

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE FIRST SESSION OF THE
THIRD SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NSUKKA AT ST. THOMAS' CHURCH,
AKU ON MONDAY 30TH OCTOBER, 2000 BY HIS LORDSHIP THE RT. REV.
DR. JONAH CHUKWUEMEKA ILONUBA *M.A. (OXON) Dip. Th. (LON.)***

SYNOD PRAYER

O God our heavenly father, you have called us in your Son Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all the nations of the world.

Give us the enabling grace and power of Your Holy Spirit, that we, being first made the disciples of Your Son Jesus Christ, will be enabled and equipped to disciple others, so that both we and they, will through our word and deed become visible and true representatives of Your invisible spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GREETING

My Lord Bishop
The Hon. Chancellor
The learned Registrar
Venerable Archdeacons
The Clergy
The President Mothers' Union and Women's Guild
Knights of St. Paul and Ladies
Synod Delegates
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Dear people of God, it is with immense joy and gratitude that I welcome all of you to this first Session of our third Synod. About this time last year we assembled in Eha-Amufu and we thank God for the blessings of that Synod. Within this period many things have happened both good and bad and we are witnesses to some of them. We are also aware that some of us who were present during the last Synod are not present here today having passed to the great beyond. We shall name them at the appropriate time. That we are here today is not because of any merit of ours but as an act of God's mercy and grace. We therefore have to thank God and make the best use of the opportunity He still gives us to serve Him in this life.

As we enter into our Third Synod we have to bear in mind that we are no longer a baby Diocese. At the end of the 3rd Synod we shall be thinking of celebrating the 10th Anniversary of our existence as a Diocese. Will you have something to celebrate and thank God for in your Church, your parish, your Archdeaconry and the entire Diocese in terms of development that has taken place in some place. You will hear about them from the Archdeaconry reports.

I want to thank God that some of our big churches, which have stood for many years, have been roofed within the past year. Where we are today is one of them St. Thomas' Church, Aku, and another is St. Andrew's church.

I want at this point to thank the host Parish of this year's Synod, St. Thomas' Aku. We thank God that today this Synod is holding in this Church. We are all aware of the tragedy that struck the Ogbobe family, which has been in the fore-front of development efforts in the

Diocese and in this St. Thomas' Church, Aku. Within a short time after the death of their mother they lost a sister and then Sir. Engr. Aka Ogbobe, Chairman development committee Diocese of Nsuka. I remember him saying at Eha-Amufu last year that whatever achievement recorded in Eha-Amufu that Aku Synod of 2000 will surpass it. It have no doubt that we are going to witness that in this Synod.

A minute silence for them.

After them other deaths were recorded in Aku which was the enemy's ploy to creat a set back. We thank God that inspite of all these Aku 2000 is now a reality. Praise God.

THE HISTORY OF CHRITIANITY IN AKU

The church missionary society (C.M.S.) wa late in coming to Aku because of the influence of some prominent Chiefs in Igbo-Odo areas of Northern Igbo land. Andlican Church started in Aku town in August, 1932 exactly ten years after the inception of the Roman Catholic Mission.

A number of Aku traders who had the privilege of travelling away to Uburu, Uzuakoli, Onitsha and Enugu came across Anglican Church and they became in love with it. They met the Rev. H.H. Daws at St. Peter's Church, Ogbete who asked them to pay a deposit of (£6) six pounds to the Rev. A. N. Asiekwu, the priest incharge of St. Paul's Church, Nsukka.

These influential traders who were instrumental to the establishment of the church were:

Mr. Odo Nwozo

Mr. Oduenyhi Nwocha

Mr. Ezikeanyi Nwenyi

Ezeoha Eleamu

Ugbo Nwamba and

Aka Nwaobodagu

Mr. Benson Ezewudo of Nnobi was sent to them as their first Catechist and Teacher and he also played a good missionary role. He arrived Aku on the 23rd August, 1932 and he had his first Sunday Worship at Obu Ezelu-Uwani Obie and they had a promising large congregation. The Church was sited at Ohihia Oka an evil forest associated with untold mysteries. The idea was to scare them (the denomination) away but the early converts were courageous enough to accept the piece of land given to them and haplpily they marched into it defying all the fears and superstitions surrounding it. We are happy to learn that no sad even occurred after the clearing of the evil forest.

At the initial stage, the new converts organized themselves into prayer meeting groups, which rotated from one person's place to another. Such meetings featured sumptuous feasting. However, most of the earliest converts did not persist long in the faith. Most of the people who persisted in the faith were found among the youths and little children who, through rigorous exercises in Bible Sutudies, Catechism, and the preaching of the Gospel and the Doctrines of the church were able to forge through.

It is interesting to note that we have many surviving foundation members at this time and they are:

Mr. Okechi Amu-Nnadi,

Mr. Japhet Ugwuogo,

Mr. Anthony amorha,

Ekwuruoha Nwonu and

Francis Alaku

CHURCH WORKERS:

Many people have worked in this church since its inception in 1932 till date.

Mr. Benson Ezewudo of Nnobi was the pioneer Catechist and teacher who established Anglican Church in Aku in 1932. He later left Aku in 1934 after series of disturbances and hardship. He was assisted by Mr. Daniel Okechukwu.

Mr. Jonathan Agwuncha of Oraifite took over the Church from Mr. Ezewudo in 1935. He stayed till 1936, when Mr. Joseph Aduba took over the Church from him.

Mr. Emmanuel Chokuba of Awkuzu was posted to Aku in 1937 as a Church teacher. He stayed till 1939. Mr. Stephen Iloelu stayed together at the same time with Mr. Chokuba as a school teacher in St. Thomas.

Mr. Dennis Anyafulu of Obosi took over from both Chokuba and Iloelu as the only teacher in 1940, to manage the school and the church. He left at the end of the same year.

Mr. Herbert Molokwu of Awka was posted to Aku in 1941. He stayed till 1943. He was the teacher who took Aku pupils to Ozalla when St. Thomas' School was temporarily closed.

Mr. Nathan Nwankwo was posted to Aku in 1944. He also left at the end of the same year.

Mr. G. O. Ezeorahof Aku, was incharge of St. Thomas' Church and School from 1945 to 1947. His stay in Aku was one of the most eventful periods in the history of St. Thomas.

Mr. Hezekiah Agu took over the Church from Mr. Ezeorah in 1948, while Mr. Jonah Ejikeme of Obosi was sent to replace Mr. Agu in 1949. During this time Mr. Okoro was sent to Aku as a full time church agent. In 1951 Sylvanus Uzo of Otolu Nnewi served as the Catechist of the Church.

Mr. John C. Smart Ogene of Atani was posted to Aku in 1956. He was incharge of both the school and the church. Mr. Igwebueze Ugwoke of Obukpa was posted to head the school in 1959. His short stay was very remarkable. He laid the foundation of the present parsonage. Mr. Philip Ezembu of Mbu was incharge of the church at the time.

Mr. Simon Okoro of Ibagwa Nkwo took over the church from Mr. Ezembu in 1962.

Mr. Francis Ezema of Alor-uno was posted to take charge of the church in 1964 and he was there till the outbreak of Nigerian Civil War in 1967. Mr. Jeremiah Ezema of Edemani replaced Francis as the Catechist and left in 1974. Mr. Jonas Ugwu took over as the Catechist of the church till 1978.

In August 1978 the Rev. Canon Clifford Aneke of Obinagu Udi was posted to the station as the first resident Priest in St. Thomas' Aku. He injected new life into the church and made many converts. He started the foundation of the current new church building in 1979.

The Rev. Canon C.Aneke was replaced by the Rev. G.E. Umesie in 1980. Umesie left for further studies in 1982. On January 14th 1984 the Rev. G.E. Uvuka was posted to the church. He made a tremendous impact in the church. Many couples wedded while over a hundred members confirmed. He also organized Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Church as the second launching of the new Church building project estimated ₦ 300,000.9000 as of that time.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CHURCH

In the first fifty years of her inception in Aku, St. Thomas' Church has made tremendous contributions to the religious, social and economic development of Aku people. Owing to lack of space, only a few of those achievements would be briefly highlighted below:

1. The Church had helped to eradicate the notorious evil forest “Ohihia Oka” with all the fears and superstitions surrounding it, turning it into a fertile ground for the teaching of the Christian religion and for the dissemination of formal education. Moreover, ‘Ohihia Oka’ had been turned to a centre for community resort and social entertainment.
2. In Religious sphere, St. Thomas has produced some convinced and committed Christians, who radiate the light of christianity through their exemplary living and moral rectitude. “By their fruits you will know them”.

Furthermore, St. Thomas’ Church produced the first indigenous Priest in the town, in the person of the Rev. Nathaniel O Ugwu.

3. In the academic sphere, St. Thomas’ Church had produced some Engineers, Doctors, pharmacists, Scientists, Architects, Philosophers and Educationists, mention may be made of only a few of them.
 - (a) The first University Graduate in the whole of the Old Nsukka Province, in the person of Mr. Okechi Amu-Nnadi. The first Principal Special Class, and the Director in-charge of Science Equipment Unit, Anambra State Education Commission, Enugu then.
 - (b) The first Architect in the same zone as above, in the person of Arc. E.N. Amorha, Chief Consultant, Arc. Cardinal Consultants, Enugu
 - (c) The first Structural Engineer in the whole of Nsukka Senatorial Zone, in the person of the late Hon. Sir Engr. Aka Ogbode, Consultant, Aka-George and Partner Consulting Engineers, Enugu.
 - (d) The first Chief Adult Education Organizer in the same zone as above, in the person of Chief Ekwuroha Nwonu.
 - (e) Prof, Ogbonna Alaku, Dean of Post Graduate Studies Enugu State University of Science and Technology former Professor, Department of Animal Science, University of Maiduguri.
 - (f) Mrs. E.U. Nwonu, the first Medical Matron to establish a recognized and registered private maternity Home and Child Welfare Clinic in Aku.
 - (g) Pharmacist K. E. Amorha, Managing Director/Sales Manager, POLFA Nigeria Limited, Lagos.
4. In the sphere of Economic Enterprises, St. Thomas’ Church produced some men and women with high sense of business acumen. Among them are:
 - (a) Chief Igwenazeluoha, Clement Nwezike, the managing Director Honesty Motor Brothers co. Aku.
 - (b) Chief John Ekwueme, Ochiliozua, a Philanthropist, Managing Director, Brothers Transport Co. Ltd, Mina. He is a pillar in Aku Parish.

5. In socio-political life of the town, St. Thomas had produced many leaders of thought who have served the town at various capacities. Some of them include:
 - (a) James Isioji, the first product of Adult Education in Aku, who in 1945, served as the second Clerk of the Aku Town Council.
 - (b) Chief Ekwuroha Nwonu, who served as the 3rd Clerk for the Aku Town Council, as from 1945. Even at present, Chief Nwonu is popularly called “AKAWO” i.e Clerk, by the people who know him in those days.
 - (c) Mr. Japhet Ugwuogo served as the first Chairman of the then Igbo-Etiti District Council from 1954, comprising the present Igbo-Etiti, Nsukka, Igbo-Eze South and Uzo-uwani Local Government Areas.
 - (d) Arc. E.N. Amorha, former member of the Federal Housing Board; Chairman of the Works Committee of Aku General Assembly and the Architect designer of the plans for the buildings in both Aku Boys and Aku Girls’ Secondary Schools.
 - (e) Late. Hon. Sir Engr. Aka Ogbobe – “Man of the people”. The Chairman of Aku General Assembly and Aku Development Committee, from 1970 to 1987. Honourable Member of the House of Representatives for Igbo-Etiti Federal Constituency from 1979 to 1983.

We thank God for the faith, courage and fortitude of these our early Christian converts who exhibited an unshakeable faith in God. The light of Christianity lit by them and sustained till now will not be allowed to be extinguished in our own time. As one people of God united in our effort to make Christ known in the entire world, let us eschew all hatred, jealousy, rancour and all the retrogressive customs and idolatrous practices that hinder us from worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Let us with them bear aloft the light of Christianity in this our town of Aku.

THE GUEST PREACHER

I want at this point to welcome formally our guest preacher for this year’s Synod. He is a brother Bishop and a friend, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Godwin I. N. Okpala, B.A.; Dip. Th. (Lond.) DD, Bishop of Nnewi and his amiable wife, Eugenia Okpala (Mama Nnewi) who have been with us since Saturday 28th October, 2000. We say to them Alanu, Dejenu.

We thank his Lordship for his thought-provoking and inspiring Sermon of yesterday and pray that God will help us to put into practice the lessons derived from his message for the growth of our Diocese and for the extension of his kingdom. It is also our prayer that God will continue to inspire them with his spiritual wisdom as they lead the flock of God committed to their charge in the Diocese of Nnewi in Jesus’ name.

EVENTS SINCE AFTER THE LAST SYNOD

1. On Sunday 31st October, 1999 His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. J Abiodun Adelitoye. Archbishop, Primate and Metropolitan who was due to retire in December, 1999 was sent off by Province II at All Saints’ Cathedral Onitsha. We thank God for what he

used him to achieve for the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) and pray that God will grant him a peaceful retirement.

2. DIOCESAN SINGING COMPETITION

The first Diocesan Singing Competition took place on Saturday 20th November, 1999. We thank our Diocesan Musician Dr. Dan. Agu, the Chairman of the Organising Committee, the Ven. E.E. Odo and the Choirmasters of the different Churches and the choirs that participated.

Before the singing competition, the Diocesan Music Organiser had composed a Diocesan Anthem, which I believe we have all learnt and can join whenever it is being sung.

Music is a very important aspect of our worship and should be taken seriously by all churches, as we cannot effectively worship God without singing his praises. It is our belief that when the next singing competition is organized more choirs will join. We have three grades of choirs and your church must belong to one.

Last year at the singing competition I appealed that people should donate cups for singing competition in the Diocese but no one has responded, possibly because of the poor attendance by people who can donate cups. I now renew the appeal and hope that people will take up the challenge. I know that we have music lovers here. Cups can be donated for the best choir in Hymn Singing, Canticle, or psalm, Native air and the best all-round performance. Ask question when you want to donate.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE ELDERLY

The year 1999 was declared the International Year of the Elderly. On Saturday 4th December at St. Paul's Cathedral Nsukka, the celebration took place in a colourful open-air service, which was well attended by elders from all parts of the Diocese. There was an Almanac for the elderly in our Diocese and we thank those whose photographs appeared in the Almanac. We thank the women of the Diocese for the role they played in making the day a happy one to those who attended. They provided both food and gifts for the elderly. My appeal is that our men should wake up and identify themselves with most of our Diocesan activities. You will be blessed when you do this.

4. COLLATION OF NEW CANONS

On Saturday 12th December, 1999 four new Canons were collated at St. Paul's Cathedral, Nsukka. They are:

The Rev'd. Canon Ephraim I. Asogwa

The Rev'd Canon Engr. Dr. Theophilus C. Madueme

The Rev'd Canon George U. Nnamani and

The Rev'd Canon Godwin A Ugorji.

We thank God for their ministry and pray that God will continue to use them to achieve his purpose in the world.

5. 6TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE DIOCESE

On Tuesday 11th January, 2000 we celebrated the 6th Anniversary of the inauguration of our Diocese. We thank all those who attended the service. Before then on Sunday 9th January 2000, churches were told to have a service of thanksgiving to raise funds for the development of the Diocese. We thank all those who responded to this and plead that all of us should be involved in the celebration of our Diocese Anniversary. Know that it is always in January of every year.

6. INAUGURATION OF THE NSUKKA DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF KNIGHTS

On Sunday 30th January 2000 our Diocesan Council of Knight of St. Paul was inaugurated. We thank God for the good work they are doing in this Diocese especially in the area of evangelism. The Knights of our Diocese are second to none in discipline and organization. This is not to say that all of them are living up to expectation. It is our hope that those dragging their feet, will catch up with the wind of change. I will come back to their development efforts in the Diocese within this year later in this address.

We are now training another group for Knights and Ladies in the Diocese. We hope that God willing they will be initiated and invested on Sunday 4th March, 2001. Please continue to pray for them so that they will be committed, dedicated and faithful members of the Knighthood both in our Diocese and in the entire Province of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

7. ADMISSION OF DIOCESAN CHANCELLOR

On Sunday 13th February 2000 in a very colourful service attended by the retired Archbishop of Province II His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. J. A. Onyemelukwe, the Rt. Rev. George Bako, the Rt. Rev. Prof. E. Iheagwam and the Rt. Rev. G.C. Echefu our Diocesan Chancellor Sir Barr. Obiora Nzewi was admitted. We thank God for his contributions towards the development of the Diocese. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless him and prosper him in all his endeavours.

8. NEW PARISHES

- (i) **Obukpa Parish:** On Sunday 9th April 2000 Obukpa Parish was inaugurated. We thank God for their dynamic Priest and his wife the Rev. Eric E. Ugwu and Mrs. Florence u. Ugwu for the good work they are doing in the Parish. We also thank Sir Igwebueze Ugwoke for his support and fatherly advice. We thank God for his uprightness, and positive contribution in all Diocesan matters.
- (ii) **Amachalla Parish:** On Sunday 6th August 2000, the Parish of Amachalla was inaugurated at St. Bartholomew's Church, Amachalla. We thank God for the dynamism of the Priest and his wife – the Rev. Daniel and Mrs. Ngozi Omeje.

You will recall that Amachalla started new parsonage and this was completed before the inauguration. We thank God for the person who provided the plan and for the person who almost single-handedly built that parsonage. Our prayer is that God will reward him super-abundantly, bless him with good health and long life so that he will still do more work in God's service.

(iii) **Neke Parish:** We hope, God willing, to inaugurate Neke Parish on Sunday 19th November, 2000.

I am appealing that we identify with all these Diocesan activities. I thank the Knights and Ladies who attended the inauguration of Obukpa and Amachalla and made both events what they were supposed to be. May God bless all of you in Jesus' name.

It was my hope and belief that more people will attend that of Neke and God will bless you as come. Please continue to pray for these Parishes and their Workers.

9. ST. JOHN'S AGU-AMEDE – SECONDARY SCHOOL:

On Sunday 30th April the Diocese organized a fund-raising service at St. John's Church, Agu-Amede to help in the take-off of our new school in that area. We thank all those who responded to this call. We thank especially the people of that Community who knew that it was their project and responded positively, especially their women. It is my prayer that that kind of understanding will extend to our Diocesan projects, so that we know that it is our own not for any other person.

10. ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, ORBA ROAD:

On Sunday 14th May the Knights and Ladies of St. Paul attended Church Service in this church to raise fund for their church building project. We thank God for the response and the miracle that God performed that day through those that attended.

It was estimated that the roofing of their church will take 14 bundles of zinc. This was donated by two Knights who chose to remain anonymous. The women of the Diocese donated ₦30,000.00 (thirty Thousand Naira) only and then followed other donations from those in attendance. We thank those of you who identified with this project to make sure that they have a roof on their church to protect them from rainfall. We thank the Priest and his wife, the Rev. and Mrs. S. Ezegwu for the wonderful work they are doing there. He is an unassuming, quiet but very effective worker. He is a motivator. Continue to pray for them.

11. ORDINATION:

The Trinity Ordination of our Diocese took place on Sunday 9th July, 2000. We ordained 7 deacons and 3 priests.

Deacons: Aloysius Agbo
 Joseph Agbo
 Stanley Eze
 Samuel Ezema
 Fidelis Obetta
 Paul Odo
 Kenneth Ugodu

Priests: The Rev. Christian C. Eze
 The Rev. Ekene Eze
 The Rev. Timothy Ugwu.

They are all in their different churches working. We pray that God will bless their ministry.

We thank God for the Ven. O.O. Okoh from Benin who conducted their ordination retreat and preached the sermon. Those who were in the Service will remember his inspiring and challenging sermon. He enjoined us to give for God's work and not to be on the receiving side only. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

12. NSUKKA DIOCESAN ANGLICAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL:

On Sunday 24th September, 2000 the National Anglican Youth Fellowship of Nigeria in a colourful service at St. Paul's Cathedral inaugurated the Nsukka Diocesan Youth Fellowship Council, and I was invested the National Patron of A.Y.F. Thanks be to God.

Before the Foundation Stone Laying Service of 30th September, the Diocesan Youth organized the clearing of the Bishops court compound and we thank those who attended. We noted however that many Youth members did not attend. It is our duty to encourage our youths to be devoted to the things of God.

CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION)

With the retirement of His Grace the Most Rev. J.A. Adetiloye in December, 1999 the post of the Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) became vacant.

And Episcopal Meeting was scheduled in Kaduna on Tuesday 22nd February, 2000 during which elections would be held for new Bishops for vacant Sees and An Archbishop for Province I and then a new Primate for the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

On Monday 21st February 2000 we left for Kaduna but could not get in because of a violent demonstration in protest against the introduction of Sharia Law in some states in the North and the fear of it being introduced in Kaduna. We reached the Kaduna tollgate but could not get in. We then diverted to Abuja. We thank God for the wonderful way in which he saved the Bishops even those that ran into the demonstrators. One of the Nigerian dailies published the incident under the caption – "65 Bishops Escape Death".

The Episcopal Meeting originally scheduled for Kaduna now took place in Abuja. There the Rt. Rev. Ephraim Ademowo, Bishop of Ilesha was elected as the new Archbishop for Province I and also the Bishop of Lagos.

The Bishop of Abuja and the Archbishop of Province III, His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Peter J. Akinola was elected the new Primate of the Church of Nigeria. He therefore became the 3rd Archbishop, Primate and Metropolitan of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). On Saturday March 2000 the new Primate was presented in a solemn service at Gwarinpa Abuja.

The new Primate in his maiden speech to the Episcopal Synod saw the need for charting a new course for the Church of Nigeria. The Church of Nigeria has been described as the fastest growing Church in the world but that assessment while it may be correct in numerical growth as it affects Dioceses which in 1998 only 26 and today are 76 Dioceses with 76 Bishops, cannot be true of its spiritual and caring growth.

He therefore presented a new vision for the Church of Nigeria. Proverbs 29:18 says "Where there is no vision the people perish"

This visioning process was divided into 7 sections

SECTION I:

This was the introduction of background to the vision. “He believes that the process of charting this new future must involve the various hierarchies of the Church so that they, together, will evolve a shared vision, Primate Akinola therefore used the occasion of his presentation in Abuja on March 25th 2000 to flag off the process of articulating the vision for the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

The Anglican Communion today is organized into three provinces, namely Province I, Province II and Province III. It has 76 Dioceses and 76 Bishops. Most of the Churches are located in urban settings with thousands of villages yet to be reached by the gospel of salvation. There is raw paganism and syncretism: Spirituality is shallow and many adherents pay little attention to Bible Study, prayer and Fasting. Although the Church has witnessed significant growth numerically, its Spiritual growth rate in recent times has significantly declined.

Consequently, the Church is presently, spiritually weak; there is superficial love and, in most cases, sacrificial love, as exemplified by Jesus Christ, is lacking. Commitment to Christ and obedience to the biblical injunction is weak and conformity to the standard of the world has engulfed the Church at all levels. There is need for rediscovery of the principle of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ (1st Peter 2:9-10, Ephesians 3:1-11). Presently, there is no sufficient lay involvement in the ministry of the Church. The present liturgical rigidity, which borders on insensitivity, is not helpful and there is insufficiency in the co-ordination of the conduct of church service to integrate prayers, hymns and singing of psalms, the reading of the Bible and the preaching of the word. Church services therefore appear unexciting to the youths who, as a result, leave for the new generation churches.

The failure of the church, national government and society at large has led to a situation whereby Nigeria as a country is faced with such problems as lack of genuine unity, religious and ethnic conflicts, corruption, indiscipline, lack of exemplary leadership and moral decadence, among others. In the face of the foregoing challenges, the Church of Nigeria was provoked to set objectives and goals that will lift it on to a higher pedestal and to design strategies and programmes that will lead to the attainment of the desired goal.

SECTION II – VISIONING PROCESS

Over four hundred participants drawn from Anglican Churches all over the Federation of Nigeria took part in the visioning exercise assisted by facilitators drawn from those with experience in the visioning process. In fashioning out the vision, participants adopted the national visioning process whereby the following three issues were raised:

- Where We Are
- Where We Want to Be
- How to Get There?

The process of evolving the vision began with a sober, introspective appraisal of the Church. This was required in order to understand the current position and how the Church got there, before making prognoses for the future. Next, the question – “Where we want to be” was raised. This, essentially, is the vision as it defines the destination to be reached. Put another way, it charts out the future to which resources and efforts of the Church will be devoted.

Lastly, the question “How do we get there? Was raised to address how the ultimate goal can be attained.

At the first plenary session, participants were introduced to the concept of visioning: the how and the why is two key presentations made by the new Primate, the Most Rev. Pete Akinola and Chief Ernest Shonekan, a former head of State and Chairman of Nigeria’s Vision 2010 Committee. The presentations also dwelt, among others, on the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) today, the need for a vision for it and the visioning process that would be adopted.

The participants were then divided into work groups as follows:

- House of Bishops
- House of Clergy
- House of Laity
- Mother’s Union

The groups used the papers presented by the primate and Chief Shonekan as background reference for discussion. Assisted by experienced facilitators, participants engaged in a brainstorm, directed at finding answer to the various issues that would bring out the vision of the Church and the strategy and programmes that would lead to the realization of the vision. At the end of the brainstorm, the four work groups presented their reports to the plenary.

The whole house, sitting in plenary, decided to set up a committee to harmonize all the presentations and come up with a draft Vision for final consideration. An Editorial Committee met and gave guidelines to the Facilitators/ Rapporteurs to be used to prepare the draft report for consideration by the Primate and the Standing Committee of the Church of Nigeria. The Standing Committee finally adopted this Vision of the Church of Nigeria after necessary consultations at Owerri on June 5, 2000.

SECTION III – WHERE WE ARE (THE PROVOCATION)

A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, APRIL 2000

THE MACRO-ENVIRONMENT:

The macro-environment within which the Church has to situate itself and establish its vision, strategies and programmes is assessed in the context of

- The world
- Africa
- Nigeria
- Christianity.

THE WORLD:

The world is fast becoming a global village through new-age technology. The Internet has made it possible for churches to reach out to people in far-flung areas of the globe within minutes. However, this development also poses serious challenge to the Church as satanic cults have infiltrated the Web, looking for prey on young impressionable minds.

AFRICA:

Disease, famine, wars, environmental disaster, as well as economic and political instability have continuously beset the African continent. These have made development of the continent as a whole very slow and difficult. Against this backdrop, spreading the gospel requires a lot

of time, manpower, financial resources and dedication, enough of which the Church of Nigeria does not seem to have at the moment.

NIGERIA:

Nigeria is currently undergoing ethnic strife (which has hitherto been held in check by military governments), economic hardship which may lead people to seek non-biblical solutions to their problems, as well as religious conflict occasioned by the introduction of Sharia (Islamic) Law in some Northern States. This portends serious threats to political/economic stability in the country.

CHRISTIANITY:

A lot of Christian denominations and sects have sprung up in recent times. This has led to the proliferation of churches, both inside and outside Nigeria. The new generation churches have evolved aggressive programmes in the form of outreaches, evangelical missions, music and other weapons, mostly targeted at youths, the suburbs and the rural areas, some of which had not heard the gospel of salvation. Economic hardship and “quest for quick solution and drama” have compelled many to seek succour in some of these Churches or religious gatherings. The Anglican Church has to respond to these challenges in its determination to grow and win more souls to Christ.

EVANGELISM:

The Church made reasonable success in the decade of evangelism. It however failed to consolidate the gains. An introspective examination of the Church reveals the following prevailing situation:

- ❖ Insecurity of evangelists, especially in the northern parts of the country.
- ❖ Prohibition of open air crusades which hampers evangelism work.
- ❖ Lack of prayer and other Christian books in local languages.
- ❖ High level of illiteracy, which inhibits learning through reading.
- ❖ The revision of Liturgy, which is affecting the translation, programme.
- ❖ Not enough crusade and planting of churches in new areas.
- ❖ Churches are located far apart, thereby discouraging attendance.
- ❖ Lack of manpower.
- ❖ Inadequate funding.
- ❖ Inadequate understanding of other religions.
- ❖ Insufficient distribution of tracts.
- ❖ Lack of in-depth knowledge and teaching of the scripture.
- ❖ Lack of effective follow-up after crusades.

ANGLICAN SPIRITUALITY

The commitment to Christ and obedience to the Biblical injunctions is weak. The Anglican Communion is weak in the Word of God, and more enthusiastic at prayer meetings but not so at Bible studies. The Church is not satisfied with the level of training of some of its priests and their wives, and they are not adequately committed and equipped to train the laity.

UNITY:

There is lack of true unity in Nigeria as a country. The Church also lacks unity in them and indeed amongst its members and the larger Christian community. There is also inadequate

communication and dialogue to resolve issues amongst the various hierarchies of the Church, the Christian community and members of other faiths.

A CARING CHURCH:

There is not sufficient care and sharing within and outside the Church. Many Muslims who are converted to Christianity face:

- ❖ Tribulations and threat of death
- ❖ Withdrawal of support by family members
- ❖ Social ostracisation
- ❖ The Church of Nigeria has no programme for dealing with these problems.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND FAITHS:

The Anglican Communion is not playing its rightful roles in relation to CCN, CAN, WCC or other Churches and organizations in Nigeria, Africa and indeed, the rest of the world. There is:

- ❖ A nonchalant attitude in our relations to interdenominational bodies.
- ❖ Ineffective central organization to mobilize/oraganise/promote active participation in interdenominational activities.
- ❖ Lack of progress in the execution of the ecumenical centre
- ❖ Ineffective leadership of CAN, CCN and some other interdenominational organizations.

POLITICS:

The Church has been complacent and often silent on socio-political matters of the nation and does not take firm and informed stand on these matters. There is evidence of tribalism, nepotism and favouritism in the Church as prevalent in the secular society.

CHURCH MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION:

There are disputes and controversies, which hamper the administrative work of the Church. The Churches' bureaucratic stratification from Parish to Diocese sometimes affects the contributions and effective running of the Church. The decisions of the Church are often not effectively implemented.

SECTION IV – WHERE WE WANT TO BE, THE VISION, GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE CHURCH:

The Church has complete faith in the Almighty God and will go to where He leads. The Church will, during the vision period, strive to achieve numerical and spiritual growth and show greater care and love for the flock. The Church will strive to be more efficient and effective in the management of its resources, create a sound financial base for itself and be more tolerant in intra and inter-religious affairs.

The Anglican Church shall be:

- ⇒ Spiritual
- ⇒ Dynamic
- ⇒ Responsible
- ⇒ United
- ⇒ Viable

- ⇒ Living
- ⇒ Caring
- ⇒ Loving
- ⇒ Relevant
- ⇒ Godly
- ⇒ Christ-like
- ⇒ Reformed
- ⇒ Charismatic
- ⇒ Well ordered
- ⇒ Evangelical
- ⇒ Enterprising
- ⇒ Disciplined
- ⇒ Knowledgeable
- ⇒ Bible based
- ⇒ Growing
- ⇒ Faithful
- ⇒ Self-supporting.

The following encapsulates the Vision of the Anglican Church

VISION STATEMENT

DURING THE VISION PERIOD:

“The church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) shall be spiritually dynamic, united, disciplined, self-supporting, committed to pragmatic evangelism, education, health care and shall exemplify true love to all”.

ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

The vision lays stress on spirituality, unity, evangelism, care, love and laying the foundation for enduring growth. Some of these key elements are highlighted below:

EVANGELISM:

Evangelism is the transfer of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and His goodness from one believer to another. This transfer takes place through preaching, Bible study, good neighbourliness, etc. Our Lord Jesus commanded us to “Go ye into all nations and make disciples of all men”. Whosoever believes is saved. Evangelism is a key obligation of the Church and, indeed, all believers.

SPIRITUALITY:

This relates to our level of awareness of God’s sovereignty. One’s level of God consciousness underscores one’s attitude and relationship with God and man. All Christians must be devoted and must consistently seek the truth through prayer, meditation, continuous Bible study and devotion.

UNITY:

Unity is strength. When we are united like a broom, it is hard to break us. Unity can be cultured through love, dialogue, effective communication and respect for the views of others. The unity of the Church can translate to the unity of the nation.

CARING:

The Anglican Communion is fundamentally a caring Church. When a neighbour is ill, we should care for him. When she is hungry, we should feed her. We should share food and other materials with those in need so that, like the widow of Nain, the Lord can replenish our resources. The Anglican Communion must commit itself to caring for one another within the Church as well as others in Nigeria and the world at large.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER FAITHS:

The Anglican Church is a welcoming Church. Ours is a democratic as well as a dynamic organization. We preach Christ risen and ascended. We allow His love in us to flow and reach out to our brethren who may ultimately become co-adherents. The members of the Anglican Church are committed to establishing mutual co-operation with members of other faiths and religions. In this way, we can achieve the goal of winning more people to Christ and evolving a society that is just, caring, equitable, and one in which all can live in peace and true love.

ELABORATION OF THE VISION IN KEY AREAS:

EVANGELISM:

The Church will seek to achieve improvement of its communication channels, enthrone detribalized thinking and actions by members and show genuine love for one another. Members must share the Church's vision with its leadership and strive to remove politics from church affairs.

The Church will also embark on a more vigorous translation of the prayer and other Christian books into local languages and have more literacy classes to produce members who will benefit from the translations.

All adult members of the Church shall be required to take part in active evangelism and engage in more frequent outreaches, crusades and revivals, which will be closely monitored and supervised by the Church. The Church shall increase/restructure its schools, hospitals and vocational centers to promote evangelism. It shall aim to plant churches in locations – following the population as it moves and not waiting until permanent structures are established. The Church shall encourage active daily prayers and Bible reading in each home led by the head of the family. The Church shall:

Set up a theological/spirituality committee to work out general guidelines for teaching on these areas where the church is lacking (Bible study, praying, fasting, and tithing).

Ensure that every Diocese, Parish implements and effectively monitors the national programme.

Identify, recruit, train and send out full time itinerant evangelists into every Parish and every Diocese. They must have goal of how many churches they have to plant in a given period.

African Dioceses need the help of the Church of Nigeria. It is our responsibility to look after them in every possible way we can. It is pertinent to observe that the way and manner some of our leaders go about, begging for foreign aid, is disgraceful. The method used in collecting some of the money to help the “poor in badly impoverished Africa Churches” is ungodly. Therefore, the Church of Nigeria will work out a programme for self-reliance.

UNITY:

To attain the goal of unity there has to be improvement in communication among members, detribalized thinking and taking actions that are purely objective and in the interest of the church.

- ⇒ Genuine love for one another
- ⇒ Removal of ungodly party politics from the Church, and
- ⇒ Sharing of the Church's vision with the leadership.

SPIRITUALITY:

The Communion shall grow in spirituality and in the knowledge of the Bible and Christian learning. The methodology of Bible studies would be improved, better qualified leaders, both spiritually and academically, would be made to lead Bible studies, employing Socratic system of study which is participatory. Bible study and prayer meetings will be merged to encourage greater participation and all members, not merely youths and women, shall participate in Bible study. All priests shall lead by be example, exhibiting, indeed, exuding apparent Christ-like qualities.

- ✓ Male members of the Church shall emulate the women who serve through various organizations.
- ✓ Sermons shall be more vibrant and moving to sustain the interest of members.
- ✓ Priests and their wives as well as the laity shall be better trained.

A CARING CHURCH:

- ✓ The Church (ANGLICAN COMMUNION) shall:
- ✓ Demand of every child of God a caring attitude
- ✓ Support and care for those who face tribulation as a result of being Converted to Christianity.
- ✓ Develop a nation-wide programme within the Church to provide support and care for those who deserve it.
- ✓ Provide caring and neighbourly fellowship and financial support, especially for poor converts.
- ✓ Tackle the issue of abandonment by friends and family, and undertake to provide decent burial for those having no persons to bury them The Church shall provide legal support to enforce constitutional right to freedom of worship and adequately publicise and educate Nigerians on the difficulties faced by converts in the northern parts of the country. The CNMS shall be restructured and provided with legal and social units to enhance its work. The Church shall evolve a sound and workable policy on a holistic proclamation of the gospel that provides for the care of the widows, widowers, the homeless, the jobless, the deprived, and the prisoner. The Church shall also look after African Dioceses in every possible way, as its means shall dictate.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER FAITHS:

The Anglican Communion shall:

- Claim its rights and be recognized in the community of churches and other faiths.
- Properly organize and fund a central organization with a full time General Secretary to enhance and promote interaction with other churches and organisations.
- Call for progress report (including statement of account) in respect of the building of the Ecumenical Centre.
- Support the aspirations of Anglicans to ascend to leadership positions of church organizations in Nigeria, West Africa, Africa and indeed the world.
- Take appropriate steps to see to it that the CCN is reorganised.

HEALTH CARE:

The Anglican Communion will not only carry education to the people but will also bring health care to them to win new converts and check migration of members of the Anglican Church to other Churches and faiths.

The Church shall be involved in health care delivery through ownership of health clinics, hospitals, etc to improve the health of its members and non-members, bring more converts to the fold and check migration of members to other Churches or faiths.

- ✚ Each district/Diocese will begin to operate at least one health institute within twelve months of the acceptance of this report.
- ✚ Within five years each province must maintained a hospital with at least thirty-bed space.

EDUCATION:

The Church is committed to the setting up of more secondary schools and the conversion of some institutions into full-fledged universities. Theological institutions will continue to be upgraded to universities or degree-awarding institutions.

- ✚ Where possible there will be no Diocese without at least five primary and one secondary school.
- ✚ There will be no Diocese where illiterate members exist. All members of any Diocese will be able to read in at least, one language.
- ✚ Each Province will establish quality vocational secondary institutions including teaching training institutions where the workers will be well remunerated.

In summary and in line with the challenge of the Vision, the Church commits itself to the reduction or elimination of the myriad of problems now facing it. In this regard:

1. The leadership of the Church will move closer to God, leading the people, even closer to God, where the people pray, have Bible study Sessions, have retreats, vigils and witnessing as very well organized regular activities in the church.
2. The Church must be seen by the congregations as relevant because it cares and shares.
3. The Church leadership must be experienced and attested to by the congregation, as sensitive to its spiritual and material needs.
4. There will exist open dialogue on all vexatious questions and regular open re-examination of the ways and means whereby major decisions concerning the Church are made. This will be structured into the work of all Bishops.
5. The Church leadership must be avid students of the Bible, the social-economic situation of Nigeria and the world. The Church must be melting pot of all Nigerians with clearly spelt out policy and practice that make all decisions in the church devoid of ethnic overtones.
6. For the purpose of mission and evangelism, translation may be effected after a period of ten years. Translation only to greener pastures will not be encouraged. It need be a matter of consent than compulsion.
7. Churches will have well-established institutions that improve their funding.
8. Churches will have centers and neighbourhood cells where church activities such as Bible reading, prayer groups and other activities relevant to problems of everyday living are examined by parishioners.
9. Where possible there will be no Diocese without, at least, five primary schools and one secondary school.

10. There will be no Diocese where illiterate members exist. All members of any Diocese must be able to read at least one language.
11. The Church will establish small cottage industries specifically to fund the aged, the sick and where the unemployed is encouraged to work and earn a livelihood.
12. Each province would have established quality vocational secondary institutions and teacher training institutions as relevant to their selected areas. Teachers in such institutions shall be well remunerated.
13. The Church will maintain interest – yielding accounts outside the country managed by experts.
14. All clergy will be well remunerated and regularly paid.
15. Each District/Diocese will begin to operate, at least, one health institution within twelve months of the acceptance of this report.
16. Within five years, each province must maintain a hospital with at least thirty-bed space.
17. Prison, women and youth ministries shall be established or resuscitated in each church.
18. Lay schools of theology and viable colleges shall be established for the training of the laity.

SECTION V

HOW TO GET THERE:

The Vision, goals and aspirations of the Church can only be achieved through total commitment and dedication. The Church shall be open to new ideas and learning from others without losing its identity and its root in evangelical Biblicity. The Church will achieve its goal by:

- ◆ Recognizing and applying ministry gifts e.g. prayer, fasting, deliverance, healing, witnessing, etc.
- ◆ Employing and empowering evangelists, being a mission-oriented church, which encouraged instruments of mission such as CCN, Bible Society, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries, etc.
- ◆ Establishing Prayer Ministry Groups in the church and emphasizing training in the ministry of prayer and spirituality e.g. each Diocese having a Spirituality/Prayer ministry team, publishing prayer bulletins and having Night Vigils.
- ◆ Reorientation in the method and content of ministerial training programme.
- ◆ Recognize the people's gifts, talents and training and put them to effective use for the gospel through the church e.g. finance Management, Personnel Management, ministry Gifts Medical Education, etc.
- ◆ The Church shall have its own projects and fund generating programmes towards self-reliance and to generate funds for missions and ministry. Here the gifts of the laity shall be emphasized. The church shall encourage family ministry/care groups and give great emphasis to youth and women ministries.

TRANSFORMATION

There will be transformation of structures with a view to encouraging emphasis on mission and ministry. The Church will update itself modern technology and install computers in all Church Headquarters with Internet linked with Primate/Church of Nigeria Office. The Clergy and the Bishops will be trained to operate the system. A world-wide web will be installed and both the laity and clergy will be encouraged to contribute to it. The co-ordination will be at the three Princial Headquarters. There will be emphasis on grassroots evangelization.

Teaching and disciplining of members, social involvement and organization of seminars for the leadership of the church, especially on social issues. The church shall build bridges by having dialogue with other faith leaders (Moslem) on burning issues.

SECTION VI: PROGRAMME OF ACTION: THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA SHALL:

- ◆ Identify, recruit, and send out full time itinerant evangelists into every parish in every Diocese. They must have goals of the number of churches they have to plant within a given period.
- ◆ The evangelists shall be well remunerated.
- ◆ Build and properly manage an Anglican Retreat Centre of 100 bedroom in Abuja, Badagry and Onitsha.
- ◆ Build, furnish and fully equip a functional Secretariat in Abuja for efficient administration of the affairs of the Church.
- ◆ Build a 30-room Church Guest House in Abuja (land is already available for the purpose).
- ◆ Build lock-up shops in prime areas as a means to raise funds. Ensure that the CSS Bookshop and the Bookshop House are profitably run and that they pay dividend regularly to the Church.
- ◆ Loot out for viable investment portfolio in the U.K. and put in about one million pounds by 2002. This will pay for the entire cost of Lambeth 2008, and subsequent overseas conference and other international financial obligations.

FINANCING THE ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMMES OF THE CHURCH

The way and manner some leaders of the Church go a begging for foreign aids is disgraceful. The method used in collecting some of the money to help the “poor badly impoverished African Churches” is ungodly. The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) must work out a programme of self-reliance. Aid programme must be co-ordinated.

The Church shall therefore raise a minimum of 3,000 committed Eminent Anglicans into a Resource Group, to lift up the burden of fund raising from the Bishops. The Resource Group is to be autonomous but responsible to the Primate/Standing Committee.

In addition to the income generating activities and the other sources specified above, the Church expects more tithing from members whether rich or poor. It is a scriptural injunction (Malachi 3:10). Nothing is too great and nothing is too small.

SECTION VII: INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE VISION AND THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR COMMITTEES:

The following Committees are to be established to enhance the implementation of its Vision

1. Peace and Justice Committee
2. Committee on Youth Ministry
3. Finance/Investment Committee
4. Theological and Doctrinal Committee
5. Committee on Ecumenical Relations
6. Mission and Evangelism, Monitoring and Statistics Committee
7. Committee of Reference
8. Liturgical, Prayer and Spirituality Committee
9. Social Welfare Committee
10. Committee on Women’s Work

11. Vision Implementation and Monitoring Committee

In addition to the above, a Communication Office shall be appointed to strengthen communication and publicity within and outside the Church. The officer shall promote and ensure adequate communication/publicity of the activities of the Church of Nigeria in the print and electronic (including e-mail Internet) media.

Some of the committees shall be transformed to departments, while more institutions may be established as circumstance demand.

RETIREMENT S OF BISHOPS AND NEW ELECTIONS:

The following Bishops retired within the period in review:

The Rt. Rev. A.O. Awosan of Oke-Osun – November, 1999.

The Rt. Rev. S.O Elenwo – Niger Delta North – December, 1999

The Rt. Rev. G.I. Olajide – Ibadan – March, 2000

The Most Rev. Dr. J.A. Onyemelukwe – Niger, Archbishop Province II and Dean of the Province – May 2000.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. R.N.C Nwosu – Asaba – October, 2000.

The Rt. Rev. E.B. Gbonigi – Akure – January, 2001.

Apart from the Diocese of Asaba and Akure new Bishops have been elected for these vacant Sees, consecrated and enthroned.

A new Archbishop has also been elected for Province II. He is His Grace the Most Rev. Maxwell S.C. Anikwenwa the Bishop of Awka. He is also the Dean of the Province of the Church of Nigeria.

We thank God for the work and ministry of these retired Bishops and pray that God will grant them more years of happy and peaceful life in their retirement.

For the new Bishops we ask for the indwelling and enablement of the Holy Spirit as they face the divine task of leading and shepherding the flock of Christ.

DIOCESE OF BENIN

We are all aware that the Rt. Rev. Peter Onekpe who was elected and consecrated as the Bishop of Benin in 1996 was rejected by the people of Benin who were insisting that their own son should be elected as the Bishop.

The case had since been in court and the Church of Nigeria had been exploring all avenues through dialogue and negotiations to restore peace in the Diocese.

We thank the new Primate His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Peter J. Akinola for all the efforts made and for the trips to Benin. He has made more than ten trips to Benin and during one of such trips he ran into the armed robbers. We thank God for his safety. We also thank God that his trips yielded some fruit.

The people of Benin finally agreed that the Rt. Rev. P.O Onekpe should be enthroned in Benin and then translated to another Diocese.

On Thursday 3rd August, 2000 he was enthroned as the Bishop of Benin at St. Mathew's Cathedral Benin city.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS IN THE DIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT

The year 2000 has been a very remarkable year in our Diocese as far as progress of work is concerned both on Diocesan level and on Church, parish and Archdeaconry levels.

I know that these reports will come from their appropriate quarters, but I want to place on record these achievements.

- (i) The Bishops court has been roofed and we hope that the completion will not be far from now.
- (ii) St. Thomas' Aku has been roofed and we are here today in the Church Arrangements will be made for its foundation stone to raise money to continue with the work.
- (iii) St. Andrew's church, Ibagwa has been roofed and the same thing applies to it i.e. planning for foundation stone laying.
- (iv) St. Luke's Church, Nsukka has completed the steel work and I hope that very soon it will be roofed.
- (v) Already we have mentioned the completion of a modern parsonage at Amachalla.
- (vi) The EFAC of the Diocese is gradually but steadily moving towards the completion of their EFAC Hall and a Guest House. The two buildings have been roofed and plastered.

I know that there are other building projects like – Youth Hall at St. Paul's, the Parsonage at both St. Paul's Cathedral, Nsukka and St. Luke's Amufie, but I just mentioned the ones where the progress of work was remarkable.

I also hope that St. Mary's Opi will take a cue from the above Parishes that have roofed their Churches and do something. I have no doubt that their collective effort will go a long way in changing the doldrums in that Church.

- (vii) **The Knights of St. Paul:** We thank God for the commitment of the Knights of this Diocese under the able and purposeful leader of their President Sir Dr. Emenike A. Onwura. Apart from featuring in every activity of the Diocese, they have organized an evangelistic outreach to Idoha and other places. They donated the sum of ₦200,000.00 (Two Hundred Thousand Naira) only to Amube for their Church building and they have also roofed the Church at Idoha. Our prayer is that God will bless them as they continue to do exploits for Christ.

I am aware that not all the knights are responding or taking part in the activities of the Knights in the Diocese.

Many do not attend meeting or even pay their annual dues. Such people should examine themselves and ask themselves whether they are for the progress of the Diocese or working against the Diocese. Know that whatever you sow is what you reap.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR DIOCESE

In the next three years we shall be talking about the 10th Anniversary Celebration of both our consecration and the inauguration of this Diocese. Ten (10) years is not ten days and therefore

we have to start in time to plan about it. The celebration will be done first on Archdeaconry levels and finally on Diocesan level.

I am saying this now because the celebration will not be just coming together, eating and dispersing. You have to know what you are celebrating in your Archdeaconry. What achievement did you record within this first ten years of our existence as a Diocese, in terms of infrastructure, church planting and any other development. Make sure you have something to celebrate.

THE STATE OF THE NATION:

Last year our nation and the world community were excited and happy to see the return of democracy into our political system. The euphoria with which the event was ushered in was informed by the misrule of our military dictators for over 30 years of Nigerian independence. Everyone was convinced that our country was merely drifting along without vision, without planning, there was no sense of direction. The new leadership under General Obasanjo took off on a very bright note and as I said last year that was a move by someone who was determined to salvage a nation heading for destruction.

Unfortunately, what followed after raised some doubts as to whether the operators of the new democracy actually understood the role they were expected to play. Instead of acting as public servants they arrogated to themselves supreme powers and started sharing the national cake, as they deemed fit. Over 5. Million Naira was demanded for furnishing a senator's house and when this way challenged the Executive and the Legislative arms of the government fall apart.

The house of Senate engaged in witch haunting and there was impeachment one after the other. Within one year we have had three Senate presidents. Apart from that the revelations in the House of Senate on inflated contracts and financial mismanagement show that we are still far from getting honest, trustworthy and patriotic citizens who will pilot the affairs of this nation.

The crusade against corruption being championed by the President if it will succeed must be carried out by those who are not corrupt in themselves. We have such people in the society but the way our elections are manipulated and votes bought do not give such people the opportunity to serve. They see politics in Nigeria as being dirty. It is our belief that the President will not relent in his effort to rid our nation of corruption especially at this time when Nigeria's rating in the community of nations shows her as the most corrupt nation in the world.

Apart from this the President has other problems staring him in the face. The introduction of Sharia in some states of the North which started with Zamfara and the Federal Government not taken a firm stand to denounce it and call the governor to order has made way for more states to follow suit. The Kaduna riot of March 2000 and the attendant destruction of lives and property was as a result of the Sharia problem. One wonders why those who took an oath of office with the constitution of the land will go against the same Constitution and be allowed to continue in office.

The earlier the Federal Government takes a firm stand on the Sharia problem the better for the nation.

Professor Nwabueze reacting to the Sharia issue said. “We must be honest with ourselves and accept the plain truth that enforcement of Sharia, in all the plenitude of its injunctions, cannot, in the multi-religious society of Nigeria, co-exist with a truly Federal form of political association. If, therefore any of the Federating units now feel that they can no longer abide by the condition of the association as enshrined in section 10 of the 1979 and 1999 Constitution, then all the constituent units should come together and re-negotiate another form for our continued association, whatever that form might be”.

He further said, “If the states in the North are bent on adopting Sharia criminal law, and refuse to be persuaded to drop the idea, they must be taken to have opted for a confederal arrangement or a complete break-up of the association. It is better to pull apart or break up in peace than fight over the issue!”.

(Guardian – Monday July 3, 2000): Apart from the Sharia case in the North, there are different youth movements in different parts of the country staging protests for one thing or the other. We have the pipeline vandalism in the oil states of the country and this had led to loss of lives and loss of revenue to the nation.

In the education section we need to be pitted as a nation. What is happening in most of the tertiary institutions of our land especially University of Nigeria, Nsukka is a far cry from what the founding fathers had in mind. “Restore the Dignity of man”. No country in the world ever achieved any technological break-through without proper education. Not that we are not blessed with intellectuals who can deliver the goods but the running of our education institutions and the attitude of some teachers to work leaves much to be desired. On the part of the students many of them no longer respect their lecturers or any constituted authority. Any slightest demonstration ends up with destruction of government or personal property. This shows lack of understanding, because by doing that we are destroying our future and ourselves.

In Enugu State we thank God for what the government under Dr. Chimaroke has been doing especially in the area of road construction, water and electricity. We pray that God will continue to direct the present administration under General Obasanjo as they face the teething problems of governance in this multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

CONFIRMATION OF SAN-RE-DR. M.E. AJOGWU

We thank God that our Diocese benefited from this year’s conferment of SAN (Senior Advocate of Nigeria) ON SOME LEGAL LUMINARIES OF THE COUNTRY. The Hon. Attorney General of the State – Dr. M.E. Ajogwu was among the 12 people who on Monday 25th September, 2000 received the Conferment by Chief Justice Muhammadu Lawal Uwais at Abuja. It is our prayer that God will continue to guide him and give him the needed wisdom to dispense justice without fear or favour.

T.A.P (TRAIN A PRIEST)

The need for well-qualified and trained clergy can never be neglected. We have seen the result in many parts of our Diocese where they are working and have sensitized the people and changed their poor commitment to the things of God. Many people now are no longer just paying lip service to God, they now know their responsibility in the work of evangelism in the Diocese.

To train a priest now will cost between ₦25,000.00 - ₦30,000.00 (Twenty-Five to Thirty Thousand Naira) only. Many of those who subscribed to this project have completed their term and we thank them very much for their contribution. It is my plea that individuals or groups who can take up this challenge will let me know and you will remain blessed.

THE THEM OF THE SYNOD:

“CALLED TO LIVE AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS” (*Luke 4:18-19; 1 Peter 2:9*)

The theme of this year’s Synod is one of the four themes that were considered during the 1998 Lambeth Conference. At the Ovoko Synod of 1998 we reflected on **“CALLED TO FULL HUMANITY”** which is also one of the four themes. Our emphasis is on the word **‘CALLED’**

The question one may ask is who is calling and who is being called? God calls and he is calling his people whom he created in his own image. From the beginning of God’s activity in human history especially in his relationship with his chosen people Israel, the voice of God is active, provoking human beings to move, change, and recognize who they are and what by God’s help they can become. God called Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others and sent them to minister to his people. In the New Testament Jesus called the disciples, taught them and sent them out to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. Today God continues his call to us as individuals and as church, which is his instrument for spreading the good news. The name ‘CHURCH’ ecclesia, means a community that has been summoned, not one that chooses to bring itself into being. The word “Ecclesia has its roots in the secular word of the Greek and Roman Empires. Within the Roman Empire ‘ecclesia’ means ‘a group of free citizens gathered to deliberate” and those who were to seek the welfare of their neighbours. It has both political and social concept. The early Christians with the authority of Jesus Christ as their inspiration, believed themselves to be “free citizens” of a new order, an emerging coming kingdom, ‘Ecclesia’ also means called out and called together; so Christians perceive themselves summoned and chosen by God (1 Peter 2:9). “But you are a chosen race, the Kings Priests, the holy nation, God’s own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light”. This ought to affect our worship, our evangelism and our response to the social, political and economic realities of our time. Our calling is from God the Father, the Source of everything. He called us out in the power of his Holy Spirit and sends us to live and proclaim the good news of his kingdom. Our call and our being sent to do not depend on our resources or lack of them. It does not depend on our race, colour, holiness, knowledge or status in life.

The Church as one body, holy in communion, Catholic in pilgrimage and apostolic in proclamation, is called to worship and witness. So witnessing or evangelization is not man’s invention or choice. God took the initiative. We have been simply caught up in God’s own movement or love by being called to be with Jesus To be with or ‘in’ Jesus is never to enjoy some static or private relationship with him; it is to be moving with him from the heart of God to the ends of the earth; John 20; 21 “As the Father sent me, so I send you” John 15:16” You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit”.

It therefore means that evangelism or the proclamation of the good news both in word and deed is not an option for the Christian. It is simply part of being in Christ. Being sent means to carry the transforming life – the Good News. It is to be alive with the life of Jesus, which communicates both grace and truth. Sharing the good news is always the goal and focus of the Christian’s journey with Jesus. According to the Archbishop of Canterbury during the

Anglican Communion's Global Conference on Dynamic Evangelism Beyond 2000 he said: "Mission which does not have evangelism as a focus is not Christian mission, and evangelism which keeps itself aloof from matters of justice and human welfare does not reflect adequately the biblical revelation. We must insist on the seamless character of mission and evangelism".

The mission of Church, which we are to communicate, is to be through our lives as we live it in this world. Our biological lives in this world are to be the life of the Good News. As Christians, we are in the world but not of the world. God's Call is for us to return to our original nature, be the true human being or child of God exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. It is to mend the broken relationship and man's disobedience to God's will recorded in Genesis.

To do this it needs our presence. We must be present in all church activities, which include worship, Bible Study, retreats, fellowships or other meetings that build up the Christian community. In Hebrew 10:24 – 25 we are told "Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another, to show love and to do good. Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the day of the Lord is coming nearer".

It also needs skill. Before you make others disciples you must yourself be a disciple. You cannot convert someone until you are converted yourself. Jesus chose his first disciples and first trained them before sending them out. (Mark 3:14-15). That is why the church trains her clergy so that they in turn will train others to live for Christ. We need to bring the hearer to the Church and then to Christ, using prayers, follow-ups, teachings, and miracles. People adopt different techniques, which include"

- (i) Person to person evangelism
- (ii) Church based evangelism
- (iii) Crusades, Revivals, etc
- (iv) Healing Ministry

(The Church of Nigeria has started special training to cover this aspect of ministry)

- (v) **Follow-ups and pastoral care or visitation:** Many of our pastors have lost this ministry to the detriment of their effectiveness and the growth of their church. Those who embark on it see the rich dividends.

AREAS OF OPERATIONS:

1. Primary Evangelism. Here we are thinking about people, who have not heard the good news at all, who are denied access to it either by their religion or location or any other circumstance of life.
2. Secondary Evangelism: In this area we are thinking of those who have had the good news but have backslided after receiving the message. We have this group almost in all our churches and they have reasons for back-sliding. Our responsibility is to detect those reasons and find solutions.
3. Tertiary Evangelism: This refers to congregations that are Luke-warm like the Laodicea Church or dead as the church as Sardis; (Revelation 3:16-20a). "I know that you have the reputation of being alive, even though you are dead! So wake up, and strengthen what you still have before it dies completely". What is your congregation

like? Are you of those who when they are sent to a church kills the church or do you bring back to life a church that is almost dead?

MEANS OF PROCLAMATION:

1. **WORSHIP:** Our worship of God should be lively and meaningful to our present situation, using indigenous language music and dancing and allowing freedom in prayer. People should be free to worship in their mother tongue to understand what they believe and practice. Gospel bands.

2. **STEWARDSHIP:** Our Christian stewardship must be taken seriously in order to cope with modern challenges of proclaiming the good news. Tithing and free will offering should be part of our worship of God. We have also the stewardship of time, talent or professional knowledge which people can give in the service of God.

3. **LOVE:** In John 13:34-35, Jesus said “I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples”. Lack of love in time of need may militate against proclaiming the gospel. Relationship between the members of the church and their workers should improve. We have not learnt to care for our workers enough. Paul in 1st Corinthians 9:11-12 wrote, “We have sown spiritual seed among you. Is it too much if we reap material benefits from you. If others have the right to expect this from you. Haven’t we an even greater right”. Vs 14 “In the same way, the Lord has ordered that those who preach the gospel should get their living from it”. Gal. 6:6 says ‘The man who is being taught the Christian message should share all the good things he has with his teacher’.

The Church should cultivate the habit of being a more caring church, identifying with the need of the less privileged in their number, be they widows or orphans or even poorer congregations. We thank the Knights for the work they have done in some areas of need in the Diocese, Amube, Idoha, St. Andrew’s Orba Road and so on.

4. **SOCIAL JUSTICE** – Christians in politics should fight for social justice and fair play. The fight against corruption should not be an empty word but should be lived out by Christians in politics by shunning any kind of bribery. Exod. 23:8 says, “Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous”. Our call is a call to be co-workers with God in achieving his purpose for man on earth. It is a call to spread by word and deed the good news of what God has done in Christ.

To proclaim in the power of the Holy Spirit, his person and work, his teaching and eternal purpose for us, what we must do in order to attain everlasting life.

**ADMISSION AND CONFIRMATION:
OCTOBER, 1999 – SEPTEMBER, 2000**

DATE	PARISHES	G.G	W.G.	M.U.	CONFIRMATION	
					MALES	FEMALES
3/10/99	St. Stephen’s Church, Neke	4	2	4	36	36
10/10/99	St. Andrew’s Church, Ibagwa-Ani	2	9	3	62	95

14/11/99	Mbu Parish – St. Mary’s	4	1	2	34	52
21/11/99	St. Stephen’s Umulokpa	2	-	-	6	13
26/11/99	At. Andrew’s Church, Ikem Parish	8	2	-	17	35
28/11/99	Unadu Parish – St. John’s Itchi	1	1	1	33	87
10/12/99	St. Andrew’s Church, Adani Parish	5	1	1	14	13
12/3/2000	St. Philip’s Eha-Amufu Parish	31	14	2	82	154
19/3/2000	St. Matthew’s Mgbuji Parish	23	-	1	40	109
7/5/2000	St. Cyprian’s Chapel	-	-	-	-	29
21/5/2000	St. Peter’s Ovoko Parish	8	1	1	77	138
28/5/2000	Onuiyi Parish – St. John’s Church	4	10	2	22	33
11/6/2000	Amufie Parish – St. Luke’s Church	11	8	4	24	142
25/6/2000	Orba Parish – St. James’ Church	11	1	2	36	40
2/7/2000	Christ Church Chapel, U.N.N	-	5	4	51	22
16/7/2000	St. Mary’s Opi parish	-	1	4	14	41
23/7/2000	St. Paul’s Cathedral	13	13	4	51	61
13/8/2000	Enugu-Ezike Parish – St. mark’s Umuopu	4	4	1	22	63
27/8/2000	St. Andrew’s Ibagwa-Aka	3	27	4	62	154
10/9/2000	Emmanuel Church, Alor-Uno	3	3	-	28	47
21/9/2000	Ohodo Parish – St. Mark’s Church	-	-	-	27	53
	Total	137	103	40	738	1,417

CONCLUSION

Before I conclude I want once more to thank all those who have consistently supported all the development effort in the Diocese. You all know the contributions the women have been making since we started. Last year during the Synod at Eha-Amufu they donated ₦6 million (Six Hundred Thousand Naira) only towards the Diocesan Development. On 30th September 2000 during the Foundation Stone Laying of the Bishops court they gave ₦7 Million (Seven Hundred Thousand Naira) only. I want at this point also to thank God for that day and thank all of you who as individuals, groups, organizations, or branches came to support the work of the court. May God bless all of you in Jesus name.

I will not forget to thank Sir Igwebueze Ugwoke who initiated prize award for churches who top the list in the payment of assessment. This year he bought Prayer Books for the prize award. Remain blessed in Jesus’ name. Amen.

As we move into first year of the new millennium, let us with renewed zeal and commitment face the task of evangelizing all the nooks and corners of the Diocese. Let us obey the injunction of James by being doers of the word and not hearers only.

Thank you for patient listening and God bless.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. J.C. Ilonuba,
(Bishop of Nsukka).