

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NNEWI



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**READING THE SIGNS OF THE
TIMES IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH**

PASTORAL LETTER

BY

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Nnewi 2007

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PREFACE

*Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith
and brings it to perfection (Heb. 12:2)*

1. Our journey in faith continues. We are on the threshold of our fifth anniversary as a diocese. The diocese has made steady progress in many areas in spite of the initial teething problems. The diocese has been successfully organized for more efficient and effective administration. Recently, it was divided into four Pastoral Regions: Nnewi, Ihiala, Ozubulu and Amichi with ten Deaneries: Uruagu-Nnewi and Otolu-Nnewi (**Nnewi Region**), Ihiala, Okija and Orsumoghu (**Ihiala**), Ozubulu, Oraifite and Ukor (**Ozubulu Region**), Amichi and Osumenyi (**Amichi**). These Regions will be formally inaugurated in March 2007. In the same vein, the organization of the Family of God into vital groups for easy pastoral care into statutory bodies has been completed. Every person in the diocese is expected to register in one of the statutory organizations and participate in their activities. The statutory organizations are: Catholic Men Organisation (CMO-for men), Catholic Women Organisation (CWO-for women), Catholic Boys' Organisation (CBO - young men and boys) and Catholic Girls' Organisation (CGO - for young ladies and girls). CBO and CGO come together with other youth organizations to form Catholic Youth Council of Nigeria (CYON) while all lay Organisations are coordinated by the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria. All indigenes of the

diocese living outside the diocese are expected to belong to Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Community (NCDC) in the place of their residence. NCDC gives them the sense of belonging to the one Family of God, to be in constant communion and communication with the diocese, especially with me as their diocesan Bishop.

Fifth Anniversary Celebration: 10th February 2007

2. On 10th February, 2007, the diocese will celebrate the fifth anniversary of its erection. It is hoped that, the occasion will offer us the opportunity to celebrate God's love and care for the diocese - "The Family of God". It will also be the celebration of our identity as the Family of God on Mission as well as our united efforts at realizing the mission of the Church in our area. We expect every member of our diocese to identify with our vision. The vision of the Diocese was inspired by the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa (The African Synod) and the Pastoral Exhortation of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II of saintly memory. The Diocese will be a Family of God modelled on the Trinitarian Family and the Holy Family of Nazareth as incarnated in the African family characterised by love, mutual acceptance, solidarity and reconciliation. Similarly, it will be an opportunity of every member of the diocese to recommit himself or herself to our mission. The diocese through all pastoral means at its disposal will work assiduously to inculcate the sense of community and values of unity and solidarity in all the members of Christ's faithful so that, all with one heart, and one soul, will cooperate to achieve the vision of the diocese. The directive principles, policies and action will be channelled to forming the members of the Family of God into "a chosen people, a kingdom of priests, a holy

nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Showcasing Our Common Efforts

3. We are hoping to showcase the fruit of collaborative endeavours of the members of the people of God. God willing, we hope to bless the fruits of the efforts of our people living in Port Harcourt and Lagos. The members of Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Community (NCDC) Port Harcourt have committed themselves to construct a Media House at our diocesan headquarters at Nnewi. The building currently houses the Directorate of Communications, the offices of THE CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK, our diocesan monthly newspaper and our Chukwunenye Community Bank, **THE FAMILY BANK** which is expected to be Chukwunenye Microfinance Bank. It will further provide accommodation for Father Edmund Ikenga-Metuh Memorial Library and Nnewi School of Business Studies. We also hope to bless the Diocesan Secretariat being constructed by Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Community (NCDC) Lagos. The Secretariat will bring together all the diocesan offices currently scattered all over the diocese. We will also use the occasion to focus the attention of every member of our diocese on Our Lady of Assumption Cathedral, Nnewi begging to be completed and dedicated. 2007/2008 will be dedicated to this most pressing work. I do hope that, the first phase of the work on St. Gabriel's Spiritual Year Seminary, Ozubulu, will come to an end in 2007. God willing, the first batch of students will be admitted in October 2007.

My Prophetic Mission

4. One of the principal means of achieving our mission is the commitment to the exercise of my teaching office, the prophetic ministry (*munus docendi*). On 10th February, 2002, I made a solemn commitment to teach in season and out of season. I have endeavoured to keep faith with the flock entrusted to me with the charge to “give a shepherd's care to the flock of God that is entrusted you” (1 Peter 5:2). In the midst of the other commitments, I have tried to put before the people the whole of God's purpose (see Acts 20:27). In my homilies, addresses, letters and above all, in my Pastoral Letters, I have exposed the mysteries of God in the light of our faith in Christ Jesus. God is my witness that I have laboured day and night to expose to you the message of eternal life as I have received it from the Church. The strand of faith goes through all I have taught and all I will teach. In my teaching, I do not pretend to have any other wisdom except that which comes from Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God (see 1 Cor. 1:24). You will be saved if you wholeheartedly accept and put into practice the message which we give, a message that is a stumbling block for those who are looking for signs and wonders and rank foolishness for those seeking for the wisdom of this world. Like St. Paul, I have chosen to know only the crucified Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:21-24).

Résumé of My Pastoral Letters

5. In 2002, I laid the foundation of the edifice with “**WE ARE THE FAMILY OF GOD**”, a family inspired by faith, energised by love and strengthened by hope. In this unique family, we presented the model of the Holy Trinity as our heavenly exemplar, the Holy Family of

Nazareth as our model and the African family as the context of the incarnation of the Family of God. The outstanding characteristic of this Family is faith in Christ Jesus. That was why we explored the issue of the Christian faith in 2003 in **WE WALK BY FAITH**. The Christian Church and Christian life are founded on the solid rock of the faith in Christ. It is the faith in the Trinity and faith in the Son of God who became a human being and was born by the Blessed Virgin Mary, who lived in our world, taught and went about doing good, suffered and died for our sins, rose from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father. How can our world be the same after the transforming presence of God among us as *Immanuel* God-with-us! Faith in Christ must issue in faith in the Church founded by Christ as the Sacrament of salvation. That gave rise to the 2004 Pastoral Letter, **FROM FAITH TO FAITH**. Our faith must have ecclesial dimension. I believe in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Ecclesiology becomes an essential part of theology, for even though the Church does not save anyone, no one will be saved who knowingly rejects the Church, the Body of Christ. Are we not justly disturbed by the craze of confusion that is blazing like fire destroying the sense of the Church?

6. Having explored the important ecclesial dimension of our Christian faith, I moved into the other support of the tripod: the worship of the Christian people. Faith must issue in worship of the true God in spirit and in truth *Lex credendi lex orandi (celebrandi)*. Worship, whether as public and official worship of God in liturgy and the other acts of worship bring interiority and spirituality into our lives and orientate us to the Divine, the Ground of our being. Is it therefore not important and indispensable to ensure that our worship stems from true faith and that our worship nourishes, strengthens and enlivens that faith?

Our pastoral Letter of 2005, **LET US CELEBRATE THE MYSTERY OF FAITH** did address our concerns for worship that agrees with and sustains our faith.

7. The 2006 Pastoral Letter addressed a very important dimension of Christian life - love. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI chose that for his first Encyclical Letter, precisely at the same time. He released *Deus Caritas Est* as a launching pad for his Apostolic ministry. On my part, I brought out the necessary link between faith and love in the Pastoral Letter **FAITH THAT WORKS THROUGH LOVE**. This Letter places before the people the dynamic of faith as it ensues in love: *Lex credendi lex agendi* for it is clear that, faith without works is definitely dead (see James 2:17). Are we not challenged by the demands of love to prove our faith? The Devil believes but trembles because the Devil cannot love. Christians are so not just in name but in the fact that they love as Christ loved. That was precisely why they came to be called Christians. Do men and women of our present society still wonder at the love among Christians? Are men and women still drawn to the Way by the deeds of love of believers?

Diocesan Synod - A Landmark

8. The celebration of the first diocesan synod for the Diocese of Nnewi from 3rd-10th April, 2005 provided a great opportunity for learning and teaching for the whole Family of God of the diocese. Called to re-examine and strengthen our faith commitment, the synod was a veritable *kairos*, moment of grace through which we encountered one another more intimately in the presence of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The prayer on the lips of every participant was *mane nobiscum Domine* (Lord, remain

with us). It is in union with the Lord that we hoped to attain the objective of the synod: that Christ may live in our hearts through faith (see Eph. 3:17). The rich fruits of the synod were harvested and put as a rich menu before the members of the Family of God on Mission in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi in the post-synodal Pastoral Exhortation, **THE MESSAGE OF ETERNAL LIFE**. This document collects the recommendations of the first diocesan synod of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi and presents them in the context of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to whom St. Peter confessed; “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68-69). It is our vivid hope that the rich pastoral, doctrinal and disciplinary content of the Exhortation will provide the solid foundation for living the life of our Christian faith with utter conviction, unshaken dedication and uncompromising faithfulness.

Introducing the 2007 Pastoral Letter

9. Following the trend, we hope to bring our reflection to bear on the social realities of our times in the light of our Christian faith. The light of faith must illumine all aspects of the lives of the members of the Family of God. This light of the Christian faith shines brightly on both individual lives and social realities so that men and women born again to a new life as new creatures in Christ will respond to the social realities in the light of that faith given once and for all through the Apostles and transmitted to us through the Church of the Living God. That is why I am moved to write this year's pastoral letter on **READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN THE LIGHT OF FAITH**. It is my ardent hope that members of Christ's faithful will be able to

discern from the events taking place in our country Nigeria, the paths to tread in order to fulfill their prophetic and priestly mission of sanctifying the world and renewing the temporal order according to the will of God. It is by being the salt of the earth and light of the world that the Christian contributes to the peace and well-being of the society. That is what we are called to do.

CHAPTER ONE

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times
(Mt. 16:3).

10. 2007 is a year of destiny for us, Nigerians! It is the year for elections at the Local Government, State and Federal levels. The elections of 2003 were but a travesty, a charade of democratic elections. The tales and realities of election fraud of unimagined and unimaginable proportion abound. One politician confessed that, he was prepared for election rigging but not for a coup, which was how he saw the 2003 elections. The courts were overwhelmed with election petitions from the 2003 elections. Some of these cases dragged on for over two years. Many of the elections results declared by the Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC) were overturned by the courts to show the shoddy work and outright fraudulent activities of INEC. Indeed, the independence, impartiality and even ability of INEC to conduct any credible elections were decisively lampooned by the courts. Given the propensity to crisis at such periods of elections, the question is: to be or not to be? Can we read the signs of the times? And how do we read them?

Signs of the Times

11. Jesus challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to put him to the test. They were religious and

political leaders of the day. They were astounded by the person and work of Jesus Christ, the unknown and unconnected figure who was making waves in Palestine. They came to ask him to show them a sign from heaven, as if they cared at all about heaven. Jesus knew their hypocrisy and gave them the challenging reply: "In the evening you say, 'It will be fine, there is a red sky' and in the morning, 'Stormy weather today, the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times. It is an evil and unfaithful generation asking for a sign, and the only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah" (Mt. 16:2-4). Signs from heaven were well known in the Old Testament. God established the rainbow as the sign of his new relationship with humanity after the flood: "Here is the sign of my covenant I make between myself and you and every living creature with you for all generations. I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth..." (Gn. 9:12-16). Yahweh asked Ahaz, the King of Israel to ask for a sign and on his refusal to do so, God gave him a sign: "the maiden is with child", the sign of ***Immanuel***, God-is-with-us (Is. 7:10-14). When the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted a sign from heaven, probably, one of the apocalyptic signs (see The Book of Revelation) or miracles which were regarded as signs and wonders, Jesus gave them the sign of Jonah, the sign of repentance.

Signs in Human Knowledge

12. Signs are important in human knowledge. They are means through which human beings mediate knowledge. Human beings create signs, which can be natural or contrived. Natural signs have affinity to the thing signified while artificial signs have a meaning

attributed to them in such a way that the meaning of the sign is known to those who share the knowledge. Smoke is naturally associated with fire and so people say, there is no smoke without a fire. While the piece of cloth sown in a certain way and with a certain combination of colours stand for a country. Naturally, people through experience have learnt basic meteorology with which they predict the changes in weather. We do not have to be Femi Oke, of CNN to know when rainy or dry spell is coming. However, we need prophets to decipher for us the revelation of God through signs.

The Prophetic Sign

13. The Prophet Ezekiel was a sign to the people of Israel before the catastrophe of the Babylonian Exile. He was asked by Yahweh to pack an exile's bundle and leave in the evening, making a hole in the city wall to go through into the dark with covered face. The people had to ask for an explanation. The prophet gave them the word of the Lord. The sign was a prophecy concerning the exile and what would happen to the king and people of Jerusalem (Ezk. 12:1-16). The people failed to heed the warning contained in the sign of Ezekiel and all that Yahweh foretold happened to the "tribe of rebels who have eyes and never see, they have ears and never hear because they are a tribe of rebels" (Ezk. 12:2).

Reading the Handwriting on the Wall

14. In the Book of Daniel, we have the famous handwriting on the wall. King Belshazzar had a great feast and, in his revelry, he called for the sacred vessels looted from the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem to drink out of them. He and his noblemen, their wives and women who

sang for him drank out of them and they praised their idols of gold, silver, of bronze, of wood and stone. Suddenly, the finger of a human hand appeared and began to write on the plaster of the palace wall. The terrified and petrified king invited his sages, soothsayers, chaldeans, and exorcists who could not read the writing nor could they explain to the king what it meant. They had to turn to Daniel called Belteshazzar, a man filled with such a marvellous spirit and such knowledge and intelligence in interpreting dreams, solving enigmas and unravelling difficult problems. Daniel read the handwriting on the wall as a sign of the times in the light of God's word. God had given the kings dominion which they had abused and now the judgement of God on them: ***mene, mene, teqel, parsin!*** ***Mene:*** God has measured your sovereignty and put an end to it; ***teqel:*** you have been weighed in a balance and found wanting; ***parsin:*** your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians (see Dan. 5:1-30). It happened as Daniel said and King Belshazzar was murdered that night. People who fail to heed the signs of the times end up grinding their teeth.

The Sign of Jonah

15. Unlike the people of Babylon, the people of Nineveh read the handwriting on the wall and did something about it. The "writing" was the preaching of Jonah, an eccentric looking man from the belly of a fish who went through Nineveh, a great city beyond compare and preached a strange message: "Only forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown". The people of Nineveh believed in God and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least including the king. God spared Nineveh (Jonah 3). The salutary effect of reading the signs of the times in the light of God's word was evident

in the case of Nineveh. That was why Jesus speaking to the evil and unfaithful generation, gave them the sign of Jonah. The sign of Jonah thus becomes a permanent sign for every generation. It is indeed a sure sign before our own generation which can be correctly described as a corrupt generation, a present-day Nineveh. In spite of much touted crusade against corruption, Nigeria is still stinking with corruption, ranking second in the whole world. The corruption messes up every aspect of our public life. Elections in Nigeria are marred by greed and corruption. We need Jonah to preach to us!

Are We Nigerians Ready to Read the Signs?

16. Can we read the handwriting on the wall? Are we Nigerians ready to learn from history to escape the cataclysm that the ominous clouds forebode? Ours is a call to discernment, to divine wisdom that sees the hand of God in human as well as cosmic events. Where is God leading Nigeria and Nigerians? Inspired by the sense of patriotism and guided by my faith in God, the Supreme Lord of history and destiny, I invite you, dear people of God and any other readers to seek that wisdom from above in reading the signs of the times. Political expediency, superficial and selective indices of economic well-being, lure of money and false promises of political posts and privileges, social harmony secured with ruses and carrot and stick diplomacy may lure us into stupor of peace but the word of the Lord says: "For, from the least to greatest, they are all greedy for gain; prophet no less than priest, all of them practise fraud. Without concern they dress my people's wound, saying, 'Peace! Peace!' whereas there is no peace. They should be ashamed of their loathsome deeds. Not they! They feel no shame; they do not know how to blush. And so as others fall, they too will fall, will

be thrown down when I come and punish them, Yahweh says" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11).

The Light of Faith

17. Following my Pastoral Letter for 2006, **Faith that Works through Love**, I wish to explore with you and reflect on how our faith works through love in the area of politics. We are doing this in the context of the political situation of our country as we prepare for 2007 elections. We are doing the reflection in the light of our Christian faith and conscience in this year's Pastoral Letter, **Reading the Signs of the Times in the Light of Faith. Christian faith must issue in love**, in righteous living, in moral probity and personal integrity. St. James put it very succinctly: "In the same way faith, if good deeds do not go with it, is quite dead" (Jam. 2:17). In other words, "Christian faith must issue in good works: a faith not expressed in good works is no faith at all" (A Commentator on the Letter of St. James). To be a Christian, is to be a follower of Jesus Christ, to imitate Him. That is why the Christian must live the life worthy of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Phil. 1:27). The Christian is urged to live a life worthy of the vocation to which he or she is called (see Eph. 4:1). Let us not deceive ourselves: we cannot claim to be Christians and continue to indulge in unrighteous living of our former state of life. St. Paul made it clear: "Make no mistake, the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the self-indulgent, sodomites, thieves, misers, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. Some of you used to be of that kind; but you have been washed clean, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

In the World but not of the World

18. The Christian is not isolated and insulated from the realities of the time and place. We are in the world even though we are not of this world (John 17:14-16). As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated: “The joys and hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age,... these too are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men [and women] ... That is why this community realizes that, it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history” (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Contemporary World, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1). The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council really pointed out to us the way to be Christians in the contemporary world by reflecting on every aspect of human society in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, “Therefore, the Council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which that family lives... Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served... To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel” (*Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 2, 3 and 4).

The Light of the World and the Salt of the Earth

19. Jesus gave the Christian important responsibility to the world: “You are the salt of the earth” (Mt. 5:13) and

“You are the light of the world... Your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:14,16). The Christian armed with an upright Christian conscience formed in the Christian faith, casts the light of faith on everything. He or she reads the signs of the times with the optics of faith and acts as the prophet of the nation. Every Christian is made a watchman to the society: “Son of man, I have appointed you as watchman for the House of Israel” (Ezk. 33:7). Yes, we are the watchmen of the society. We have the obligation to sound timely warning to the people of our times about impending disaster. If they do not change their rapacious ways and bend themselves to the discipline of the Lord, the men and women in our society will experience the just reward of their wickedness. But if they heed the warning and accept the Lord's discipline, it shall be well with the society. Yes, the discipline of the Lord! The yoke of the Lord! St. Paul was aware of the great burden on Christians. He expected them to walk as children of light and challenged them: “See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). It is by following the discipline of the Lord that Christians redeem the time.

Christian Discipline and Politics

20. But what has the discipline of the Lord got to do with politics and civil governance? People would glibly quote the saying of Jesus “Very well, pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt. 22:21). By this saying they understand rather strangely but wrongly that earthly power and governance is autonomous of God. God has nothing to do with the political realities and matters of governance! These, one

would erroneously believe, are areas of activities that have their own laws and are independent of God and His laws! Indeed, religion and morality have no place in politics and governance! Would this dichotomy not explain the double life led by most Christians, especially in public life? I mean, Christians in politics or government and indeed in other areas of public life who behave as if they do not know God. Such “Christians” behave as if they have no fear of God! This is the bane of a society in which men and women have no transcendental vision: their vision and therefore, their concerns are about the things of this world, the gains, the pleasures and earthly possessions and well-being (see 1 John 2:16). Christians must make space for God in this world, for God is *Immanuel*, God-with-us in our world (see Mt. 1:23).

My Goal: To Bring God into Politics

21. Thus my one goal in presenting this reflection is to focus the attention of all members of the Family of God on the integrity of creation and human society under God. We want the members of the Family of God to be discerning men and women who consciously realize in all aspects of their lives the centrality of God in both their public and private lives, especially in the area of politics. It is my burning desire that men and women, especially Christians, will enter politics, participate in politics in a manner that reflects the Christian faith and their commitment to God.

CHAPTER TWO

GOD OF POLITICS

... because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God (Rm. 13:1).

Politics - A Dirty Game?

22. It will be difficult for many of us to associate God with politics, given our association of politics with “dirty game”. It is just like an experience I had. I had just finished explaining to students that some priests study law, when a student asked me: “How is it that priests study law? Are they going to be lawyers as lawyers are liars?” Well, I replied with the play on words: “All lawyers are liars, said a liar!” It is for you to evaluate the veracity of what a liar said! In the case under discussion, the general impression is that, politics is a dirty game. I replied: “To those who are pure themselves, everything is pure; but to those who have been corrupted and lack faith, nothing can be pure- the corruption is both in their minds and in their consciences” (Titus 1:15). Politics as a serious business of managing the polis is by no means a game and not to talk of a dirty one. Men and women can abuse politics but that does not in any way take away from the use of politics. ***Abusus non tollit usum!*** Abuse of anything does not take away its usefulness. God who created the earth and all in it and who entrusted the earth to human beings cannot be absent from politics without awful consequences. Indeed, our negative

and sad experiences with politics are born from the systematic elbowing out of God from the consciences of men and women who hanker after power, positions and privileges at any cost. When men and women are God-fearing, they will foster healthy and creative politics.

God is involved with Politics!

23. A look into the scriptures will show us clearly that our God is involved in politics, that is, in the *polis* and the care of it. Psalm 24:1 tells us: "To Yahweh belongs the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live in it". It just means that the Lord has everything to do with the world, its existence and its functioning. It means that the State and its apparatus are not realities outside God's concern. They and their functioning concern God. Generally, a State is defined in terms of people, territory, organisation (laws and government). The God of Israel demonstrated his involvement with all these facets of the State.

The People of God-A Political Community

24. In choosing Abram, later called Abraham, God wanted to establish a people who were described as "*a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people set apart to be the personal possession*" (I Peter 2:9; see Is. 43:20-21). He made a promise to Abram: "I shall make you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). He bound himself by covenant to make the descendants of Abram as numerous as the stars in the sky and sand on the seashore (see Gen. 15:5). Abram believed God. After the attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac, God confirmed his promise: "I swear by my own self, Yahweh declares, that because you have done this, because you have not refused me your own beloved son, I will show more blessings on you and make your

descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore" (Gen. 22:16-17). The descendants of Abraham through Isaac and then Jacob (Israel) became numerous in Egypt and in the experiences of Exodus from Egypt and the forty years wandering in the desert, they got the awareness of being a people, the people of God. Through the leadership of Moses, the Hebrew tribes were bound to Yahweh by a covenant at Mount Sinai by which God was to be their God and they were to be his own people (Ex. 19:5-6). The Hebrew people enjoyed a special relationship with Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had the awareness of being a special people.

A People with Laws and Organisation

25. These wandering Arameans were to receive a territory and an organisation from Yahweh. In the desert, Yahweh gave them his laws through Moses. These laws were to distinguish them from all other people. The laws covered cultural, religious, social and domestic aspects of the people's existence and life. For the Hebrew people, the whole of the Five Books called the Books of Moses made up the Law, *ha Torah*. The Books of the *Pentateuch* have legal sections such as the Decalogue and the expansion of it (Ex. 20; Dt. 5), the Holiness Code (Lev.19) and the Deuteronomic Code (Dt. 12:26). These norms were to govern the daily private and public life of the Hebrew people as the Law of Moses. The Law was the sign of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel: "Yahweh your God commands you today to observe these laws and customs; you must keep and observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have obtained this declaration from Yahweh: that he will be your God, but only if you follow his ways, keep his statutes, his

commandments, his customs, and listen to his voice. And today Yahweh has obtained this declaration from you: that you will be his own people-as he said- but only if you keep all his commandments..." (Dt. 26:16-18). Every society must have laws: *ubi societas ibi ius!* Living under laws or what is called rule of law distinguishes a society from mobs or the jungle living. God provided laws for the Hebrew people as a paradigm for all other peoples.

A People with A Territory

26. God promised and provided his people with a territory, a land flowing with milk and honey: The Promised Land. The promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1) was to be fulfilled hundred of years afterwards when God took the Hebrew people with a mighty hand out of Egypt to bring them into the land of Canaan. The people had a territory that they could call their own. But their survival in that territory depended on their observance of the laws given them by Yahweh. Moses gave them this injunction: "After you have crossed the Jordan into the country which Yahweh your God is giving you, you must set up tall stones, coat them with lime and on them write all the words of the Law, when you have crossed and entered the country which Yahweh your God is giving you, a country flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, God of your ancestors, has promised you" (Dt. 27:2-3). The security and greatness of the Hebrew nation were predicated on their observance of the Law in the country which Yahweh their God gave them. On the other hand, neglect of the Law would surely bring wars, diseases and ultimately exile from the country (see Dt. 28:47-68). The Book of Judges confirmed this: "whenever the Hebrew people sinned, God would inflict one disaster or another on them until they repented and called on him" (see Jgs. 2:11-

19). The Prophets kept warning the people about the great disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem and Temple and exile but they did not heed the prophets until the disasters came upon them. God is the supreme owner of the country!

A People with Government

27. God showed his involvement in the life of the people of Israel by providing the government of the people. Beginning with Moses whom he chose as the liberator of his people, through his successor Joshua to the charismatic leaders called up by God in the time of national crises as Judges, God showed that all authority comes from him (see Rom. 13:1). In the desert, Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses suggested a form of government of participation to Moses: "But choose among the people, capable, God-fearing men, men of truth who hate a bribe, and appoint them as leaders for groups of a thousand, a hundred, fifty and ten...If you do this, God will guide you and you will be able to cope with this duty; and all these people will reach their place in peace" (Ex. 18:17-26). God gave the tribes seventy tribal leaders who were filled with his spirit. They were to be Spirit-filled men who would help Moses in bearing the burden of governance of the people (Numbers 11:24-30).

From Tribal Government to Monarchy

28. God appointed Joshua, the son of Nun to take over the mantle of leadership from Moses. He had the privilege of leading the Hebrew people into the land of Canaan. After his death, God raised charismatic leaders to judge the people and deliver them from the hands of their enemies. This period in the life of the people of Israel led to anarchy

which the sacred writer described in the plait: “At that time, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what seemed good to him” (see Judges 18:1; 19:1. 21:25). Monarchy seemed to be the paradigm for order and effective governance. During the time when Samuel was getting old, the people came to him to demand a king so as to be like the neighbours who had kingship institution. For the people, the king was the embodiment of success: “We want a king to govern us, lead us and go ahead of us in our battles” (1 S. 8:19-20). This was displeasing to Samuel. He saw this as rejection of God's rule over them. But God intervened: “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you: it is not you that they have rejected but me, not wishing me to reign over them any more” (1 S. 8:7-8).

Governance is from God

29. It is clear from the above passage that God is the ultimate point of reference even of politics. Every authority comes from God and so it is important that everything that has to do with the constitution, establishment and exercise of authority must have God as their ultimate point of reference. The leaders and the people must obey God as the source of authority and direction. In that way, theocracy is the basic political structure. All others such as monarchy, democracy, plutocracy, aristocracy, gerontocracy or whatever system human beings devise must be built on the substructure of theocracy. It was God who chose their king, Saul and when Saul disobeyed God, he was rejected by God and David was chosen and from David onwards, God decided to set up a dynasty (see 1 Chron. 17:3-14). The kings of Judah and Israel were evaluated as good or bad depending on their fidelity to Yahweh and the covenant.

“Chinweze” - God, the Universal Kingmaker

30. God's involvement in politics did not stop with Israel. God showed that He is the Lord of all the earth. He mandated Elijah to go and anoint even the King of Syria. At the encounter of God with the prophet, God commanded Elijah: “Take the road back through the desert and go to Damascus for you must anoint Hazael as king of Syria; you must also anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king over Israel...” (1 Kings 19:15-16). The rise and fall of kingdoms were the work of Yahweh, the God of Israel. The story of Cyrus showed God's long reach in the affairs of nations. Cyrus was a Persian King. But the Lord showed that He influenced his rise for His own purpose: “I call on Cyrus, 'My shepherd!' and he goes to fulfil my will... I have called you by name and given you your mission although you do not know me... I armed you when you did not know me, so that, from the rising to the setting of the sun, all may know that there is no one besides me; I am Yahweh, and there is no other. I form the light and create the dark; I usher in prosperity and bring calamity. I, Yahweh, do all these” (Is. 44:28; 45:1-7). God is the God of politics and governance!

God and Caesar: A Critical Issue

31. The New Testament presents the same view: governance and all connected with it, come from God the Author of all things. It is true that Jesus Christ maintained a critical stance with regard to civil power and authority. He acknowledged that Caesar had power but he also stated categorically that the power of Caesar came from God. The attempt by the Pharisees to trap Jesus led to a statement of Jesus that has received diverse interpretations. They wanted to know if it was permissible

to pay taxes to Caesar. “But Jesus aware of their malice replied, 'You hypocrites! Why are you putting me the test? Show me the money you use to pay tax with.' They handed him a *denarius*, and he said, 'Whose portrait is this? Whose title?' They replied, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Very well, pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God.’” (Mt. 22:18-21). Caesar represents earthly power. Some people erroneously see the power of Caesar as distinct and autonomous from the dominion of God. Such dichotomy is alien to biblical tradition.

My Kingdom is not of this World!

32. Jesus himself was to put the matter in the right and proper perspective. During the trial before Pontius Pilate, the Governor of Judea and representative of Caesar in Palestine, Jesus wanted to correct the wrong impression of the independent power of Caesar and his agents. When Pilate questioned Jesus and Jesus remained silent, Pilate then said to him, “Are You refusing to speak to me? Surely you know I have the power to release you and I have the power to crucify you?” Jesus calmly replied, “You have no power over me at all if it had not been given you from above;” (John 19:10-11). All earthly power comes from God. Even though the immediate source and configuration of authority and power are from human beings, the ultimate source of power and authority is God, the Author of everything in this world and the world to come. It is therefore clear to any perspicacious person that all earthly power and authority belong to Caesar (that is, to secular authority) but Caesar belongs to God. Is it therefore not certain that God should be the supreme authority over all earthly potentates?

Every Authority is from God

33. St. Paul writing to the Romans stated, “Everyone is to obey the governing authorities, because no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God... because the authorities are all serving God as his agents” (Rm. 13:1-7). It is important to remark that any properly established authority requires the obedience of every responsible citizen. That does not go easily for illegal governments and those governments constituted through criminal and fraudulent means. We will go into details about the obligations of citizens to the government. Suffice it now to state that, God is the Lord and every government in heaven and on earth is subject to him and acts as his agent. This in effect, means that, it is this link with God that gives validity to any legitimate government. For a government to enjoy the loyalty of the populace, it must be seen to be acting as the agent of God. In the way, the obligation becomes moral, not merely legal.

Divine Source of Human Institutions

34. St. Peter exhorted the Christians to respect civil authority. “For the sake of the Lord, accept the authority of every human institution: the emperor, as the supreme authority, and the governors as commissioned by him to punish criminals and praise those who do good... Have respect for everyone and love for your fellow-believers; fear God and honour the emperor” (1 P. 2:13-17). In those days, Christians had cause to hate civil authorities for these subjected them to persecutions and inhuman treatment. But St. Peter insisted on respect for them as agents of God. Instead of hating the civil government of the day, the Christians even under the most inhuman persecutions were to heed the instructions of St. Paul for prayers to be offered

“for everyone, for kings and others in authority, so that we may be able to live peaceful and quiet lives with all devotion and propriety” (1 Tm. 2:1-2). However, in view of the common good and the demands of morality, citizens are not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teaching of the Gospel. In such cases, the Christian is to follow his or her conscience nurtured on truth for we must obey God rather than men (see Acts 5:29 **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, No. 2242).

God is the Source of Politics

35. From our brief excursus into Scripture, we find that God must be the reference point of all politics and governance. The earth and all it contains, the world and all its inhabitants belong to God. For the proper ordering of the world and of the societies in the world, humanity must consciously embrace God and work according to His plans and carry out His purposes. That is why everybody, especially politicians and participants in governance must be people chosen from “among the people, capable, God-fearing men, men of truth who hate a bribe” (see Ex. 18:21). The Bible thus provides the foundation and guideposts for sound politics, good governance and harmonious societal living.

CHAPTER THREE

I BELIEVE IN POLITICS

For the sake of the Lord, accept the authority of every human institution (1 P 2:13)

Homo Politicus

36. Human beings as social beings are organized in ***polis***, (a city-state), an organized human society. The organization of human societies gives rise to politics, the art of organization of the ***polis***. It is important to note that politics is not extraneous to human society. It is central and essential. That is why a human being is defined as ***homo politicus***. In general, the whole essence of politics is the organization of the society. According to Pope Benedict XVI, “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?***” (Encyclical Letter, ***Deus Caritas Est***, no. 28). The exigencies of public order and common welfare of the community is the ***raison d’etre*** of the political community. If we view politics from this perspective, we see that politics is not only essential but also necessary for the well-being of the State and for the well-being of individuals. Unfortunately, politics is seen as a dirty game for men and women who are prepared to do anything to get power and abuse power. In Nigeria,

politics is seen as the occupation for men and women who care less about the well-being of the society. Such people care only about access to power through foul or fair means and using the power to enrich themselves. Thus, the brand of politics exercised in Nigeria has been variously described as “politics of chop-make-I-chop”, politics of sharing the national cake, “*mago mago* politics” etc. No wonder it is called a dirty game.

Dirty Men and Women - Politics of Pigs!

37. Fortunately, that is not politics. Politics is not a game. It is the serious business of ordering the *polis*. It is not dirty *per se*. Morally, debased men and women in politics are dirty and give a bad name to politics. According to Pope John Paul II, “ignorance of the fact that human beings have a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the area of politics and morals” (see **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, no. 407). The wounded nature of human beings, nature corrupted by original sin, bring in various abuses and excesses to politics. If human beings do not control and exercise vigilance over their natural inclinations, the result would be what St. Paul calls self-indulgence and the result is obvious: “sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality, the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things” (Gal. 5:19-21). Do we not experience these “dirty” things in Nigerian politics? We need a change, a transformation, *metanoia* in politics for politics to become a noble art of governance and just ordering of the society.

Conversion of Power

38. Such a change must begin with our concept of power. According to Lord Acton, “power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely”. Do we not see it happening in Nigeria? Whether under the military or civilian governments, there is abuse of power. In most of the cases, power has entered the heads of people in power that they turn lawless in the exercise of power. If power is taken in isolation from its purpose, then, we have a situation of tyranny: Tyranny manifests itself in many ways: tyranny of government, tyranny of the party and tyranny of numbers! We have recently experienced not only the tyranny of the Executive but also the tyranny of the Legislature and sometimes, the tyranny of the judiciary with some misguided judges making reckless judgements! The spate of impeachments in the country, even by a criminal minority, speaks volumes of the type of politics being carried out in Nigeria. Indeed, Nigeria deserves to have a Hall of Shame for all the major actors in the lawless abuse of power. For politics to be what it is intended to be, we need to follow the three wise men, who went to visit Jesus, the new born baby in their conversion with regards to power. According to Pope Benedict XVI, “They had to change their ideas about power, about God and about man, and in so doing, they also had to change themselves... They had to learn to give themselves no lesser gift would be sufficient for the King. They had to learn that their lives must be conformed to this divine way of exercising power, to God's own way of being. They must become men of truth, of justice, of goodness, of forgiveness, of mercy... They must ask: How can I serve God's presence in the world?” (see **Benedictus: Day by Day with Pope Benedict XVI**, p. 19). Such a change will move politics from exercise of power as the pagans and instil Christian

concept of power: “You know that among the gentiles those they call their rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be the slave to all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45). Such a change will transform the face of politics in our land from politics of reckless display of power to politics of selfless service.

Politics, Instrument of Order and Progress

39. Politics will be true politics, that is, the noble means of attaining order and well-being of the society in general. Politics is an instrument of order and when well exercised, leads to harmony and order in the society. On the contrary, when men and women engage in dirty acts and call that politics, there is chaos in the society. The politics of lies and deceit, of violence and blackmail, of bribery and corruption will produce instability, insecurity and corruption. We need politics that secure the common good. According to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, the political community exists for the common good, which “embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfilment” (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 74).

Politics for the Common Good

40. The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** sums up the elements of the common good. “The common good

consists of three elements: respect for and promotion of the fundamental rights of the persons; prosperity, or the development of the spiritual and temporal goods of the society; the peace and security of the group and its members” (no. 1925). It must be emphasized that the human person is the centre-piece of all polity. Pope Benedict XVI rightly states: “I am convinced that respect for the person promotes peace and that, in building peace, the foundations are laid for an authentic integral humanism. In this way, a serene future is prepared for coming generations” (Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace” 1st January, 2007). Any attempt at development or at building national, regional or international peace that is not grounded on and built upon respect for the human person is built on sand and must collapse. Respect for the equality and freedom of persons is the cornerstone of all polity. “The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: ‘The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26). This order is founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love” (**Catechism of the Catholic Church**, no. 1912). That is why any political, social or economic programme has to be evaluated by its impact on the human person. The reform agenda of the government would be adjudged successful to the extent that it promotes the integral well-being of the majority of the people and not just the interest of the ruling class. Common good is the end and challenge of every political institution and hence of every political activity. Therefore, politics and political participation by every member of the community must guarantee the achievement of the common good. The same Council teaches, “It follows that political authority, either within the political community as such, or through organizations representing the State, must be exercised

within the limits of moral order and directed toward the common good according to the juridical order legitimately established or due to be established” (*Idem*).

Politics and Moral Order

41. The political community to be according to the mind of God and to correspond to a just order must be founded on two very indispensable principles: **moral order** and **rule of law**. **The moral order** is the law which the Creator established independently of any human authority for the guidance of the universe. It is the law that corresponds to the truth of being. It is the law that regulates and guarantees the order and harmony of the created world resulting from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them (see **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, no. 341). According to the same Catechism, “The natural law states the first and essential precepts which govern moral life. It hinges upon the desire for God and submission to him, who is the source and judge of all that is good, as well as upon the sense that the other is one's equal” (no. 1955). The natural law provides for the moral order in which human beings as individuals and as members of a society live and act in a manner that respects their freedom and responsibility. This moral law forms the foundation not only for the moral order but also for the juridical order, for “The natural law, the Creator's very good work, provides the solid foundation on which man can build the structure of moral rules to guide his choices. It also provides the indispensable moral foundation for building the human community. Finally, it provides the necessary basis for the civil law with which it is connected, whether by a reflection that draws conclusions from its principles, or by additions of a positive and juridical nature” (no. 1959). It is therefore important to emphasise

that “Authority is exercised legitimately if it is committed to the common good of society. To attain this, it must employ morally acceptable means” (**Catechism of the Catholic Church**, no. 1921). The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council insist on morality in politics and political organisation: “it also follows that, political authority, whether in the community as such or in institutions representing the State, must always be exercised within limits of morality and on behalf of the dynamically conceived common good, according to a juridical order enjoying legal status” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 74).

Politics without Morality - A Travesty of Politics!

42. The tragedy of any political organization is the neglect of the moral order and attempting to build the political society and its juridical order on the shifting sand of public opinion or worse still on the whims and caprices of the authority. Such moral anarchy had produced disastrous regimes with terrible consequences for humanity. Civil society and laws based on the will of an individual or a group of individuals without reference to the moral order produced the worst type of tyranny which the world had experienced. *Quod vult princeps habet vigorem legis*, whatever the prince (lord or authority) wills is law. Such a legal order is based on sand. Lacking a solid anchor and a firm point of reference, the legal order would flounder in the midst of opinions and interests. Is it no wonder that many political systems that rejected the anchor of truth had produced monsters and inhuman conditions for the people? We must go beyond personal and group interests to ground the political community of the solid rock of moral law. Thomas Paine shows the necessity and fundamental importance of political/juridical order grounded on natural law: “The

more perfect civilization is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more does it regulate its own affairs, and govern itself... all the great laws of society are laws of nature” (**The Rights of Man, 1792**). Positive laws of the State rooted in natural law protect the society from arbitrariness and recklessness in the exercise of political or juridical power.

Rule of Law, the Basis of a Civilised Society

43. The second mooring of the political community is the **rule of law**. The rule of law is defined as a legal principle, of general application, sanctioned by the recognition of authorities, and usually expressed in the form of maxims or logical proposition. The rule of law, sometimes called “the supremacy of law”, provides that decisions should be made by the application of known principles or laws without the intervention of discretion in their application (see **Black's Law Dictionary**, p. 1196). The rule of law is opposed to arbitrariness. It is based on equality of all before the law and that law is no respecter of persons. Rule of law has the following componential implications: It regulates government and thus limits the arbitrariness and abuse of power by the government. There is need to check excess of government itself under the rule of law. That is why the constitution is supreme in a civilized State under the rule of law. The President or Governor or political party, however powerful, is subject to the constitution. There is division and separation of power with the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, each playing its part and acting as a check and balance to the others. Secondly, the rule of law implies equality before the law. The government and the governed, the rich and the poor, men and women have equal access to justice under the law. No one is above the law, not even the President or the

Legislature or the Judiciary, not even the police and other security and coercive agents of the State. Finally, the rule of law demands procedural and formal justice, so that law is applied through pre-existent and pre-known procedures that are public and transparent. The civilization of a society is measured by its adherence to the rule of law. The alternative to the rule of law is the rule of the jungle. According to Pope John Paul II, “The foundation of good government must be established on the sound basis of laws which protect the rights and define the obligations of the citizens” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 112). It is not enough to have laws. The laws must be reasonable and just. That means that the laws must be in line with the moral law. The laws must be applied without respect for persons.

Lawlessness and Law of the Jungle

44. Unfortunately, the general experience in Africa and in particular in Nigeria is that the rule of law is partial: law is made for the weak and applied to the weak members of the society. All animals are equal but some are more equal than others! Is it not the normal experience that lawmakers make laws without reference to justice, good conscience and equity? Lawmakers are generally dominated and directed by greed, personal interest and party interests. They make and unmake laws to favour their personal or group interests. The executive implements and applies the laws with reckless abandon, with arbitrariness and selectivity and without much reference to the laws. The rascality of the legislative arm is matched and surpassed by the recklessness of the executive arm of government. The judiciary which is the watchdog is muzzled and muffled and in many cases ignored. Some judicial officers behave like “hustlers”, bowing to the pressure of their greed for money, power and position. The wave of impeachments

and purported declaration of vacant seats have created the deplorable situation of “anarchy of government” or “government of anarchy”. In fact, the condition of lawless governance relegates our country to the condition of *ancien regime*, a situation in which one of the kings of France claimed: *L'etat, c'est moi!* He was the State! Even though the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria grants immunity to some members of the government, the constitution in no way accords them impunity, the right to act as if there is no limit to government. But the way some government agencies including some judicial officers treat court orders spell anarchy. Nigerians need to fight impunity with all the weapons at our disposal for this country to be counted as a civilised one.

Constitutional Democracy, Most Befitting for Human Beings

45. It is true that there are many forms of juridical organization of the political community. Anarchy is the basic form of government obtained in primitive societies. Such a condition obtained in Israel after the period of the Judges. The sacred Writer lamented: “At that time, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what seemed good to him” (Judges 21:25). Of all the systems of government known to humanity and tried by various societies, constitutional, representative/participatory democracy is the form of government that agrees best to the dignity of the human person. Defined as the government of the people, by the people for the people, democracy guarantees the rights and obligations of every member of the society. The essential elements of constitutional democracy are: 1. Sovereignty of the people, who are the ultimate source of authority of the government which must govern with the consent of the people; 2. majority rule coupled with the

protection of the minority, the fundamental rights of individuals and minorities are guaranteed and protected by law; 3. limited government, as the powers of the government are defined and limited by law and constitutions whether written or unwritten and government is bound to obey the law and be bounded by it; and 4. institutional and procedural limitations on power of government through separation and sharing of power by the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, checks and balances of the various arms of government, institutionalization of due process and leadership succession through elections (see **Civic Education Manual for Communities and Schools**, produced by JDPC/Caritas of Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, pp. 54-55).

Democracy or Demo crazy!

46. We can all attest to the fact that though we have constitutional democracy in the books, in the Constitution and laws of Nigeria, what we operate is a far cry from the civilized form of constitutional democracy. The perception of the people can be summed up in Fela Anikulapo Kuti's rendition of democracy as “*dem-all-crazy* (they are all crazy)” (see Matthew Hassan Kukah, **Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria**, p. 1). Between the ineptitude and indifference of the people and the lack of vision of the leaders and those aspiring to leadership, democracy suffers from abuse. To compound matters, military adventurism in politics has not allowed the democratic culture to take root. Nigeria is and operates as a huge garrison, where “garrison commanders” select and order others around and demand to be obeyed without discussion. We have the basic duty to move into modern times. For that to happen, we must take to heart and

implement the programme of the Synod of the Catholic Bishops for Africa: "That is why the Synod rightly considered that an authentic democracy, which respects pluralism, 'is one of the principal routes along which the Church travels together with the people... The lay Christian, engaged in the democratic struggle according to the spirit of the Gospel, is the sign of a Church which participates in the promotion of the rule of law everywhere in Africa'" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 112).

Politics under God

47. I believe in politics under God. Like every earthly institution and reality, politics has to be carried out according to just order, according to moral norms. Everybody has the moral obligation to participate in politics to ensure the well-being of the society. If good men and women abandon politics to charlatans and to the wicked, the society will be ordered according to the laws of the jungle. And that is what is generally happening and Nigeria is worse off for it. Christians schooled in the discipline of Christ must join to liberate Nigeria and Nigerians from the clutches of those who think that Nigeria is their exclusive birthright and they must continue to ravage and exploit the country for their selfish interest. Nigerians have to learn to engage in politics with principles.

CHAPTER FOUR

CITIZENS OF THE EARTHLY CITY

God wants you to be good citizens, so as to silence what fools are saying in their ignorance (1 P 2:15)

Christians: Citizens of Two Cities

48. It is important to project the aspect of faith in every aspect of our lives. Faith has to do with our life of worship as well as our life of active involvement with the things of this world. It is true that Jesus Christ seemed to introduce an opposition between the Christian and the world. The Christian is in the world but he or she does not belong to the world. In his priestly prayer, Jesus said, "I am not in the world any longer, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.... They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world" (John 17:11, 16). It will be wrong to understand the words of Jesus as a radical opposition of the Christian to earthly realities. Rather, his words pose a challenge to Christians to stand in opposition to the spirit that attempts to distance earthly realities from God, the spirit of the Evil One. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. The Church gives the key to a proper understanding of the paradox: in the world but not of the world.

Civitas Civilitas!

49. The very nature of human society demands ordered existence. In the first place, a member of the society is a member of the State which was represented by the body of citizens, *civitas*. *Civitas* represents the citizens united in a community, the body-politic, the State as this consists of one city and its territory. It means an ordered human habitation that is more than just a city, *urbs*, unless it is a city-state. *Civitas* can also be used for the condition of a member of the *civitas*, and, as such, a *civis*, a citizen. A citizen has obligations and rights in the *civitas*. St. Peter advised Christians to be good citizens. "God wants you to be good citizens, so as to silence what fools are saying in their ignorance" (1 Peter 2:15). It means that Christians are citizens of this world. They are also citizens of the heavenly kingdom, the Church, the household of the living God and of God's holy people as St. Paul calls Christians: "Now you are no longer strangers or guests, but fellow citizens of the holy people: you are of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). This dynamic of being citizens of two cities came out very clearly in the monumental work of St. Augustine, **City of God, *De Civitate Dei***. St. Augustine approached the two Cities from a theological perspective wholly marked by dichotomy. "So it is that two cities have been made by two loves: the earthly city by love of self to the exclusion of God, the heavenly by love of God to the exclusion of self. The one boasts in itself, the other in the Lord. The one seeks glory from men, the other finds its greatest glory in God's witness to its conscience" (**City of God, 14, 28**). St. Peter in calling Christians to be good citizens spans the two cities, builds a bridge between them and commits the Christian to be at their best in the two cities. He meant that they are to take up their civic responsibilities and enjoy their rights as members of the

civitas. Christians have no separate cities, no separate governments, no separate markets, no distinct manner of dressing and no strange customs. They are members of the society, the civil society. As such, they must live and work in the society with other men and women, fellow citizens. At the same time, they are to bring their Christian citizenship to bear on their civil citizenship.

Being in the World ad Modum Christianorum!

50. The Second Vatican Council teaches extensively the involvement of the Christian in the world. With a broad but powerful stroke, the Council Fathers painted the picture in the opening statement in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, ***Gaudium et Spes***, no. 1: "The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs, is a community composed of men, of men who, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onwards towards the kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all men. That is why Christians cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history". This programmatic declaration sets the tone for the Christian's relationship with the world, with the city of men. Christians, whether clerics (Sacred ministers) or lay faithful have an intimate relationship with the human society, the temporal order and must identify with it but always ***ad modum Christianorum***, as Christians. Christians as followers of Jesus Christ, are always in the world but not of the world!

Secular Engagement of Christians

51. The Christian is one who is involved with the world as a theatre of God's action. The world for the Christian is not a profane arena. It is secular in the sense of *saeculum*, because it has to do with earthly realities, with culture, politics, education, arts, sciences, professions and entertainment. These are the warp and woof of the world. The Christian is sent on mission into the world to sanctify it and fill it with the spirit of the Gospel. The involvement of the Christian with the world is given by Jesus Christ himself in two images: "You are the light of the world and you are the salt of the earth" (see Mt. 5:13 and 14). These two powerful images show a presence that is transforming. The light chases away darkness while salt preserves and seasons. It means that, the Christian's presence in the world is not to be characterized by conformism or neutrality. Neither is it to be experienced only as a catalyst. It is a catalyst for change that is not only beneficial but also renewing and strongly encouraging. In effect, the Christian must impact positively on the society so as to make the society a better place and a more humane community.

Mission of Renewing and Sanctifying the World

52. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* gives the basic way the Christian lay faithful relates to the world. "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. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There,

they are called by God. Being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like a leaven. They are to do so by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity, they must 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" (no. 33). The Christian as a citizen and a good one, has a special responsibility to the world - the renewal of the temporal order. Christians, as "citizens among citizens" must cooperate with others to install proper moral values, especially, the justice of the kingdom of God (see Decree of Lay Apostolate, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 7). One of the areas that are crying for renewal according to justice, truth, honesty, sincerity and decency is politics.

Participation in the Life of the Polis

53. To be a citizen, is to be a political being, to have the right and obligation of joining in the necessary duty of organizing the *polis*. Politics touches every aspect of the society. It also means that every member of the society is in one way or the other involved in politics. Therefore, it amounts to abdication of one's primary responsibility for one to shy away from politics. The Christian as a good citizen has the primary responsibility of influencing this important aspect of the society. To be a good citizen, one must participate in the life of the community. Participation is the broad term used to describe the voluntary and generous engagement of a person in social interchange (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1913). Participation is rightly demanded of every human

being in the society in accord with each person's position and role. This participation must be guaranteed in keeping with the dignity of the human person. Participation is on two levels. On the first level, is the assumption of personal responsibility by every member of society. In the areas of family life, professions and trade, the conscientious and diligent carrying out of one's obligations and functions ensures the well-being of the society. We need to emphasise this aspect of social living; the care and diligence of the individual and not just of the public authority make for the good of the society. In so far as the individual members of the society take up their personal responsibility in proper organization of family life, in sound education and cultural enrichment, in providing services and in caring for the environment, to that extent will the society succeed in achieving integral well-being. In this way, every member of the community contributes his or her quota to the general well-being. But, the sad fact is that, many members of the society neglect their personal responsibility and turn round to blame the State, the government for all their self-inflicted woes.

Participation in Public Life

54. The second level of participation is the engagement in public life. The organisation and governance of the society call for the participation of all members of the society. The manner of the participation may vary according to the juridical organization in force but the dignity of every human person entitles him or her to have a say in the way he or she is governed and in the way things are done in the society. Often, some people tend to withdraw from public life, leaving it to professional politicians. The town, the local government, the State and the country belong to every member of the society and

every member has the right and responsibility to participate in their governance. In a democratic set-up, the constitution empowers the citizens to participate in the governance of the society in accordance with the stipulations of the constitution. The Catholic Church praises and supports all the nations that have political and juridical systems which permit the largest possible number of the citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom (see *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 31). That is why absolute monarchy and military or any dictatorship are no longer in vogue and must be roundly condemned as an affront against the human person. The collapse of communism or the dictatorship of the proletariat or whatever name it goes under is a positive development for humanity. The human society must have a system of governance that ensures the most active participation of the greatest number in the political process.

Participation in the Political Process

55. The political process runs through all the activities that lead up to formation of government and continues with the actual conduct of the business of government. From the formation of political parties in a multi-party democracy, to party elections and primaries through elections, the citizen has a duty to be involved. Indifference, cynicism, fatalism, (to use Matthew Hassan Kukah's categories see **Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria**, pp. 1-30), and absence from these necessary political activities result in failure to use one's power to influence the governance of the society. Some people with the false belief that politics is a dirty game keep away from anything that smacks of politics. In doing so, these people deny themselves their right of participation and the society the benefits of their participation in the polity. It is

generally true that the brand of politics that people carry out in Nigeria is riddled with bribery and corruption, intimidation, violence and even assassination. However, if honest, righteous men and women keep off, rogues and brigands would have a field day in politics. They would continue to perpetuate the negative and corruptive ways that make people perceive politics as a dirty game. The worst that can happen to a society is for just men and women to keep off politics. The involvement of right thinking and acting men and women is critical for the transformation of politics in Nigeria. The fear is that one has to join in the iniquitous brand of politics in order to break into the ranks of the rogues so as to be able to influence matters from within. This is not necessary. One must not have to soil one's hand in order to be able to clean the hands of others. The idea of joining them, if one cannot beat them, remains a major capitulation of virtue to vice. Christians armed with their Christian consciences and guided by the power of the Gospel can transform the face of the earth and the manner things are done in the society by their constant witness to truth, honesty, justice, equity, fairness and love. Using the dynamics of social pressure, lobbying and mobilization, they will be able to get people to see, judge and act correctly and rightly in the political arena.

Participation in Political Parties

56. In a multiparty democracy as we have in Nigeria, citizens participate in politics through membership of political parties. As good citizens, lay Christians are to participate in politics and governance by joining a political party that has vision, focus and clearly defined mission for the attainment of the greatest good for the greatest number

of people, in effect, a political party that is concerned for the common good. In a polity that admits of parties, politics is influenced mostly through the parties. The choice of a political party to join becomes very important. One is not to join a party that is only concerned with capturing of power and sharing of booty. Such a party will definitely be a band of thieves and rogues. And that is what a party that is not concerned about just ordering of the society and State is, in the words of St. Augustine, *magna latrocinia*, a bunch of thieves, a gang of robbers (see Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28a). Even in a party, the Christian is bound to work from within to change the structures of sin and iniquity which often make the party a vehicle of corruption and brigandage. The Christian must not succumb to the tyranny of the party. On the contrary, acting as salt, he or she will endeavour with all his or her power and influence to be the beacon of light in the party. He or she must not share in the spoils of sin, in lies and deceit, blackmail, intimidation and violence, in the corruption and looting that go on in some political parties.

Participation in Elections as Candidates or Voters

57. A very important means of participation in a democratic setting is participation in elections as candidates or as voters. In either case, the Christian is invested with power and opportunities to influence the polity. As good citizens, Christians endowed with the spirit of service and ability and means to work for the good of the society are invited to offer their candidature for elective offices. This important duty is urged by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council: "Catholics versed in politics and, as should be the case, firm in faith and Christian teaching, should not decline to enter public life; for by a worthy discharge of their functions, they can work for the common

good and at the same time prepare the way for the Gospel” (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 14). The perception of politics as a dirty game has led many good Catholics to keep away from participation in party politics and in presenting themselves for elective posts. And actual hurdles placed in the path of sincere men and women of integrity scare away people who are not stout-hearted. Without compromising their moral standards, Christians are to seek elective posts in the party and in the government. Apathy is prejudicial to both the society and the Church.

Battling Corruption in the Political Process

58. One of the issues that needs urgent attention is the corruption in the political process. Even though it is in vogue, it is not right for a person wanting to serve the public to pay either the party or the people to be able to stand for election. The very fact of the party demanding money from the candidates is part of the structure of corruption in the polity. Why should a person pay to serve? It means that the post is so lucrative that one has to pay to accede to it. It also means a societal encouragement of corruption, of looting and embezzlement of the common patrimony by elective office holders. Political posts are seen as commercial enterprises and investment. People who pay the party to win such elective posts have received from the society *carte blanche* to recoup their expenses and make gain. No wonder corruption is the order of the day! No wonder the massive looting of the public coffers! Is it not true that political posts and offices are the money minting enterprises in Nigeria? Is it not hypocritical to pretend to fight corruption when the causes of and incentives to corruption have been sanctioned officially? There is a lot of hypocrisy in the polity. The fight against corruption to

be sincere and integral, must begin with the systemic corruption. Candidates, whether they offer themselves or they are drafted, are not to be put in a situation in which they have to compromise themselves in order to be elected. People expecting monetary and other inducements from candidates are architects and masons of corruption. Fundamentally, access to political positions and power has to be liberalized in order to encourage well-meaning people and not just rogues and bandits to make themselves available for the service of the society in elective contests that are free and fair.

Voting, a Right and Obligation

59. Participation in elections as voters is a right and duty. It is a right because it provides the opportunity to free and equal human beings to determine who will lead/govern them. It is a fundamental human right. It is at the same time, a duty as a citizen, to contribute to the order and well-being of the society by choosing leaders to guide the society. The legal safeguards must be in place to allow the citizens to exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations to choose the leaders in an elective process that is free, fair, transparent and efficient. This includes provision of sound electoral laws, establishment of a truly independent electoral body to umpire the elections, proper registration and accreditations of voters, efficient conduct of elections by honest and dedicated officials of the independent electoral body, accurate and honest records and collation of votes and publication of results. If these steps are properly and honestly done, there will be voter-confidence and enhanced participation. Unfortunately, the common experience in Nigeria is otherwise: confused and confusing electoral laws, an Independent Electoral Commission that is hardly seen as independent from its

track record of allying itself with the government and officially rigging elections. The result is voter-apathy and decreased participation in the elections. Even as Nigeria prepares for the next elections, complaints of shoddy preparations, likely disenfranchisement of a large number of would-be voters through inefficient voter-registration exercise continue to trail the process. Every eligible voter is expected to do all that is possible to get registered for the vote. All should resist the temptation to give up trying in the face of difficulties put up by INEC. We pray that citizens may still be able to exercise their right and duty to vote and that their votes will count, that is, will be counted and the count will reflect in the results that will be released by INEC, (Independent National Electoral Commission!)

Election Monitoring and Defence of Mandate

60. Participation of citizens in politics and governance does not stop with casting their votes. Our experience in Nigeria with rigging of elections has called for vigilance so that the populace will be able to defend their votes. Election monitoring by independent observers and especially by teams trained by our Justice Development and Peace Commissions will help to check flagrant abuses at the polls. The sad part of the rigging of elections is the collaboration of security agents and officials of INEC with people who are determined to thwart the will of the people. The exploitation of such security agents and the acquiescence of the very agents are a sad parody of our national life. Citizens will do their best to ensure that they cast their votes and that their votes are counted and recorded. Candidates and their helpers have the duty to see that the recorded votes are properly collated and that the results announced by INEC correspond to the results collated from the polling centres. Active and informed

participation in the electoral process had assisted some candidates to reclaim their mandates brazenly stolen by election riggers. Election tribunals have also helped to restore justice in those cases in which crooked persons tampered with the votes of the people to install persons not duly elected by the people. Mr. Peter Obi of Anambra State had steadfastly followed the judicial process to reclaim his mandate. It will be very helpful to establish a time frame for the conclusion of election petitions before the swearing in of any candidate whose election is in dispute. The danger of rigging is still there. The conduct of party primaries has shown that rigging has become more systematic and more brazen. Honest citizens have to become more vigilant to protect the integrity of the elections and electoral process.

Participation in Governance - Monitoring Government Policies and Performance

61. Good citizens have the duty to participate in governance by following keenly the conduct of government affairs. In general, many citizens end their civic participation with elections. They are not concerned with the conduct of the elected officials. And these officials carry on as if they are not representatives of the people. Lip service is paid to the principle that power belongs to the people. It is only when they are seeking for votes that they remember the people. They inundate the people with lofty promises. Once elected, they turn their backs to the people and carry on as if governance is their private business. Citizens must engage their representatives in serious dialogue to ensure that the elected people effectively represent them. It is a failure in democracy for elected people to cut themselves off from the people, from their constituencies. They have

constituency offices which are funded by government, but are never in use. They collect fabulous sum of money with which to relate to their constituencies but pocket the money and have no relations with their constituencies. They collect allocation for constituency projects and rather than execute the projects they fatten their bank accounts. Worse still, without reference to their constituencies, they make laws and policies that promote the interest of the elected representatives at the expense of the well-being of the people in general. This is the general situation and is a tragedy. Unfortunately, the people have become so emasculated that they cannot demand an account of the stewardship of their representatives. Nigerians in general have to shake off their stupor and cast off their fears in order to be able to participate meaningfully and effectively in governance. In that way, genuine democracy will replace the oligarchy in the guise of democracy which we are operating in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POLITICS

I could not see any temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple
(Rv. 21:22)

Theocratic Ideal Unity of Temple and Palace

62. The Book of Revelation describes the new Jerusalem coming from above as a city characterised by unity. It is part of the new heaven and new earth (Rv. 21:1). The unity of this new city comes from the presence of God among men: "Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make his home among them, they will be his people, and he will be their God, God-with-them... The world of the past has gone" (Rv. 21:3-4). This messianic Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God has no distinction between the sacred and the secular. This idyllic city is yet to come. The present city, our present world is sadly characterised by divisions. Caesar has his palace and there is the temple as distinct from the palace. "Aso Rock", the Seat of Government in Nigeria stands side by side with the National Christian Centre and National Mosque to demonstrate the plurality and division in our present world. Even among Christians, the sad reality of division stares one in the face. The National

Christian Centre stands as an attempt to bring together the Churches with their various temples. We need to look at the relationship of the temple to the palace in our present city.

The Catholic Church

63. It is important to begin this section with a few clarifications. When I use the Church, I mean the Catholic Church. Other Christian groups, churches and communions may be included but my main reference point is the Catholic Church. The Church of Christ, established and ordered in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the successor of St. Peter and the Bishops in communion with him (see can. 204, §2). In this Church, we have sacred ministers called clerics and others are lay faithful (see can. 207, §1). This distinction is necessary for us to understand the Church's role in political community. The Church is a mystery. This is the theological basis for what the Church is and does. The Church is a mystery in the sense of being a divine-human reality. The Second Vatican Council gives a profound teaching on the Church: "Christ, the one Mediator, established and ceaselessly sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope, and charity, as a visible structure... But the society furnished with hierarchical agencies and the Mystical Body of Christ are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things. Rather, they form one interlocked reality which is comprised of a divine and human element" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8). One

must expect this tension and dynamic paradox in the relationship of the Church with the realities of this world, especially with politics.

The Mission of the Church - The Mission of Christ

64. The mission of the Catholic Church is primarily to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ Himself. He established His Church to be a prolongation of Himself in time and space. It becomes clear that the Church is primarily for the kingdom of God. At His trial before Pontius Pilate, Jesus Christ gave an answer that can help us to understand the role of the Church vis-à-vis the earthly kingdom: "Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. As it is, my kingdom does not belong here" (John 18:36). The Church continues to stand by this truth. The Church does not pretend to possess secular power. In the Middle Ages, there were attempts to rope the Church into secular affairs. There was the misnomer called "Caesaro-papism", the mixture of secular and ecclesiastical powers. In fact and indeed, there was confusion over spheres of influence. The Catholic Church had Papal States in Italy until 1870 when the armies of Garibaldi overran the Papal States and the Pope had to seek refuge in the Vatican. With the concordat of 1929, the Pope was granted a small territory called the Vatican City to be an independent territory which enjoys international recognition as a sovereign State. However, the State of the Vatican City is not identical with the Catholic Church. It only provides the Pope with independence from earthly potentates for the fulfilment of his universal mission.

The Catholic Church is not identified with any Secular Power

65. The Church does not adopt or align herself with any political community or political system. She accepts any political organisation in so far as it works for the good of the people in line with moral norms. According to the Second Vatican Council, “The political community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields. Nevertheless, both are devoted to the personal vocation of man, though under different titles” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 76). The Church as social reality must be involved with politics. **But the Church has no political party. She does not adopt any political system. She has no candidates of her own. Nobody or party should expect the Catholic Church to endorse him/her or it.** The dialectical position of the Church with regards to temporal realities, especially, politics comes out clearly in the forceful statement of the Second Vatican Council: “There are, indeed, close links between earthly affairs and those aspects of man's condition which transcend this world. The Church herself employs the things of time to the degree that her own proper mission demands. Still, she does not lodge her hope in privileges conferred by civil authority. Indeed, she stands ready to renounce the exercise of certain legitimately acquired rights if it becomes clear that their use raises doubt about the sincerity of her witness or that new conditions of life demand some other arrangement” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 76). The Catholic Church is thus fiercely independent in order to protect her mission. She is not ready to compromise her mission and her witness for a mess of porridge.

The Church as Mother and Teacher

66. The Church relates to the world as mother and teacher (*Mater et Magistra*, to use the celebrated words of Pope John XXIII). As a mother, the Church is concerned about the welfare of the society. That is her permanent interest. She does her best to realise this permanent interest through whatever government is in power. The prophet Isaiah uses the tender love of the mother to express God's love and care for his people: “Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these forget, I shall not forget you. Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands,…” (Is. 49:15). Similarly, the Church has the society in her arms, caring lovingly for it with a mother's love. The most obvious way in which the Church loves and cares for the society is by praying for it. St. Paul urges “that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving should be offered for everyone, for kings and others in authority, so that we may be able to live peaceful and quiet lives with all devotion and propriety” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Generally, the Church prescribed that the second intention for the Prayers of the Faithful should be offered for those in civil authority. They need the prayers so that they may be agents of peace. The Catholic Church in Nigeria raises holy hands to the Father for Nigeria especially in “Prayer for Nigeria in Distress” and “Prayer against Bribery and Corruption in Nigeria”. Indeed, the prayers of the saints avail much (see James 5:16).

The Catholic Church - Prophet to the Nation

67. The Church as a teacher, guides the consciences of men and women so that they can make choices that are in keeping with moral norms and for the common good. The

Church proclaims the Gospel and thus offers the society secure guides to its well-being. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council vindicate the right and obligation of the Church to be the teacher of the nations: "But it is always and everywhere legitimate for her to preach the faith with true freedom, to teach her social doctrine, and to discharge her duty among men without hindrance. She also has the right to pass moral judgements, even on matters touching the political order, whenever basic personal rights or the salvation of souls make such judgments necessary. In so doing, she may use only those helps which accord with the gospel and with the general welfare as it changes according to time and circumstances. Holding faithfully to the gospel and exercising her mission in the world, the Church consolidates peace among men, to the glory of God. For it is her task to uncover, cherish, and ennoble all that is true, good, and beautiful in the human community" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 76).

The Catholic Church - Voice of the Voiceless

68. Here in Nigeria, the Catholic Church through the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria has never ceased to be present in politics as a mother and teacher. One has only to go through the statements, addresses, communiqués and memoranda of the Catholic Bishops collected and published under the title "The Voice of the Voiceless" to see how concerned the Catholic Church is about the welfare of the State. In 1996, in the communiqué issued after its meeting at Benin City, the Bishops stated unequivocally, "The Catholic Church in Nigeria continues to identify herself with the joys and sorrows of every Nigerian, especially the poor... The Catholic Church pursues its prophetic role with undivided attention. Like the sentry in the prophecy of Ezekiel whom God

commanded to speak to the nation (Ezk. 33:1-9), we continue to denounce individual and social injustice in our society. This should not be construed as antagonism. We continue to encourage Nigerians to recognise their rights and to resolutely pursue and defend them with all legitimate means at their disposal. We continue to insist that return to democracy and sanity of government is indispensable for the realization of a truly peaceful and prosperous nation. We have also pointed out the responsibility of the generality of Nigerians for the distress of the nation and the need for a change of heart by everyone" (*The Voice of the Voiceless*, p. 332). Even in the most difficult days of the military government of General Sani Abacha, the dreaded military despot, the Catholic Church stood firmly against his self-succession as immoral. So also did the Catholic Church firmly reject the third term agenda of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. For her uncompromising stance against bad governance, bribery and corruption, the Catholic Church does not often enjoy the favour of the government. She cannot compromise truth for anything.

Political Involvement of All Christians

69. This said, we must make a distinction between the Church and Christians acting as individuals or in private association in the field of politics. While the Church herself must never be involved in partisan politics, Christians are free to participate in partisan politics. In a pluralistic society where multiparty democracy is practised, Christians have to exercise their political rights and obligations in parties of their choice. However, one must be discerning in choosing a party to join or support. No Christian is to join a party that is ideologically opposed to God, the Church and the teachings of the Church.

Similarly, Christians are to avoid belonging to parties that promote violence, discrimination and abuse of human rights. Association with thieves, murderers, and gangsters of all kinds cannot be a matter of free choice, even in politics.

Freedom of Association - A Fundamental Right

70. Freedom is the ability to choose the good and never the license to do what one likes. Freedom of association enables people to move with people of good character and reputation. Canon 227 states: "To lay members of Christ's faithful belongs the right to have acknowledged as theirs that freedom in secular affairs which is common to all citizens. In using this freedom, however, they are to ensure that their actions are permeated with the spirit of the Gospel, and they are to heed the teaching of the Church proposed by the *magisterium*, but they must be on guard, in questions of opinion, against proposing their own view as the teaching of the Church". It means that the Church does not impose any political party, candidates or political choices on the faithful. The Church expects them to utilise their freedom wisely. "Blessed is the one who does not go where the wicked gather, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit where scoffers sit" (Psalm 1:1). A person's political associates tell a lot about the person. One cannot move about with brigands, rogues and arsonists and pretend to be an innocent lamb. One must be careful to associate with honest men and women, men and women of proven integrity and people of good reputation.

Limits of Involvement of Clerics and Religious in Politics

71. Clerics and religious men and women as citizens are involved in politics. They have the right and obligation

to vote as other citizens. Their right of participation is however circumscribed by the nature of their calling. That is why Canon Law stipulates that, Clerics are not to play an active role in political parties unless in the judgement of the competent ecclesiastical authority, this is required for the defence of the right of the Church or to promote the common good (can. 287, §2). This law is applied also to religious men and women (see can. 672). The Code prefaced this norm with a motivation for the law: "Clerics are always to do their utmost to foster among people peace and harmony based on justice" (can. 287, §1). Clerics and religious, by their special vocation, must be available to everybody and are not expected to foment discord. In a multi-party democracy, there is often the tendency to have factions and conflicts in political parties. Clerics and religious must be impartial arbiters and guides.

Pulpits not for Partisan Politicking

72. We need to call for caution in the ministry of priests, especially in their use of the pulpit. Priests are never to use the pulpit to promote anything than the kingdom of God. While they cannot avoid talking about politics and political situation, they are not to be partisan or factional in their approach to politics and matters involving the people. The pulpit must never be used to promote or fight against a particular party or candidate. Preaching is basically *ministerium veritatis et amoris*, the ministry of truth and love so, the word of God, like a two-edged sword coming from the mouth of the priest must cut without fear or favour, to expose the secret emotions and thoughts of the people including politicians and office holders (see Heb. 4:12). Every priest has been appointed a prophet to the nations and Yahweh has put his word into their mouths with the words: "Look, today I have set you over nations and

kingdoms, to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jr. 1:5, 10). Priests are obliged to denounce all errors and evils in the society and encourage all efforts at justice, peace and love. It is only a priest who is and appears to be impartial but who has a passion for truth, justice and righteousness, who can utter forth God's word of judgement on politics and politicians.

‘Igwe bu Ike’ - Politics of Numbers

73. While the Catholic Church as a Church and the clerics and religious are not to identify themselves with any political party and involve themselves in partisan politics, the lay faithful are at liberty to participate actively and fully in partisan politics. It is an important fact that politics is about numbers in a constitutional/representative democracy such as we are operating in Nigeria. What do Catholics do with their numbers? It continues to be riddle why Catholics are like *akwukwo ukpaka* (leaves of oil bean tree), plenty but cannot be used to wrap anything. From the clan, the village to town and local government area and State, it is difficult to experience the impact of the teeming population of Catholics in our State. Why can Catholics not influence the brand of politics in the State with their Christian conscience and overall formation? It is a sad fact that the interest of the Catholic Church for good governance, equity in distributing posts, amenities and government patronages is hardly protected and fostered. Government continues to hold the illegally captured schools which the Catholic Church used to form the young in righteous living, in decency, in discipline and enviable standard of education and overall, human formation in spite of the fact that Catholics are in the majority in the overall population. It just means that Catholics have not learnt how to use their numbers to advantage in prosecuting

the agenda of the Catholic Church for a free, just, prosperous and united society. Parochialism, selfishness and ruthless and arbitrary use of power and discrimination thrive where there is no purposive use of the votes of the majority. The message is unity is strength: ***igwe bu ike!***

CHAPTER SIX

FACE TO FACE WITH 2007 ELECTIONS

*But choose among the people, capable, God-fearing men,
men of truth who hate a bribe and appoint them as
leaders...(Exodus 18:21).*

Qualities of a Leader

74. God had many ways of designating leaders of the people. There was leadership attained by birth such as in monarchy. There were also leaders chosen directly by God. He called Moses in the burning bush where he invested him with the responsibility of bringing the Hebrew people out of Egypt to a land which God promised them (see Ex. 3:10, 16-22). Moses, with the help of his brother Aaron, succeeded in bringing the Hebrew people out of Egypt. During the sojourn in the desert, Moses had to appoint leaders to share the burden of administration and governance with people chosen because of their competence and integrity. Moses was exercising the judicial function of governance when his father-in-law pointed out the unwieldy and burdensome way in which Moses was carrying out this function. He advised Moses to delegate authority to others. The men who would participate in this work, must be capable, God-fearing, men of truth who hate bribe (Ex. 18:21). These are qualities of every authentic leader. Leaders are not just anybody.

2003 Elections - A Charade

75. As we prepare for elections into Local Governments, State Governments and Federal Government, Nigerians in general and Christians in particular, have a serious obligation to Nigeria to elect men and women of proven integrity to run the affairs of this country for the next four years. It is indeed sad that, elections in Nigeria had always brought out the worst in Nigerians lies, deceit, greed, violence and lawlessness. The result is that, elections had always produced conflicts and governments that did not represent the mandate and interest of the electorate. The elections of 2003 were a monumental and colossal abuse of electoral process in a civilised democratic society. Even though adjudged free and fair by some agencies, the truth is otherwise. It was a grand larceny, indeed, robbery. The Monitoring Groups organised by our Justice, Development and Peace Committees gave us the true picture of affairs. It is shameful. We have the opportunity of doing it right this time.

Challenge to Government Agents

76. The question is: who wants the elections done properly? The generality of Nigerians would want credible elections but most Nigerians are not ready to give up the gains of the corrupt ways things are done in Nigeria. The people in government and in the corridors of power are prepared to exploit their positions in order to make the elections serve their selfish interests. The Independent National Electoral Commission and the State Independent Electoral Commissions have not shown their readiness and willingness to conduct proper elections. Their roles as impartial arbiters had been compromised by their ties to the

powers that be, to the Federal Government or the State Government that appointed them. These bodies owe it to Nigeria to be courageous enough to uphold their neutrality and impartiality and stop being the tools of the government or ruling party. Similarly, the government agencies that are the guarantors of our democracy have to rise to their responsibility of ensuring law and order and good conduct of elections. In this, the Police, the SSS, the EFCC and other agencies must not be seen as agents of a political party to be used to intimidate the opposition candidates and to protect and favour the candidates of the ruling party. Patriotism should inspire them to carry out their duties without fear or favour. All government agencies should provide a level playing field for all candidates so that there can be truly free, fair and credible elections.

Vote for the Individual and not Just for a Party

77. All citizens have the obligations to see to it that the elections of 2007 produce truly credible and trustworthy leaders for our country at all levels of governance. All are urged to register for the voting and then use their votes wisely to elect men and women of integrity with the qualities that make for good governance. A look at the qualities given by Jethro to Moses will be helpful. We are to vote not just for a party but for men and women who possess the qualities necessary for good leadership. Political parties are useful but they cannot replace human beings. It is true that the party plays an important part in the affairs of the nation and government. In countries where there are political parties in the true sense of the word, the parties have ideologies and political programmes which are defined and communicated in their manifesto. In Nigeria, all parties seem to be the same. All make the same promises. All are just intent on capturing power. The

parties take the electorate for granted and believe that they can foist any candidate on the people. The electorate has to consider the party but also the individual candidate. Is the party faithful to its promises? Has the party a good track record in the places where it is in power? Is the leadership of the party honest, civilised, democratic, open and accommodating? Whatever power the party has and whatever influence it exerts, the people have to break the tyranny of the party and vote for the candidate who has the requisite qualities and is likely to deliver on his or her programme. The candidate must be capable, God-fearing, honest, trustworthy and truthful; in short, he or she must be a person of integrity and a person with good repute.

Vote for Capable Candidates

78. The quality audit must include, first, the **capability** of the candidate for the office. There are never-do-wells who see politics as the means to success in life. For them, it is just a matter of getting elected to enjoy the goodies of the land. They are not capable of running any business. It is important to bear in mind a candidate's track record before voting for him or her. There are instances in which a person had been sacked for non-performance or fraud but such persons have been recycled and given bigger responsibilities. Of course, everybody knows why such was done. Nigerians are known to be the greatest users of detergents, not only to launder money but also to launder people's images. Insane people, drug addicts, drunkards, and failures in all walks of life have found refuge in politics and people know them as such but still push them forward, understandably to use them. Be on your guard and do not vote for such incapable men or women. Ask yourselves what the candidate has done for his or her community? What services has he or she rendered to the community or

church? A capable candidate must be able to address the problems of his or her environment. He or she must be able to manage the resources of the Local Government, State or nation to deliver the dividends of development in terms of education, health, sanitation, housing, employment, security and economic empowerment. He or she must be capable of managing the human resources in order to build up a happy and peaceful society. Men and women known to be looters, cheaters and promoters of discord, violence and destruction are automatically unfit for any public office and should be roundly rejected if they dare to present themselves for election.

Vote for God-fearing Men and Women

79. Christians following their conscience should vote for **God-fearing men and women**. It may be difficult to pin down the parameters of being God-fearing. But, honest men and women know that a person is God-fearing when he or she acts righteously. A person with conscience that can distinguish between what is good and what is evil, is God-fearing. A person who considers the well-being of others is God-fearing. Similarly, a person who is concerned with truth and justice is God-fearing. A God-fearing person is sincere, honest, truthful, kind and considerate. He or she will work for the common good, out of respect for God and for his or her fellow human beings. Look out for such persons. On the other hand, people who are selfish, greedy, criminally-minded, a person who acts without consideration for the laws of God and feelings of fellow human beings cannot be God-fearing. The judge in the parable of the importunate widow was callous: This judge had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone (Luke 18:2). Such a person is a monster. He or she behaves with no regards and concern for decency. He or she cares nothing

about his or her reputation. Our people say: *Ezi afa ka ego* (Good reputation is better than wealth). According to the Book of Proverbs, “A good name is more desirable than great wealth, the respect of others is better than silver and gold” (Pr. 22:1). Unfortunately, people who have no fear of God have no concern for their good name. Such people will readily loot the treasury and kill and maim in order to achieve their objectives. Voting for such persons is suicidal.

Vote for Candidates who do not give Bribes

80. The sad fact is that, people knowing that, a particular candidate is vicious and morally debased, still vote for such a person. Factors as ethnicism, sectionalism and blind loyalty to the party may lead to such an aberration. Also to be seen as one of the causes of disregard for common sense and reason in voting for such a candidate is bribery. Bribery and corruption play a lot of havoc in our politics. Candidates give out a lot of money to induce people to vote for them. As it is said, “bribes blind the eyes”. The word of God disqualifies any candidate who gives bribes. Indeed, one of the qualities expected of a leader is that, he or she be trustworthy and incorruptible. Any candidate that offers monetary or other inducements to be elected has already disqualified himself or herself. He or she has indicated that he or she is not trustworthy and cannot be trusted with public resources. By accepting the bribe and voting for such a person, the voter has given him or her licence to recover his or her “investments”. The voter has lost all moral rights to complain about corruption in the government. Accept bribe and lose your right to protest bad governance, bribery and corruption.

Vote for Men and Women of Truth

81. Truth is generally in short supply in Nigerian politics. Politicians tell unnecessary lies about themselves and against their opponents. They make unrealistic promises. They know very well that they will not be able to make good those fantastically fabulous promises. Free House for everybody! Free Education for All! Electricity for all and no power outages! Good bye to hunger! Who is deceiving who? The failure to deliver on the promises has led to distrust of politicians by the people. We need a new brand of politicians who can tell us the truth and be realistic in their manifesto. Vote for candidates who are prepared to present facts and not fancies. ***Eziokwu bu ndu!*** Truth is life.

Break the Yoke of Slavery! Liberate Yourselves from Slavery!

82. One value that cries to heaven for recognition and defence is the value of freedom. We are born free and equal. The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the consciences of mankind..." Article 1 of the Declaration states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI insists on the need for the recognition of the essential equality of human persons and decries the many unjust

inequalities still tragically present in the world and the persistent inequalities between men and women in the exercise of basic human rights (Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace 1 January 2007, no. 6). Unfortunately, the enslavement of a large section of the populace continues to take place. Through access to power, position and wealth, some people have constituted themselves into political cabals of "born-to-rule", "ordained to rule", "anointed to rule" and have reduced others to serfs in a country that is supposed to be free and democratic. Using the instruments of government, they intimidate the rest of the populace to supine submission. Allowing this tendency to continue, will lead to complete slavery. Your vote is your weapon. Use it to liberate yourselves from modern slavery.

Choose freedom

83. The die is cast. All lovers of freedom and democracy must come together to defend these basic principles and values. Turning away from the evils of bribery and corruption, "money bag" politics, godfatherism and the tyranny of money, violence and intimidation, blackmail and abuse of power, rigging of elections, Nigerians can hope for a better country and a better tomorrow. We pray for a change, for revolution that will sweep away the corrupt and corrupting mentality from the rank and file of Nigerians. The coming elections offer us the opportunity of transforming Nigeria through conduct of and participation in elections that will be well organised, free, fair, peaceful and credible. Why can we not think of the well-being of our society rather than just of our selfish interests? Vote according to your conscience for candidates whom you believe will deliver the goods and give Nigerian the true dividends of democracy in

terms of freedom, equal access to public life and opportunities. In this way, the benefits of peace and development will be there for the majority of the Nigerians.

Exhortation

84. May we no longer succumb to the temptations to accept a mess of porridge and sell our birthright! Let us work for the greater good of Nigeria. May this prayer be in the heart, mind and mouth of every honest and sincere Nigerian: "Lord, you can read everyone's heart; show us therefore the persons you have chosen to take part in the service of governing us for the next four years for your glory and for our well-being, Amen" (adapted from Acts 1:24-25). Let us redouble our prayers to God for successful elections. May our blessed Mother Mary, Queen of Nigeria obtain for us God's blessings on Nigeria so that our nation will have a free, fair, peaceful and reliable elections.

Given at the Catholic Bishop's House, Nnewi, on 10th February, 2007, the Memorial of St. Scholastica and the fifth anniversary of the erection of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi and of my Episcopal Ordination and installation as the Catholic Bishop of Nnewi.



Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke
Bishop of Nnewi

APPENDIX ONE

UPHOLDING UPRIGHTNESS IN THE 2007 ELECTIONS

A Pastoral Statement Issued by the Bishops of the Onitsha and Owerri Ecclesiastical Provinces on the 17th January, 2007

Preamble

We, the Bishops of the Onitsha and Owerri Ecclesiastical Provinces, met at the Bishop's House Nnewi on Tuesday, 28th November, 2006. At the meeting, we decided to issue a pastoral statement on the political situation in our country with specific reference to the forthcoming elections. After prayerful and careful study of the issues, we make the following statements.

1. A Fresh Opportunity

God, in his providence, is giving us Nigerians a fresh opportunity to go to the polls in order to elect credible and competent leaders to direct the affairs of our nation. A well-organized, reliable and transparent electoral process gives a solid foundation to genuine democracy. When an election is free and fair, it expresses the will of the people and guarantees their right to participate in governance in a democratic setting. Furthermore, it creates a sense of trust and satisfaction in the democratic process.

2 Our Concerns

We appreciate the guarantees being given that there will be free, fair and successful elections. However, we are

worried about certain indications and trends that are capable of frustrating the great hopes that Nigerians have built up around the 2007 elections.

Concern About the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Given the closeness of the elections, we are worried about the pace of the voter registration and revalidation exercise. Many people report that they are not yet registered. There is the danger of disenfranchisement of many eligible voters.

Concern About Government and Government Officials

We are concerned about the undue use of government apparatus to manipulate the electoral process to the advantage of those in power. The tragedy of writing and announcing election results without reference to the actual votes cast continues to haunt the nation.

Concern About Politicians

We are alarmed at the staggering amount of money being spent by politicians in their quest for political positions at various levels. It raises the question whether the real motive for seeking these positions is service for the common good. Besides, we are worried about the level of violence and intimidation by politicians and their agents.

Concern About the Electorate

The electorate continues to exhibit ignorance and insufficient interest in the electoral process. This leads to voter apathy on the part of a good number. It also exposes many others to exploitation and manipulation by unscrupulous politicians. Nevertheless, greed and not necessarily poverty remains a major contributing factor to the corruption of the electorate.

Concern Over the Primaries

From what has happened in the conduct of party primaries, the fear of Nigerians has been heightened with regard to the possibility of having free, fair and genuine elections in 2007. Reports about the Party Primaries indicate that, massive intimidation, monetary inducement, blackmail and deception abound.

3 Challenges and Hopes

Love for our country moves us to make this intervention. We are convinced that the path to genuine and lasting democracy lies in firm adherence to the principles of truth, uprightness and respect for human dignity and rights. For that reason, every stakeholder in the electoral process should uphold and cultivate these principles in his/her own sphere of responsibility.

We call upon INEC to intensify its efforts to provide sufficient registration machines/materials and ensure that they are functional and accessible to millions still yearning to register. While we hope that INEC will play its part, we urge every eligible citizen to register.

There should be a level playing ground for all political aspirants, especially with regard to having access to the public media, necessary official information and in the conduct of political campaigns. We must abandon money politics, intimidation, violence, manipulation, deceit and thugs if we are to build up a true democratic culture. The freedom of political aspirants to campaign should be guaranteed. Campaigns should be focused on programmes, projects, policies and issues. Mudslinging should be avoided.

In the actual conduct of elections, it is necessary that elections be free, fair and peaceful. INEC should be truly independent in order to be seen as an impartial arbiter. On

their part, government and law enforcement agents must respect the electoral law and must be seen as impartial.

In deciding whom to vote for, we should all vote according to our consciences for candidates who are God-fearing, trustworthy and capable.

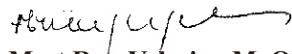
On the day of election, the law enforcement agents should guarantee the safety of the electorate and their votes. The votes should be accurately counted and be used to determine the actual winners of the polls.


We urge the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) of our two Provinces to intensify civic education, especially voters education and to monitor the elections accurately. We demand that their right to monitor the elections be respected and protected by the relevant authorities.

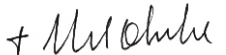
4 Prayer


Finally, we invite all Catholics and other Nigerians to join us in continued prayer to God for free, fair and successful elections. For this reason, we enjoin that everyone participates in the "Prayer for Upright Voting, Accurate Counting and Impartial Announcement of Election Results in Nigeria" - Ekpere maka Ituzi, Iguzi na Ikpozi votu n'ala Nigeria. May Our Lady, Queen of Nigeria and Queen of Peace, intercede for us!

Signed:


Most Rev. Valerian M. Okeke
Metropolitan Archbishop
Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province


Most Rev. Anthony J. V. Obinna
Metropolitan Archbishop
Owerri Ecclesiastical Province


Most Rev. Hilary O. Okeke
Bishop of Nnewi
Secretary


Most Rev. Victor A. Chikwe
Bishop of Ahiara
Secretary

For and on behalf of the Bishops of the Onitsha and Owerri Ecclesiastical Provinces

EKPERE MAKÀ ITUZI, IGUZI NA IKPOZI VOTU N'ALANAIJIRIA

Chineke Nna anyi
Onye ike ochichi niile di n'aka
Ikpe nkwumoto bu nke Gi
Obi ebere na udo bukwa nke Gi
Ma mmeto na ihere bu nke anyi
Na nke ndi ochichi ala anyi
Mgbe I zoputara anyi n'aka ochichi ndi agha
Anuri bu ihe juru anyi n'obi
Ma lee, iji egbe ado ochichi
Na iji aka ike na-ezu votu
Ka bukwa ihe anyi na-ahu
Nke mere ala anyi jiri noro
Na nkwa fu Qbara na Qgbaaghara
Umu ogbenye anoro na nhujuanya.
Chukwu obi oma
Gbaghara anyi, sachawa anyi
N'ezie ewezuga Gi
Onweghi ihe anyi onwe anyi puru ime
Ya ka anyi ji daa n'ukwu gi n'ario enyemaka Gi
Biko nna, ka anyi malitere itu votu ozo
Wepuru anyi akpiriogologo
na omume nkagide anya
Nke na-emebi ezi atumatu na iwu e ji atu votu
Wepukwara anyi tigbuo, zogbuo na mpu
Nke anyi hurula n'itu votu n'ala Naijiria.
Tinyezie mmuo nke Gi
Mmuo nke eziokwu na udo n'ime anyi niile
Ma ndi INEC na-ahazi itu votu,
Ndi Pati na-achu nta votu,
Ndi mmadu na-atu, ndi na-aguko votu,
Ndi na-edeputa votu, ma ndi na-akpoputa votu.

Ezigbo Nna
Mee ka anyi hu ihe ohuru n'ala anyi bu Naijiria,
nke bu: Ituzi, Iguzi na Ikpozi votu
N'enweghi nsogbu na ogbaagbara obula.
Ihe ndi a ka anyi na-ario
Site na Jesu Kristi Onyenweany. Amen
Obi Jesu kacha nso; Meere anyi ebere (Ugboro ato)

**PRAYER FOR UPRIGHT VOTING, ACCURATE
COUNTING AND IMPARTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
OF ELECTION RESULTS IN NIGERIA**

God our Father
All ruling powers lie within your hands
To you belong just judgments
Mercy and peace
But to us and the rulers of our land
Belong defilement and disgrace.
When you freed us from military rule
Our hearts were so full of joy
But alas, fighting with guns for rulership
And stealing votes with violence Continue to plague us
Causing bloodshed and confusion in our land
Feeding the poor with misery and sadness.
Gracious Father
Forgive us, cleanse and cleanse us
Truly without you and left to ourselves
We are just helpless
We therefore fall on our knees seeking thy help
Merciful Father
As we begin another round of voting
Remove from us the greed and terrorism

Which destroy upright guidelines
and laws that ought to regulate elections
Keep also far from us the deadly robbery
That has been the bane of voting in Nigeria.
Put your own spirit,
The Spirit of truth and peace within us all-
The INEC organizers of the elections,
the candidates seeking for votes, the voters themselves,
those who count and record the votes,
And the announcers of the election results.
Dear Father
Help us to see a new dawn in our land Nigeria,
namely: upright voting, accurate counting,
Impartial and just announcement of Election results
Without any problems and without any confusion.
All this we ask through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen
Sacred Heart of Jesus; Have mercy on us. (Three times)

APPENDIX TWO

RECALLING WORDS FROM THE PAST

History is useful if we are ready to learn from it. The people who neglect history repeat the mistakes of the past and pay dearly for it. In 2003, Nigeria went through the trauma called elections. As the teacher and shepherd, I did my best to prepare you for those elections. I represented the thoughts and words with which I tried to prepare you to take part in those elections as Christians, as Catholics, as good citizens and especially as authentic Igbo people. Did you listen to me? The result was predictable. The macabre dance produced a political situation of intrigues, violence and instability in Anambra State. Can we not avoid repeating the mistakes and sins of 2003. As a prophet, mine is to proclaim the word of God, reading the signs of the times in the light of faith. Having done so, I absolve myself and my ministry of the dire consequences of people's disobedience to the word of God and words of reason.

The following excerpts are from my "Letter to the People of God" from January to April 2003.

JANUARY 2003

Politics: The Year of Decision

2003 is the year of decision for the political future of Nigeria. We, as Christians and Catholics, are major stakeholders in the political destiny of our country. We

have the responsibility of being the leaven and salt (Matt. 5:13; 13:33). The political situation of our country is unfortunately tainted by corruption, greed, violence and brigandage. Though our age is evil, we have the responsibility of redeeming it. We have the obligation to sanitise the politics of this country. Catholic men and women, lay members of Christ's faithful, recognise your dignity and carry your Christian identity and vocation into the political arena to salvage this country.

I encourage only those Catholics, fully convinced of their baptismal commitment and their mission in the Church and in the world, and motivated solely by the desire to serve diligently, honestly and faithfully to come forward for elective positions in the coming dispensation. Those Catholics who are driven by the mad desire to acquire ill-gotten wealth, to loot and exploit, to throw about their weight are unworthy of the name "Christian and Catholic". Such people have "left the right path and wondered off to follow the path of Balaam, son of Beor, who set his heart on dishonest reward, but soon had his fault pointed out to him: a dumb beast of burden, speaking with a human voice, put a stop to the madness of the prophet" (2 Peter 2:16). May a dumb donkey dissuade our miscreant politicians who go by the name Christian from their madness! For us, the end will never justify the means. For us, the policy of "if you can't beat them, join them", is totally unacceptable. For us, politics is an area of Christian witnessing, for living out our Christian convictions, of following the narrow path of Christ, of being like Christ who came not to be served but to serve and sacrifice his life for many.

Following our Christian principles, do not give or accept bribe in any shape or form to vote or to be voted for. Do not bribe or accept bribe to thwart or disrupt the electoral

process. Bribery corrupts even the best. I invite you, my fellow Christians, to be transparent in all you do, to foster good political culture in our country. The present struggle for justice, equity and good conscience in our polity calls for supreme sacrifice. Let us make the sacrifice for a better future for ourselves and for our children. I believe in a Nigeria where things will work. Let us work now to bring to birth that Nigeria.

FEBRUARY 2003

On politics

I have to continue to remind you that your faith has a lot to do with your choice. You are never free to act against your faith, against your conscience. You are never permitted to divorce faith from the public life. As Christians, we are called upon to bring the gospel values to renew the temporal order, the political, cultural, social, economic order. Ours is not a religion that is so totally other worldly and spiritual as to neglect the society and the environment. Our faith must touch every aspect of our lives. Politics is a very necessary part of our lives as citizens. We must contribute our quota to the peace and progress of our society. The choice which we make at the elections is important. In spite of the evil practices of bribery, corruption, party manipulations, rigging and other malpractices, the Christian must **vote according to his or her conscience! He or she must vote for any candidate with God before his or her eyes and for the common good of the nation.**

Ask yourselves the following pertinent questions before you settle down to vote for any candidate:

- i. Is he or she capable of the office for which he or she is vying?

- ii. Is he or she God-fearing?
- iii. Is he or she public spirited and concerned for the common good?
- iv. How has he or she performed in other areas of life? Is he or she successful in handling his or her family, business, professional obligations?
- v. What is his or her track record in the public offices which he or she has?
- vi. Has he or she a good reputation in the society?

The answers to the above and other questions will provide us the basis to make an informed and ethically justifiable decision.

We continue to pray for Nigeria in distress. We will not get tired of praying against bribery and corruption in Nigeria. I direct that Prayer Against Bribery and Corruption in Nigeria be taken up again in all public Masses in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. It will be said by all after the intentions at the Prayer of the Faithful. Prayer works. Our prayers will lessen bribery and corruption. As of now, it seems that bribery and corruption have become institutionalized. But, I am convinced that the prayers of the saints avail much. While we pray against bribery and corruption in Nigeria, we must ensure that, we do not in any way, encourage or condone the evil practices at any level and in any aspect of our lives. Reject bribes! Do not ask for bribes and do not give bribes! Our prayers against bribery and corruption will be effective. May God of all creation hear our prayers and make our land righteous and peaceful!

MARCH 2003

1. **POLITICS - WHO IS READY TO LISTEN TO US!**

I am taking up the theme which I have been hammering at for some months now. Politics is too important a business to be left to charlatans. It is our life. Therefore, every sincere citizen must come out to be counted in the politics of our time. I have continued to cry out against "**Godfatherism**". This is the bane of the Nigerian politics. Must we continue to mortgage our nation, our resources, our future to a cabal of predators who pose as godfathers! They sponsor candidates for political offices only to turn round to dictate how the affairs of the State must be run. Is it not the vicious circle of the one who pays the piper dictating the tune? The quarrels, conflicts and stalemates in governance in this country and especially in Anambra State were due principally to the fight between the stooges and their godfathers! Shall the people continue to allow this to happen?

This time around, I call on Igbo people to liberate themselves from the shackles of modern slave dealers. These slave dealers armed with the power of their money buy men and women who become their *Oti mkpu*. Their only business, is to drive around behind the money bag, jump around like marionettes, throw around their empty weights and make as much noise as to attract the attention of their masters! The super slaves are ready to maim and kill on the orders of the masters. The new slave dealers dispense money, rice, salt and other material favours to people to buy them and keep them enslaved. They buy people's votes and consciences! They install a puppet in the State House and siphon the resources of the State.

Igbo men and women, recover your dignity, that dignity that rejected imposition or domination by anyone, that dignity that ensured true democratic values, that dignity that was epitomized in the proverbial *Igbo enwe eze*, that dignity which made every man and woman noble and proud. What has happened to the spirit of the Igbo people? Where is the pride of personal achievement embodied in *Ikenga*? How has it turned out that, Igbo men and women are contented to be praise singers to people with no enviable background and whose only distinction is money? Why can we not recover our independent spirit, the spirit of our fathers, the spirit of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Michael Okpara and Mbonu Ojike? Our mothers are lamenting the loss of the spirit of our people. Mrs. Florence Nwapa is mourning the emasculation of the Igbo people!

I am praying for my people who have taken the path of Esau, selling their birthright as noble Igbo men and women for a mess of porridge! The coming election is a God-given opportunity to recover our sanity and liberty. Take time to look at the candidates. Reject any candidate that is being sponsored by a money bag. He has nothing to offer. He will be only a conduit pipe to siphon our resources. Nothing goes for nothing! Reject any candidate who is dividing money or material things to enslave you. It is pure but corrupt business. He gives you a pittance and loots your heritage without any qualms. **Vote only for those candidates who have the personal means to run for the office and who does not engage in money politics!** Refuse to be enslaved either with bribes or by the tyranny of the party! Exercise your freedom to responsibly choose your leaders!

For our country, this month is one of momentous decisions. It offers us the opportunity to free ourselves from the political slavery. We have experienced the rule of opportunists, looters, reckless men and women who are in government to serve themselves and their cronies, locusts that have decimated the land! We are groaning under the burden of oppression and utter neglect. The land is full of wickedness and oppression. Our very existence is threatened by armed robbers, armed security personnel, armed private militias and unarmed hordes of private toll collectors while our rulers are only concerned about their political survival. Workers are dying from hunger; university students are stranded and given the opportunity to learn armed robbery and political thuggery. The land is reeking with the stench of political intrigues, political prostitution, political violence. In a similar situation, God had intervened. But the Lord said, *“I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians...”*(Ex. 3:7-8). **○ Lord, hear our prayers and let our cry come unto you!**

The coming elections provide the opportunity of liberation. This is the favourable time which the Lord is offering us, citizens of this great country, made a dwarf by corrupt, self-serving, insensitive and irresponsible leadership as well as supine and indifferent masses. Every Nigerian adult has in his or her hand the power to influence the state of affairs in our country. Our vote is our weapon! If the powers-that-be will allow us to exercise our God-given right to choose our leaders, and if we use our God-

given power wisely, Nigeria will have leaders that will restore glory and greatness to our nation. But these two “ifs” are hanging in the air.

Will the government guarantee a free and fair election? Can it, for the love of this country, give the democratic process a fair chance to take root in the life of this country? The indices are not encouraging. The charades at the primaries of the parties, the inability of INEC to meet or adhere to any of its deadlines, the political thuggery and unacceptable level of political violence only point to business-as-usual. I am afraid that the elections will end up in selections. I am afraid that the machinery of rigging has been perfected to the state of infallibility. I am afraid that the people will cast their votes and the powers-that-be will foist their candidates on the masses. On the other hand, I am afraid that the masses are not yet ready to vote wisely. I am afraid that many of them do not understand what the whole thing is all about. With the welter of political parties and without any serious voter education, how can the ordinary Nigerian understand what is going on? I am afraid that many are ready to succumb to the lure of money, peanuts given to them by unscrupulous agents of political lords to buy them and their votes.

The God of our fathers and the God of our land says, *“I am concerned about you and about the way you are being treated... I have decided to lead you out of the misery...”* (Ex. 3:16-17). I appeal to you in the name of God and out of love for our land:

- Reject any bribe and any bribe giver;
- Reject any dishonourable candidate;
- Reject any political prostitute;
- Reject any candidate who has no principles;

- Reject any candidate that has a known godfather;
- Reject any violence and recourse to violence;
- Reject any underhanded ways to power and position;
- Reject any verdict that does not reflect the votes of the people.

Your vote is your power in a true democratic setup. Use it wisely! Cast your vote for a sincere, honest, God-fearing person who demonstrates credible signs of concern for the common good. We have heard the promises before. This time, we want to see commitments and action. We should not be hoodwinked with the promises of free hospital treatment, free education, free roads, free water, free cars, free transports, free taxes, free births and free deaths! This is the time to fight for your freedom and not to be enslaved with the false promises of free things. Igbo people work for whatever they get. This is our title to pride and great. We believe in personal achievement. Do not allow anybody to cheapen us with the offers of free this and free that! We demand freedom to work, to earn by the sweat of our brows, to live in dignity and be able to keep our heads high.

APPENDIX THREE

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NNEWI

LENTEN REGULATIONS FOR 2007

1. The Holy Season of Lent begins from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. This year, Ash Wednesday is on 21st February 2007. The Lenten Season has two characteristic elements - the recalling of baptism or the preparation for it and penance. Through Lenten observances, the Church prepares the faithful for the celebration of the greatest feast of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Vat. II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 109.)
2. The preparation for baptism comes out strongly in the catechesis of Lent. The stages of the proximate preparation of catechumens for baptism are celebrated during the Lenten season.
 - First Sunday of Lent (25 February 2007) Rite of Election and Enrolment of Catechumens
 - Third Sunday of Lent (11th March 2007) First Scrutiny
 - Fourth Sunday of Lent (18th March 2007) Second Scrutiny
 - Fifth Sunday of Lent (25th March 2007) Third Scrutiny
 - Presentations of the profession of Faith and Our Lord's Prayer can be done during the week after Fifth Sunday of Lent.

- Adult Baptism and Confirmation are to be celebrated on Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil. Priests who confer adult baptism have the faculty to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation in the same ceremony.
3. The Penitential aspect of Lent demands that every member of Christ's faithful is obliged to do penance every day of Lent. On these days, Christ's faithful are in a special manner to devote themselves to prayer, to engage in works of piety and charity, and to deny themselves, by fulfilling their obligations more faithfully and especially by observing fast and abstinence (see canon 1249). Therefore, all are bound to do the following according to one's condition:
- Fasting and abstinence, especially on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday
 - Do other penitential acts and acts of sacrifice and self-denial, such as availability for church or public service
 - Keep away from sin, sinful environment and habits; Intensify the fight against bribery and corruption
 - Go to sacramental confession and do appropriate penances both those imposed at confession and other voluntary acts of penance. **All priests in the diocese are hereby given the faculty to absolve from the censure of excommunication attached to abortion during sacramental confession during the period of Lent.**
 - Avoid ostentatious and lavish celebrations. Save money by avoiding useless spending and even by denying oneself legitimate things and

- give to charities, especially to the Lenten Fund. A person can give up drinking even soft drinks during the period of Lent. ***Those who are wedding during Lent are reminded of the penitential character of the season and are therefore urged to exercise frugality and moderation in their civic reception.***
4. Lenten Season is a time for solidarity with others in need. Our penance should flow into solidarity with others and generosity in everything especially in giving to the needy and contributing to the works of the Church. It should bear abundant fruits of justice, peace and charity. Following the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI on Christian love and his call on all to be more charitable (***Deus Caritas Est***), the faithful are encouraged to embark on:
- Charity, almsgiving, remission of debts should be practiced
 - Donations should be generously made for the various projects of the Church, especially for St. Gabriel's Spiritual Year Seminary Project, Ozubulu
 - More attention is to be paid to the suffering of others
 - Attention to social justice, payment of just wages and prompt payment of debts
 - Avoidance of litigation and readiness to dialogue and reconciliation. Make peace with others and be an agent of peace in your family and community.
 - Attention to the environment, engaging in communal work to keep the environment clean and healthy

- Promotion of the Church's campaign in favour of life, especially the life and the right to life of the foetus.
- Work for the conversion of sinners and amendment of life of those living in sinful situations.
- Vote with sincerity, honesty and good conscience for candidates that are God-fearing and prepared to work for the common good
- Work for peace and good public order and avoid discrimination and violence

Note: Collections for those in need will be made after the 14th Station of the Cross every Friday of Lent and a special Collection will be made on Sunday, 1st April 2007. The whole amount collected in both collections shall be remitted promptly and integrally to the Diocesan Accounts Office. The Diocesan Financial Administrator will divide the money collected according to the percentages approved by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria.

5. Lenten Period is a time for increased prayer: Therefore, all the members of Christ's faithful are to
- intensify their prayer life
 - endeavour to participate in the Holy Mass **daily and receive Holy Communion frequently. The period of Easter Duty, that is, going to Confession and**

receiving Holy Communion at least once a year is from Easter Sunday (8th April 2007) to Pentecost Sunday (27th May 2007).

- Visit the Blessed Sacrament and spend time with the Eucharistic Lord daily
- Take part in the celebration of the Stations of the Cross in every church on every Friday of Lent. A collection is to be made after the Stations of the Cross for the Poor and for other social and charitable works of the Church. **The collection is to be made after the 14th Station before the Prayer before the Altar and conclusion!** The money is meant to be the fruit of penance and self denial. It is collected and remitted promptly to the Diocesan Secretariat.).
- Attend the Retreats organised for the faithful during this holy period.
- Take part in all liturgical celebrations, especially the ones of Holy Week beginning with Palm Sunday.

For this year, the celebration of *Chrism Mass will be on Thursday, 5th April 2007* at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Assumption, Newi for the whole Diocese. There will be no Cathedralicum on that day. This will enable us finish the Chrism Mass in time to enable priests to go home and celebrate the Lord's Supper in their parishes. All priests living and working in the Diocese are to come for Chrism Mass at the Cathedral in order to express the unity of the *presbyterium*.

NOTE: Cathedraticum will be done in each Region on the day established for it. Cathedraticum is the occasion of showing a Catholic's love for and loyalty to the Bishop of the Diocese as the Father and Elder. It is a sort of tribute (*Ibu nru*). All Catholics and Catholic groups, including priests, every parish, station, every Catholic family, every statutory organization, every association in the Church, every religious community and every company owned by Catholics are expected to give the diocesan Bishop a present in cash or kind to demonstrate the filial love for him. Through this tribute, you support his work as the Shepherd of your souls. Therefore, you are expected to be generous!

Inauguration of the Regions and Cathedraticum will be as follows:

Saturday, 10th March 2007: Nnewi Region at St. John Cross Church, Nnewi

Saturday, 17th March 2007: Ihiala Region at St. Martin of Tours Church, Ihiala

Saturday, 24th March 2007: Amichi Region at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Church, Amichi

Saturday, 31st March 2007: Ozubulu Region at St. Michael's Church, Amakwa Ozubulu

In case of elections falling in any of these days, a new date will be arranged.


Note: On Good Friday, special collection is taken up for the maintenance of the Holy Places in Jerusalem!

6. Lenten Season is a time to listen more attentively to the word of God. We are in a special way reminded that a person does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). Therefore, every member of Christ's faithful is to:

- Get a copy of *Baibul Nso (Nhazi Katolik)*
- Read, study and meditate on the Bible daily
- Attend spiritual instructions, seminars and conferences
- Read other spiritual books and Catholic Newspapers and magazines, especially my Pastoral Letter **Reading the Signs of the Times in the Light of Faith and the Christian Outlook**
- Make more effort to spread the knowledge of the Bible and Catholic Doctrine.
- **Donate towards the work of social communication by paying for air time in radio and/or television and for the establishment of a printing press.**

I wish each and every one of us a holy and fruitful celebration of Lent so that we may all be appropriately prepared for the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May God's favours be with you all.

Given at the Bishop's House, Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, 10th February, 2007 on the occasion of the fifth Anniversary of the erection of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi.

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+ **Hilary Paul Odili Okeke**
Bishop of Nnewi