

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE THIRD SESSION OF  
THE THIRD SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NSUKKA AT ST. MARY'S  
CHURCH, OPI ON MONDAY 28TH OCTOBER, 2002 BY HIS  
LORDSHIP THE RT. REV. DR. JONAH CHUKWUEMEKA ILONUBA *M.A.*  
(*OXON*) *Dip. Th. (LON.)***

**GREETINGS:**

My Lord Bishops  
The Hon. Chancellor  
The Learned Registrar  
Venerable Archdeacons  
The Clergy of the Diocese and other Clergy here present  
The President, Mothers' Union and Women's Guild  
Knights and Ladies of St. Paul  
Synod Delegates  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good people of God, my joy and happiness know no bounds as I welcome you to yet another Synod of this our beloved Diocese. The Third Session of the Third Synod of the Diocese which is the last of this Session. I want to thank God specially for making it possible for us to meet under a roofed Church. "It is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes."

When Opi Parish was informed about hosting the Synod of 2002, there were doubts and fears whether the Church would be ready for the Synod. I however believed and trusted God because with him nothing is impossible. By the last week of August 2002 the Church has not been roofed but before we left on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, 2002 for the Provincial General Synod at Ibadan, the roofing was almost completed. The details of how the church came to be roofed will not be narrated here but we thank God and thank the Superintendent of the Parish, the Rev. Canon E.I. Asogwa, the Chairman of the building Committee, Sir Joseph Ezea and others who may have contributed positively to see that this church was roofed. Our prayer is that God will bless all of you in Jesus' name Amen.

It is also our prayer that this year's gathering of the Diocese in Opi will be a turning point in the life and commitment of this Church in their service to God and humanity. Our prayer is that this Synod will bring about a true transformation in this Church and parish in general, so that they will become a united people under a united church and together march forward in progress and development.

About this time last year, we met at St. Paul's Cathedral, Nsukka and the theme of the Synod was 'Pressing Forward' (phil. 3:14). I thank those of you who have used this theme in their Bible studies and other activities of the church. This has led to some meaningful development and progress in some churches.

I must not fail to recognize the contributions of the knights of this Diocese in all areas of development both in their individual church and in the Diocese at large. St. James' Church, Amube which they adopted as their baby has been roofed and there is a plan for a foundation stone laying sometime this year to raise funds for its completion. This does not mean that all the knights are living up to expectation as there are a number of them who neither attend their meetings nor even contribute towards the development fund of their organization.

Such people should re-examine themselves and the pledges and vows made during their investiture and initiation.

## **THE HOST PARISH**

We now have a short history of the coming of Christianity into Opi

### **(a) St. Mary's Church, Opi**

The C.M.S Church arrived in Opi in 1933 through the influence of Chief Ishiwu Abonyi Ugwuegede. Two teachers were sent to open up the church. They were Mr. B.A. Okeke Anyiwo and Mr. F.B. Onwujekwe. They lived in one of the houses within the compound of Late Ishiwu Abonyi Ugwuegede. Church services were organized within his palace (OBUAMA). Before long. Kindergarten classes were started for the children from the three quarters of Opi; Ibeku, Ogbozarra and Idi. Because the number of the congregation was small and slow in growth. Mr. Onwujekwe was transferred. The Church and School continued operating at the OBUAMA until Ishiwu Abonyi Ugwuegede donated a piece of land where the school and church exist today.

The people of Opi saw the coming of the MISSIONARIES to Opi as a way of development. The church was therefore built communally. It is of interest to note that those who built the church then were pagans. The church was built of mud walls. The roof was constructed of palm fronds and grass. Seats were constructed within the church hall by erecting dwarf mud walls (Okpo) measuring twelve inches wide, eighteen inches high and twelve feet long. Every Saturday, women rubbed these 'Okpo' and floor with clay and water such that when they dry. People sat on these 'Okpo' comfortably in their whites, coloured or Sunday bests without any speck of dust on them. The church then served as church and school.

At the completion of the church building, the teachers' house was also erected by the natives using the same materials. Therefore, the teacher moved into his house.

Some of the prominent people who played important roles in the establishment and growth of C.M.S. mission within Opi are Ishiwu Abonyi Ugwuegede, Abonyi Ugwuasogwa, Ugwuanyi Okenyi, Ugwu Alich, uwu Onaiyi, Eze Nkpume, Ugwoke Eleje and Eleje Ugwuagbo.

Some prominent early converts were Abraham Abonyi, Jeremiah Agbo, Mike Nwenyi, Patrick Abonyi, Ugwuegede Jeremiah Okidigwe, Amos Ezea, Samuel Abonyi, Mary Agbo and Hannah Abonyi. The pupils then included the Rev. D.O. Nweze, Inspector Emmanuel Ekeja, Sir Godwin Abonyi Ugwuegede, Ben, Okadigwe, Igwe R.O. ikeoha and Josiah Ugwuolola.

Some of the prominent teachers included Mr. Emmanuel E. Ogenyi. He was at St. Philip's Opi-Agu from 1939 to 1943 when he was transferred to St. Mary's Opi-Uno. He remained at Opi-Uno till 1947 when the school was up-graded to Standard Five. He was both the headmaster and the catechist. He was also the group teacher incharge of other churches established at Umabo-Agu in (Eha-Alumona), Ekwegbe, Ohodo, Lejja and Ozalla.

By 1939 when the Second World War broke out, St. Mary's Opi has reached Standard Two. Thereafter, those whose parents could afford it transferred to Standard Six at Nsukka. By 1947, St. Mary's had five teachers including Mr. Ogenyi, Mr. Charles Aneke (now Rev. Charles Aneke), Mr. R.O. Ikeoha (Now the Igwe of Opi-Uno) and Mr. Bernard Mojekwu.

St. Mary's continued to grow with the addition of two permanent school buildings. This time they were build of stones, sandcrete block walls and corrugated roofing sheets. Again, the buildings were built through communal efforts. Some other teachers included Mr. Godwin Agbo, Fredrick Udebuluzor E. O Nwanja, Henry Eya, Sussy Onyeisi, etc.

The first priest posted to St. Mary's Church, Opi was Rev. S. A. Eke followed by Rev. E. Onyiaene, the Rev. Canon G. E. Uvuka and Rev. Canon L. I Eze. Others were the Rev. Canon B. C.D. Diara, (former Nsukka Diocesan Synod Secretary) the Rev. Canon G.A. Ugorji (2000) and now the Rev. Canon E.I Asogwa (2002).

St. Mary's Church, Opi has also grown in other dimensions. Five of her sons have been ordained priests. The first of the five has retired. He is the Rev. D. Nweze.

Others are all superintendents of parishes as follows: The Rev. Emmanuel Agbowo – Eha-Alumona, the Rev. Theophilus Ugwuishiwu – Ohodo, the Rev. Ernest Omeje – Adani, and the Rev. Joseph Agbo - Mgbuji

**(b) St. Philip's Church Opi-Agu**

St. Philips' Opi-Agu was established in 1936 and the first church teacher was Mr. Iweka, followed by Mr. Emmanuel Ogenyi. The church was nurtured to maturity by Mr. Jonathan O. Edoga, a notable church and school teacher. The present church teacher is Mr. Ugwu Michael.

**(c) Emmanuel Church, Idoha**

Emmanuel Church, Idoha was planted in 1988 by Late Rev. Emmanuel Onyiaene. Early converts were Mr. A. Isiani, mr. Ugwuegwu Nwali, Odo Mbialaka, Okechulwu Nwodo and Igbo Nwaonuoha. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1992, the foundation stone of the permanent site was laid by the Ven. S.O. Ugwuanyi, the then Archdeacon of Nsukka. The knights of St. Paul's Nsukka, roofed the building in year 2000. Sir Dr. Emenike A. Onwurah and family single-handedly supplied all the benches used by worshippers in the church in 2002 till date.

The pioneer church teacher was Mr. Ernest Omeje (now Reverend) and the present church teacher is Mr. Godwin Agbo.

**(d) St. Peter's Church, Idi**

This is a baby church, established in 1999 by the Rev. Canon G.E. Uvuka. They are still worshipping in a village hall but has almost completed the walling of their church building in a portion of land they bought directly opposite the village square. The present church teacher is Mr. Anthony Ezema

**(e) St. Paul's Church, Ezi-Ukehe**

This is another baby church in the parish situated at Ukehe. Enemies are fighting daily against this baby church planted during the evangelistic campaign of the Rev. Canon B.C.D. Diara in the year 2000. We are yet to secure a piece for land to this baby church as her permanent site. The present church teacher there is Mr. M.U. Ike.

**(f) C.M.S. Umunko**

A church has been planted at Umunko through the powerful ministration of the word of God and prayer in a four days crusade by the Rev. Canon E.I Asogwa organized by Opi Area

EFAC, from 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2002. Forty-one persons were converted (all youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty four). Twenty eight of them were baptized and all given free Gideon Bibles in a colourful service on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2002 held at the village square. By Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2002, their number has risen to sixty three. It is our prayer that through our collective support and effort they will have a permanent site as their place of worship.

Opi Parish is one of the parishes that we look forward to in giving leadership in this Diocese. It is also our hope that they will think of something higher and not be satisfied with only a parish status.

## **THE GUEST PREACHER**

Let me at this point thank our guest preacher in this year's Synod. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Roland N.C. Nwosu and his amiable wife, E. Nwosu have been with us since Saturday evening. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Nwosu, I have no doubt, is well-known to many of you here. Rt. Rev. Dr. R.N.C. Nwosu is the retired Bishop of Asaba. He was among the pioneer clergymen of the then Enugu Diocese and served as its first Synod Secretary. An old student of DMGS, Trinity College, Umuahia and studied as an external student of the University of London. Between 1960 and 1963, he studied at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka for his B.A. degree in religion. He was awarded the D.D. (Honoris Causa) by marquis Giuseppe Scicluna International University Foundation.

We thank God for his inspiring and thought-provoking sermon and we hope that the challenges posed by the message will remain with us for sometime and inspire us to greater heights.

## **EVENTS SINCE AFTER THE LAST SYNOD**

### ***1. Inauguration of Alor-Agu parish***

On Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 the Alor-Agu Parish was inaugurated. We thank those who attended the ceremony, although it was observed that proper preparations were not made. Archdeacons are advised to see that future inaugurations will be organized only when the necessary requirements are put in place e.g. renovation of churches and parsonages where they are already in existence, building of new ones where there is none and provision of means of transport for a would-be superintendent.

### ***2. Amufie Archdeaconry***

On Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2001 Amufie Archdeaconry was inaugurated and Ven. John C. Onah inducted and collated as the first archdeacon.

We thank the people of Amufie for the work done in the parsonage which is a modern building. I believe that the electrical work has been completed by now. I also hope that the completion of the remaining part of the work will be done soonest. Thank God for all those that attended and supported the young Archdeaconry. Remain blessed in the name of Jesus.

### ***3. Conferment of the Mother of Faith***

On Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2001 in a colourful service well-attended by a cross-section of people from all over the Diocese and beyond, 8 of our worthy mothers were conferred with “THE MOTHER OF FAITH” (Nne-Okwukwe) because of their exemplary life and faith in the things of God. You will recall that the preacher in that service was the Rt. Rev. Dr. R.N.C. Nwosu, the retired Bishop of Asaba, whom I approached to stand in for me when I thought that we would have left for Israel by then. Once more I thank him for accepting to come at such a short notice.

#### **4. *Diocesan Music Festival***

In an effort to improve the singing in our churches, we have been organizing Diocesan Singing Competitions and churches are placed in different categories where they compete. I thank those who have taken this seriously and have taken advantage of the music students in the university to come and coach their choirs. We have noticed the remarkable change this has made in some of our choirs and the members are happy for that.

On Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2001 we have the Music Festival and we thank the churches that attended and ask that defaulting churches will join in the next competition.

During the last Province II Council held at All Saints Cathedral, Egbu, the Council of Knights presented a paper in which they were requesting that the Anglican Church does not lose her heritage in the traditional Anglican way of worship in which many of them were brought up. They said and I quote, “Many of the adult members of the church are strongly attached to the original traditions in worship and get their satisfaction thereof. They are accustomed to and are in love with the order of service. (Mattins and Evensong) in the Book of Common Prayer with its canticles, the creed and psalms for chanting, and the melodious, rhythmic and enchanting hymns in Abu, and in the Hymns, ‘Ancient and Modern’ that mean so much more to the adult generation than the choruses of the modern day worship.”

“All that we are asking for is that those who still believe in the old liturgical order should be given a slot in the Sunday Service agenda.”

Pastors have to take note of this as we have not introduced a new form of worship. While we are free to adapt to the wind of evangelical revivalism of our age, we are not permitted to throw over-board our own Order. Remember that at your ordination, you swear and say. “In public prayer and administration of the Sacraments, I will use only the form of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.”

#### **5. *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land***

The State Governor, Dr. Chimaroke Nnamani, nominated me as one of the Bishops to lead the Enugu State Christian pilgrims of the year 2001.

We were two Bishops, the Methodist Bishop of Ngoro, the Rt. Rev. Nnuonah and myself. We left for Israel on Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2001. We arrived Ben Gurion airport Tel-Aviv in the early hours of Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> December where our four guides were already waiting for us. Two coaches were arranged for pilgrims from Enugu State by Emmanuel Tours. We left for Nazareth and lodged at the Renaissance Hotel. On Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> December we travelled to Jerusalem, Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> December we paid a courtesy call on

the mayor of Jerusalem. Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> we went to the wailing wall where people offer prayers to God. Christians are not allowed to put on their crosses there. If you have a cross, you put it inside your bag or pocket. We walked through the Via Delorosa – i.e. The way of the cross – saw the place of the crucifixion – the place of anointing before the burial and the burial place. We were shown where Simon of Cyrene took over the cross when Jesus could no longer walk and the two points at which he collapsed. We saw the place of the Jewish Holocaust where 6,000,000 Jews were killed by the Germans. One and half million of these being children. We then passed through the Damascus Gate.

On Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> December we left Jerusalem for the Dead Sea, passing the road to Ramalla (Yassar Arafat's place). We arrived Eilat and the following day left for the Egyptian border. After the immigration check, we travelled along the Red Sea and lodged at St. Catherine's Hotel at the foot of Mount Sinai. At 2.00am on Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> December we started climbing Mount Sinai. It took a total of 5 hours before we could return to base.

On Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> December we left Eilat for Tel-Aviv. On our way we stopped at Ben-Gurion's place, we then went through Beersheba, Herbron, Lydda, Philistia-Emmaus, Joppa. We were shown Abraham's Well and the Trade Tower of the Israel with 56 stories.

On Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> we have a free day and organized our worship in the Hotel we were staying.

On Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> December we left Israel for Nigeria, arriving Lagos at about 8.00pm. The following day, 25<sup>th</sup> December, Christmas Day, we finally came back to Enugu State arriving government house at 4.00pm. We thank God for granting us journey mercies. I thank you for your prayers for us while we were away and for the support given to me financially before we left for the pilgrimage. May God bless all of you in Jesus' name.

## **6. *Conferment of Mother of Faith***

On Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2001 Mrs. Margaret Mgba-Okolo was conferred 'Mother of Faith' (Nne-Okwukwe) at St. Luke's Church, Nsukka. The three sons who are Knights of St. Paul pledged to pay for the cost of the German-flooring of the Church. We thank them for their contributions in seeing that St. Luke's Church came to its present position. It is our prayer that God will help them fulfill this pledge before long as St. Luke's Church may be the venue for the 2003 Ordination in July. We thank the priest in charge of the church and his wife for their effective ministry in the church.

## **7. *Foundation Stone Laying***

On Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2002 we were at Okutu to lay the foundation stone of the church – St. Michael's. We thank God for the attendance and the response from those who were present at the occasion.

(ii) On Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> may the foundation stone of St. Stephen's Church, Neke was also laid and we thank God that people are now responding to activities that make for development especially when it affects their home church. We thank God for the progress of work in Neke and it is our prayer that God will continue to strengthen them especially in their resolve to stamp out Odo cult in that area.

## **8. Collation of Canons**

Six of our priests who were preferred canons were collated and installed as Honorary Canons of the Cathedral on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2002. They are the Rev. Can. S.C. Anioke, Rev. Canon G.C. Asadu, Canon N.S. Dimelu, Canon C.A. Onyechi, Canon E.E. Ugwu and Canon. J.C. Urama, continue to pray for them so that their lives and ministry will justify the confidence reposed on them.

## **9. Christian Fathers' Fellowship**

During the last Synod I announced my intension to introduce the Christian fathers' Fellowship in the Diocese as an umbrella for all Christian fathers to meet and assume their responsibility as leaders both in the home and the church.

The inauguration of Christian Fathers' Fellowship took place on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2002. Over 70 fathers were admitted into the Fellowship.

Subsequent admissions as indicated will be in our separate churches. Since then, we have admitted other fathers in Ozalla, Ohodo, Aku, and Uda Parishes. I therefore appeal that other parishes will educate their fathers on the need to belong to the Fellowship. The Diocesan co-ordinator and trainer of Christian fathers, the Ven. E.I Onah, is always available for your consultation.

## **10. Inauguration of 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee**

During the last Diocesan Synod held at St. Paul's Cathedral, Nsukka, it was agreed that a committee be set up to start planning for our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in 2004. This committee was also inaugurated on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2002 with the Chancellor, Sir Barrister Obiorah Nzewi, as the chairman. Other members apart from the Registrar, Sir Barrister F.I.N Ngwu, who by virtues of his position as a Diocesan Registrar is an ex-officio member include:

The Ven. E.I Onah  
Sir Chike Ngwu  
The Ven. A.N.C Ogbochie  
Sir Engr. Dr. Ugo Nwoji  
Lady Promise R. Okonkwo  
Mr. Jonathan C. Onuh (Accountant)  
Sir Emma. C. Onah (Chairman, Diocesan Development Committee)  
Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Nnam  
The Rev. Canon G.U. Nnamani (Synod Secretary)  
Sir Dr. A.E. Onurah (President, Council of Knights)  
Sir Felix Amoke  
Sir Emma. Ogbonna  
Sir Dr. Emeka Enjere  
The Rev. Canon E.I Asogwa  
Mr. Gabriel Ajibo (Diocesan Youth Leader)  
The Ven. J.C. Onah  
Lady Dr. Florence O. Ezeudu  
Mrs. Lois Okeke

Dame Selinah Ugwuoke-Adibua.

They were given the following terms of reference:

1. Powers to co-opt other members.
2. Sub-divide into sub-committees for effective grass-root planning
3. Draw up a programme of activities that will touch the number of archdeaconries that will be in existence by 2004
4. Plan for Diocesan Cloth for the celebration, T-shirts, caps, and other souvenirs.
5. Source for fund – either by appeal, launching or levy, Reach out to Nsukka indigenes and friends of the Diocese, both within and outside the country.
6. Monitor the development/progress of the work in each archdeaconry to make sure that they have something to celebrate.
7. Suggest any other idea that will be of interest to the Diocese.

### ***11. Fathers' Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2002***

For this year's Fathers' Sunday I decided to move away from the Cathedral to worship in another church. I went to St. Andrew's Church, Ibagwa. On arrival, there was nothing to show that it was a Fathers' Sunday. Most of the fathers came late to the church. No formal procession by the fathers with their own choruses or songs. Lessons were read by clergymen as usual and the official wardens of the church did their work. Before the sermon however, I demanded that they sing some choruses by the fathers. They nevertheless donated a number of plastic chairs to mark the occasion. I know that St. Andrew's, Ibagwa may not be the only culprit, but I have said this so that those who do not make the necessary preparations for these special services will take note.

### ***12. Trinity Ordination***

The Trinity Ordination of the Diocese took place on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2002. 7 deacons were ordained priests. They are:

The Rev. Okwuchukwu Ayogu  
The Rev. Joseph N. Chukwuma  
The Rev. Chiedu Ekpunobi  
The Rev. Christopher Okwor  
The Rev. Alphonsus Odo  
The Rev. Christian Nnadi  
The Rev. Clifford Ugwuanyi

Two deacons were also ordained  
The Rev. Ugochukwu Ofoezie and  
The Rev. Leonard Ukwueze.

We ask that you continue to pray for these ministers of God as they work in their respective churches that they will be true shepherds of the flock of Christ committed to their charge.

### ***13. T.A.P. (Train a Priest)***

In the early years of this Diocese, we appealed that individuals or organizations who want to identify with the ministerial training in the Diocese will indicate. We thank God that both individuals and organizations then took up the challenge. We are equally appreciative of those who responded to the call. For some years now, people are no longer coming forward to take up the challenge except the women. It is our aim that every church in this Diocese will be led by a clergyman and if so, it then means that we still need many people to be trained as pastors. I want to renew the appeal and ask that people or organizations once more come forward to indicate their interest. Today, the cost of supporting a student for one year will be about 25,00.00 (Twenty-five thousand naira only). I look forward to your response and God will bless you.

#### ***14. Conferment of Mother of Faith***

At St. John's Church, Onuiyi Nsukka on Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2002 another 4 women who have showed exemplary faith and devotion in their Christian commitment were conferred with the title "MOTHER OF FAITH" (Nne-okwuke). We pray that they will not relent in their work for Christ.

#### ***15. The Work of Women in the Diocese***

At the appropriate time, the President of the Mothers' Union and Women's Guild will give a comprehensive report of the activities of women in the Diocese. I simply want to express our profound gratitude for the contributions of the women in the development efforts of the Diocese. You know the role they have so far played in seeing that the Bishops court is brought to its present state. The walling of the compound which they pledged to do has started and the interior decorations and furnishings have almost been completed. More details will be given in their report. We also thank God for a very successful Annual Conference which they held at St. Johns' Church, Onuiyi – Nsukka. We thank the men who came out in good numbers to support them especially the knights of St. Paul and the University Community.

The Girls' Guild of the Diocese under the able and dynamic leadership of the co-ordinator, Dr. (Mrs.) Stella Ify Madueme, purchased one 18-seater Urvan bus.

#### ***16. Bishops court Project***

The report on Bishops court will be given by the Chairman, Diocesan Development Committee. I think that this is the last time the report on Bishops court will be appearing in our Synod as we hope to conclude everything about the Court after this Synod.

We shall embark on other projects as we are looking forward to the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the inauguration of the Diocese. Our next project is the building of a Cathedral for the Diocese. We thank all of you for your contributions in the Bishops court and hope that you will even do more as we start the Cathedral. God will bless you in Jesus' name.

#### ***17. Visit of the Presiding Bishop of Ecusa***

The Most Rev. Frank Griswold and wife, Phoebe, visited Nigeria in January 2002. Most Rev. Griswold is American's equivalent of the archbishop of Canterbury. He came with two clergymen and a journalist – Canon Patrick Mauney, Director of Anglican and Global Relations and Canon Benjamin Musoke, Lubeja partnership Officer for Africa, and Miss Nan Cobbery, a journalist, for 'Episcopal Life'. He and his team spent from 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> January in

Province II From the 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> January he was at Agbarha-Otor with the Bishops of Church of Nigeria during their annual retreat.

### ***18. Gift from Overseas***

Professor Onuorah, my Commissary in London, gave the Diocese £200 (two hundred pounds). Professor Onuorah has occasionally given some pound sterling in support of the Diocese.

### ***19. New Archbishop of Canterbury***

The Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England, His Grace the Most Rev. Rt. Hon. Dr. George Carey, has indicated his willingness to retire by the end of November 2002.

A new Archbishop has been elected to succeed him. He is the Archbishop of Wales, The Most Rev. Rowan Williams. He will become the 104<sup>th</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury and the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion World-Wide.

## **CHURCH OF NIGERIA NEWS**

### ***1. New Bishop***

During the Provincial Standing Committee at Umuahia in March 2002, the Provost of Ikala-Ilaje, Very Rev. Joshua E. Ogunele, was elected as the new Bishop of the Diocese following the retirement of the Rt. Rev. Dr. J.O. Arulefela. He has been consecrated and enthroned. It is our prayer that God will bless his ministry.

### ***2. Bishops' Retreat at Agbarla-Otor January 21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 2002***

The annual retreat of the Bishop of the Church of Nigeria was held this year at Ibru Anglican Retreat Centre, Agbarla-Otor in Ughelli Diocese. It provided the Bishops an opportunity of fellowship in which they reflected on some issues affecting the Church of Nigeria.

The Ibru Anglican Retreat Centre is a gift to the Anglican Church by Mr. Alex Ibru, who in his speech said that God gave him wealth, contentment and the mind to give. The Primate thanked him on behalf of the Church of Nigeria and prayed that his gesture should challenge other wealthy Anglicans to give from what God has given them to meet the needs of the Church.

The Ibru Anglican Retreat Center is open for conferences, seminars, retreats, etc. It has accommodation for over one hundred people. People from different Dioceses have had their retreats there. We hope that our Diocese will one day have hers there.

### **The Centre has:**

- (i) An international school for the age 3 – 18 years where he has already invested over ₦250 million
- (ii) A fully equipped hospital for women and children is located near the Center there which is worth over ₦200 million.
- (iii) A hospital in the pipeline in Lagos worth several millions of naira, which he has promised to endow with ₦100 million when it is completed.

- (iv) He offered four free pages in the Sunday Guardian for publications for the Anglican Church.

Mr. Alex Ibru also loaned the Church of Nigeria ₦20 million to enable it pay for the Anglican Radio Station – Radio Crowther.

In his characteristic humility, he says that he does not feel that he is doing anything spectacular since the money belongs to God and he sees himself as holding it in trust for God.

It is our prayer that his generosity will challenge us to work for God. We also pray that God will continue to bless his family.

### ***3. Proposed New Provinces For Church of Nigeria***

There has been agitations from many parts of the Church of Nigeria that more provinces be created.. The Primate during the Standing Committee at Umuahia gave full details of the reasons for the proposals which will bring us to ten provinces.

If the proposals are accepted, after the constitutional amendments, Province II as we know it will be split into three provinces.

- (i) **Province On the Niger:** On the Niger, Enugu, Awka, Nsukka, Nnewi, Oji-River and Abakaliki.
- (ii) **Province of Niger Delta:** Niger Delta, Aba, Uyo, Ukwa, Calabar, Niger Delta North, Niger Delta West and Umuahia.
- (iii) **Province of Owerri:** Owerri, Orlu, Okigwe-North, Okigwe South, Mbaise, Ideato and Egbu.

Asaba which has been in Province II will then join Province of Bendel.

The Primate gave the assurance that the new arrangement will not result in increased financial obligations for the Diocese.

### ***4. Lambeth 2008***

During our last Synod, I mentioned that the Church of Nigeria has already started to plan towards the 2008 Lambeth Conference. Every Diocese was told its Financial involvement towards the Conference. Our Diocese was told to contribute ₦1,000,000 (One Million Naira) only. We have started collecting our own and I hope that by the end of the year we shall be able to pay. I appeal to churches or parishes that have not paid theirs to do so immediately.

### ***5. Training of Clergy for the Church of Nigeria***

The Church of Nigeria has proposed that from September this year, theological colleges will run a four year course instead of the three year course which has been operational.

It is intended that the three main languages of Nigeria – Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba – will be taught, and one of the four years will be for fieldwork in an area where the ordinand’s language is not spoken, so that our clergymen will be exposed to other cultures and languages in our country.

The Primate has equally proposed that in order to alleviate the financial problems faced by our theological colleges, an endowment fund will be set up. He has also suggested that bishops and clergymen will start contributing towards this endowment fund as follows:

1. Primate, Archbishops and Bishops – ₦2,000 monthly
2. Provosts and Archdeacons – ₦1,000 monthly
3. Canons – ₦500 monthly
4. Priests – ₦250 monthly.

This will run for three years starting from January 2002. This has to be deducted before the payment of stipends to the clergy.

#### **6. *Church of Nigeria Endowment Fund***

Since this Primate came into office, he has been working hard to see that the new vision of the church of Nigeria is realized. One of the objectives of the vision is to have a strong financial base for the church, so that the burden of assessment will be removed from the Dioceses; have enough fund for Church of Nigeria activities so that the burden can be less on the hosting dioceses. There will also be missionary Diocese. To realize this, the EARG (Eminent Anglican Resource group) was introduced but the response was not encouraging after some years.

A new system has now been introduced where the Church of Nigeria will raise 2000,000 Anglican to give the Church 5,000 (Five thousand Naira) only each, and this will enable the Church raise one billion naira needed by the end of December 2002 to see that Church of Nigeria becomes financially self-reliant. He calls this the Stewardship of Self-Reliance. In his paper presented at the Standing Committee he said, ‘there is an urgent need for the Church of Nigeria to be self-reliant so as to be more functional and effective in its operations. The Church of Nigeria which has been described as the fastest growing church and the largest concentration of Anglicans in the world will be strengthened and well-resourced to positively propagate a holistic gospel throughout the country and beyond’.

Our Diocese is expected to produce at least 1,500 Anglicans according to the category we are in. We have already discussed this in our Diocesan Board and plans are on, not just to raise money for our own Diocese but to equally endow our Diocese. More details of our plan will be made known to you. It is our appeal that people will respond to this and we believe that there are many who can give more than ₦5,000 while those who will afford less will not be rejected. All of us will like to identify with the development effort of both the church of Nigeria and our Diocese.

#### **7. *Retirement of Bishops***

At the last Provincial General Synod held at St. James’ Cathedral, Oke-Bola, Ibadan the retirement of the following Bishops was announced

- (1) The Rt. Rev. Prof. A. A. Iwuagwu – Bishop of Aba
- (2) The Ret. Rev. N.A. Enuke – Bishop of Warri
- (3) The Rt. Rev. S.O. Onyelade – Bishop of Kabba
- (4) The Rt. Rev. A. A. Edionwe- Bishop of Benin.

Let us continue to pray for them as they plan for their retirement and ask that God will sustain them throughout the period of their retirement.

### **THE STATE OF THE NATION**

Recent events in our nation ought to be a matter of great concern to any well-meaning citizen of this great nation. In our former National Anthem we say:

“Nigeria we hail thee  
Our own dear native land  
Though tribe and tongue may differ  
In brotherhood we stand”

I doubt whether most of our leaders ever know what leadership entails. It is very unfortunate that the political parties that emerged at the end of the military, could simply be described as an amalgamation of selfish opportunists who see politics as a means of looting the nations’ treasury for their own selfish ends. We lack patriotic leaders who love their country. Since last year, we have witnessed countless number of political murders in different parts of the nation.

The Attorney General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ige, was assassinated on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 2001 and one wonders why the authorities have not been able to unravel the mystery surrounding his killing. Can it be that the hands of the authorities are there? In many states, the story is the same – destruction of houses of political opponents, killings, intrigue and false accusation abound. Politicians elected to represent the masses and plan for development and progress of the nation have abandoned their legitimate duty to the detriment of the masses and the nation in general.

The nation therefore, has been plagued by insecurity of life and property, unemployment, non-payment of salaries of both civil servants and pensioners. Cultism has eroded our universities and for a greater part of the year, most universities remain closed.

During the last General Synod of the Church of Nigeria, the theme was “When the righteous are in authority the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule the people groan,” Prov. 29:2

The Church has a very great responsibility at this time when the next election is fast approaching to pray for God’s intervention in our country. He has done it before. He will do it again. Christians are therefore urged not to shun politics any longer but to be actively involved in it so that we can vote righteous people into power.

It is sad that instead of planning for progress and well-being of the masses, leaders of our nation are busy planning for a second term when they have not justifiably concluded the first term.

Writing about Uganda in the Anglican World Trinity Edition 2002, the author said, “Uganda, a nation plagued by insecurity, where the chief law-breakers were the guardians of the law, where nothing worked economically and orphans were everywhere.”

How true this is of Nigeria, but it is our hope that God will not allow this ugly trend to continue.

## **OBITUARY**

During the period in review, we lost the following people by death.

1. Lady Nene Onyekwelu
2. Rev. Can. A.E.D. Mgbemena
3. Mr. Bartholomew Eze –Ovoko
4. Mr. Ogbonna – Chief Security Officer, U.N.N

Let us continue to remember their families in our prayers.

## **THE THEME OF THE SYNOD: “TRANSFORMATION AS THE NEED OF THE MOMENT” (ROMANS 12:2)**

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

The word ‘transform’ means to change something or a person in nature, in appearance or character. A steam engine, for instance, transforms heat into energy. In Christianity, conversion can transform the character of the convert. Transformation therefore, is the change into Christ likeness which Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “All of us then reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.”

The New American Standard Version translates it thus: “All of us with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

Through the Holy Spirit’s agency, we become like the one we look at as we absorb the message of the gospel. Transformation can be equated with new birth or new creation as indicated in 2Corinthians 5:17, “When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being, the old is gone, the new has come.”

In the Old Testament, God spoke of transforming the nation of Israel individually. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord declare:

*“ I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts, I will be their God and they will be my people”.*

When this happens, the individual is liberated and freed from the rule of sin in our daily lives and we are helped by the Holy Spirit to live the new life we share with Christ. He lives and

walks in the spirit, bearing the fruit of the spirit as indicated in Gal. 5:2: “But the Spirit produces love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.”

Paul speaks of transformation as against the desire to conform with the standards of this world. The world and the desires of the world which are very attractive and easy to follow draw people away from God. Hence in 1John 2:15-17 we are warned: “Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. Everything that belongs to the world – what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of – none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but he who does the will of God lives forever.”

The call for transformation is so urgent today in our society where materialism, greed, corruption, and all kinds of vices are the order of the day. Today, people are no longer concerned about the standards set by God rather, they follow the standards of the world.

The Church which is meant to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth has joined in worldly pursuit and the true gospel is no longer preached in many places. The word of God is now being proclaimed and interpreted with human wisdom and to many today prosperity gospel is the only message that has any meaning. A transformed person ought to be God’s show piece in the proclamation of the message of truth. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:17: “We are not like so many others, who handle God’s message as if it were cheap merchandise, but because God has sent us, we speak with sincerity in his presence as servants of Christ.”

### **OUR VALUE SYSTEM**

The value system of our society today needs a total transformation. Our attitude to wealth and material possessions has made people to neglect good societal norms like integrity, truth, dedication to duty, and honest labour. Our society today honours and adores the person who has wealth not minding how that wealth was acquired. The person that speaks and people listen is the one who counts money in millions. The person who speaks the truth is not listened to because he can’t afford to spray money. Ostentatious living has therefore given way to modesty. Justice in our courts go to those who can offer the highest bribes. Inflated contracts are offered by those in authority only to share the money without effectively executing the contract.

The Bible makes clear the danger of bribes. Exod. 23:8 says; “Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twist the words of the righteous” (cf Deut. 16:16).

### **OUR RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Jesus in his teaching condemned the hypocritical religious life of the scribes and Pharisees. In Mathew 15:8 he said, “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” How true this is of many today who profess Christianity. We hear the word of God but in most cases it has not changed our lives. In James 1:22 it is written – “Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to the word; instead, put it into practice.” Part of true religion is also to “keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” Millions attend crusades and revivals, fast and perform all religious ceremonies and yet they live in conformity with the standards of the world. God therefore, seems to be far away from us. People complain that they have fasted and prayed and yet God did not answer.

Isaiah 58:4 says; ‘Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.’”

In verses 6 and 7, God states the kind of fasting that is acceptable to him: “is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen, to loose the chains of injustice... to set the oppressed from and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry... when you see the naked to clothe him and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood.”

## **OUR ATTITUDE TO WORK**

It is unfortunate that in our society today majority of workers are only concerned about their pay packet instead of the output in their places of work. People do not see their job as a way through which they will show their patriotism and commitment to the economic development of their fatherland. Excellence and productivity for many is not worth striving for. A teacher goes to school, clocks in and away he/she goes for his/her own business. Some live in places very far away from their schools and attend school twice or thrice in a week. Authorities do not help matter either. What concerns them is clocking in, not the output and therefore no proper supervision. No wonder the standard of education in our country has fallen greatly. Clerks in the offices have to be bribed before one’s file is produced or the file will be lost. Chief executives are known for their not being on seat; some even live in places very far from their official location. To compound the matter, workers are owed salaries for many months. The Bible speaks of employers of labour who fail to fulfill their obligations. James 5:4 says: “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workman who moved your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvests have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

## **TRANSFORMATION IN OUR POLITICAL PRACTICE**

The politics of bitterness and hate as currently played in our country does not make for national progress and economic development.

Political assassinations abound in many parts of the country with the result that perpetrators of these heinous crimes are not detected and brought to book. Arms are imported illegally and thugs trained and armed for personal security. This poses a great threat for the nation as time will come when they will have nothing to do and the only alternative will be to resort to armed robbery. Politicians ought to learn that governance is not a do or die affair and that people should not get into offices by force, rather through the mandate of the people. Our politicians have to learn from other civilized societies where people go into politics for the service they will render and not for what they will get. The amount of money that is spent to perpetuate one’s stay in office should gainfully be utilized for establishing industries to create employment opportunities for millions of our unemployed youths who through frustration resort to crimes. It could equally be used as in some countries to pay unemployment allowance.

A transformed political understanding will mean letting Jesus be the Lord of our political practices as He is the Lord in our Church attendance. Every politician needs God’s transforming grace in order to live out what Christ taught. According to Prov. 29:2; “When the righteous is in authority, the people rejoice but when the wicked rule, the people groan.

## **TRANSFORMATION IN HUMAN RELATIONS**

The world today is torn apart by strained relationship between one nation and the other. The wealthy nations are economically trying to strangulate the poor nations. In many places, religious belief is a force that places people of one faith against those of another faith. In others race, tribe or language could be responsible for causing unhealthy rivalry and division. Most of the problems that face us today as a nation are because of very poor human relations. Ethnicity and tribalism which have eaten deep into our society have made progress and stability difficult if not impossible in our country. The biblical injunction to love your neighbor as you love yourself and do unto others as you will like them do to you is not heeded. Federal appointments in most cases are not to people qualified to do a job but to relations of those in authority. An ordinary business man could be awarded a contract which an engineer will execute only for him to hire the services of an engineer. Religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in our country has taken much toll both in life and property especially in the Northern part of the country where it is becoming increasingly impossible for Christians to live in the same community with their Muslim brothers and sisters. Christians are not given a place to build their church. Hence, one section of the country is operating on the constitution of the land while another is operating on its own religious law. Even among people of the same religious belief, there is sour relationship. In Christianity, for instance, there are places where the main Christian denominations are antagonistic towards their sister denominations. It is now no secret that we have denominations that now compel their members to vote only for people from their particular denomination, without taking into consideration the kind of person to be voted in. Muslims on their part educate their own people not to vote for any Christian. This attitude does not make us one nation and tends to polarize instead of uniting us. A transformed mind will always be concerned with the best in the interest of the society.

## **TRANSFORMATION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT**

In Genesis 1:28 God enjoined man: "Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under control." The question we have to ask ourselves is: what practical things should we do to make this world a better place to live in? I usually tell my clergymen and other workers in the Diocese to see that before they leave any station, they make it better than what they met on arrival. If this is done, within a short time, you would have created an environment where any worker who comes there will be happy to work.

In many parts of our country today, government effort to change our environment is being thwarted by some selfish individuals who do not consider the interest of the masses. Reports of the vanalization of telephone lines, NEPA installations and other items meant for the public abound. In most cases, public demonstrations end up in destroying properties, whether individuals or government, with the result that instead of adding to what is already in existence, we continue to replace one thing or even lose the one we have put in place. What use are we making of the natural resources that God has given us? Are these being harnessed and utilized for the improvement of the living condition of the masses? In some parts of the country, erosion has either destroyed crops or houses causing untold hardship to those affected.

Government has a responsibility to initiate plans that can alleviate the suffering of such a community.

## **CONCLUSION**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Paul tells us not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but that we be transformed by the renewal of our minds which means our hearts, our desires, our thoughts and purposes and indeed our entire inner life.

It is his thought that by self-offering and submission, we open ourselves to God, and thereby bring to an end any resistance to the in dwelling Holy Spirit that may have been in us before. The renewed mind enlightened by the Spirit, will compare the options and then perceive what course of action will best please God.

As Christians, we have to make a conscious effort to submit to the rule of Christ's Holy Spirit which is no easy matter in this permissive and materialistic society.

According to Hebrews 12:1; "Let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings too closely" and refuse to be conformed to this world.

It is therefore, my prayer that God alone who can transform, will through His Holy Spirit, transform us both as individuals and the society at large.

Thank you for patient listening and remain blessed in Jesus' Name.

#### **ADMISSIONS AND CONFIRMATION – OCTOBER 2001 – SEPTEMBER 2002**

We thank God that he gave us his enabling grace as we went round in our pastoral work throughout the Diocese.

Within the year in review, we have admitted 112 girls to the Girls' Guild, 200 women to the Women's Guild, 71 to the Mothers' Union, while 96 men have been admitted to the Christian Fathers' Fellowship.

A total of 2925 candidates have been confirmed: 886 males and 2039 females.

The table is shown as follows:

<i>DATE</i>	<i>PARISHES</i>	<i>G.G</i>	<i>W.G.</i>	<i>M.U.</i>	<i>CFE</i>	<i>CONFIRMATION</i>		<i>TOTAL</i>
						<i>MALES</i>	<i>FEMALES</i>	
7/10/2001	St. Mark's Ohodo	2	2	5	-	16	57	70
14/10/2001	St. Paul's Udah	-	6	2	-	26	47	73
15/10/2001	St. Stephen's, Ogurte	1	9	1	-	19	83	102
20/10/2001	All Stains', Obollo-Afor	-	1	-	-	14	39	53
4/11/2001	St. Stephen's Neke	27	7	11	-	29	75	104
9/12/2001	St. Andrew's, Ibagwa	4	14	2	-	70	195	265
13/1/2002	St. John's, Onuiyi-Nsukka	5	5	1	-	27	26	53
16/1/2002	St. Philip's, Eha-Amufu	15	29	8	-	48	183	231
18/1/2002	Emmanuel Church, Alor-Agu	-	10	1	-	55	100	155
3/2/2002	St. Mary's Church, Mbu	3	1	1	-	18	36	54
17/2/2002	St. Cyprian's Chapel (Sec. Sch)	-	-	-	-	26	50	76

24/2/2002	St. Mathew, Mgbuji	-	4	-	-	19	93	112
24/3/2002	St. Andrew's, Ikem	2	14	1	-	17	63	80
28/4/2002	St. Stephen's, Eha-Alumona	1	15	7	-	65	91	156
12/5/2002	St. Paul's Cathedral Inauguration of CFF	-	-	-	74	-	-	-
19/5/2002	St. Paul's Cathedral, Nsukka	7	5	5	-	66	87	153
26/5/2002	St. mark's, Obukpa	-	2	-	-	24	79	103
2/5/2002	St. Peter's, Ovoko	-	4	-	-	65	103	168
9/6/2002	St. John's, Edem-Ani	5	11	4	-	27	72	99
23/6/2002	Christ Church chapel, UNN.	1	2	-	-	19	16	35
30/6/2002	Emmanuel Church, Unadu	1	42	-	-	37	36	73
14/7/2002	St. Luke's Church, Amufie	-	11	1	-	16	64	80
28/7/2002	St. Bartholomew's, Amachalla	2	9	-	-	16	64	80
4/8/2002	St. Mathew's Ekwebge (Ozalla)	4	17	3	9	33	81	114
11/8/2002	St. Thomas', Aku	18	3	6	3	54	155	209
25/8/2002	St. Mark's, Ohodo	-	7	1	-	22	40	62
1/9/2002	St. Paul, Uda	9	8	3	10	15	45	60
22/9/2002	Emmanuel Church, Alor-Uno	5	20	8	-	47	62	109
		<b>112</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>2039</b>	