing your will.

Cast down, O Lord, all forces of cruelty and wrong. Defeat all selfish and worldly-minded schemes, all hatred, corruption and injustice.

Prosper all that is conceived among us in the spirit of Christ. Through your Holy Spirit help us to grow daily more like Him, in Christ's name we pray. A-men.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

GREETINGS:

Brethren and good people of God, it is my joy and privilege to welcome all of you in the most precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to Ibagwa where, by God's grace we are now assembled for the First Session of the Second Synod of the Diocese.

I thank the people of Ibagwa for accepting to host the Synod and for all the necessary preparations and arrangements that were made towards this year's Synod.

We are now in our Second Synod and this means that we are getting on in years and no longer a baby Diocese. Since the creation of our Diocese in 1994, Eleven more Dioceses have been created, five of them being Missionary Diocese that were created towards the end of last year. We shall come to that later in this address.

INTRODUCTION:

The History of Christianity in Ibagwa:

The history of Christianity in Igbo land dates back to 1857 during the Niger Mission led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a slave boy who became a Bishop. He joined the British expedition of 1854. His mission was to evangelize the Niger Territories. Samuel Ajayi Crowther who was accompanied by freed slaves of Igbo origin from Sierra-Leone brought the Good News to Onitsha on July 27, 1857. For nearly 30 years the C.M.S. Niger Mission operated in areas around Onitsha, in such places as Onitsha, Aboh, Asaba, Idumuje, Obosi, Ogidi, Awka, Nnewi and in other places in the old Onitsha District.

Christians from these areas soon started to move out from their homes to settle in other places where they worked for their livelihood.

In 1930, Zepheniah Ojukwu, Gabriel Azom both from Nnewi and Sydney Atuba from Abacha in Idemili came and settled in Ibagwa as traders. These people were already Christians before coming to Ibagwa. Before them, some Methodist traders had settled at Ikolo. These Aro Christians converted their Landlord and Landlady – Late Israel Enejere and Late Magaret Idoko.

Zepheniah Ojukwu and his group had their prayer meetings at the Motor-garage. They were using Ojukwu's motor-garage for their Sunday Services. In 1931 they got a parcel of land in front of the palace of Late Igwe Jonathan A. C. Ugwu, for church building.

The first church building was put up there; then the late Israel Nwosa, Israel Enejere and Magaret Orefi Idoko left the Methodist and joined the C.M.S.

The following members of the new church, Zepheniah Ojukwu, Gabriel Azom and Sydney Atuba approached the Rev. A. N. Asiekwu and demanded for a church teacher. They were given Mr. Simon Ebeye from Nise as their first teacher. He was succeeded by Mr. Harrison Agbasi from Inyi and Nathan Nwankwo were succeeded by Mr. Ofili from Asaba, B. O. Ifeobu from Aba and P. E. Agbatekwe from Nibo.

The Church was then named St. Andrew's Church, Ibagwa-Aka.

The landlords of St. Andrew's are Amebo and Idi. Ugwu Adana Ugwu Onah of Idi, a relation of Igwe J. A. C. Ugwu played greatest role in helping the church to get land. This Ugwu Adana was the first recorded death in St. Andrew's. He was the first person buried in church cemetery, in front of Igwe's Palace.

J. O. Onah and Igwe J. A. C. Ugwu were among the early converts of St. Andrew's.

The last Catechist of St. Andrew's Ibagwa-Aka before the Nigerian Civil War was Mr. Joseph Chikwendu from Nnewi. After the civil war, when no Catechist was posted to the Church, Theophilus Onah and Igwebueze Ugwuoke jointly looked after the Church. Not long after, Ernest Odo, a Catechist was posted. The last Catechist before the curate was David Nweze.

In 1974, the Rev. A. I. Eneasato was posted to Ibagwa as a curate. Ibagwa group of churches continued to be a part of Nsukka parish until 13th May, 1979 when the Ibagwa Parish was inaugurated by the Rt. Rev. G. N. Otubelu, the Bishop of Enugu Diocese. The Rev. A. I. Eneasato became the first Superintendent of Ibagwa Parish.

The Rev. Umesie succeeded Eneasato after the later had stayed for eleven (11) years. Before his transfer, Eneasato increased the churches from seven to ten. Umesie did not stay for long before he got his appointment as a Supervising Principal representing the Anglican Communion in Abakaliki Zonal Education Commission. Umesie was succeeded by the Rev. Clifford Aneke. The Rev. C. Aneke stayed longer than Umesie but his stay was also short. He was succeeded by the Rev. Canon D. O. Ogbonna now late. The Rev. Canon Ogbonna stayed from 1988 to 1992. He inherited ten (10) stations and bequeathed thirteen (13) to his successor the Rev. L. I. Eze. The Rev. L. I. Ezech stayed from 1992 and left at the end of 1994. The Rev. Eze was succeeded by the Rev. Canon E. U. C. Nnamani now late who became the Superintendent of Ibagwa Parish at the beginning of 1995.

On Sunday 12th November, 1995 St. Andrew's Church became the Archdeaconry headquarters of what is today the Ibagwa Archdeaconry.

The Ibagwa Parish which is hosting the Synod is made up of:

- St. Andrew's Church, Ibagwa;
- St. Mark's church, Obukpa;
- St. John's Church, Ebulu-Mmiri
- St. Philip's Church, Agu-Ogbara;
- St. Bartholomew's Church, Isi-Agu;
- Emmanuel Church, Nkalagu-Obukpa; and
- Christ Church, Onunwagu.

We hope that very soon some of these churches will develop to be a Parish of their own while new churches are planted in the yet unreached areas of the Parish.

Our Guest Preacher:

We now welcome formally our guest preacher, the Rt. Rev. (Dr.) Bennett C. I. Okoro, B. A. (Lincoln) LIC. Th. (New York) D.D., the Lord Bishop of Okigwe South; and his lovely wife Dorah. They have been here with us since Saturday evening.

Bishop Okoro has been very familiar to me when he was the Provost of Okigwe/Orlu Diocese.

Bennett and I were elected the same day and consecrated the same day, Thursday 6th January, 1994. Bennett is simple and unassuming and it was his calm disposition that helped him wade through the crisis that engulfed the twin Dioceses of Okigwe North and Okigwe South.

We thank him for his challenging and inspiring sermon delivered yesterday in a very articulate language.

Our prayer is that God will grant them travelling mercies when they leave us to return to their Diocese, and that God through His Holy Spirit will continue to support him as he shepherds the flock of Christ committed to his care.

Events Since After the Last Synod:

1. Ordination:

On Sunday 7th July, 1996, history was made in the Diocese when 15 persons were ordained Deacons and 2 were ordained Priests. This is the largest number so far in the Diocese. 13 Deacons were trained within the Diocese. 12 of them are non-stipendiary priests, 2 of them went in for the full ordination course. We thank them for their devotion and commitment and for their contribution towards the development of the Diocese. Many of them have proved in their places of work that their choice was actually guided by the Holy Spirit.

The **Deacons** are:

- ◆ Silvanus C. Anioke
- ◆ George Asadu – (Okene)

- ◆ Steve Dimelu
- ◆ Lawrence N. Eze
- ◆ Paul Eze
- ◆ Samuel Ezeugwu
- ◆ Dr. Emmanuel Idike
- ◆ Engr. Dr. Theophilus C. Madueme
- ◆ George Nnamani – (Trinity College)
- ◆ Simon C. Nnamani
- ◆ Theophilus Onah
- ◆ Chijioke C. Onyechi
- ◆ Eugene Ossai
- ◆ Eric E. Ugwu
- ◆ Jonathan Urama

Priests:

- ◆ Rev. Emmanuel Agbowo
- ◆ Rev. Samuel UGwu

2. Women Conference:

Women Conference was held at St. Thomas' Aku on 11th July - 14th July, 1996.

The 1996 Women conference was held in Aku and we thank the Mothers' Union President and her team of workers for organizing the Conference. We thank Aku people for hosting the conference and for offering accommodation to as many people as wanted to stay. We commend the remarkable contributions of Aku women, particularly, to the success of the conference. Full reports of the conference will be covered in the Women's report. It must however be observed that the people of Aku did not respond as expected and some of the people who were being looked upon as leaders in the community were not really leading by example. Special mention must be made of Engr. Aka Ogbobe and his wife who apart from hosting the Bishop and his wife also offered accommodation to almost twenty other members. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless Engr. Ogbobe and his family and that others will also emulate his good leadership qualities. I am convinced that he is not the richest person in St. Thomas' Aku.

3. The General Synod of the Province:

The General Synod of the Province was held from September 10th -15th 1996, at the Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Ikeja. Five Missionary Dioceses were created and their Bishops elected. They are the Dioceses of:

- ◆ Kebbi,
- ◆ Dutse,
- ◆ Damaturu,
- ◆ Jalingo, and
- ◆ Oturkpo.

The Bishop of Niger Delta was also elected following the translation of the Rt. Rev. S. Elenwo to Niger Delta North.

The Bishops-elect were:

- ◆ Daniel Abu Yisa for Damaturu
- ◆ Yesufu Lumu for Dutse
- ◆ Tanimu Samari for Jalingo
- ◆ Ityobee Ugede for Oturkpo
- ◆ Edmund Akanya for Kebbi

While Ven. G. H. Pepple was elected for the Diocese of Niger Delta.

The following communiqué was issued at the end of the General Synod. Issues highlighted were:

A. Mission and Evangelism:

- (i) The growth of the Province of Nigeria Anglican Communion.
- (ii) The creation of proposed Provinces.
- (i) Fellowship with other denominations of the Christian family.
- (ii) The people's fundamental right to freedom of worship devoid of religious fanaticism and violence.

B. The Nation of Nigeria:

- (i) Suspension from the Commonwealth;
- (ii) The alarming rate of assassination, arson and armed robbery;
- (iii) The fall in the standard of education and the current dispute between the Government and ASUU;
- (iv) The lack of maintenance culture as regards roads, electricity, telephone system, etc.

C. Return to Democratic Rule:

- (i) Early release of political prisoners.
- (ii) Non-interference with political parties.
- (iii) Success of Nigerian Football Team at the Olympics.

D. International Relations:

- (i) Fundamental human rights should be guarded jealously.
- (ii) The need for advanced nations to assist the poorer nations.
- (iii) The aberration of military rule.
- (iv) The elimination of disease, illiteracy and poverty.

4. Collation of New Canons:

On Sunday 6th October, 1996 the following priests were collated and installed Canons of the Cathedral: The Rev. Nathan O. Okwu, the Rev. Emmanuel I. Onah and the Rev. Benjamin C. D. Diara (the Synod Secretary)

5. Appointments, Collation and Installation of New Archdeacons:

During the Diocese Board of 17th October, 1996, three new Archdeacons were appointed. They are: the Rev. Canon Emmanuel I. Onah for Nsukka Archdeaconry, the Rev. Canon Jonathan N. Eze for the proposed Ovoko Archdeaconry, and the Rev. Canon Nathan O. Okwu for Eha-Amufu Archdeaconry.

The Archdeacon of Nsukka Archdeaconry was collated and installed on Sunday 9th February, 1997 while that of Eha-Amufu was on Sunday 23rd February, 1997.

6. The Burial of the Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha and the first President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:

On Saturday 16th November, 1996 the Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the Owelle of Onitsha and the first President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who died in May was buried at Onitsha his home town.

The activities marking his burial started Friday 8th November, 1996 and ended on Saturday 16th November, 1996. Being an international figure and the founder of Nigerian politics, his burial was attended by national figures from both within and outside Nigeria.

To us as a Diocese the building which is now St. John's Church and the Archdeaconry Headquarters of Nsukka Archdeaconry is a donation from this eminent Nigerian.

We thank God for his life and his contributions towards our national development.

We shall continue to remember the family in our prayers, especially Dr. (Mrs.) Uche Azikiwe, the widow and her children.

7. Episcopal Retreat at Ibadan 27th – 29th November, 1996:

All the Bishops of the Province met at Ibadan, St. Anne's Church, Molete to deliberate on the 1998 Lambeth Themes:

- (i) Called to Full Humanity.
- (ii) Called to Live and Proclaim the Gospel.
- (iii) Called to be Faithful in a Plural World.
- (iv) Called to be one.

Papers were presented on each of the above themes, followed by responses.

The clergy of the diocese have since been given the report of the Pre-Lambeth Conference discussions on the themes.

We shall take them one after the other so that every member of our congregations will be part of the Lambeth discussions.

The Lambeth Conference is intended to afford the Bishops an opportunity to study together, share with each other, and pray together.

According to Archbishop George Carey:

"I hope that Lambeth 1998 will be supported by all the Communion as the bishops meet in the dying years of the present millennium. Effective leadership depends upon vision, faith and commitment. I believe Lambeth '98 will help to focus the minds and hearts of all bishops as the Anglican Communion prepares for the challenges and opportunities of the century, please support Lambeth '98, and your bishop as he or she prepares to come. Above all, remember it in your prayers. I too, shall draw strength from that support, knowing that it represents our common desire to serve Christ in a world He loves."

I believe that all necessary arrangements are being made to see that we are fully represented in the Lambeth '98 so that we can share meaningfully with and be part of the Anglican Communion World-Wide.

8. Consecration of new Bishops – Saturday 30th November, 1996:

On Saturday, 30th November, 1996 – being St. Andrew's Day, the six new bishops elected during the General Synod in September were consecrated during a solemn service at St. James' Cathedral Ibadan. They have since been enthroned in their different Dioceses:

- ◆ 4th December, 1996 – Kebbi – The Rt. Rev. Edmund E. Akanya
- ◆ 6th December, 1996 – Dutse – The Rt. Rev. Yesufu Lumu
- ◆ 8th December, 1996 – Damaturu – The Rt. Rev. Daniel A. Yisa
- ◆ 10th December, 1996 – Jalingo – The Rt. Rev. Tanimu Samari
- ◆ 11th December, 1996 – Oturkpo – The Rt. Rev. Ityobee Ugede

9. Inauguration of Ovoko Archdeaconry – 8th December, 1996:

On Sunday, 8th December, 1996 Ovoko Archdeaconry was inaugurated bringing the number of the Archdeaconries in our diocese to four (4). The Rev. Canon Jonathan N. Eze was collated and installed as the first Archdeacon of the Archdeaconry. Before his appointment and collation he was the Superintendent of Ovoko Parish and he worked hard to see that their dream of being carved out as an Archdeaconry was realized. Ovoko Archdeaconry is made up of Ovoko Parish, Orba Parish, Uduledem Parish and Eha-Alumona Parish.

At the end of the service of inauguration a modern parsonage completed by St. Peter's Church, Ovoko was dedicated for use as the Archdeaconry Headquarters. This parsonage is the first of its kind in the whole Diocese and we believe that others will copy from the Ovoko example.

10. Transition to Civil Rule:

The present military government is working hard to see that the promise of handing over to a democratically elected civilian government is realized by October, 1998.

NECON has achieved a considerable success in some of the hurdles that needed to be skipped before the zero hour.

There was the registration of voters and the preparation for the Local Government elections which took place on Saturday, 15th March, 1997.

The elections we were told were free and fair although we know there are some cases where they held other by-elections because of reported cases of either rigging or hooliganism.

The chairmen have been sworn in and they in turn have sworn in their councilors. We have to pray for them so that they will see themselves as servants of the people and not masters. That they may work for the development of their Local Government Areas and for the entire nation and not for the gratification of their selfish desires which will be to the detriment of the electorate.

We thank God for those elected within the Nsukka Senatorial Zone. It is our prayer that they will see themselves as brothers and sisters and not as people divided either by politics or religion.

While we wait for other elections, let us continue to pray for peace and good governance in this our great nation.

11. Province of Southern Africa:

A new Primate has been elected for the Province of Southern Africa, following the retirement of the Most Rev'd. Desmond Tutu in June last year. He is the Rt. Rev. Winston N. Ndungane, Bishop of Kimberley and Kuruman. He is elected the Archbishop of Cape Town and he becomes the Primate of the church of the Province of Southern Africa.

12. University of Nigeria Nsukka:

The pride of Nsukka is this great institution of higher learning which is of international repute. The motto which was informed by the aspirations and aims of the founding fathers is – “To Restore the Dignity of Man.” One wonders if there can be a better motto for one who has high hopes for the development of his people.

Unfortunately what has been going on in the University in recent years raises the question whether the dignity of man is being restored or degraded. We are aware that the Engineering Department was burnt down, the Arts Theatre and just recently the vice Chancellor's Lodge and a car were burnt.

Many of the Professors in the University have been dehumanized making them suffer for crimes they know nothing about. These and some other incidents have made members of the University Community suspect themselves for one thing or the other and this has soured the brotherly relationship that should otherwise exist in such a place.

It is not therefore surprising that students have been off the campus for a long time. It is no longer possible to say how long a student can stay in the University. This is a matter for serious concern and I think that the Igwes and Chiefs of this Nsukka being the landlords of this institution have to think seriously about the future of this institution that gives Nsukka a name.

It is time to make positive moves to the appropriate quarters, so that sanity will be restored.

13. Provincial Standing Committee Meeting – April, 16th – 20th 1997:

The Provincial Standing Committee and Mothers' Union Executive Committee met at Christ Church, Owerri from 16th April – 19th April, 1997.

On Sunday 20th April a closing service was held at (CATOL) Cathedral of the Transfiguration of our Lord Owerri. The Military Administrator Col. Tanko Zubairu and his wife were in attendance and the Administrator read the Old Testament Lesson.

The Archbishop proclaimed the creation of three Ecclesiastical Provinces from the present Province of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

PROCLAMATION:

WHEREAS the Church Missionary Society (herein called “the C.M.S.”) brought Christianity into Badagry, Nigeria, in December, 1842 with Rev. Henry Townsend at the head of mission;

WHEREAS the C.M.S. on the 27th of July, 1857, through Reverend (later Bishop) Samuel Ajayi Crowther arrived at Onitsha for evangelism;

WHEREAS for a more effective administration the C.M.S. constituted Sierra Leone, Gold Coast (now Ghana), Nigeria, the Gambia and Rio Pongas into the Province of West Africa on 17th day of April, 1951;

WHEREAS on 24th February 1979, the Dioceses within Nigeria were constituted into a Province under the name of Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion);

WHEREAS there now exist in Nigeria 58 Dioceses and it is desirable to create more Province for the efficient administration of the Church of Nigeria;

NOW BE IT PROCLAIMED, AND IT IS HEREBY PROCLAIMED, THAT by virtue of the powers conferred upon it, by the Constitution of the church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), the General Synod of the Church has created three Provinces within the Church of Nigeria with their respective foundation Archbishops as indicated in the schedule hereunder:

THE SCHEDULE:

S/No	Name of Province	Archbishop	Diocese within the Province
1.	Province one	His Grace, The Most Rev. J. A. Adetiloye	1. Lagos 2. Ibadan 3. Ondo 4. Benin 5. Ekiti 6. Kwara 7. Ilesa 8. Egba 9. Ijebu 10. Warri 11. Akoko 12. Owo 13. Akure 14. Remo 15. Osun 16. Ife 17. Oke-Osun 18. Sabongidda-Ora 19. Ikale/Ilaje 20. Kabba 21. Yewa 22. Lokoja
2.	Province Two	Rt. Rev. B. C. Nwankiti	1. On the Niger 2. Niger Delta 3. Owerri 4. Enugu 5. Aba 6. Asaba 7. Orlu 8. Awka 9. Calabar 10. Uyo 11. Mbaise 12. Okigwe-North 13. Okigwe-South 14. Umuahia 15. Ukwa 16. Nsukka 17. Egbu 18. Nnewi 19. Niger Delta North
3.	Province Three	Rt. Rev. P. J. Akinola	1. Kaduna 2. Kano 3. Jos 4. Abuja 5. Aba 6. Asaba 7. Katsina 8. Sokoto 9. Makurdi 10. Yola 11. Maiduguri 12. Bauchi 13. Jalingo 14. Kebbi 15. Dutse 16. Damaturu 17. Oturkpo

Dated this 20th day of April, 1997.

14. Communiqué:

The following Communiqué was issued at the Meeting:

PREAMBLE:

The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) in its continued mission to hold and maintain the Faith, Doctrine, Sacrament and Discipline in the Church of Christ and the society as a whole, cognisant of the role of the Church in bringing about happiness to the citizenry and conscious of the need to ensure that the society is just, fair, peaceful and progressive – including for spiritual and economic growth and development, met at Christ Church, Owerri from 16th to 20th April, 1997 and hereby issues this communiqué:

- 1. HOSPITALITY:** The Church of Nigeria is grateful to the Government and people of Imo State for their heart-warming hospitality and specially thanks His Excellency, the Military Administrator of Imo State, Col. Tanko Zubairu, for being a wonderful host.
- 2. PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH:** As we approach the year 2,000, we note with satisfaction the effort of the church in keeping aloft the banner of Christianity in Nigeria. As a result of our progress, the Church has decided to create three Provinces within the Church of Nigeria with three Archbishops under one Primate. The Provinces will take effect from September, 1997. The Church has also approved the creation of three new dioceses of Abakaliki, Wusasa and Oji-River.
- 3. THE ECONOMY OF THE NATION:** Although there is laudable effort on the part of the Government to improve the economy, we still regret that this effort has not succeeded in alleviating the suffering of the masses. The cost of living is still too high. The recent mass retrenchment of workers in some states has worsened the unemployment situation in the country. Retired workers are not being paid their gratuities and pensions as and when due and this has brought untold hardship to many families. The value of the naira, although steady, continues to be low. However, we note the magnificent effort of the Federal military Government through the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in maintaining several facilities in the country and urge that this effort be redoubled. Government should take immediate steps to prevent the shortage of petrol and petroleum products in the country.
- 4. EDUCATION:** We have expressed our dismay on previous occasions at the falling standard of education in the country. Matters have now degenerated to the level where Secondary School students can no longer express themselves orally or in writing in the official language of the country. We are dismayed that Science and Mathematics are no longer properly taught due to lack of adequate laboratories and qualified teachers. We warn that these subjects are of profound importance in the modern world.

We are therefore compelled to demand that some former voluntary agency schools be handed back to their former owners and that more private schools be allowed to exist. We urge the Governments of Nigeria to regard themselves as partners of voluntary agencies and private proprietors in providing education in the country and to continue not only to supervise all schools within their jurisdiction but also to pay grants-in-aid in respect of all pupils.

We urge the Government to stem the tide of frequent closure of Universities which has adversely affected the quality of University education in the country and to adequately fund Universities in the Country.

5. **DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NON-INDIGENES:** We urge all governments in the country to encourage all Nigerian citizens to feel at home in all parts of the country. We therefore wish to discourage the recent practice in some states of retrenching “non-indigenes” from their services. Any discrimination based on ethnicity or place of origin is immoral and should be discouraged.
6. **TRANSITION TO CIVIL RULE PROGRAMME:** We note that two local Government elections have so far been held during the administration of General Sanni Abacha – one under the Zero party system and the other contested by the five registered centrist political parties.

We urge that all lapses observed in these elections be prevented in future elections.

We recognise that Nigeria cannot be an island unto herself and urge all Nigerians to take note of the views of the United Nations, The Commonwealth and the Organisation of African Unity regarding respect for human rights during this period of transition to civil rule. We urge all public officers, Military or Civilians, who are keen on contesting an election to resign their posts and join a political party of their choice long enough to avoid any onward conclusion that they exploited their public offices to their own political advantages.

7. The Church of Nigeria will continue to pray for the peace, stability, and prosperity of Nigeria and will continue to thank God for His bountiful blessings.
8. The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) calls on all its members and the faithful to continue to adhere to the teachings of Christ following the Anglican tradition and thus refuse to directly be associated with the proliferation of Churches particularly those which veer away from established Anglican tradition.

Retirement:

The Rt. Rev. C. A. Akinbola, the Lord Bishop of Ekiti retired at the end of last month, May, 1997.

We thank God for the way he has used him for the furtherance of the gospel throughout the years of his active service.

We pray that God will continue to support and sustain him so that he will enjoy his retirement.

THE SYNOD THEME: “Walking in the Steps of Christ”

1 John 2:6 “He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (RSV) “Whoever says that he remains in union with God should live just as Jesus Christ did.” (GVB)

J. Conder said,

“How shall I follow Him I serve?
How shall I copy Him I love?
Nor from these blessed footsteps swerve
Which lead me to His seat above.”

To walk in someone’s steps means to copy, imitate or behave like that person in all aspects of his life. To look up to someone as a pattern to be followed either in behaviour, speech or in leadership qualities. To make another person’s character your own standard to be emulated. To judge one’s behaviour or way of living by the standard already set by someone and then try to attain that standard.

As Christians our faith is built upon the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He was God but for our sake he became man and lived as we live, but in his own case, he lived a perfect human life and calls upon us his followers to live just in the same way that he lived. Jesus kept God’s word and did His will.

If we are to walk in the steps of Jesus we have to think about his life and those qualities in his life that made him acceptable to God.

The writer of the 4th Gospel describes him as “Full of grace and truth” John 1:14.

Christ’s acceptance to be born as man shows his obedience to God. In his life there is that continual care for those in need, his thought for the good of others and his readiness to help them; His stand for the truth even though it cost him his life; His compassion for human suffering, leading to many miracles of healing; His close relationship with God which was characterized in his prayer life. To walk as Jesus walked we have to reflect on these aspects of his life and place our own life side by side with his.

HIS OBEDIENCE:

The Holy Bible enjoins children to obey their parents. Christ we are told in Luke was subject to his earthly parents. Luke 2:51 “So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them.”

It was his obedience to God that made him accept to be born as an ordinary human being and to give his life in order to redeem the human race. Phil. 2:8 “He was humble and walked the path of obedience, all the way to death.”

In order to walk in the steps of Jesus we have to obey God and live our lives according to Biblical injunctions. God is not pleased when his children disobey him and pay him lip service. In Malachi 1:6, God showed his anger on the priests of Israel who were disobedient to his commands, “A son honours his father, and a servant honours his master. I am your father, - why don’t you honour me? I am your master – why don’t you respect me? You despise me, and yet you ask. “How have we despised you?”

In God’s promulgation of the old covenant, the emphasis was on obedience as his requirement if his people were to enjoy his favour. Exodus 19:5 says:

“Now, if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own people.” In the new covenant relationship the emphasis was on obedience as God’s gift to his people in order

that we might enjoy his favour. If we are to obey God we need to have faith in him and in his Son Jesus Christ. Faith in the gospel, and in Jesus Christ is seen as obedience.

Acts 6:7 “And so the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger, and a great number of priests accepted the faith.” A life of obedience to God is the fruit of faith. (cf Genesis 22:18, Heb. 11:8).

For us Christians obedience means imitating God in holiness 1 Peter 1:15f “You shall be holy, because I am holy”, it equally means imitating Christ in his humility and love, John 13:14f, Phil. 2:5ff.

Our obedience to Christ should spring from our gratitude to God for grace received – (Rom. 12:1f).

Our pattern of obedience should be that of:

- (i) Obedience to divinely established authority in the family, Eph. 5:22; 6:1f (cf 2Tim. 3:2).
- (ii) Obedience in the church, Heb. 13:17 “Obey your leaders and follow their orders. They watch over your souls without resting, since they must give God an account of their service. If you obey them they will do their work gladly; if not they will do it with sadness, and that would be of no help to you.”
- (iii) Obedience in the State – In the question about the tribute to Caesar Jesus says in Matt. 22:21. Well, then pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay to God what belongs to God.” Rom. 13:1f, 1 Peter 2:13f, Titus 3:1. As Christians we have to pray for leaders and pray for peace not only in our country but for world peace. This is part of Christian’s obedience to God.

Do children these days obey their parents. Do we these days obey the church and her leaders? Our answer to these questions will show our stand on walking in the steps of Christ.

HIS COMPASSION AND LOVE FOR THE POOR, THE SUFFERING:

In the Bible, compassion is shown as both a divine and human quality. Christ being a Jew knew the Jewish teaching on what should be their attitude towards the poor, the less privileged, the widows and the orphans.

The prophets and other men of God were deeply aware of the wonder of God’s mercy to sinful men. They taught that anyone who had experienced this would feel it his duty to have compassion on his fellow human beings, especially, the fatherless, the widow and the foreigner. Deut. 10:18 “He makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people and gives them food and clothes.” Deut. 14:29; Deut. 16:11. This compassion is extended to the poor and the afflicted – Ps. 146:9, Prov. 19:17. James speaks of pure and genuine religion as taking care of orphans and widows in their suffering and to keep oneself from being corrupted by the world. James 1:27. Our Lord Jesus Christ not only taught about compassion he also lived it out in his life. From the parable of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10, it is clear that compassion is to be shown by his disciples to anyone who needs their help. Most of the miracles of Jesus were done as a result of his concern for human suffering. Mark 8:2-3 “I feel sorry for these people, because they have been with me for three days and now have nothing to eat. If I send them home without feeding them, they

will faint as they go, because some of them have come a long way.” This statement was made by Jesus before the feeding of the four thousand. Christ’s compassion was also evident in the raising of Lazarus from the death – John 11:33. “Jesus saw her weeping, and he saw how the people who were with her were weeping also; his heart was touched and he was deeply moved.”

Today we live in a world where many people are no longer concerned about human suffering. Where a few individuals live in affluence while the majority suffer in abject poverty. Where the custodians of the world’s natural wealth especially in Nigeria, practice “winner take it all”. Where workers are owed their salary for months or even years while their masters have their own and even build houses. Can we say that there are no Christians among them? Many of them are Christians and are regular in their church attendance. The question then is whether these people realize that as followers of Christ they would ask what Christ would have done if he were in their position. Jesus made it clear that we serve him when we look after the poor and the down-trodden. Matt. 25:40 “I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.”

What does the church do about our Motherless Babies’ Homes, the Prisons, unemployment, armed robbery, injustice, expo in examinations and so many other ills that plague our society? The church will not only speak out against them but also involve itself in helping to solve these problems. This calls for more dedication to our evangelistic outreach, our Christian stewardship in terms of giving so that we can embark on some projects no matter how small. The Diocesan Weaving Centre is open for people to come and learn the art of weaving and thereby they will either be employed in a weaving centre or establish their own weaving industry.

Our commitment to Christ calls for a greater social sensitivity if we take our faith seriously. Let us demonstrate in practical terms our compassionate concern for what happens to our neighbours in human society.

HIS PRAYER LIFE:

The disciples of Jesus recognized him as a man of prayer and therefore demanded that he should teach them how to pray. Luke 11:1 “Lord teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” In the parable of the widow and the judge Luke 18:1f, Jesus taught that “men should always pray and never be discouraged.”

Jesus established a close relationship with his father through his constancy in prayer and this enabled him to do the will of his father in heaven. He never did anything without first praying to the father. Before he embarked on a preaching tour of Galilee he prayed; Mark 1:35 “Very early the next morning, long before day-light, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed.” Before he chose his apostles he prayed – Luke 6:12-13. “At the time Jesus went up a hill to pray and spent the whole night there praying to God.” When day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he named apostles. Before his betrayal, trial and death he prayed at Gethsamane and even on the cross he remained in prayer till he gave up the ghost.

If Jesus who is God realized the need of prayer, we who are mere mortals ought to know that we need it even more than Jesus. As Christians who are expected to walk in the steps of Christ, we must see prayer as a necessity and not an option. Unless there is an outpouring of men’s and women’s hearts to God in prayer there cannot be the outpouring of

God's Spirit upon us. We ought to know that Prayer is an encounter with a holy God. It is coming into his presence – entering into fellowship and relationship with him. It is the means by which we get to know God.

Prayer therefore requires humility. According to E. M. Bounds “Humility is an indispensable requisite of true prayer; it must be an attribute or characteristic of prayer. Humility must be an attribute or characteristic of prayer. Humility must be in the prayer character as light in the sun. Prayer has no beginning, no ending, no being, without humility. As ship is made for the sea, so prayer is made for humility and so humility is made for prayer.” Jesus confirms this statement in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector who went into the temple to pray, Luke 18:9-14. In his letter James says “The prayer of a good person has a powerful effect.” (James 5:16).

It is through prayer that we are transformed and the Holy Spirit poured on us. The kingdom of God will grow powerfully as Christians pray. Our Diocese will witness a tremendous revival if we commit ourselves to prayer. In another statement E. M. Bounds says, “Prayer is loyalty to God. Non-praying is to reject Christ and abandon heaven. A life of prayer is the only life which heaven counts.” Sammy Tippit then asserts “No wonder there are so many struggling, defeated Christians today. We have abandoned the throne of heaven. We have substituted technology for “kneelogy”. We would rather have emotional excitement than daily fellowship with the Creator.”

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul says “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” Eph. 6:18. Nothing is more powerful than prayer for reminding us that we are dependent on God. As we bow our heads or fall on our knees before him, the very posture we adopt puts us in mind of the fact that we are dependent beings. Prayer makes us aware that unless God comes to our aid we are sunk. Christ succeeded in his earthly ministry because of his dependence on God, we on our part can equally achieve success by following his example.

HIS LOVE FOR SINNERS/ENEMIES:

Jesus in his life harboured no ill-feelings about anyone. He saw himself as coming to suffer for the sins of the whole world. He made it clear that he has come to call sinners to repentance. Among his disciples were those the Jews regarded as sinners, Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax-collector. He took his cue from his heavenly Father, “For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil.” Matt. 5:45.

On the cross he prayed for those who were nailing him – “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do? (Luke 23:34). On the cross he forgave a repentant sinner – “I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me.” (Luke 23:43).

How do we react to those we think are sinners? In most cases we adopt the attitude of rejection and abandonment. It is only when we come in contact with them with the intention of converting them for Christ that we can truly be called the sons of God. What about enemies? We create barriers and perpetuate hatred. We decide those to talk to and those not to talk to.

We exhibit some air of superiority to others; and these things affect our evangelizing through our lives. People do not look on us as patterns to be followed. Paul in his letter to the

Romans states clearly what should be the Christian attitude to supposed enemies – (Romans 12:17-21) vs 17 “If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong” vs 20-21. “If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for by doing this you will make him burn with shame. Do not let evil defeat you: instead conquer evil with good”. Forgiveness is a Christian doctrine which must be taken seriously and in the New Testament several points are made clear.

- (i) We are all forgiven sinners and we owe it as a duty to forgive others. (Luke 6:37) “Do not judge others, and God will not judge you; do not condemn others, and God will not condemn you; forgive others and God will forgive you.”
- (ii) A readiness to forgive others is part of the indication that we have truly repented. Moreover, our forgiveness should be whole-hearted.
- (iii) Our forgiveness springs from Christ’s forgiveness of us and it is to be like Christ’s forgiveness. Col. 3:13. “Be tolerant of one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you.”

WHERE DO WE WALK IN HIS STEPS?

Christianity should be lived out in our daily lives, in our normal everyday activities.

In our places of work, be it our home, the market place, our offices and in courts and in government houses. In our baptismal promise we say:

“that I should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.”

To walk in the steps of Christ is not something that is done on Sundays alone. Everyday belongs to God and we shall honour him in our everyday relationships with our fellow human beings.

MEANS OF GRACE:

Confirmation and Admissions: Within the period in review the following members were confirmed: 711 males and 1,607 females, giving a total of 2,318. 212 girls were admitted to Girls’ Guild, 252 women were admitted to Women’s Guild while 119 women were admitted to Mothers’ Union.

Date	Church	Confirmation		Girls’ Guild	W.G.	M.U.
		Male	Female			
5/5/96	St. Mary’s Parish, Opi	34	65	-	14	6
26/5/96	St. John’s Parish, Edem	44	126	15	23	3
23/6/96	Christ Church Chapel, U.N.N.	20	21	-	6	9
21/7/96	St. John’s Parish, Onuiyi	40	50	24	8	7
4/8/96	St. Paul’s Cathedral Parish	46	80	10	14	14
25/8/96	St. James’ Alor-Agu-Unadu Parish	28	96	6	4	-
22/9/96	St. Peter’s Ovoko Parish	51	109	16	16	9
13/10/96	Eha-Amufu – St. John’s Agu-Amede	115	242	42	24	3
18/10/96	Amufie Parish – St. Luke’s	25	118	11	19	6
20/10/96	Ibagwa Parish – St. Andrew’s	72	108	-	28	1

9/11/96	St. Barnabas' Eha-Ndiagu	21	108	15	16	8
17/11/96	Adani Parish – St. Andrew's	13	28	20	2	1
24/11/96	Ohodo Parish – St. Mark's	39	81	-	5	4
15/12/96	Ozalla Parish – St. Philip's	22	61	7	22	6
22/12/96	Orba Parish – St. James'	39	89	4	20	19
16/2/97	St. Stephen's – Umulokpa	22	49	-	15	11
23/3/97	St. Matthew's Mgbuji	30	75	5	6	6
12/4/97	St. Thomas' Aku	15	38	18	9	5
3/5/97	St. John's Edem Parish	35	63	19	3	-
	TOTAL	711	1607	212	252	119

CONCLUSION:

Once more I want to thank God for yet another opportunity given to us to meet in the Synod of this our Diocese.

I thank all of you for the various ways you have helped in the development of our Diocese. I still want to appeal that those who have not fully identified themselves with what is going on in this Diocese will do so now as all hands must be on deck so that we can all share in the honour of being good pioneers in our own time.

Remember that we must serve God with our time, our talent, our knowledge and our wealth. Total service to God must include all of the above.

Thank you for patient listening and may God bless all of us in Jesus' name.

The Rt. Rev. J. C. Ilonuba
Bishop of Nsukka