

# THE MESSAGE OF ETERNAL LIFE



## POST-SYNODAL PASTORAL EXHORTATION (FIRST SYNOD OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NNEWI)

*BY*

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life” (John 6:68)*

1. As I was reflecting on the first Synod of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, it struck me with force that we are faced with the situation that led Peter to exclaim to Jesus Christ, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life” (Jn. 6: 68). Jesus had multiplied bread and fed over 5000 men. Seeing the sign that he had done, the people said, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world” (Jn. 6:14). They wanted to make him king but Jesus fled into the hills alone (v. 15). His disciples left by boat and Jesus later came to them walking on the sea. They were afraid. On coming into the boat, he told them: “It is me. Don't be afraid”(v. 20). They then crossed the sea to Capernaum. A large multitude of people surged across the sea in boats to the other side to look for Jesus. On seeing them, Jesus told them point blank: “In all truth I tell you, you are looking for me not because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that goes bad, but work for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of man will give you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal” (v. 26-27). The encounter led to the exposition of the mysteries of Christian life, the mysteries of eternal life.

2. The first key struck by this passage is the priority of eternal life. While this earthly life and its concerns are important, they pale into insignificance when confronted with the demands and offer of eternal life. Jesus has come

to give life and give it in abundance (Jn. 10:10). He was at pains to teach the people that the gift of eternal life outweighs all other considerations. Think of the Sermon on the Mount. A person would be ready to lose his or her limbs or eyes rather than risk being thrown into hell, the opposite of eternal life (see Mt 5:29-30). In the same Sermon on the Mount, Jesus went through the major earthly concerns that could distract a person from seeking eternal life treasures, food, clothing and declared: “Set your heart on his [your Father's] kingdom first, and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well” (Mt. 6:33). Two of the parables of Jesus, the parable of the treasure and that of the pearl showed the surpassing value of the kingdom of Heaven, for which a person would sell all he or she owned to buy (Mt. 13:44-45). In effect, Jesus pointed out to the people that they should live and work for eternal life. Eternal life is God's ultimate gift to humanity and that is exactly the goal of salvation. Our ultimate concern, our primary and supreme ministry and our passion are about eternal life *Salus animarum prima et suprema lex in Ecclesia est!* The salvation of souls is the first and supreme law in the Church (see can. 1752). With St. Paul, we offer “*What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love him*” (1 Cor. 2:9; see Is 64:3 and Jer. 3:16).

3. Eternal life in Christ is indissolubly linked with the Eucharist. The food of eternal life is the Eucharist which the Son of man would give. It is to be noted that St. John's Gospel contains no account of the institution of the Eucharist. However, the Fourth Evangelist gave the best theology of the Eucharist in the New Testament in the

account which we are reflecting upon. Jesus stated clearly that he is the bread of life which is his flesh. All must eat his flesh and drink his blood to have eternal life. This was a hard saying for those followers who had no commitment. They were following him out of curiosity or out of the desire to gain immediate satisfaction. They had no faith and as such could not accept him and all he stands for. At the challenge of faith, they left him. “This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?” After this, many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more (John 6:60, 66) The Eucharist continues to be a stumbling block to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. But to those who believe, it is the guarantee of eternal life. Peter was to voice out the faith of billions of men and women who down the ages since the beginning of Christianity have seen Jesus as the one who has the message of eternal life, the message which is closely and intimately bound up with the Eucharist.

### **The Theme of the Synod**

4. The passage is therefore at once the introduction to the Eucharist and the proclamation of the Christian faith, the faith in Jesus Christ who is the bread of life and who has the message of eternal life. The fusion of faith in the Word of God and the Eucharist set the tune of the First Synod of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. It was providential that the Synod conceived in the first year of my Episcopal ministry in the new Diocese was delivered in the Year of the Eucharist, the Year set out by our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II of saintly memory to deepen the faith and devotion of the whole Catholic world in the Most Holy Sacrament of Eucharist. The faith in Jesus Christ was then

the matrix of the whole synodal event. Thus we providentially chose the theme of the Synod with faith in Christ as the centre of our life: **Living the Faith in the Family of God on Mission in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17)**. Is it not obvious that the Eucharist would resound as the source, centre and summit of our life in Christ as we strive to live our faith?

5. The Synod came as a challenge to all Catholics in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. We are happy with the impressive numbers that turn out for daily Eucharistic celebrations and the even greater numbers that participate in the Sunday Eucharistic assemblies in all our churches. Catholics in other parts of the world, especially in Europe and America are drawing back from Christ because of increasing secularization of life and increasing material well-being. They feel that they have no need to go to Christ either for the bread that perishes or the bread that would last. They are a world to themselves and therefore feel they have no need for Christ. People in our area still feel the need for Christ. But the challenge comes when their need for Christ is tested. If Christ were to ask the teeming population in our churches, “Why have you come?” How many would remain to say: “We have come to you because you have the message of eternal life?”

### **The Challenges**

6. In the face of the attractions of Pentecostalism and the advancing menace of neo-paganism, Catholics are challenged in their profession of faith. People troop out to

“where it is happening”, where there are claims of signs and wonders, miracles, healings, visions and other extraordinary manifestations. But how many are prepared to fight the good fight of faith in the face of tribulations and the cross that is part and parcel of life? From the other angle, many are drawn to “pagan” practices through either fear of the unknown spiritual forces or the pressure of the traditional society. How many Catholics are prepared to be faithful witnesses to the Catholic faith in all situations and to the end? It is in the search for true, genuine and enduring faith in Christ that I convoked the Synod.

7. Faith is the utter conviction about what is not seen and certainty about what is to come (see Hb. 11:1) and without this faith no one can please God (see Hb. 11:6). Church membership, attendance at Mass and other Christian activities of worship or service, membership in the various Christian organizations and the many activities in which a person engages do not guarantee the existence of the faith that can save a person. The traditional Catechism insists that a Christian is one who is baptised and who believes and accepts all the teachings of Jesus Christ and who puts all these teachings into practice. Accepting and living the faith in Christ can only be integral when one accepts and lives the faith in the Church. Our creed moves from “I believe in one God Father, Son and Holy Spirit” to “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church and everlasting life”. Everything is all tied up in the

authentic faith in Christ, in a faith that makes us his authentic witnesses in all situations, even to the point of death in martyrdom, the ultimate witnessing with one's life! The synod was called to purify our faith and to help us live that faith in its entirety and integrity in the Family of God, which is the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. In effect, the synod was to help us to rediscover and renew the faith of Peter: “To whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life” (John 6:68).

8. The Synod process itself was alive with faith. From the announcing of the synod to its conclusion, we saw the hand of God at work. I must thank the Synod Preparatory Committee which worked day and night to prepare for the synod. The first obstacle was the mentality of Catholics to the synod. Being familiar with synods in the Anglican Communion, most of the Catholics wondered why I was convoking a synod at all. We had to convince our Catholic faithful that diocesan synod was also done by Catholics as a means of involving the whole diocesan community in the discernment process and in mapping out the strategies for evangelization. Even though the synod itself would be attended by a selection of the members of Christ's faithful, the whole community had the opportunity to make their input in the study and preparation of the matters to be discussed in the synod. The study of the *Lineamenta* and *Instrumentum laboris* gave everybody the chance to contribute to the discussion. In the end, the synod delegates numbering over 350 brought together the fruits of the discussion after an intensive week of further study, discussion and reflection all done in the atmosphere

of prayer and worship of the Most Holy Eucharist. I am convinced that the Spirit of God was palpably present in the synod from the Opening Ceremonies at Our Lady of Assumption Cathedral Nnewi on Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2005 through the days and nights at Ozubulu to the Closing Ceremony at Our Lady of Assumption Cathedral, Nnewi on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

### **Gratitude**

9. I wish to use this medium to thank all those who contributed in one way or the other to the success of the Synod. I thank God who is the driving force of all we do. Without Him, we could have done nothing (see John 15:5). With St. Paul I can confidently say that I can do all through Him who strengthens me (see Phil. 3:13). His grace was enough for us. He saw us through the preparations and celebration of the Synod. Again with St. Paul I render praise and glory to “him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20-21). I thank all my collaborators, priests, consecrated men and women and the members of the lay faithful, who gave their time, talent and treasure to see that the Synod was a successful event in the life of our Family of God on Mission. Special thanks go to the chairman of the Synod Committee, Very Rev. Fr. Anichebe Patrick Ezeobata and to his team of dedicated men and women. I am grateful to Ozubulu Catholic Community in general and Eziora Catholic Community in particular for hosting the Synod. I am sure that the Church of God in Ozubulu will experience a new spring in evangelization and holiness. May the Lord bless

and reward all who took part in the Synod either as delegates, facilitators, experts, officials as well as those who provided support services like secretarial, catering, liturgical, communication, logistic and security services.

## CHAPTER ONE

### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHERS IN FAITH

*“Remember your leaders, who preached the word of  
God  
to you, and as you reflect on the outcome of their  
lives, take their faith as your model” (Heb. 13:7)*

#### Historical Notes

10. The Synod took us down the memory lane to the origins of the Catholic missionary enterprise in our area, beginning with the visits of European missionaries from the riverine areas to Isingwu Oraifite but the early missionaries decided to set up the parish centre at Eziora, Ozubulu in 1907. Ozubulu Parish was formally and solemnly opened on the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1908. Their decision according to the records available was based on the openness of the people of Ozubulu to other cultures. According to Jordan, “the missionaries were pleased with the customs and traditions of Ozubulu which were amenable to foreign influence and change, unlike the customs of the riverine peoples” (See C. Obi and others, **A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985**, p. 129). This openness made it possible for the people of Ozubulu and

the surrounding towns to accept and assimilate Western culture and Christian religion which went hand in hand. Today, the people of our area are challenged to maintain the same openness which made it possible for Ozubulu to be the main springboard for the missionary penetration of the heart of Igboland . We pay tribute to Ozubulu for providing this springboard. That was why we decided to go back to our roots for the Synod. It was not fortuitous that Eziora, Ozubulu was chosen as the main venue for the Synod. It was for us a pilgrimage to the place that was sanctified by our missionaries. The moving of the parish headquarters from Eziora, Ozubulu to Odoata, Ihiala in June 1927 was a decision based on the realities of the time. Ihiala was seen to be more central and had more advantages for quicker movement into the interior. It had already facilities such as Catechists' Training Centre. This movement notwithstanding, we will continue to regard Eziora, Ozubulu as the cradle of Catholicism in our diocese.

#### The Early Missionaries

11. The early missionaries were heroes of faith. The first group of these missionaries came from Alsace and Lorraine but later Irish missionaries took over the field. These missionaries were men and women fired by zeal for the Gospel. Out of love for our Lord Jesus Christ, these men and women defied all odds and faced all difficulties in order to bring the message of eternal life to our people. They were undaunted in the face of the serious handicaps and obstacles. Their heroism which bordered on martyrdom planted and watered the dense forest belt of Igboland to which God gave the wonderful increase that we are experiencing. It remains true that the blood of Christians is the seed of Christianity (*Sanguis Christianorum semen*). How can we appreciate the great

sacrifices which the early missionaries made? While showing gratitude to them for their labours, we have the bounden duty to maintain their glorious heritage. We, Catholics have the obligation to keep the legacy of the Catholic faith alive and strong in our time. May God reward those heroes of faith with eternal life for which they laboured and died! The Diocese will erect a monument in memory of all the missionaries who laboured in our diocese. The monument will be sited at St. Michael's Parish, Eziora, Ozubulu and will be opened on the Feast of the Archangel in 2007 which will be the centenary of the establishment of the first parish in the Diocese. Every parish is to compile the names of these men who brought us the message of eternal life and their names will be in the Book of Glory to be placed at the monument. I would request anybody who has any memory of the early missionaries to document his or her impressions. In the same vein, I would request anybody who has articles, books, letters, documents from those early missionaries to please bring them to the Chancellor of the Diocese for preservation in our archives.

12. The missionaries who laboured in our diocese brought to us a resilient Church, a Church that survived in spite of the disadvantaged position of the Catholic missionaries. The government of the day was English and the officials were mainly members of the Church of England (Anglican Communion). The missionaries were mainly Irish people. There was not much love lost between the English and the Irish. This notwithstanding, the Irish missionaries founded a Church with robust faith. Ireland was reputed to be a land of saints and scholars since St. Patrick cleansed the land of "paganism". The faith of the people and missionaries from Ireland transmitted to us the faith of our Fathers, the faith of the Catholic Church, that is one, holy, catholic and apostolic and indeed Roman.

The emphasis on Roman is deliberate. Coming from the background of conflict between Roman Catholicism embraced by the Irish and Anglicanism of their English overlords, the Irish were fiercely attached to the Church of Rome, to the Vicar of Christ, the Pope and brought this unalloyed allegiance to the Successor of Peter to us. We remain grateful for the Catholic orthodoxy and "natural" communion with the Chief Shepherd of the flock of Christ. Our diocese will remain solidly united in the faith brought us by our Fathers.

### **St. Patrick - Icon of Missionary Work**

13. When we reflect on the faith of our Fathers, our minds go to St. Patrick, the missionary from England who preached the Catholic faith in Ireland. He met Traditional Religion of the people of Ireland with their multiplicity of deities. He presented to them the Blessed Trinity. It is said that he used the shamrock to demonstrate the mystery. Shamrock continues to be the symbol for Ireland. Ireland will continue to be Christian and Catholic because of the insertion of Catholicism into the way of life of the Irish people. St. Patrick is one of the principal patrons of the Church in Nigeria. We need to revive the special honour given to St. Patrick during the missionary era. St. Patrick's Day, 17<sup>th</sup> March was generally celebrated as a Feast and there were many activities to mark the Day. We will mark the day with special activities in honour of our patron saint and in gratitude for the rich heritage of faith and culture which we received from the sons and daughters of St. Patrick.

### **Our Missionary Heritage**

14. Our diocese is linked to the vital river of the gospel that flowed from the Church in Jerusalem through Rome to Onitsha. This river which brings life in its wake and which makes the trees at its banks bear abundant fruit reached the shores of Onitsha on December 4, 1885. It flowed and

continues to flow by God's design to see the words of salvation reach the ends of the earth. We remain attached to the stem of the Gospel. The Onitsha connection makes us members of the family that spreads across most of the South eastern Nigeria and parts of Middle belt and Cameroon. The progress of the message of eternal life to our area makes us part of the river of life. While remaining part of this river of life, we have the obligation of ensuring that the river continues to bring our people and land the rich blessings associated with the Gospel. We need to continue to affirm that we have received the message of eternal life through Onitsha. The decision of our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II to make us a Particular Church has not cut us off from the vital source. Rather has it linked us vitally to Onitsha as its suffragan See. We shall endeavour to maintain filial relationship to our mother, the Archdiocese of Onitsha.

### **Our Fathers and Mothers in Faith**

15. We cannot forget the men and women who received the faith on our behalf. Our forefathers and fathers encountered the missionaries. While there would be some resistances, there was general acceptance of the Catholic missionaries whom they saw came for their welfare. Unlike the colonizers and traders from Europe, the Catholic missionaries came that the people of Nigeria would have life and have it to the full. They offered not gin, tobacco and the likes and they did not collect palm produce and slaves but they preached the message of eternal life and brought the benefits of modern civilization through schools, craft centres. Our fathers travelled to far places to invite the Catholic missionaries to their communities and helped them to establish the Church. Many of these men were really heroes of faith. Some of them endured persecutions from the predominantly pagan Chiefs and neighbours. Some were ostracized and dispossessed. But they remained steadfast to hand over to us the faith purified in the crucible of suffering. We need to

sing the praises of these men and women. Every community is to document the lives and activities of these men and women of outstanding faith, of devotion to the Church and their contribution to the coming of the Catholic Church in the various communities.

### **Catechist-Teachers**

16. We will not forget the early associates of the missionaries, the teacher-catechists who acted as the go-between in those early days of the gospel. They organised the communities and provided catechesis for the converts. They remained close to the various stations and facilitated the work of the missionaries. They were unsung heroes of our faith. We shall not allow their memories to go into oblivion. We will preserve their memories as much as we can excavate them from the memories of the people and from the historical records available. Our catechists have a lot to learn from these early harbingers of faith. Today, the communities are much smaller but the work of the Catechists is still much. They will continue to be the bridge between the pastors and the people. Living with the people, the catechists can feel their strengths and weaknesses, experience their joys and sorrows and be a compassionate and relevant intermediary in their dealings with the priests. The faithfulness, devotion and sacrifices of the early catechists should inspire our present-day catechists to more commitment to the work of being at the cutting edge of the spread of the message of eternal life among our people.

### **A Church Founded on Sacrifice**

17. The faith of our fathers was watered by the sacrifices and toils of countless men and women. A great Church has risen over the bones of those early missionaries who came to bring the message of eternal life. Many died at very tender ages. More pressed on to take their places.

While the living missionaries buried the dead, they prayed: **“Lord, receive the soul of our brother and our own. May a great Church spring up over our bones”**. God has answered their prayers beyond any imagination. Today, the Catholic Church in our diocese has over 438,905 members out of a total population of 658,358, being 66.67% of the population. This teeming population is served by 165 diocesan priests, 24 priests belonging to the following institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life: The Holy Ghost Congregation (CSSp), the Vincentians (CM), the Claretians (CMF), the Missionaries of St. Paul (MSP), the Vocationists (SVD). The diocese has the following female religious institutes working in it: Immaculate Heart of Mary Congregation (IHM), Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy Congregation (DMMM), Daughters of Divine Love Congregation (DDL), Holy Family Sisters of the Needy Congregation (HFSN), Clarissan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation (MC), Sisters of Jesus the Saviour (SJS) and Consecrated Virgins. The Congregation of the Brothers of St. Stephen has its members in the diocese. Two Public Association destined to become religious institutes have been granted permission to exist in the diocese. They are Holy Family Fathers and Brothers of the Youth and Missionary Sisters of Divine Mercy. We are happy with the abundance of vocation to the priesthood and consecrated life. We are grateful to God for the rich harvest from the labours, tears, blood and sacrifices of our fathers in faith.

### **Footprints of Holiness**

18. Our diocese has the foot prints of holy men and women to follow. The Servant of God, Bishop Joseph Shanahan laboured much in our area. Through his missionary zeal and extensive tours of our diocese, and by means of the use of the strategy of schools, he did more than any other missionary in spreading the message of eternal life and to plant the Catholic Church firmly in our diocese.

We pray that this holy missionary will be raised to the altar. We are proud to have had the ministry of Blessed Michael Iwene Tansi who worked in then Nnewi Parish. The memories of his very active apostolate remain vivid and fresh in the minds of those who encountered him. We look forward to the tour of our diocese with the relic of the Blessed. This will light the fire of holiness of life among the members of Christ's faithful. The members of Tansi Solidarity will arrange for the tour within 2007. I am aware that there are many men and women who lived genuinely heroic Christian lives in our area. Blessed Iwene Tansi has opened the way. The diocese will be ready to promote the cause of any of our fathers in faith who had reputation for holiness of life (*fama sanctitatis*) and for whom there is enough evidence of heroic Christian life.

### **Gratitude and Confidence**

19. Going back to our almost 100 hundred years of Christianity, we have to thank God for his love and kindness. We need to rekindle our spiritual fervor as we struggle to keep alive the faith of our fathers. In the face of the ominous threats to the Catholic faith in form of neo-paganism and Pentecostalism, we are set to embark on new evangelization aimed at deepening the faith of those already in the fold and seeking the lost sheep and bringing in new members into the fold. Three categories of the lost sheep which attract our attention in this new evangelization are those who were baptised but are not really converted, and those who have given up the practice of the Catholic faith and returned to traditional Religion and finally, those who have abandoned the Catholic faith for other Christian groups. All these categories will engage our attention as we endeavour to recover and renew the faith of our fathers. We are confident that the Lord who began this good work among us will bring it to completion and perfect fulfillment in his own time (see Phil. 1:6).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CHALLENGE OF EVANGELIZATION IN OUR TIME

*“Duc in altum Launch into the deep!”* (Lk. 5:4)

#### The Major Challenge

20. The major challenge facing our diocese is the need to rekindle in the whole Catholic community the zeal for evangelization. How can anybody continue to sit on the fence when the destiny of humanity is at stake? Or how can anybody, ordained or non-ordained continue sitting idle in the market place while there is much to be done in the Lord's vineyard? The mandate of Christ remains the driving force: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news!” (Mt. 28:19). At this stage of our progress, the challenge comes in a more urgent and pressing way: *Duc in altum* launch into the deep for more catch! These words of our Lord rang in the ears of the apostles who had laboured the whole night and caught nothing. At the prompting of Christ, they threw their net and netted so much fish that their net was about to break (see Lk. 5:1-7). The Lord invites us to renewed commitment to primary evangelization and on-going evangelization.

#### The Challenge of “Paganism” and Neo-paganism

21. It is true that the number of adherents of African Traditional Religion has gone down considerably to the

extent that in some communities, there are hardly any adherents left. However, the remnants are strong enough to constitute challenges to the Church. Similarly, the shallowness of the faith of the baptized and practising Catholics and the strong tendency to indulge in the practices of African Traditional Religion dictate ongoing evangelization, so that baptised people will be led deeper into the mysteries of the faith. The objective is to get Catholics who are truly Christians.

22. Looking at the present situation, one can easily discover that the Catholic Church in our area might have become complacent due to the teeming population of its members. The churches are full and overflowing. The impetus to proclaim the message of eternal life to the members of the African Traditional Religion may no longer be there as most of the priests and other pastoral workers are engrossed in pastoral duties and administrative activities. They tend to be mainly managers and maintenance personnel whose main task is to service the Catholic faithful with the Word and sacramental ministrations. Secondly, the teaching about dialogue with others, especially with the members of African Traditional Religion might have doused the enthusiasm to be fishers of men and women who are still followers of the Religion of our ancestors. The Synod has rekindled the flame of primary evangelization as we launch out in the deep for a catch.

23. Parishes are to design programmes to reach the pockets of Traditional Religionists among them with the message of eternal life. The Gospel is to be presented to them not as an option but as the Way to eternal life, for Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (see John 14:6). He has the message of eternal life (see John 6: 68) and in no other name under the sun will people find salvation (see Acts 4:12). It is equally necessary for Catholic

communities to be alive to the teaching of Christ and deal with the challenges of “neo-paganism”. In this regard, Catholics, as communities and individuals have to root their lives and activities on the gospel, listening insistently to the message of eternal life which in most cases goes against the current. Jesus continues to challenge us in the face of his demands which are at variance with the African (Igbo) customs and traditions: “What about you, do you want to go away too?” (John 6:67). We must be constantly on our guard against compromise with idolatry, superstition and fetish practices under the guise of “our culture”. Similarly, the Catholic community has to be vigilant lest the members espouse beliefs and accept practices which, though traditional, offend good conscience, human dignity and Christian morality. The gospel must thoroughly inspire our lives and actions. As St. Paul stated, “But you must always behave in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 2:27).

24 We need to emphasise the fact that evangelization must embrace the whole gamut of activities that have to do with proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, concern for justice, development, charity and peace and the use of social communication in order to be integral. The Synod following the African Synod and the First Pastoral Congress of the Catholic Church in Nigeria explored these ways of evangelization. We intend to gather and harness the fruits of the Synod along the lines mapped out by the African Synod.

### **Proclamation**

25. The message of eternal life proclaimed by our Lord Jesus Christ continues to be proclaimed by the successors of those who received the original mandate: “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations... and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you” (Mt. 28:19-20).

The ongoing evangelization will continue until the end of time. Even though it is said that their message has reached the end of the earth (see Ps. 19:4; Rom. 10:18), the need to proclaim the message is still urgent and insistent. Therefore it is necessary and urgent to mobilize every Catholic in the Diocese of Nnewi to proclaim the message of salvation by word and deed. The work of formation of agents of evangelization is a pressing task for all pastors in the Diocese.

### **Inculturation**

26. The message of eternal life is from above. But it has taken flesh in our Lord Jesus Christ. The incarnation of Jesus Christ continues to be the paradigm for inculturation, that is, the taking flesh of the message of eternal life among the various peoples, at various times and circumstances. The dynamic interaction of the message of eternal life with the present-day circumstances of life of the people makes the message relevant to every people and every culture. Ours is the task of mid-wiving the birth of a Christianity that is authentically African and Igbo. The task is not an easy one. We are to keep the proper balance to be able to effect the marriage of the Christian message of salvation with the culture of our people without in any way diluting the message or destroying the culture.

### **Dialogue**

27. Ours is a world in dialogue. We cannot but be part of the dialogue. In the midst of differences and diversities in which we find ourselves, the path of dialogue is the way of the follower of Christ who was in constant dialogue with others. Our family, the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi is called upon to be in dialogue with other Christians, both those in established Churches and those of Evangelical, Pentecostal or Sabbath traditions. Christian unity is the ultimate goal of the dialogue with other Christians. But in

the interim, we are to engage in activities that will foster more friendly relationship and cooperation among Christians. Similarly, while upholding the supremacy of Christ and the uniqueness and unicity of the Christian religion, we are to engage in dialogue with members of the African Traditional Religion with a view to better relationship with them. Dialogue will not lessen our zeal for evangelization but will rather sharpen our interest to present to others the total message of eternal life brought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Encounter with the Society - Justice, Peace, Development and Charity**

28. Our strategy for evangelization cannot pass by the human person and society. We are to be involved with the joys and sorrows of humanity and human society as we march exultantly to the Kingdom. That is why we have to witness to our abiding involvement in and commitment to everything that is genuinely human. The search for a better society in which justice, peace and development go hand-in-hand with the progress of the gospel is at the heart of the Christian message of salvation. Not only individuals in our diocese but all the organs, structures, organizations, associations and indeed, the diocese are to bear witness to our commitment to a more just society, more loving communities and more peaceful environment and especially, our preferential option for the poor, the needy, the distressed and those in any kind of disadvantage, whether physical, economic, social or cultural.

### **Evangelisation of the Society through the Family**

29. The family is the centre piece of our evangelization. It is not without reason that the diocese appropriates the family paradigm for its vision and

mission. Ours is the family of God on mission. We need to reinforce the family paradigm by renewing marriage and the family so that the family institution can continue to be an authentic sign of solidarity, unity, love and reconciliation. We are to pay particular attention to family catechesis and to building families that are truly Christian and truly Igbo. We are to purify the Igbo family while at the same time enriching the Christian family with those positive values of Igbo traditional families. Pastors are directed to undertake pastoral initiatives that will strengthen family bonds and make them true domestic churches, units of human communities in which the love of God and love of one another thrive. Our families shall draw the admiration of others outside the Catholic fold : “See how they love one another”!

30. The family is not just the centre piece of evangelization. It is the goal of evangelization. We aim at building each group into a true family of God united in faith, hope and love. Among all the images of the Church, the one of the Church as the Family of God is most significant and relevant to the circumstances of the People of God in Africa. We will therefore continue to foster this image and make it more evident in every aspect of the life of individuals and the Church in our diocese.

### **Reaching Every Segment of the Society**

31. Our evangelizing mission has to touch all aspects of the society. There are some groups and professionals whom we need to address more in our work of evangelisation and proclamation. Such groups are: The police, businessmen/traders, taxi drivers, *okada* riders, town unions, lawyers, politicians, media practitioners, artisans like carpenters and masons. The Diocese is to

provide spiritual directors or chaplains for these groups. The spiritual directors and chaplains are to form the members of these groups in the social teaching of the Catholic Church as well as in the doctrines of the Church.

### **Agents of Evangelization**

32. Evangelization is a task for every Catholic. Under the leadership of the diocesan Bishop, all the baptised in virtue of their Baptism and reinforced by the Confirmation are called and sent as agents of evangelization. It is important that nobody excludes himself or herself from this task. The obligation to spread the faith rests on each according to his or her condition, status and office in the Church. Therefore, priests, consecrated men and women, catechists and other members of the lay faithful are obliged to participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

### **Sacred Ministers**

33. Sacred ministers, that is, the Bishop, priests and deacons are commissioned in a special way to be ministers of the gospel. All priests, especially those engaged in pastoral ministry are to regard evangelization as their major task. Parish priests and other pastoral ministers are to be more committed to the spreading of the gospel by every means available to them. They are to pay attention to the words of St. Paul: Make the preaching of the message of eternal life your life-consuming work! They are to be committed to the preaching of the word “whether the time is right or not, to convince, reproach and encourage as you teach with all patience” (2 Tim. 4:2). The time prophesied by St. Paul has come. There are many preachers who do so out of their own selfish purposes. That is why authentic agents of evangelization have to wake up to the holy duty of proclaiming the message of eternal life out of the pure motive of bringing the gospel to all for their salvation.

34. The Synod delegates were convinced that the effectiveness of evangelization in our dioceses would depend to a large extent on the spirit of communion and cooperation existing among all the agents of evangelization. To achieve this spirit of ecclesial communion and fraternal collaboration, they made many proposals which I find very appropriate. We as members of the family of God on mission are to reflect carefully on the basic factors of communion and collaboration and adopt them in everything we do for the success of our common evangelising mission. With the diocesan Bishop at the head of the diocesan family and parish priests as the heads of the parish family, all members of the family of God are to be and act as children of one family in God. The following points can help to create and foster the spirit of ecclesial communion and collaborative ministry among the members of the family of God on mission.

35. Priests are to see themselves as ministers at the service of the communion. For that reason, they are to live and work as members of the priestly family (*presbyterium*). They are to demonstrate to other members of Christ's faithful the love of Jesus Christ which they preach and which they live. The consistent efforts of priests to live and work together as brothers in affective and effective communion and collaboration make them strong and vibrant witnesses of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel based on love: “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” (John 13:34). Imbued with the love of Christ, parish priests and their vicars will give a collective testimony of Christian love among the people entrusted to their pastoral care.

36. There shall be common life among the priests living together in a rectory. How happy when brothers dwell in unity! (*Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum*) Taking the example of the early Christian community, all the priests in the rectory will be “one in mind and heart” (Acts 4:32). They will share all they do and have and eschew the spirit of selfishness. Parish priests are to endeavour to create the family spirit by making adequate provision for the involvement of all the priests in the rectory in the work and benefits, in the joys and sorrows. In this regard, there shall be an effective division of labour and adequate job description for all the priests. The parish priest as the responsible head of the family is to ensure that the other priests are given a sense of belonging. They are to love and respect them as brothers and fellow workers in the Lord's household. Other priests, whether parish vicars or priests in residence are to show genuine love, respect and obedience to the parish priest. In general, transparency, mutual consultation, accountability and maturity are to characterize the relationship of all the priests in the parish or institution.

37. The common life among the priests is to be rooted in true spiritual communion as they pray together and seek the face of God together. The saying “The family that prays together stays together” is very true of the presbytery. Priests living in the same rectory are to create opportunities of praying together. In spite of the different assignments and ministries, the priests can always find a suitable time everyday to express and foster their unity and love through common prayer. Properly rooted in the love of God which is fostered by prayer, priests will find it easier to share other aspects of their lives. They will become more and more a forgiving and reconciling community. They will be able to have “their meals together in their homes, eating with glad

and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people” (Acts 2:46-47).

38. All priests living in a rectory are to avoid any divisive or discriminatory attitude or action. Other people are also to avoid introducing division and discrimination among the priests. In the event of any disagreement or misunderstanding, priests are to utilize the means of dialogue and reconciliation seeking the intervention of the Dean or Episcopal Vicar or Vicar General or as the last resort of the Bishop. They are to be conscious of the harm they could be doing if they allow the disagreement to blow up and damage their relationship. On no account will priests take their disagreement or misunderstanding to the parish council. The ability to handle the issues maturely will be an example to the flock entrusted to our care.

39. Love of God should also characterize the relationship of priests with other members of the family of God. Priests are to respect the members of the institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life (Rev. Brothers and Sisters). We need to emphasise the fact that religious men and women are full members of our ecclesial family. These are men and women who have dedicated themselves to the service of God and the Church. They are by that fact to be given due recognition in the ministry in accordance with the particular charisms and apostolate of each institute. We all should appreciate the presence and contributions of the religious men and women in this family of God. It is to be borne in mind that the value of the religious in the ecclesial community does not depend on what work they do but on their very presence as signs of God's love among men and women. Diocesan priests are to be careful to relate appropriately with religious priests and other religious, especially with religious women and

religious brothers. Religious men and women on their part are to have a sense of belonging to the diocesan family and endeavour to participate actively in the life and activities of the diocese and parishes. Priests are not to invite or employ religious men or women in their parishes or institutions without prior clearance with and permission of the diocesan Bishop. They are to adhere strictly to the terms of the contract without however neglecting them in the sharing of the offerings of the faithful.

40. We need to call the attention of all priests to the pastoral charity that is to be at the heart of our relationship with lay people. Our lay men and women, young boys and girls and children are one with us in Baptism and are equally children of God for whom we are to have love and respect. It must be seen that we all belong equally to the same family of God. To that effect, priests are to ensure that the people are fully involved in all matters touching the Church, for they are “fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household” (Eph. 2:19). They are to be made sharers in the vision, mission and projects of the Church as collaborators with the clergy and religious. Therefore, they are to be involved in planning and execution of all projects and they are to be given comprehensive account of the monies which they contribute. The correct operation and proper functioning of the local church councils and parish councils should inspire commitment and response of the lay people in the work of the Church in which they have a sense of belonging.

### **Consecrated Men and Women**

41. The Church has institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life in which the members live the life of Christian consecration in its intensity. These members,

men and women, follow Christ more closely and are completely dedicated to God's kingdom (see can. 573). Even though as consecrated men and women, they do not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, they are splendid signs of the vitality and charismatic dimension of the Church. They are treasures in our diocese. In the first place, whatever is said about priests in our diocese concern not only diocesan priests but also priests who are members of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. Their pastoral ministry is to be guided by the norms operative in the diocese and regulated by contract. Similarly, the apostolate of other consecrated men and women is regulated by universal law as well as by the contract between the diocese and the competent superiors of these institutes and societies. But we must appreciate the presence and evangelizing work of these consecrated men and women who by their very presence in our diocese showcase God's love and thereby proclaim the supremacy of God's kingdom. We expect them to feel at home in the Family of God of the Diocese of Nnewi and bring their spiritual wealth into our family. They are assured of the love and support of all the members of the Family of God of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi.

### **Lay Faithful**

42. It is important that the lay faithful see the priests as shepherds (pastors) of their souls and fathers in faith. This sense of faith is to characterize all their attitude, relationships and dealings with priests. It is true that many of the lay people are older, more intelligent, more knowledgeable and better endowed than some of the priests. All lay persons are however to defer to their priests as those placed over them by God in His wisdom. They are

to have genuine affection and respect for their priests and be ever willing to forgive them their shortcomings and ever ready to help them with prayers and moral support in their weaknesses. They are also to support them materially in their ministry. As members of the family of God, lay people are to exercise their obligation and right to make known to the priests in all sincerity and love anything that concerns the Church. They owe it in love and justice to give the priests information that is useful in their pastoral ministry. In this matter, truth is to be told with love and every member of the community is to stand by the truth and by the person who told the truth.

#### **Unity and Solidarity.**

43. All are to live as one family, supporting one another; mourning with those who mourn and rejoicing with those who rejoice (see Rom. 12:15). The example of the early Christian community made Christianity a great attraction such that every day “the Lord added to their group those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). Solidarity and fellowship were the striking characteristics of the early Christian community. The members stood by one another, especially in times of persecution. They prayed for those who were suffering persecution (see Acts 12:5). Catholics are to be one another's keepers and are to help fellow Catholics who are suffering persecution or ostracism because of the faith. It should never be heard of that Catholics join non-Catholics to persecute fellow Catholics who are fighting for their faith, good conscience or truth. That should never be. A house divided against itself must fall (see Mt. 12:25). Let us learn to stand together. In that way, we manifest the unity and strength of our family.

#### **Formation of Agents of Evangelization**

44. For all to be actively involved in evangelization, there is need for formation of all members of Christ's faithful for evangelisation. Sacred ministers, seminarians, members of institutes of consecrated life and lay faithful, especially the catechists are to be formed to be agents of evangelization. Seminars will be organised regularly for all the groups. The Directorate of Evangelization and Catechetics is to undertake this important task of the formation of all for evangelization. The School of Evangelization is to be strengthened and upgraded to handle the regular formation of all members of Christ's faithful for evangelization.

45. Formation for evangelization shall encompass both the content and method of evangelization. Bearing in mind that the new evangelization which Pope John Paul II called for must be new in its zeal, expression and method, everybody is to be formed for this new evangelization. The formation must begin with personal conversion through which we learn to love as Christ loves us. This conversion in the words of Bishop Anthony Gbujji involves character transformation that is fully human and fully supernatural. The evangelizer must be formed to be open to the Spirit and to be docile to the Church. This is the only way to ensure that such a person is not proclaiming himself or herself but Jesus Christ. The evangelizer must also be formed in the mystery of the Church in order to have the *sensus Ecclesiae*, that is the ecclesial focus. The person must have also love for the Church so as to have the mind

of the Church (*sentire cum Ecclesia*). Finally, the evangelizer must be formed in human virtues and qualities that are solidly rooted in the social, cultural, intellectual and humanistic currents of the ambient.

46. The content of the formation is to be strongly biblical. The Bible is the word of God. It is inspired by God. As St. Paul teaches, “the holy scriptures from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright. This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17). St. Jerome emphasized that ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ. That is why every evangelizer must be deeply grounded in the scriptures like Timothy (see 2 Tim. 3:15). It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Catholics to read, study and meditate on the Bible so as to be filled with the wisdom that comes from above. To achieve mass biblical literacy, the bible, especially *Baibul Nso na Nhazi ndi Katolik* is to be made available and affordable. This Igbo translation is to be used for public reading of the Holy Scripture both in liturgical and non-liturgical celebrations. It is also to be used for bible reading in the meetings of statutory bodies and pious associations.

47. As evangelization has to do with transmission of faith, the evangelizer must be formed in that faith handed over once and for all to the Apostles and transmitted in unbroken Tradition to us. The teaching of the Church

(*magisterium*) is our guide. The evangelizer has to be formed in the Sacred Tradition and the teaching of the *magisterium*. Every opportunity is to be used to form the people in the rich teaching of the Catholic Church. Catechetical formation must be ongoing. This formation is not meant only for candidates for the reception of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Homilies, meetings, funerals and especially the Sunday Evening Instruction are occasions for teaching the sound doctrines of the Catholic Church. The knowledge of the doctrines of the Church will root our faith in the deep soil of Sacred Scripture and Tradition and the experiences of the People of God down the ages.

48. Formation for evangelization is to take into account new methods of transmitting the message of eternal life. It is true that the essence of evangelization is the action of the Spirit of God who is the principal Agent of evangelization. However, the human agent has a lot to do in making the action of the Holy Spirit reach and touch the lives of others. Hence, the evangelizers have to know and use those methods that have been seen to be effective in transmitting the message of salvation. Various aids and techniques have been found effective: good interpersonal relationship, lively communications strategy, stories, proverbs and the use of multimedia. We need to develop these and other techniques in order to package and deliver the message of eternal life in an attractive and compelling manner.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PROCLAMATION

*“Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome insist on it” (2 Tim 4:1)*

49. Evangelisation begins with proclamation. According to St. Paul, “How then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them?” (Rom. 10:14). The burden of proclaiming Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour rests on every Catholic. Indeed, we should not know anything except the Lord Jesus Christ. And him as the crucified Lord (see 1 Cor. 2:2). It is true that in these days many are proclaiming Christ, some unfortunately out of malice, envy, rivalry or greed (see Phil. 1:15-17), we must be emboldened to proclaim the Message of Christ without fear or shame. The important thing, my sisters and brothers is that Christ is proclaimed (see Phil. 1:18).

50. The proclamation of the message of eternal life is to take place by word and by deed. While the spoken word is important, because faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the word of Christ (see Rom. 10:17), the witness of

our consistent Christian lives makes more impact. That is why St. Paul insistently challenges Christians: “But you must always behave in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). It is evidently scandalous when it is seen that our conduct does not agree with our utterances. Jesus warned about disparity when he spoke about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that is, their teaching (Mt. 16:6-12). Jesus warned about them: “The scribes and Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do and observe what they tell you; but do not be guided by what they do, since they do not practice what they preach” (Mt. 23:2-3).

51. We are to use every opportunity to proclaim the message of eternal life. St. Paul used every occasion to proclaim Jesus Christ: in the market place, in the stadium, in private homes, before governors and kings. He asked people to pray for him “to be given an opportunity to open my mouth and fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel of which I am an ambassador in chains; pray that in proclaiming it I may speak as fearlessly as I ought” (Eph. 6:19-20). We have to exploit the many opportunities that Divine Providence presents to us to proclaim the message of eternal life in our homes, in family gatherings and meetings, in town meetings and assemblies, in marketplaces and union meetings, in the schools and at marriages and funerals, we are to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, welcome or unwelcome (see 2 Tim. 4:2).

§1 Properly trained members of the lay faithful are to assist the priests in the various occasions of proclamation of the Gospel.

§2. Catechists, teachers, graduates of the School of Evangelization, members of the the Bible Society, Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria,

Catholic Biblical Instructors Union and other teachers of religious studies are to assist the priests in proclamation. They shall be guided and supervised by the priests.

- §3. Homes, zones, small Christian communities, schools, block rosary centres, Christian funerals, Christian community meetings, marketplaces and other venues of meetings shall be used for proclamation.
- §4. The principal method of proclamation is presenting the teachings of the Bible, Sacred Tradition and doctrines of the Church in homilies, out-reach programmes, personal contact, catechism classes, singing, Sunday evening instruction and in televisions, radio, and interpersonal contacts and communications.
- §5. The materials for proclamation are available in the Igbo Bible, The Documents of the Second Vatican Council, The Catechism of the Catholic Church and other documents of the Church. The teachings from these materials can be disseminated through hand bills, recorded gospel music, live gospel band and other musical groups, religious articles, good public address systems and religious text books e.g. *Meri Nne Jesu, Ndu Dinwenu anyi Jesu*.
- §6. The Directorate of Evangelisation and Catechetics is to set up a committee on proclamation and they are empowered to do all that is possible to see that this major work of the Church is carried out effectively in our diocese. This requires a powerful information network.

- §7. The Director of Evangelisation and Catechetics is to organize annual retreats for the elite in the Diocese. Such retreats are to be organized for various professionals such as legal practitioners, police, teachers, medical practitioners and business men and women.

### **Opportunities of Proclamation**

52. The Church provides many opportunities for proclaiming the message of eternal life in the liturgy and in other celebrations. The ministry of the word has to be taken more seriously and the opportunities to proclaim the word of life utilized fully and appropriately. Thus, homilies and instructions at Sunday Evening Instructions are to be well prepared and delivered. Homilies are privileged occasions of proclaiming the message of eternal life in its purity and integrity and with all the seriousness which this ministry demands. Therefore, homilies are not to be used for jesting, for flippant talks, for irrelevant distractions and for fighting perceived enemies. The lure of Pentecostalism and Charismatism has led many into all sorts of gimmicks and mannerisms that trivialize the word of God. Some abuse the pulpit for self-glorification. Homilies are not speculation or bandying about tendentious rumors and silly myths and old wives' tales (see 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Ti. 3:9-11). Our homilies are to be simple proclamation of the word of God in the context of the living community. All are to follow St. Paul's advice to Titus, "and you yourself set an example of good works, by sincerity and earnestness, when you are teaching, and by a message sound and irreproachable" (Ti. 2:7). Homilies are to present the word of God and the

sound doctrine of the Church in their power and purity as well as in their practical relevance to the lives of the people.

### **Sunday Evening Instruction**

53. We must emphasise the importance of the Sunday Evening Instruction. Since the homily is not enough for the transmission of the mystery of faith, the Catholic community has to find more time and appropriate occasions for the dialogue of faith. Evening Instruction on Sundays provides a more conducive atmosphere for the study of the word of God and the doctrines of the Church. It is important that the Evening Instruction be properly prepared and competently handled so that people can enthusiastically participate in it. Priests are to take the handling of Evening Instruction as their special responsibility and important obligation. Only in cases of very grave necessity will a priest hand over this most important task to the Catechist but never on a stable basis. All Catholics are to come for the Sunday Evening Instruction as part of their obligation to learn the mysteries of the faith and to fulfil their Sunday obligation. In order to better fulfil this obligation, all meetings and other celebrations which can distract Catholics from attending the Evening Sunday Instruction and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament are banned on Sundays.

### **Catechesis**

54. Another important aspect of proclamation is catechesis, the doctrinal formation of the people who have received the good news and are to be instructed in the mysteries of the faith. The instruction in the faith begins

with the catechumenate stage when catechumens are gradually and thoroughly taken through the main mysteries. It is important that those adults who want to receive Baptism are taken through the stages of initiation as mapped out in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.). All pastors of souls and catechists are to study the R.C.I.A. programme and know how to use it for the initial catechetical formation of catechumens. After the reception of the Sacraments of Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) usually on Holy Saturday night, there is to be continued formation of the neophytes (*mystagogia*). In the same way, it is mandatory for all who are preparing to receive the Sacraments, especially, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage to undergo, well graduated courses in Catholic doctrine.

55. In order to ensure that catechism is properly taught and learned, the Synod delegates insisted on proper organization of catechetical formation.

- §1 Every parish should endeavour to have or train well informed devoted catechism teachers, who may be serving or retired teachers and others who volunteer for this service.
- §2 The teaching of catechism is to be better coordinated in the diocese.
- §3 The Directorate for Catechetics and Evangelisation is to produce an integrated syllabus for catechism which will be based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church and other catechetical resources such as *Ndu Dinwenu Anyi* and *Mary Nne Jesu*. The use of this syllabus is to be mandatory throughout the diocese.

- §4 Catechism attendance card is to be introduced which should be used to check attendance as well as the movement of candidates from one parish to the other.
- §5 The stages/classes of Catechism are to be programmed in such a way that they are to be same as far as possible in all parishes.
- §6 In order to remove the abuse of people moving from one parish to another to receive First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Marriage without going through the Catechetical formation prescribed, no candidate from another parish is to be admitted to these sacraments without written evidence of having gone through the prescribed catechism course. This evidence is to be given by the parish priest of the parish from which the candidate comes. The Catechism Attendance Card from one parish shall be recognized by the other parishes.

### **Witness of Life**

56. Another aspect of proclamation is witness of life. This aspect has become all the more important as people are wont to value authenticity of life more and more. The failure of some Catholics to live up to the ideals of the Christian life is a source of scandal to non-Catholics and non-Christians. St. Paul rightly said of such: “As scripture says: *It is your fault that the name of God is held in contempt among the nations*” (Rom. 2:24; Is. 52:5). Catholics are to live in such a way as to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (see Mt. 5:13-16), so that others seeing our good works will not only praise our

Father in heaven but can also be drawn to follow us. The early Christians gave us a good example of this. Because of their manner of life, they “were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved” (Acts 2:47).

57. In order to be good witnesses in our society, Catholics are to bear in mind that they are like a city built on a hilltop that cannot be hidden (see Mt. Mt. 5:14). So, we must strive always and in every situation to uphold the precepts of the gospel with faith and good conscience (see 1 Tim. 1:19).

§1 Parents are to train their children well from the early stages before they enter the large society. The training has to be by precept and example. It is important for parents to bear in mind that the influence of their own lifestyle on the children is enormous. They are to be careful to transmit worthwhile values and behaviour pattern to their children and wards.

§2. Catholics are to give good example to their children by teaching them Catholic traditional prayers, devotions and hymns at home instead of the Pentecostal approach to prayer and singing. While we appreciate the good aspects of Pentecostal songs and manner of prayers, we are not to lose our Catholic traditional prayers, devotions and hymns. To that effect, the Liturgical Music Commission is to make a collection of Catholic hymns in Igbo, English and Latin for use at liturgical celebrations.

- §3. Priests/religious men and women are to be sent into the school system to teach in primary/secondary schools as well as into tertiary institutions by the diocese to take our prime position in the scheme of things in our school system especially in the state. Their very presence in the schools is a witness to God's presence.
- §4. Catholics are to bear strong witness to the power and goodness of God in the face of neo-paganism and Pentecostalism by living an exemplary life. In the village, community and union meetings, Catholics are to stand always for the truth, justice and fair play. Living and doing truth in love, Catholics will show lives worthy of the gospel as a means of evangelization.
- §5. Every parish is to form Small Christian Communities as means of living intense Christian lives. These communities will provide avenues of close encounters and interpersonal relationship and opportunities for sharing the faith and reaching every member of the community. In that way, lapsed and lukewarm Catholics can be reached and helped to become zealous in the practice of their Catholic faith.
- §6. Since examples are more forceful than mere precepts, Small Catholic Communities should pursue the practice of praying together, teaching their young members to say the traditional Catholic Prayers together read the Scripture together and encourage group solidarity as an eloquent way of expressing our Catholic faith. Catholics are to show practical charity and solidarity in the Small

Christian Communities so that people will be attracted by the love which we show to one another in Christ.

### **Catholic Schools and Christian Education**

58. Catholic Schools are essential for proper formation of Catholic children and also for the Catholic witness in the world that is gone more and more secular and with divergent and confused worldviews. In the face of crisis of faith and morality and the efforts of many to spread false ideologies and unwholesome ways of life, the Catholic Church in our diocese is to develop and strengthen the Catholic school system.

- §1. Catholic schools are to aim at very high standards of infrastructure, facilities, staffing and moral discipline. The Catholic character of these schools is to be clearly evident in all aspects of the school. Schools that do not meet the standards set by the Catholic Education Policy are to be closed or be acquired by a higher body that is capable of attaining the standard.
- §2. Catholic schools are to be very careful about employing non-catholic teachers who can confuse Catholic children. Children of impressionable age, learn their teachers' attitudes, words and actions. Therefore, Catholic schools are to employ teachers and other workers who can communicate the Catholic faith to the pupils and students. The Diocesan Education Board shall ensure the quality and appropriateness of the teachers employed in the Catholic schools.

59. Catholics are to witness to Christ in other schools, including state schools. Catholic teachers are to ensure that Catholic pupils and students are given proper Catholic moral and religious instruction in state schools and private schools.

§1. While it is possible to send external teachers into state schools for Moral/Religious Instructions, it is clear that such external teachers cannot replace the normal teachers. The diocese and parishes are to give Catholic teachers in those schools attention and a sense of belonging and mission so as to involve them more in teaching Moral/Religious Instruction in the schools.

§2. The Church community should integrate the work of Catholic teachers into the mission and programme of the Family of God on mission in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. The Catholic teachers are to be given appropriate formation and their contributions recognized. Therefore, the Diocese is to give special attention to the proper and adequate training and formation of Catholic moral and religious education teachers in the public schools in the diocese.

§3. In order to ensure that Catholic teachers know their expected roles and play them effectively in schools, the Catholic Teachers Association is to be formed in all parishes for all Catholic teachers in primary and secondary schools. Catholic teachers are to belong to the Association in both the parish of residence and in the parish of work. However, the teacher is to take part in the activities which he or she can in both parishes. Parish priests and other

Church officials are to devote care and attention to this very important apostolate.

§4. The parish priests and other priests are to look after the religious needs of all other schools both private and public in their territory. They are to visit the schools and minister to Catholic teachers and pupils/students in these schools. They can organize and train others who can help Catholic teachers in these schools to look after the moral and religious needs of the pupils/students.

§5. In addition to getting as many priests as possible involved in the school apostolate, special efforts should be made to promote the vocation of the religious men and women (Rev. Sisters and Brothers) and their apostolate in the schools.

§6. In order to extend our witnessing in the schools, we are to continue to press for the return of all schools forcibly taken over from the Church by the government on terms that are agreeable to the Church. At the same time, we are to be prepared to manage the schools well when they are returned.

§7. Parents and youths are to be reoriented to value education as a means of self-improvement and advancement in today's society. Therefore efforts are to be made to encourage male enrollment in schools.

### **Healing Ministry**

60. Healing ministry is one of the signs of the times which need proper discernment. People are concerned about their physical health as well as other aspects of

material and social well being. The hunger of the people has led to proliferation of ministries that pretend to provide answers to all imaginable questions of life and death and remedies for all problems. This has led to the “prosperity and abundance gospel”. Many Catholics are led astray in their search for quick solutions to their problems. We have to exercise the virtue of prudence so that while not denying charisms and the work of the Holy Spirit, we should not be led astray by claims of “signs and wonders” that can be used by false prophets, teachers, preachers, pastors, mighty men and women of God to deceive even the elect, if possible (see Mt. 24:24).

61. In exercising the power of discernment and to better provide for the flock of God, the synod delegates provided some guidelines which will help us to regulate the phenomenon of healing ministries. Every Catholic who believes that he or she has the charism for healing or ministering to the spiritual and material well-being of the people is to exercise the charism for the common good of the believing community (see 1 Cor. 12:7). He or she is required to exercise the charism under the vigilant care and supervision of the pastors who have the authority of discernment (see 1 Thess. 5:19-20). All praying and healing ministry should be done in the church and not in private homes or halls.

§1. Every parish is to earmark a day every week for special prayers for the needs of the people. In our diocese, Thursday has been set aside for such prayers which must include Eucharistic celebration which is the highest form of Christian prayers. It is to be noted that every Mass is a healing Mass for God heals the body, spirit and soul through the Sacrifice of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

§2. All persons exercising charisms in the ministry of praying/healing are to avoid actions, gestures, manner of praying or speaking that suggest magic or sleight-of-hand. They are also to avoid giving prescriptions of actions and prayers that suggest magical efficacy.

§3. While we recognise and recall the healing powers of our Lord Jesus Christ and Apostles and accept that such powers are still with us in both priests and laity whom the Holy Spirit endows with such gifts, we are to equally accept that there is a specialized discipline and trained personnel for physical ailments, their diagnosis and treatment. Therefore, those engaged in praying/healing ministry are not to dispense with the services of medical profession. The healing ministry must not be presumed to replace medical treatment/practice

§4. In order to avoid ridicule, priests and lay people engaged in healing/praying ministry are not to pontificate in matters pertaining to the medical profession. They are to avoid unguarded claims of medical feats and subject the people to medical attention and advice.

§5. The Diocese has two centres which have been established in line with provisions of the Catholic Bishops' Conference: “The setting up of so-called 'healing centres' should be discouraged. Rather, healing should be carried out within centres of prayer or pastoral renewal set up by the Diocese or within a religious community with the approval of the Local Ordinary” (**Guidelines for the Healing Ministry in the Catholic Church in Nigeria no. 4.3c**). The Centres are at St. John of the Cross

Parish, Nnewi and Centre for Evangelisation and Catechetics, Ihiala. The ministers are to refer medical cases to the appropriate trained personnel.

- §6. Priests and/or other ministers who work in these centres are to be given spiritual, pastoral and catechetical formation to enable them carry out the ministry in the name of the Church.
- §7. It is necessary to avoid turning the ministry into money-making venture. Following the norms given by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, all monies, movable and immovable goods accruing from the exercise of prayer/healing ministry are to be administered as Church goods according to the norms of Canon Law and the directives of the diocesan Bishop. Similarly, merchandising with religious goods in any form is forbidden and charging fees or money for the ministry is equally forbidden. Those engaged in the ministry are to be given allowances in keeping with the norms of the diocese.
- §8. In order to avoid abuses, all night vigils and night ministries are to be discouraged.
- §9. Home visitation as a means of pastoral care is highly recommended. However, *olu ezinuno* (ministry in the family) is to be under the vigilance of the parish priests. No Catholic is to invite a priest or a lay person or a group of persons to perform rituals and prayer sessions in the family without the knowledge and approval of the parish priest. If the persons doing the prayer ministry are not from the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, a certificate of good standing and the permission of the diocesan Bishop of the persons are to be

submitted to me with the application for permission to bring the persons to minister anywhere in this diocese.

62. Christians are called upon to seek spiritual healing. Some people go to prayer/healing ministers only for physical and material needs and neglect the most important need: being reconciled with God. Those exercising charisms of healing or praying are to be genuinely concerned about the overall welfare of their clients. They should endeavour to bring them to God through repentance and access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and amendment of life. The conversion of the persons will lead to the conversion of the community which in turn witnesses to the supremacy of God. The faith generated by the ministry of the healing/prayer ministers should help the people to surmount temptations and trials and hold on to the cross of Christ in the midst of the emergent visible crises and trials in life and in the conflicts between the demands of the Christian faith and those of the traditional customs and practices of the people.

### **Means of Social Communication**

63. The means of modern communications are essential for proclamation. It is absolutely necessary that the Catholic Church in our diocese make use of this modern means of social communication in order to make the message of eternal life reach more and more people in their environment. In order to be more effective in our proclamation, the Synod delegates made some recommendations which I find very useful and necessary.

- §1. Every parish or institution is to have a very good and powerful public address system. The system is

to be used for liturgical celebrations, outdoor celebrations, open air outreaches, meetings of the Small Christian Communities and all such celebrations.

§2. Communication centre is required not only at the diocesan centre but also at the parishes, diocesan hospitals, and schools.

§3. Libraries are to be established at the diocesan centre and in parishes and Parish priests should stimulate and encourage reading culture among their parishioners. The parish library authorities should endeavour to feed the libraries with good books, magazines, journals and newspapers. Publications on faith and morals are to be made available in the libraries. Parishes should consider the establishment of readers clubs especially for the young.

§4. The Directorate of Social Communications with the sponsorship of the various statutory bodies is to establish a printing press as a matter of priority.

§5. The diocese is ready to cooperate with any group or individuals to establish a Radio and Television Station. Meantime, the diocese is to set aside reasonable amount from the diocesan annual budget to maintain steady access to the media, especially the electronic media. As part of their evangelizing mission, parishes, statutory organizations and pious societies in the diocese are to contribute regularly and generously to the Media Fund to be administered by the Directorate of Social Communications.

§6. Courses in social communications and public relations are to be given periodically in St. Paul's Seminary, Ukor. The Director of Social Communications is to arrange for programmes on communications, public speaking and public relations for our Major Seminarians during the reunion with the Bishop.

§7. Parishes/Seminaries/Schools should be encouraged to set up societies for drama, where people should act gospel stories.

§8. The diocese should encourage production of films by groups and individuals within the diocese. Such productions should be approved by the Directorate of Social Communications.

64. The task of proclaiming the message of eternal life is important and urgent. The Family of God on Mission in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi is committed to using every means, all resources, institutions and avenues to carry out the mission entrusted to her by our Lord Himself. For that reason, every Catholic in the diocese is to make himself or herself available for this task. We shall preach everywhere, trusting that the Lord will be working with us, confirming the word by the signs that accompany it (see Mk. 16:20).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### INCULTURATION

*“..., we hear them preaching in our language about the marvels of God” (Acts 2:11)*

65. The Apostles were mandated to preach the Gospel beginning from Jerusalem to Samaria and even to the end of the world (see Acts 1:8). As the Gospel went from place to place, it took flesh in various places and in the various cultures of the people. The same Gospel was preached among the Hebrews of Palestine, among the Hellenic Jews and eventually to the Gentiles. The same Gospel assumed different features and emphasis in various places and among various communities. The principle of inculturation of the Gospel was accepted in the Council of Jerusalem. The controversy over the conditions for the admission of Greeks (Gentiles) was resolved in favour of diversity: “It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to impose on you any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages” (Acts 15:28-29). The Church is one and many. Inculturation is therefore an essential process in evangelization: To the Jews, the Gospel must become a Jew, to the Greeks, it must be a Greek and it must become

all things to all men and women in order to save them (see 1 Cor. 9:19-23). Therefore, the Gospel must become Igbo for the Igbo people to be saved through it. We must preach and hear the message of eternal life in Igbo. We need to promote Igbo language which is the necessary vehicle for the transmission of culture.

#### **Criteria for Inculturation**

66. For the Gospel to take deep root in our diocese, it is necessary that it will be incarnated in the Igbo culture bearing in mind the criteria for inculturation, that is, compatibility with the Christian message and openness to the universality of the Church. Bearing these criteria in mind, we are to discern the action of God in our cultures, fostering and taking into the Church “in so far as they are good, the abilities, resources and customs of peoples. In so taking them to herself, she purifies, strengthens and elevates them” (Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Church, “*Lumen Gentium*”, no. 13). Therefore, the Church does not take over indiscriminately, activities, institutions and forms of a given culture. These must be filtered with the Gospel to be acceptable to the Church. It is in this light that we are to process our culture to be assimilated into the Way of Christ. The Synod delegates were fully conscious of this process when they made recommendations for inculturation in our diocese.

#### **Traditional Title-taking: *Ozo***

67. *Ozo* title is very common and a strong traditional institution, with very significant social consequences. In some communities, the title was tied to one idol or another. However, efforts have been made by some communities to extricate the title from the connection with idol worship. The instruction given by the then Archbishop of Onitsha,

now His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Arinze remains the main reference point for any discussion of the title. However, there are grey areas and some inconsistencies in practice and in the implementation of the instructions. It has been observed that some communities continue to demand allegiance to idols or idol-worship as a prerequisite for the title-taking. Some Catholics are accused of performing secretly some traditional rituals inconsistent with the Christian faith in the process of title-taking. It is important for Catholics to be clear and consistent on the matter of *Ozo* and similar traditional titles.

- §1. The Diocese is to undertake a deep study of the *Ozo* institution. A Commission made up of experts in Theology, Sociology, Anthropology, Spirituality, Liturgy and Religious Studies is to be established to undertake the study.
- §2. Meanwhile, in line with the instructions given by the then Archbishop of Onitsha, now His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze, *Ozo* title and similar traditional titles can be taken after an agreement with the relevant title societies, making sure that the title is no longer dedicated to any deity and the process of taking the title does not involve idol worship or any superstitious or fetish actions. The Parish Councils are to monitor such title taking to ensure the observance of the agreement. A Title Committee is to be set up by the Diocese to negotiate the terms of agreement with each title society.
- §3. Christians who took the titles in a manner acceptable to the Church are to form Catholic Title

Holders Association in each parish. This association will provide the forum, where they can deliberate on problems encountered with the *Ozo* Title Holders of their community in order to be able to defend the Catholic faith and morals.

- §4. Catholics must be always conscious of the primacy of their Catholic faith and must do everything possible to keep to that faith in public and private, especially in matters concerning the taking of traditional titles. Duplicity in traditional title taking is to be avoided.
- §5. Catholics who had taken the *Ozo* title in a way that is not acceptable to the Church are to renounce the unacceptable practices and after due penance are to be received back to the Sacraments.

#### **Traditional Religious Symbols: *Ofo***

68. Another very common institution among the Igbo people is *Ofo* which can be a symbol of authority or an instrument of cult. Generally, every traditional family or clan head has this symbol of authority as the oldest man in the family or clan. Given the traditional religious matrix of this symbol, it is associated with rituals of African Traditional Religion. It becomes a problem when the position of the oldest man comes to a Catholic.

- §1. Catholics are to accept the position which comes to them by their age in their family or clan without, however, subscribing in any way to the rituals of the African Traditional Religion.
- §2. On account of the association of the *Ofo* with rituals of the African Traditional Religion,

Catholics are not to take over the family or clan *Ofo*. The family or clan members who are still members of African Traditional Religion can keep the *Ofo* but the Catholic who is the oldest person can ask for Christian symbols such as a crucifix or Bible as his symbol of office.

- §3. Families or clans that so wish can consign the traditional symbols in a box and preserve them as artifacts in a public museum. Each parish can establish a museum in which such artifacts are collected and carefully itemized and properly documented for future studies.

### **Cultural Manifestations: Masquerades**

69. Masquerades are part and parcel of our cultural heritage. Old men, young men and young boys have one kind of masquerades or another. Generally, they are for entertainment and for other social functions like accompanying groups to funerals. However, some areas of the diocese have the species of masquerade called *Ozoebune* which is part of their tradition. This type of masquerade used to have prominent roles in the traditional society. They were used as custodians of the tradition and security. The whole community was involved in the masquerade cult but males have to be initiated into the cult. Women and girls had to sweep the masquerade square and sing and dance after the masquerades.

70. On account of the incessant conflicts between the Christian faithful and the masquerade cult, I set up a committee to study the phenomenon of *Ozoebune* Masquerade. I have studied the report of the committee which counselled caution in our approach to the issue of this type of masquerade. The synod delegates studied the

matter. The majority recommended the outright ban of the masquerade because it is inherently cultic. They were of the opinion that “pagans” also use it to suppress others mostly Catholics and lead people astray. The minority held that Catholics should be allowed to participate in the masquerade if it is devoid of “pagan” and fetish practices because of their entertainment and cultural values.

71. In view of the lack of consensus on the matter of *Mmanwu Ozoebune* and given the fact that there had been earlier agreements between the *Mmanwu* group and some Catholic Communities following the instruction from the competent ecclesiastical authority, we need to study the matter more. The diocese is to examine and review all existing agreements between the Church and any *Mmanwu* group before the final decision is taken. However, belonging to the masquerade society, participation in the masquerade activities, and sweeping of the masquerade square must be free. Nobody is to be forced to take part in it. I must invite all the members of the Family of God to take to heart what St. Paul taught us in a similar situation. Writing to the Corinthians, he stated: “For me everything is permissible; maybe, but not everything does good. True, for me everything is permissible, but I am determined not to be dominated by anything” (1 Cor. 6:12). Why should a Christian allow himself to be dominated by *Mmanwu*? As followers of Christ, we must always be ready to give up anything that can lead us to sin or cause scandal to others (see Mt. 5:29-30).

72. St. Paul gave the example of eating food sacrificed to idols. Even though one can argue that idols had no existence and therefore one could in clear conscience eat such food, St. Paul wrote: “There are some in whose consciences false gods still play such a part that they take the food as though it had been dedicated to a god; then their

conscience being vulnerable, is defiled. But of course food cannot make us acceptable to God; we lose nothing by not eating it, we gain nothing by eating it. Only be careful that this freedom of yours does not in any way turn into an obstacle to trip those who are vulnerable” (1 Cor. 8; 7-10). Following the teaching of St. Paul, I urge all Catholics to stop taking part in *Mmanwu Ozoebune* as a way of respecting the consciences of other Catholics who see the masquerade cult as intrinsically associated with fetish cult and oppression.

### **Oath Taking**

73. Oath taking is usually adopted by the traditional society to settle matters which are not easily solved otherwise. The traditional Igbo people have recourse to idols **or juju** for their oaths. Christians also take oaths. The temptation to settle disputes by recourse to idols said to be very powerful is still strong among Christians. Catholics must resist the temptation and the pressure from “pagans” and neo-pagans and unconverted Catholics to drag people to such idols. We have to be very careful about any kind of oath taking or swearing. Catholics are never to take an oath or swear or have anything to do with idols or **juju**. Taking an oath is generally a call on God as a witness to what one affirms (**The Catechism of the Catholic Church**, no. 2150). Definitely the virtue of religion forbids false oaths, since that would be invoking God who is Truth itself as witness to a lie. Jesus takes the Christian to the evangelical perfection in his teaching: “Again, you have heard how it was said to our ancestors, *You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord*. But I say to you, do not swear at all, either by *heaven*, since it is *God's throne*...All you need say is “Yes” if you mean yes, “No” if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One” (Mt. 5:33-37). On account of the hardness

of our hearts, the Church allows us, for grave and right reason to take an oath. Can. 1199, §1 states that an oath which is an invocation of God's Name as witness to the truth “cannot be taken except in truth, judgement and justice”. Therefore, Catholics should be slow and prudent in taking any oath.

- §1. Pastors are to be very slow to administer oaths, to the faithful.
- §2. Oath taking should be preceded by serious catechesis and counselling of the parties. It is to be done in the atmosphere of faith.
- §3. An oath can only be taken by Catholics if administered by a Catholic priest in line with the Catholic tradition. Catholic are never to take any oath before an idol or a non-Catholic minister/pastor. The Catholic community is to come to the aid of any Catholic being forced to swear before an idol or before a non-Catholic pastor or minister. Catholics are to resist such imposition from *Umunna* or Town Union or anybody at all.
- §4. Any Catholic who takes an oath or swears publicly before an idol or **juju** or before a non-Catholic minister (pastor) is by that fact suspended from the reception of the Sacraments and is to do suitable public penance before he or she is readmitted to the Sacraments.

### **Ritual Covenant (*Igba Ndu*)**

74. *Igba Ndu* or covenant is a specie of oath taking. Covenant is seriously binding agreement between two or more parties. We are aware that Christians are united in the

most intimate covenant in the blood of Christ, the new and eternal covenant which is made new in the Eucharistic celebration. Christians should therefore not need to enter into another covenant. We should discourage entering into covenant by Christians. Christians are forbidden to enter into blood covenant or any covenant with idol or any fetish means. Christians are to seek other means of re-establishing damaged interpersonal relations. The disputing parties should be reconciled through forgiving themselves and loving themselves instead of binding the future generations that know nothing about the case.

### **Caste System (*Osu*)**

75. *Osu* caste system is an institution of the African Traditional Religion in which men and women were dedicated to a deity either by the community or by their own initiative. Those dedicated to the deity or idol become the *osu* of the deity. It became hereditary so that people born of *osu* inherited the stigma of being outcasts in the society of persons who are not *osu*. These people were discriminated against. They could not partake of the some of the activities, offices and functions in the society. They could not intermarry with others. Definitely, *osu* system belongs to “paganism” and should not affect those who have been born again in Christ. As St. Paul teaches, those in Christ Jesus have put on Christ: “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female- for you all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26-29). We cannot be Christians and still hold on to the categories and discriminations based on the African Traditional Religion. This is definitely a vestige of “neo-paganism”. Christians must see the *osu* caste system

as evil and contrary to the Christian faith and morals. The Catholic community is bound to do everything possible to remove the blot of this unchristian institution. Catholic parents, boys and girls are to be instructed on the evil of the system and encouraged to embrace the Christian system in which every baptized is a child of God and as such a sister or brother in Christ. Catholics who continue to hold to this system are sinning against God and their brothers and sisters. They are therefore not worthy of participating in the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. How can we who participate in the one Body of Christ and share in the one Blood of Christ discriminate against one another?

### **Other Areas**

76. The Family of God in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi has to look into other ways in which the Catholic faith or community comes into conflict with the traditional customs. Such areas as traditional festivals, sacred days and seasons, sacred totems and animals continue to be sources of conflict of conscience. There is to be on-going study of the issues arising from such conflicts with a view to protecting the integrity of the Christian faith without destroying anything good and praiseworthy in the local culture.

- §1. The Diocese and every parish shall establish an Inculturation Committee to study local customs and festivals. This committee will find out customs and practices that are intrinsically repugnant to the Catholic faith and those that can be adopted by the Church.

- §2. This committee is to monitor any agreement between the Diocese and the local community on cultural issues like *ozo*, funeral rites and traditional festivals.
- §3. Catholics are to bear witness to the Gospel by abstaining in private and public from any rituals or practices that have to do with “paganism”, superstition and fetishism. They will help others to reject any such practices that are against Catholic faith and morals. In this matter, Catholics are to follow the teaching of the Church and not their personal opinions.
- §4. Catholics are free to adopt any aspects of the local culture, practices, and take part in any celebrations that are devoid of idolatry, superstition or fetish beliefs. Such cultural practices can be assimilated into the Church to the glory of God and enrichment of the Church.

### **Inculturation of Liturgy**

77. Inculturation of the Liturgy is important and necessary. The Church in our land must celebrate her faith in a way that brings out our way of life that is genuinely human and open to the Gospel. Every aspect of the liturgy—prayers, hymns, vestments, sacred furnishing—has to reflect the culture of our people so that the liturgy may become part of our lives. But liturgical inculturation is not to be haphazard and *ad hoc*. It must flow from deep study of both the Igbo culture and Christian theology and liturgy as well as spirituality. It must be carried out according to the norms of the Church. It is therefore against the norm of liturgical inculturation to innovate *ex tempore*. The

Liturgical Committee and the Liturgical Music Committee of the Diocese are to work hand-in-hand to develop models for inculturation in liturgy which can be studied before use in actual celebration.

78. Liturgy is a very important aspect of the life of the Church. I devoted my Pastoral Letter of 2005 to the theology and practice of liturgy in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. Every member of the Family of God should avail himself or herself of the teaching in **Let Us Celebrate the Mystery of Faith** so as to grow in the grace of God which flows to us through the liturgy. Everybody is also to observe strictly the norms which I established in the Pastoral Letter for the celebration of the Eucharist so that we can have celebrations that are worthy and dignified in which everybody participates actively. The synod delegates brought up some aspects of the liturgy which we need to highlight.

- §1. The traditional practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue should be continued. But if the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria allows communion in the hand, the faithful in our diocese should be given the option to receive Holy Communion on the tongue or in the hand. However this must be preceded by thorough catechesis
- §2. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion according to the norms of the Church should be accepted. Rev. Brothers, Sisters and seminarians who have been duly commissioned by the Diocesan Bishops as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should continue to assist the

Rev. Fathers in the distribution of Holy Communion in line with the decision of the universal Church. Catholics should exercise their faith and docility in accepting this provision of the Church.

- §3. Furthermore, pastors and the faithful should be adequately informed on the meaning and the essence of our liturgy. Pastors are to engage in liturgical catechesis to form the people well in liturgical matters.
- §4. Practices that may mean well but are out of place in liturgical celebrations should be avoided. Priests are not free to introduce theatricals in liturgical celebrations. Liturgical celebrations should be according to the liturgical norms with words, gestures and actions according to the liturgical books..
- §5. Furthermore, all participants in the Liturgy, including non-Catholics, should be made to dress and behave in a manner befitting the Liturgy especially wedding ceremony. Indecent dressing by brides and bridesmaid must be avoided. People who are indecently dressed should not be allowed to take part in any Liturgical ceremony. Therefore pastors are to warn the intending brides and their prospective bridesmaid to be decently attired for the celebration.
- §6. The Liturgical Committee should study the matter of fusing traditional and church wedding in one ceremony as presented by Fr. Patrick Chibuko.

The current practice of church wedding after the traditional wedding or *igba nkwu* after the church wedding is unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

- §7. Catholics are to be careful that they do not use sacramentals in a way that could suggest they are charms and talisman. Burying crosses, hanging holy water bottles on things and other such practices may bring about confusion and give the impression of idolatry or superstition. Prudence, moderation and hierarchy of truth should guide the use of sacramentals. Damaged sacramental object should not be discarded irreverently as they are blessed objects (see can. 1171).

### **Christian Funeral Rites**

79. One of the areas that demand serious attention is that of funerals. Christians celebrate the funerals of their departed ones in such a way that the Church prays for the spiritual support of the dead, she honours their bodies and at the same time brings to the living the comfort of hope (see can. 1176, §2). Funerals also involve the family and the wider society. It has been observed that funerals in our society have got many accretions and abuses that call for urgent attention. While respecting traditional practices that are not idolatrous or superstitious, the Family of God has to organize the funerals of its members in such a way as to emphasise the primacy of the spiritual and eternal salvation. It is also a concern that the cost of funerals tend to be exaggerated to the extent that some have to take a loan to be able to perform the funeral ceremony of their dead ones. In order to ensure decent funerals without unnecessary and extravagant spending for our dead ones,

the synod delegates made many useful recommendations. Nobody is to be constrained to borrow money or sell land to perform the funeral rites of a deceased person.

- §1. The family of a deceased Catholic and the Catholic Community are to ensure that the burial and funeral rites are carried out within thirty days of the death of the person.
- §2. Any unnecessary and extravagant spending is to be avoided especially in eating and drinking. Even those who can afford to be lavish are encouraged to use their money for charity and for the care for the living. Every community is to regulate this matter.
- §3. The Catholic community is not to make heavy demands on the family of the deceased. On the other hand, the Catholic community is to show Christian solidarity to the bereaved family by contributing to the necessary expenses if the family is not able to shoulder these expenses.
- §4. Where vigils are still allowed, the vigil Mass and activities are to end at 9.00 p.m.
- §5. Catholics must see that the Holy Mass, prayers, reading from the Bible, preaching the word of God and religious songs form the main part of funeral ceremonies. Other activities of social or cultural nature can be allowed, provided that they are not opposed to the Christian sense and ethos.
- §6. Traditional cultural ceremonies like *Ibu/idu ozu nwada* may be permitted if they are not done for

motives that are against Christian faith and morals and if idolatrous, superstitious and fetish practices are completely removed.

80. In all, Christian charity and solidarity should characterize the attitude of the Family of God in all matters concerning funerals of Catholics. Therefore, everything must be done to facilitate the arrangements for the funerals. Where necessary, the Catholic community should come to the help of the bereaved family in the spirit of communion. In these moments of grief, love that is the hallmark of Christianity should shine forth as a mark of witness to the Gospel. Bearing in mind the exhortation of St. Paul, let us be sad with those who are in sorrow (see Rom. 12:15). Even in the case where Church funerals cannot be granted for very grave reasons, Christian charity, understanding and solidarity must not be lacking. Finally, the Catholic community is to keep alive its communion with its dead members by offering prayers and especially, the sacrifice of the Mass for them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

*“This is why a man leaves his father and mother  
And becomes attached to his wife, and the two  
become one flesh” (Mt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31).*

81. Marriage is a very important institution both in the Igbo community and in the Family of God. It is an institution of nature as well as that of grace, for Jesus raised the natural reality of union of a man and a woman to the dignity of a sacrament when two baptized persons enter a valid union (see can. 1055). For that reason, marriage is regulated by divine law, ecclesiastical law and civil/customary law (see can. 1059). It is important, therefore, for Catholics to observe the hierarchy of laws governing marriage of Catholics, even if only one of the spouses is a Catholic. Divine law, whether natural or positive takes precedence over every other law, followed by canon law. Traditional/customary law and civil law are observed to the extent that they do not conflict with divine law or canon law.

### Characteristics of Christian Marriage

82. Catholics are bound to respect and uphold the sanctity, unity and indissolubility of marriage (*bonum sacramenti*). Marriage is a lifelong union of a man and a woman. This excludes all the aberrations which we encounter in both our place and elsewhere. Unions of a man and a man, or of a woman and a woman are strictly forbidden and should not be mentioned among the faithful. Therefore such practices as *nuchi, nkuchi, nhachi nwanyi* and women marrying women are totally against God's laws and are totally and absolutely reprobated. Similarly, polygamy for any reason is against God's law. Catholics are not to engage in it or aid or abet it. Also against God's law is divorce for Jesus was very clear and categorical about it: “But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Mt. 5:32; see also Mt. 19:9). Christian marriage is for better or for worse and all members of the Family of God must strive to protect marriages of Catholics and of others. “So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide” (Mt. 19:6).

83. It is also important that they are fully aware of the ends of marriage: the partnership of the whole life of the couple (*consortio totius vitae coniugal*) is ordered by its very nature to the well-being of the couple (*bonum coniugum*), and to procreation and upbringing of children (*bonum prolis*) and also to the good of the society (*bonum societatis*). The integral vision of marriage helps to remove the selfishness and lopsided view of marriage prevalent among the Igbo people. In a special way, I must point out the excessive value placed on children and especially male children, often to the neglect of reality and

the well-being of the woman. Often, women are unjustly maltreated due to absence of issues or male issues in marriage, even when in many cases, the fault is from the man. Some Catholics who should provide support for the couple in such difficult situations aggravate the situation by putting undue pressures on the man to divorce the woman or marry another woman. All the members of the Family of God are to stand by couples, encouraging them with their kindness, wise words and prayers to enable them carry the cross of childlessness or absence of male children.

### **Necessity of Church Marriage**

84. Marriage has to be celebrated according to the law of the Catholic Church. While traditional marriage rites and civil marriage procedures are admitted, the Catholic is not validly married unless he or she complies with the canonical form of marriage (see can. 1108 and can. 1116). Catholics are bound to celebrate their marriage in the Church (what is called church wedding or “white” wedding) before cohabitation. It is a grave scandal and very disorderly for Catholics to begin to live together and engage in sexual activities before their marriage in the Church. Young people have to imbibe self control and sense of faith to be able to keep themselves chaste until their church marriage. All members of the Family of God must re-orientate their values in order to live according to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.

85. In order to ensure that Catholics marry according to the will of God and the teachings and laws of the Church, there is need for pre-marital preparation that is catechetical and practical. The synod delegates reflected on this matter and made very far-reaching recommendations.

- §1. It is important for the intending spouses to know each other well before committing themselves to the life-long union of marriage. Therefore a period of Christian courtship is recommended under the watchful care of the parents. In the case of people living away from home, they are encouraged to learn about the other in situations that do not expose them to cohabitation or sexual activities.
- §2. Immaturity has been identified as one of the factors that lead to broken homes. Early marriages contribute to this. Pastors, parents and indeed the entire Catholic community are to prepare the young for marriage from childhood in ways that are adapted to children, young people and young adults (see ca. 1063, 1°).
- §3. Pastors and people preparing for marriage are to adhere strictly to the pre-marriage preparations including pre-marriage inquiry (banns and other means of investigations) and pre-marriage instruction. None of these are to be neglected. It has been observed that people preparing for marriage are more concerned with halls, invitation cards and inviting people, food and drinks, wedding gowns and outfit, to give a thought to the proper preparation for the reception of the Sacrament of Marriage.
- §4. The Directorate for Catechetics in collaboration with the Committee on Marriage and the Family is to prepare a programme and manual for pre-marriage instruction for the Diocese of Nnewi. This manual will include catechetical, pastoral, psychological, sociological and practical inputs for sound formation of the intending couples.

- §5. Priests are to undertake the marriage instructions with the help of catechists, experienced couples and experts in the various fields.
- §6. The programme shall last for at least three months. People who have not completed the programme for pre-marriage instruction are not to have their marriages celebrated without the permission of the Diocesan Bishop. This permission shall not be given without very grave and cogent reason.
- §7. The intending couples should undergo the following tests in our Catholic hospitals namely- Genotype test and H.I.V. test.
- §8. In addition, the teaching of the natural family planning should be revamped in our parishes to help the intending couples in matters relating to family planning.
- §9. It is necessary to give more attention to people coming into full communion of the Catholic Church especially for marriage. They are to be given special catechetical preparation on Catholic Christian doctrine (catechism) for at least six months before the marriage.

### **Mixed Marriages**

86. Mixed marriages, that is, marriages between a Catholic and a person who was baptized in a Church or ecclesial community not in full communion with the Catholic Church continue to create difficulties. Some Catholics enter such marriages against the instruction of

the Catholic Church. Catholic parents who gave their daughters out for such marriages are suspended from the reception of the Sacraments. This is because they are accomplices in the sinful situation into which these children enter with their cooperation. The synod delegates were concerned about the situation.

- §1. Catholic boys and girls are to be encouraged to marry fellow Catholics.
- §2. Parents are to do their best to encourage their children to marry Catholics. In the case of the refusal of the son or daughter to enter into a good Catholic marriage, the parents are to meet the parish priest for advice. On no account are they to consent to and cooperate in a marriage in which their sons or daughters will lose their Catholic faith. Those who gave their children into an irregular marriage should realize that they are accomplices in the sinful situation and acts of their children.
- §3. Those parents who have been suspended from receiving the Sacraments for their part in irregular unions of their children can be reconciled to the Church as the fruit of the synod, provided they have shown sufficient repentance, and have undergone adequate catechesis and penance..

### **Irregular Unions or Marriages**

87. Our people value marriage so much that girls would think that it is a disaster not to get married. The compulsion to get married leads some Catholic girls to enter into irregular unions either by getting into a

polygamous union or by entering into a union which the Church cannot recognize. In either of the cases, the Catholic stands to jeopardize her Catholic faith and communion. Catholic girls and their parents are to seek the will of God in whatever decision they wish to take. They are to bear witness to their faith by resisting social pressures to marry even if the marriage is irregular and unacceptable to the Church. Parents and the family members should accept and encourage them because marriage is not everything. There are also eschatological dimensions in human life for in the life of the resurrection, there will be no marrying and giving in marriage (see Mt. 22:30).

### **Polygamy**

88. Polygamy continues to be one of the shadows of marriage in our area (see Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 47). It is seen not only among non-Christians but also and sadly too among Christians. It is not a question of African culture. It is clear that polygamy offends against the Gospel. Traditional religionists who are polygamous cannot receive Baptism unless they are prepared to take only one of the women and dismiss others (see can. 1148, §1). Baptized polygamists can be reconciled to the Church with the same conditions, provided that, in case of a person who was married validly in the church, the wedded wife must be retained and other women dismissed. Dismissal of the other women sounds very harsh but we are not free to tune down the demands of the Gospel. We must not compromise the teaching of the Gospel on monogamy and adopt polygamy in disguise. While protecting the well-being of the people involved, care must be taken to preserve the dignity and unity of marriage.

- §1. For the reconciliation of a baptized polygamist with the Church, the parties must be sincere. There must be sincere readiness to live the doctrine of monogamy.
- §2. The separation of the man from the other women must be made by public declaration that they were no longer husband and wife. This separation (dismissal of other women) which is not punitive must be properly documented.
- §3. It may be desirable that the traditional rite of separation should also be made, even if symbolically, so that the traditional community knows that they are no longer husband and wife.
- §4. There is to be no semblance of cohabitation between the man and any of the dismissed women. Anything that can cause scandal and raising of eye brow (*admiratio populi*) should be scrupulously avoided.
- §5. The man is to settle the former wives properly according to his means and in keeping with the demands of justice, Christian charity and natural equity (see can. 1148, §3).
- §6. The rights of the children of the polygamous unions are not affected adversely by the separation of their mothers with their father.
- §7. In the case of the death of the man, none of the dismissed women shall carry out the mourning rites including having a special mourning place and shaving the hair for the deceased.

## **Pre-marital Cohabitation and Pregnancy Before Marriage**

89. Christian values of chastity and purity face serious challenge in the lives of some Catholics. The phenomenon of sexual activity outside marriage continues to demand serious attention. With regard to marriage, the Church insists on pre-marital chastity. Intending spouses are not to engage in pre-marital sex. Efforts to control the incidents of pre-marital cohabitation and sexual activities are frustrated by the desire of the intending couple to be sure of the fertility of the woman. In many cases, the intending spouses only come for wedding (church marriage), when the woman is pregnant. Such attitude betrays lack of faith and trust in God. This problem and the problem of pregnancy outside marriage call for serious pastoral attention. A lot of catechesis on Christian chastity and Christian attitude of complete trust in God is to be undertaken by pastors and all members of the Family of God in order to fight against this scandal in the Christian family.

§1. Parents are to discourage their daughters from living with their intending husbands before the marriage in the Church.

§2. Pastors and indeed the whole Catholic community are to fight against cohabitation and pre-marital sex and pregnancy before the wedding. Visibly pregnant brides are to be advised not to wear white veils which signify virginity.

§3. Pastors are however to do everything to ensure the fruitful and decorous celebration of the marriage liturgy, so that it clearly emerges that the spouses

manifest, and participate in, the mystery of the unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church (see can. 1063, 3°).

§4. While we disapprove and condemn pregnancy outside marriage, women and girls who get pregnant outside a valid marriage are to be treated with dignity bearing in mind the love which the Lord has for sinners. Everything should be done to encourage them to true repentance and good confession as soon as possible.

§5. Girls and women who are pregnant outside a valid marriage are to be suspended from Holy Communion in order to avoid scandal and raising of eyebrows but they should be readmitted to Holy Communion, if they show repentance and do public penance after delivery.

§6. If the man responsible for the pregnancy is publicly known, he is also to be given public penance.

§7. Children of unmarried mothers born into a family can be given the surname of the family of the mother, unless with the consent of all parties, the surname of the biological father can be given.

§8. The Marriage and Family Committee of the Diocese is to be empowered and expanded to handle all matters concerning marriage and the family.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DIALOGUE

*“..., and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have.*

*But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience...” (1 Peter 3:15-16).*

90. Dialogue is the way of the world come of age, a world that has learnt accommodation rather than conflicts and confrontation. According to the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, “Dialogue is a way of being for the Christian within the community in contact with other believers and all men and women of good will. Dialogue is an important instrument for peace and unity, especially where the society tends to be polarized along religious lines” (**The Church in Nigeria, Family of God on Mission**, p. 84). Without sacrificing truth and the teaching of the Church, the Church is open to dialogue with all in order to further the cause of the Gospel. When well used, dialogue is a potent instrument of evangelization. The Family of God on Mission in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi is to engage in dialogue in all sectors and at all levels. For Catholics to engage meaningfully and honestly in any dialogue, they must be adequately formed and

equipped to give reason for their hope and their kind of life in Christ with courtesy and respect and with clear conscience (see 1 Peter 3:15-16).

§1. The Catholic Faithful have to master the Catholic teachings and have authentic faith that they hold with love, humility and good conscience. There must be a living conviction of the teaching, message and doctrine of the Church among the Clergy, the Religious and the Lay Faithful. This brings about committed dialogue and pastoral cooperation among the people of God in the Diocese.

§2. Every Catholic is to seek to maintain the communion of love and fraternal affection among all members of the Family of God on Mission. In dealing with one another, Catholics are to show love and restraint and be always ready to listen more to what the Spirit is telling the Church. There must not be any bickering, conflicts and self-willed disobedience among Catholics, especially in their dealings with the pastors of the Church.

§3. The pastors, for their part are always to heed the words of wisdom of St. Peter: “give a shepherd's care to the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it... Do not lord it over any group which is in your charge, but be an example to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3).

§4. Every Catholic is to accept new developments in the Church as approved and sanctioned by the competent ecclesiastical authority and act accordingly as a sign of faith and obedience.

- §5. There is to be no favouritism in the Family of God in order to promote the unity, love and fraternity of the Family of God in Nnewi Diocese (see Jam. 2:1).
- §6. All members of the Family of God in the Diocese of Nnewi are to be “united, heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). There must be unanimity of purpose and oneness of mind in all we do in the Diocese and in the Parishes.
- §7. Catholics disobeying Diocesan or Parish stipulations should be given fraternal corrections and will only be subjected to penal sanctions or penalties only if it is prudently seen that neither by fraternal correction or reproof, not by any methods of pastoral care can the offender amend his or her ways (see can. 1341). Punishment should be the last unfortunate resort in case of recalcitrance.
- §8. Catholics should be encouraged to settle issues amicably without having recourse to others such as *Umunna* or courts without prejudice to penal codes and other allied legal legislations of the state (see Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 6:1-8).
- §9. The Diocese has many structures for conflict resolution. The Parish Council, the statutory bodies and especially, Justice, Peace and Development Committee are empowered to be arbitrators in disputes arising among Catholics. However, the Diocese will establish a special Dialogue and Conflict Resolutions Committee.
91. Dialogue with others gives us the opportunity to manifest Christ to them. In our relationship with other

Churches and other Religion, we are to show our convictions of the truth of the Gospel and the values of the Catholic faith. Dialogue is never to lead to religious indifferentism or false irenicism. Religious indifferentism sees all Religion as equally good and acceptable putting into danger the uniqueness of the Christian Religion. While false irenicism is the attitude of making peace by sacrificing truth. That attitude tends to regard all churches as one, thereby relativising the Catholic Church to the position of just one of the churches. Dialogue with other Religion and Churches must protect the two basic truths of the uniqueness of Christ and Christian Religion and the position of the Catholic Church as the Church in which the Church of Christ subsists (see Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8). While acknowledging the existence of some ecclesial elements in other churches and ecclesial communities, we must never downplay the truth that “it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help towards salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained” (Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* no. 3).

- §1. Catholics are to be truthful and respectful in their dealings with other Churches or Religion in order to show in all intents and purposes the love of God that He has for all members of the human family.
- §2. Catholics are never to put their Catholic faith in danger but are to protect and propagate the Church's faith and morals without deliberately giving unnecessary offence to others by insensitive attitude and actions (see 1 Cor. 10:32; 2 Cor. 6:3; Phil. 1:10).

## Dialogue with Members of the African Traditional Religion

92. Dialogue with African Traditional Religion offers opportunity to study the religious background of our traditional society. It was written and variously said that Igbo people were scrupulously religious. Religion inspired and offered support for the activities of the traditional Igbo person. It is in dialogue that we can discover the various layers of meaning in the social structures, attitudes and activities of the Igbo people. Even in the midst of changes in the social life of the Igbo people and with the advent of Christianity, the Igbo people have not changed appreciably in their fundamental worldview and attitudes. The tendency is to syncretism, mixture of all currents and ideas under the title of culture. We are invited to redeem the structures from the supports of Igbo Traditional Religion. It is true that the members of Igbo Traditional Religion form less than 1% of the population in our diocese but the stranglehold of their Religion is felt in almost every aspect of life through the customs and traditions of the people. The saying: “*A ga-ghalu omenani mebe omenenu?*” needs to be critically examined in the present-day context of the advent of Christianity in which we have message from on high (*enu*) and power from on high to live a life worthy of the Gospel. Dialogue will help us to shun social structures and values of their mooring in Igbo Traditional Religion. It will also help to extricate Catholics from the mesh of neo-paganism, the attitude of promoting and fostering “pagan” institutions and values under the guise of cultural authenticity and fidelity.

- §1. The Diocese is to establish a committee to engage in dialogue with both the members of the Traditional Religion and other adherents who are baptized but not yet converted.
- §2. The areas of dialogue have to cover every aspect of our traditional society and its impact on the lives of Christians. We should not restrict ourselves to *Mmanwu* and *Ozo*. We should also dialogue on traditional marriage rites, birth and initiation rites, *Ofo* and other symbols of authority in the community, swearing, kola nut ceremony and funeral rites.
- §3. We have to educate our Catholics and especially the young people on such traditional issues so that they are truly evangelized and approach them with the eyes of the Christian faith.
- §4. In everything, we have to avoid giving scandal or confusion to the faithful and neither are we to encourage “pagan” or superstitious practices under any guise.

## Dialogue with Other Christians

93. Dialogue with other Christians is a demand for authentic Christian living as we heed the prayer of Jesus Christ “*Ut unum sint* That they may be one” (John 17:21). Ecumenism is an urgent aspect of a Church that is attentive to the heart of her Master: “May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so perfected in unity that the world will

recognize that it was you who sent me and that you have loved them as you loved me” (John 17:21-22). Division among Christians is a great scandal. All true followers of Jesus Christ must strive for the unity of all believers so that “there will be only one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16). In that way, dialogue is one important ecumenical instrument.

- §1. There is need for ecumenical formation for all the members of the Family of God of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. A holistic orientation programme should be packaged for the Clergy, the Religious and the Lay Faithful in the Diocese in order to equip them and empower them to engage meaningfully in the dialogue, especially dialogue of life with other Christians. It is to be noted that theological dialogue is left to experts.
- §2. Catholics should meet other Christians with a mature sense of respect and good dispositions.
- §3. While avoiding giving the impression that all churches are already one and that there is no difference between the Catholic Church and other churches, we should invite other churches during liturgical and social activities to strengthen the bonds of communion existing among all the baptised and their churches or ecclesial communities.
- §4. Catholics should never at any occasion or for any reason compromise the Catholic faith, morals or doctrine. At every occasion, Catholics must show in a humble manner the rich heritage of the Church's spirituality, theology and liturgy but

without prejudice to the genuine spirit of and theology of Ecumenism.

- §5. Catholics are to take their proper place and position in such a way that the Church's presence will neither be diminished nor relegated to an inconsequential position.
- §6. Strong faith and good works are requisites for preparing for and engaging in meaningful and productive dialogue with other Christians.
- §7. For those deputed to engage in theological dialogue by the competent ecclesiastical authority, the Holy Bible, the Church's Tradition and the Teachings of the Church remain the necessary and potent tools for an on-going dialogue with other Christians.
- §8. The immediate goals of ecumenical dialogue can be better relationship of mutual esteem and cooperation with other Christians. But the ultimate objective is the union of all Christians in the fullness of communion of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church “through the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance” (can. 205).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE AND CHARITY

*“the weightier matters of the Law-justice, mercy and good faith” (Mt. 23:23)*

94. The Church lives by proclaiming and practising love in all its ramifications. The early Christian community “remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to prayers” (Acts 2:42). The faith issued in good works, for St. James challenged the early Christians: “How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good work claims to have faith? ...As a body without a spirit is dead, so is faith without deeds” (Jam. 2:14-26). Bearing this in mind, “all who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed” (Acts 2:44-45; see also Acts 4:34-35). Brotherhood or fellowship flowed into active concern and care for one another, especially the poor, the needy and widows. Care ministry is an important dimension of the mission of the Church. All members of the Family of God in the Catholic

Diocese of Nnewi are called upon to produce the fruit of faith by engaging in the social Gospel, the Gospel that brings the good news to the afflicted, liberty to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed (see Is. 61:1-2; Lk. 4:18).

95. The Gospel of Jesus Christ embraces every aspect of humanity and human society. It sets the agenda for social reform, reconstruction and development. This agenda is based on social justice predicated on truth and issuing in peace. The link between justice, peace, truth, charity and development is so strong that the lack of any destroys the others. Pope Benedict XVI expressed this truth in his first Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas est*, “The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: proclaiming the word (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable” (no.25). Our Holy Father went on to show the strict nexus between charity and justice which the Church has over the years taught with consistency and increased perception in the social doctrines. “In order to define more accurately the relationship between the necessary commitment to justice and the ministry of charity, two fundamental situations must be considered: a) The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics. As St. Augustine once said, a State which is not governed according to justice would be just a bunch of thieves: *Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?* .... b) Love *caritas*- will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State that can eliminate the need for the service of love” (nos. 28). It is therefore important to see

the matters of justice, peace, charity and development as part of the parcel of the one *diakonia* to which the Church and all her members are committed.

### **Catholic Presence in the Society**

96. Christians should be present in every aspect of the society, politics and governance, economy, social life, education as the light of the world and salt of the earth so that there can be meaningful development of the society according to the will of our Creator. The lay faithful in a special way have this involvement as the core of their ecclesial mission. “But by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will... There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their particular duties. Thus, especially by a witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 31). The Church present in every area of human endeavour, especially through her committed lay faithful carries on the work of evangelization by even influencing the very structures of society and culture.

### **Justice, Peace, Development and Charity**

97. The Church has entrusted the work of coordinating all matters connected with justice, peace, charity and

development to the Justice, Peace, Development and Charity Committee of the Diocese and Parishes. This committee is to be reorganized for efficiency and effectiveness so that it may better carry out the important duties which the ministry of service lays on it. The work includes, among others, political education and mobilization, training in and vigilance over good governance, grassroots development, financial empowerment, cultural reformation, care of the poor and needy. The Justice, Peace, Development and Charity Committee is to have departments for each of the aspects of its work so that none is overlooked. In a special way, there has to be more emphasis on charity.

- §1. The Justice, Peace, Development and Charity Committee is to train more personnel to form the core-team of co-ordinators at the parish level for the job at hand.
- §2. The parish council shall see to the recruitment of the members to be trained for each parish. Professionals such as lawyers, social workers and educators are to be recruited for this work.
- §3. As part of the Church's concern and care for people with special needs, a Home for the Aged is to be established by the Diocese while each parish is to organize the care for the aged who remain in their own homes.
- §4. The Catholic Women Organisation is to form and supervise the Catholic Widows Welfare Association at the Diocesan and parish levels for spiritual and temporal welfare of widows.

- §5 All Catholic organizations that are looking after the welfare of the people are to be registered with Justice, Peace, Development and Charity Committee which has the responsibility of coordinating their activities. This is necessary to avoid duplication and wastage of resources.
- §6. The Justice, Peace, Development and Charity Committee is to have a Conflict Resolution Machinery.
- §7. There is need to form and strengthen Small Christian Communities in every parish in order to establish the structures that will bring care and concern to the grassroot. Every parish is therefore to establish the Small Christian Communities in the parish. In these communities, every strata of the society meets for the welfare of all, especially of the less privileged.
- §8. Parish priests and parishioners are encouraged to carry out home visitation of the members in order to bring the love of God to their homes. Such home visitations are not to be a burden for the people visited but are meant to bring the good news of God's love to them.
- §9. Parish priests and the parishioners are to develop a programme for the care of the sick members. They are to be visited and given assistance in any way possible. Let our members experience the love and care of their brothers and sisters in the faith.
- §10. Parish priests are to have comprehensive records and statistics of their parishioners and make sure

each member belongs to one pious society through which their spiritual and material needs can be known and met.

### **Importance of Finance**

98. The Church has to do with finance and money but always in the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ who taught: “No one can be a slave of two masters:..., You cannot be the slave of both God and of money” (Mt. 6:24). St. Paul warned that the love of money is the root of all evils “and there are some, pursuing it, have wandered away from the faith and so given their souls a number of fatal wounds” (1 Tim. 6:10). While dealing with money, we should have trust in God's providence (see Mt. 6:25-34) and heed the advice of St. Paul not to be engrossed in the things of this world (see 1 Cor. 7:30-31). For us, money is at the service of the Gospel and not the other way round. All members of the Family of God are to heed the word of Christ: “Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be too” (Mt. 6:19-21).

99. Everybody who has anything to do with finances in the Church must avoid covetousness, greed and selfishness. Church money must be handled with all honesty, transparency and absolute trust. Our faith is the basis of our responsibility to handle church finances with the fear of the Lord. Similarly, we are all called to have that diligence and sense of responsibility in handling Church finances as a good householder. Church money is never to be used recklessly. Prudence, frugality and

fidelity to the donor's intention and purpose of the money should characterize our use of Church funds. There is to be strict accountability for all administrators of Church goods. Let us all be trustworthy stewards of Church funds.

§1. Church money is never to be treated as a personal property. Therefore it is not to be kept in private possession but must be banked in a bank approved by the diocesan Bishop. The signatories are also to be approved by the diocesan Bishop. On no account is bank account to be operated by an individual. There must be at least two signatories. All bank accounts for Church money which were not opened with a letter from the diocesan Bishop are to be closed or revalidated with a letter of mandate from the Bishop. The Church funds mentioned above include the money belonging to the rectory, parish council, parish projects, statutory organizations, pious societies and institutions such as Catholic schools, hospitals and offices.

§2. In the Diocese, we discourage any form of levying the parishes or people. We prefer as more in the spirit of Christian Gospel and tradition, freewill giving out of faith and sense of Christian responsibility. All members of the Family of God are to give generously to provide for the needs of the Church (see can. 222, §1). The various ways of fulfilling this obligation are tithing, offertory collections, thanksgiving offerings, freewill offerings, harvest thanksgiving offering, and other donations for Church projects.

§3. Every parish, society, organization or institution is to have a finance committee to help the body concerned with budgeting, planning, fund raising and accounting (see can. 1280).

§4. Each parish, organization, society or institution is to prepare an annual budget of income and expenditure which is to be submitted to the Diocesan Accounts Office not later than 31<sup>st</sup> January of each year.

§5. Similarly, each parish, organization, society or institution is to prepare and submit an account of income and expenditure twice a year; before 31<sup>st</sup> July for the period from January to June and before 31<sup>st</sup> January for the period from July to December.

#### **Self-reliance in Financial Matters**

100. The Family of God must be a self-reliant Church, a Church that can generate enough resources to meet her needs. It means, in the first place, that the Family of God has to articulate her needs very clearly and strive through all legitimate means to provide the resources with which to meet the needs. We have to heed the call of the African Synod as articulated by the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II: "It is therefore urgent that particular Churches in Africa have the objective of providing for their own needs as soon as possible, thereby assuring self-sufficiency" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 104). While pursuing the objective of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, we are still to be open to solidarity by contributing more to the needs of the universal Church through the Pontifical Missions Societies. We have to increase our contributions to the universal funds of the Pontifical Society of the Holy

Childhood, Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle (for Seminaries) and the Pontifical Society of the Propagation of Faith (Mission Sunday Collection). We shall also increase our solidarity with the Holy Father by contributing more to Peter's Pence. Moreover, we shall maintain our assistance to other dioceses and make our contributions to the Provincial, National and Regional bodies.

101. In order to achieve our objective of self-sufficiency, the Synod delegates recommended the following means which I heartily adopt.

- §1. The Diocese shall establish a Self-reliance Committee at the diocesan level to be headed by the Director of Justice, Peace, Development and Caritas Committee. The committee shall study the economic situation of our area and present viable proposals for investments to the Diocesan Finance Committee. Similarly, parishes are to strive to be self-sufficient.
- §2. The Diocese should invest in securities and viable economic projects such as filling stations.
- §3. The Diocese should empower the youths by establishing a well-run youth vocational centre.
- §4. All the diocesan and parish projects such as hospitals, maternity homes, schools are to be better run so as to be viable, however, without any profiteering and be in the position to generate enough funds to run them and provide social services and amenities for the people.

§5. In order to ensure adequate funding for any project there should be initial planning and budgeting before embarking on the projects.

§6. The Finance Committee of the Diocese shall organise periodically seminars on financial administration and accounting for all financial secretaries and treasurers and members of Finance Committee at all levels.

§7. The Diocese is to formulate a policy on finance to guide everybody and every parish, statutory body and pious association.

### **Organisation of Financial Administrative Structure**

102. The Catholic Diocese of Nnewi as the Family of God on Mission has to develop a system of reporting and lines of responsibility. It is important for every member of the diocese and every organization or society to adopt the lines of reporting and responsibility in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, especially in financial administration.

§1. All statutory bodies and pious societies at all levels are to submit their accounts to the competent authority of the Church at their levels: Parish, Deanery, Region and Diocese. The principal and necessary signatory of the bank account of these bodies is the parish priest or chaplain of the various bodies. Failure to do so shall attract sanctions including dissolution after due warning.

§2. The Finance Committees of the parishes, statutory bodies and pious associations are to ensure that

accounts of income and expenditures are given as and when due to the appropriate quarters.

- §3. All juridical persons in the diocese are to maintain an up-to-date inventory of all the property belonging to that body at all levels.

### **Tithes**

103. Tithes were demanded by God in the Old Testament (see Lev. 27:30). The payment of one tenth of a person's income as tithe ensures that the person maintains the right relationship with God as regards to material things. It shows that a person acknowledges God's sovereign dominion over all things. The insistence on tithes in the Old Testament by Prophet Malachi showed that tithing was not a passing piece of legislation. Yahweh said: "No; I, Yahweh do not change" (Mal. 3:6). He went on to accuse the people of cheating Him by withholding of tithes. He promised them blessings if they brought their tithes to His house (see Mal. 3:7-12). Even though Jesus mentioned the attitude of scribes and Pharisees who were meticulous in tithing but neglected the weightier matters of the Law justice, mercy and good faith (Mt. 23:23), He did not condemn tithing. The Catholic Church kept this holy tradition as can be seen in canon 1502 of the 1917 Code of Canon Law: "In what pertains to the payment of tenth-parts (tithes) and the first fruits, the special statutes and laudable customs in each region are observed". Tithing is therefore not of ecclesiastical legislation but a permanent way of honouring God who is the owner of everything.

- §1. Tithing is recommended to all Catholics in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi as a part of our obedience to God.

- §2. Tithes are to be brought to God's house and the person blessed.

- §3. All tithes are regarded as Church funds and are never the private property of the priest who receives them. They are to be recorded in the rectory account and accounted for as other Church money.

- §4. A tithe of tithes is to be paid from the tithes collected to the diocesan accounts office.

- §5. In everything connected with tithes as in other matter dealing with finance, there is to be no room for covetousness, avarice or love of money. Obedience to God and right relationship with Him over the use of money are to be the supreme motives of our handling of financial matters.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY OF GOD

*“The reason I left you behind in Crete was for you to organize everything that still had to be done and appoint elders in every town, in the way I told you, ...”* (Titus 1:5).

#### Communion as the Way of the Family of God

104. The organisation of the Family of God into structures of communion is an important task facing the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. Communion is the way of the Church. Every structure is at the service of ecclesial communion. The division of the diocese into parishes and any other territorial or structural groupings must enhance the communion of the faithful and make it easier and more functional for the Family of God to remain “faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42). On no account are the structures to serve sectional and clannish interests which are opposed to the nature of the Church as one, Catholic and Apostolic. We must therefore discourage any sectionalism and clannishness as they are opposed to Gospel values, in which all believers were of one heart and one soul (see Acts 4:32). St. Paul condemned division and divisiveness in the Church: “Has Christ been split up?” (1 Cor. 1:13). He appealed for unity: “So if in Christ there is

anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy I appeal to you, make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind” (Phil. 2:1-2).

- §1. Parishes, Deaneries and Regions are to be established according to the needs of evangelization and demands of more effective pastoral care. The decision of the Bishop in this matter is to be accepted by all.
- §2. Parishes are to be divided into zones or other appropriate groups according to the criteria established by the parish council.
- §3. For the division of a parish, there is to be a consensus among all the parties about the desirability of the division, the territorial boundaries and sharing of assets and liabilities. The agreement is to be properly documented and submitted with the application for a new parish.
- §4. The application is to be written by the local council of the area that is to be established as a new parish and endorsed by the parish council before it is submitted by the parish priest.
- §5. For a new parish to be established, there must be a stable community capable of being a parish, within certain territorial boundaries or otherwise identifiable villages and evidence of the availability of resources to sustain the parish. Having a rectory is an advantage.

#### Small (Vital) Christian Communities

105. For more effective contacts and closer interactions among the members of the Family of God, every parish

shall establish Small Christian Communities (Vital Christian Communities) as presented by the African Synod. The Synod presented the characteristics of the communities thus: primarily they should be places engaged in evangelizing themselves, so that subsequently they can bring the Good News to others; they should moreover be communities which pray and listen to God's Word, encourage the members themselves to take responsibility, learn to live an ecclesial life, and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel. Above all, these communities are to be committed to living Christ's love for everybody, a love which transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes or other interest groups" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 89; see Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, **The Church in Nigeria, Family of God on Mission**, no. 162). It is recommended that the Small Christian Communities be established along lines of contiguity (neighbourhood) rather than on the basis of *umunna* (family or clan), so that people living together can belong to a Small Christian Community irrespective of provenance or tribe or clan.

### **Importance of Statutory Organisations**

106. The Family of God can be better and more effectively shepherded if all the members belong to the statutory groups established by the Diocese. These groups are Catholic Men Organisation (CMO), Catholic Women Organisation (CWO), Catholic Boys Organisation (CBO) and Catholic Girls Organisation (CGO). Catholic Boys Organisation and Catholic Girls Organisation together with other youth organizations form the Catholic Youth Organisation of Nigeria (CYON). It is imperative that every Catholic in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi register in and participates actively in the activities of one of the statutory organizations.

- §1. The Diocesan Administration and parish priests are to look for ways of ensuring that every member of the Family of God in Nnewi Diocese belongs to and participates in the relevant statutory organization.
- §2. Appropriate registration Card shall be prepared centrally such that anybody who registers in any parish will receive the same Card for better control and coordination.
- §3. Outside the sacraments, this card shall be required for any other activity or ministry in the Diocese.
- §4. The statutory organisations are to be run in such a way that minimum financial demands will be made on members. Every effort shall be made to ensure that members benefit spiritually, socially and materially from membership and participation in the statutory organizations.

### **Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Communities**

107. Our Family of God is not complete without the Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Communities in various parts of Nigeria and beyond. Through the outreach programme, Catholics from Nnewi Diocese are organized into communities wherever they are. These communities link our brothers and sisters in *diaspora* with the diocese in effective communication. It ensures the participation of the members of these communities in the work of the diocese. All Catholics who are from the Diocese of Nnewi but are resident elsewhere are to register with and participate actively in the Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Community of the place or residence. With these communities, our family is complete: **Ezinuno!** The Family of God on Mission!

## CONCLUSION

### WALKING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

*“Even if you have to die, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life for your prize”* (Rev. 2:10).

108. We convoked the synod as a means of facing the challenges to the faith of Catholics in our area. The twin challenges of neo-paganism and Pentecostalism put a lot of strain on the faith of Catholics. Many are suffering from persecutions from their relatives and members of their family (*umunna*) and the community on account of conflicts with traditional activities that are contrary to faith and morals. The lure and attractions of Pentecostalism are often too strong for some Catholics such that they abandon the Catholic Church, the pillar and mainstay of faith (see 1 Tim. 3:15). In the face of these challenges and the sufferings that accompany them, the Family of God has to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church. To the Church at Smyrna, the Spirit gave the following message: “I know your hardships and your poverty, and though you are rich, ... Do not be afraid of the sufferings that are coming to you. Look, the devil will send some of you to prison *to put you to the test*, and you must face hardship *for ten days*. Even if you have to die, keep faithful, and I will give you the crown of life for your prize. Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches:

for those who prove victorious will come to no harm from the second death” (Rev. 2:9-11).

109. The synod challenges us we reflect on the faith of our fathers and the demands of evangelization in our time to be firm in our commitment to our faith in the mysteries which were once for all revealed to the apostles (see Eph. 3:5). In considering evangelization in general and in its ramifications of proclamation, inculturation, dialogue, justice, peace, development and charity and social communication, the synod delegates sought diligently in openness to the Holy Spirit for the way of living the faith in Jesus Christ in such a way that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith (see Eph. 3:17). Faith in Christ Jesus is the motivating force in everything, for we have decided to walk by faith and not by sight (see 2 Cor. 5:7). The organization of the Christian community as the Family of God and living the Christian life as members of the Family of God occupied our attention and we tried to provide useful helps to this life of faith. We encourage every Catholic to hold firmly to the faith that we received at Baptism.

110. We are all called to greater witness to the Gospel and greater efforts at holiness in keeping with the challenge of St. Peter: “Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passion of your old ignorance, but as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One who calls us, since Scripture says, *'Be holy, for I am holy'*” (1 Peter 1:14-15). All members of the Family of God are called to the same degree of holiness without which we cannot see God. We are all to be committed to witness of life of holiness as a most effective means of evangelization. Following the African Synod and the Pastoral Congress for Nigeria, we call on all members of the Family of God to embrace

warmly and wholeheartedly all the means of holiness available in the Catholic Church, in a special way, listening intently to the Holy Spirit in prayers, adoration of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and filial love of and devotion to our Mother Mary (see *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 136-137; **The Church in Nigeria**, nos. 107-109.). Always open to the Holy Spirit, we can walk with Him to realize His fruit in our lives and communities: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). These virtues will definitely transform our diocese into the Family of God with its characteristic emphasis on “care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 63).

### Prayers

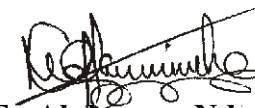
111. I invoke the heavenly intercession of Mary who is always with us as Our Lady of Assumption. I am confident that through her maternal intercession, we can go freely before the throne of mercy of our God. To God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who wants everybody to be saved and come to the fullness of truth (see 1 Tim. 2:4), through His Son, Jesus Christ, “whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made all things” (Heb. 1:2) and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we commend our synod so that it may bear lasting fruit in the lives of all the members of the Family of God in Nnewi Diocese, so that Christ may live in our hearts through faith (see Eph. 3:17).

*This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name. In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts*

*through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with God's holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breath and the length, the height and the depth; so that, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with utter fullness of God. Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:14-21).*

### Promulgation

The norms contained in this Pastoral Exhortation have different characteristics and binding force. All the norms that refer to divine law, whether natural or positive have binding force irrespective of the Pastoral Exhortation. They have declaratory value and bind with immediate effect and have retroactive force. The norms that refer to universal laws of the Catholic Church have binding force of the universal law and bind immediately. All the norms that are particular to the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi shall begin to bind after three months, that is, from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2006. Given this 30<sup>th</sup> day of April 2006 on the occasion of the formal presentation of the Acts of the First Diocesan Synod and the Pastoral Exhortation on the Synod.



**Very Rev. Fr. Alphonsus Ndoe Okonkwo**  
Chancellor



**Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke**  
Bishop of Nnewi