



HANDMAIDS VOICE

VOL. 1 MAIDEN EDITION



HANDMAIDS FOUNDED and Growing In SYNODALITY

**CONGREGATION OF THE
HANDMAIDS OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS**



MOTHER MARY CHARLES MAGDALEN,
RSC, SERVANT OF GOD
FOUNDRESS OF HANDMAIDS OF
THE HOLY CHILD JESUS



The Four Great Pillars of the Congregation, HHC: Mother Mary Ignatia,
Mother St. John Williams, Mother Mary Gertrude Waturuocha, Mother Mary Aloysia Ugoaru





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From the *Editor's Desk*



Dearest Mother and Sisters,
Welcome to the maiden edition of our Newsletter, 'Handmaids Voice'.

For years, we dreamed of a Congregational Newsletter for transmitting and disseminating important information about the mission and vision of our congregation. Unfortunately, the journey to achieving this over the years has been difficult due to circumstances beyond our control. **As we usually say; 'It is better late than never.'**

The 'Handmaids Voice' has therefore come pursuant to the **mandate of Article 1c of the Acts of the 11th General Chapter, under Governance, which states that the current administration establishes a Congregational Newsletter**, which will periodically update and

disseminate information about the apostolate of our sisters for the benefit of members.

We therefore thank the current administration for giving it the right push, by constituting the Communication committee, and according it the attention it deserves: assigning an office in the Generalate, with a full time communication director. Thank you Mother Germaine and your Council.

As we are all aware, nothing good comes easy. The realization of our Newsletter publication sharesthe value of our foundress' patient waiting for the appropriate time to come to Nigeria, and when she eventually came, the dream turned out to be bigger than what she expected.

Coincidentally, the first edition of our 'Handmaids Voice' is coming at a time the Congregation marks a milestone year—the centenary of the arrival of this visionary founder of our dear congregation.

We are told that she wrote many articles and papers on Education, which were published in Magazines and journals to boost her apostolate. Her article,

'Education of Girls in Southern Nigeria' published in the international Review Missions, 1928 (ppg 505-514) was a testimony.

Let us consider this a wake-up call then for all of us to emulate her writing skill and begin to contribute to the continuous publication of our Newsletter.

The sustenance of this Newsletter is dependent very much on our willingness to provide the content; the necessary articles in a variety of fields and information about our apostolates and other events in our contemporary society. Through our creative expression in this medium of communication, we can invent new ways of evangelizing and attract more vocation to the religious life, using positively the new technology.

'It takes a dream to get started, desire to keep going and determination to finish'

I sincerely commend the effort of the communication director, Sr. Bertha Frimpong, who worked tirelessly to ensure the production and publication of this first edition.

I am also grateful to our Sisters, whose contributions in this edition made its debut possible.

By God's grace and with your cooperation, we shall succeed. Certainly, the best is yet to come.

Yours sincerely,

FROM THE SUPERIOR GENERAL'S DESK

(Mother Germaine Ocansey, HHCJ)



In the midst of our busy life there is an aspect of us that yearns for nourishment in order to function properly, and that is our mind. The benefits of reading cannot be quantified. Reading good stuff nourishes the mind, and helps us to grow with reduced stress; it aids us to prevent cognitive decline as we age; it empowers us to empathize with other people who crush in life as a result of difficulties they encounter or get themselves entangled with.

I urge you to be part of this new quest as well as to encourage you to bring your talents to the limelight of the Christian world. Sending articles to this Newsletter will serve as another creativity of us to spread the Gospel message through the apostolate assigned us in serving the church in different styles. Handmaids all over the world are engaged in wonderful ministries with diverse and beautiful stories. The world and people around us must know the difference between acquiring knowledge and sharing knowledge to enhance the human growth for better living, and to meet the competitive skills of experts to raise the image of our Congregation. I am not advocating empty shallow publications, but that which improves the standard of

existing confusions among our fellow religious all over the world, in order to avoid being left behind. We are capable of airing out the good things that portray our charism and mission embodied in our vision.

Our Congregation is exceptional. We have



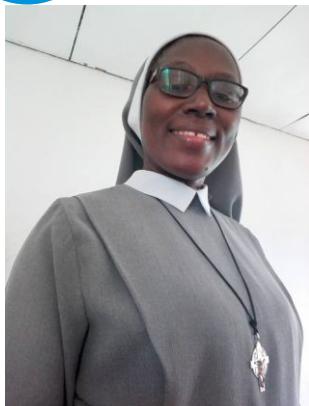
Educationist, Medical Professionals, Social Workers, Canon and Civil Lawyers, Chaplains, Administrators, Professors, Artists, Architects, Builders, etc., etc. Are all these Handmaids?! We happen to be all in all, daughters of Mother Mary Charles Magdalen Walker, Servant of God. If I am not mistaken our Congregation is one of a kind. A Congregation that has as its identity, a rich

diverse cultural group of Religious women in the Church -all from one huge single Continent of Africa, with hundreds of dialects and scores of languages, and yet not crush. We should be proud to exhibit the beautiful gifts and talents God has endowed us with, to meet the tenets of evangelization in the Church, hence, the importance of writing articles to share with our fellow Christians and others.

Making it a point of writing and reading what others present will bring us closer from the North to South and East to West. Developing a culture of reading beginning from our News-link will enable us improve our brain connectivity, to build up and increase our vocabulary to enhance our mental and physical health. It will be a way of keeping our minds engaged as we grow older. One person's story may open doors to answer the questions and resolve the problem of another Sister. Surely, the assorted articles may heighten the ability to understand the feelings and beliefs of others.

Let us make a beautiful mosaic of our stories, sharing the practical journey of our Faith and ministry to portray the love and giftedness and talents of Handmaids.

Make every action a prayer, MMCMW



HHCJ FOUNDED AND GROWING IN SYNODALITY

Pope Francis has a dream of the "Church on the move," a "Synodal" Church. Pope Francis is calling the Church to rediscover its deeply synodal nature. Drawing on the Supreme Pontiff's invitation, the synodal roots of the HHCJ embrace a process of Sisterly collaboration; it describes a journey together as a family. A "journeying together" that embraces self-transformation, spiritual transformation, community transformation and transformation of the world at large. It is a journey towards awakening not only the greatness in each one of us as a Sister; but also awakening the greatness in the HHCJ Community; awakening the greatness in the environment and awakening the greatness in the world at large. Therefore, growing in synodality designates a process of re-examining, listening and discerning how we have been and humbly learning together how God is calling us to be as His Instruments in the Third Millennium.

Growing in synodality begins within us from a change of

mentality - a personal conversion, in the community, workplaces and expanding into our ministries and mission. Thus, nourishing the synodal journey together begins with listening, making room for the other in our communities.

Community transformation calls for collective efforts in ensuring that every member of the HHCJ community is transformed because each Sister is a reflection of the entire HHCJ community. Every single sacrifice counts in attaining a community that we are proud to belong to! The above would position us as HHCJ in our missionary dream of reaching out to all, of caring for all, of feeling that we are all brothers and sisters.

Listening is the first step in this journey; we need to have an open ear to one another never excluding any one in our discussions and in the decision processes of our communities. We endeavour to listen to all and carry all along. Growing in synodality together as a family can only be possible and fruitful if it is based on prayerfulness, communal listening to God in fervent daily prayer. Growing in synodality also encourages co-responsibility in the mission. We owe each other a sense of protection and care for the common good of our Congregation. It also encourages sincere dialogue so that injuries are repaired

early enough before they degenerate and affect effective witnessing. And in the words of Mother Germaine Ocansey, (HHCJ) that there be inclusive relationships where the concerns of individual Sisters become the concern of every member of the community; where Sisters come to understand and cultivate a "We" principle as opposed to the "I" principle communally and as a Congregation.

Growing in synodality also requires time for sharing. It demands humility in listening, freedom and courage to participate and speak up, encourages dialogue and openness and readiness to work for change and newness of life. Our synodality will yield the needed fruits if we remain focused on the life and legacy of Mother Mary Charles Magdalene Walker(RSC) who eschewed biases, prejudices, stereotyping, the disorders of tribalism, sectionalism, individualism and attitudes of self-sufficiency. She stood for inclusiveness, unity and love. This will allow hope to flourish, inspire trust among us, bind up community wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a new dawn of resourcefulness that will warm our hearts and give strength to our hands.

**BY SR. LUCY YELTULE DERY,
HHCJ**



CELEBRATING A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE IN THE LIFE OF

Sister Anthonia Maurice Essien, HHCJ

The crew of Handmaids Voice congratulates Sister Anthonia Maurice Essien HHCJ, on the successful delivery of her inaugural lecture. An inaugural Lecture is a significant public ceremony to celebrate the academic feat achieved by a professor. It is a moment where the inaugural lecturer exposes his/her academic prowess by letting the university community and members of the public know the achievements made in academic and research activities carried out over the years.

The topic for the inaugural lecture contributes to intellectual development, physical, spiritual and the overall well-being of individuals and the society as a whole. It also initiates a particular professor into the chair of a particular discipline, based on the knowledge contributed in the area of her academic specialization.

So it was that, on the 25th of May 2023, as all roads led to the 1000-seater-capacity Lecture Theatre of the University of Uyo where sister Anthonia Maurice Essien HHCJ, a Professor of Sociology of Religion, Faculty of Arts, University of Uyo, distinguished herself as the 90th inaugural lecturer of the prestigious institution. The lecture hall was packed full with people from all works of life; academia, clergy, religious, etc. Born at Ikot Osurua in Ikot Ekpene Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State, Sister Anthonia rose to the peak of her career, having undergone the necessary trainings. She served the university in many capacities

as Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Dean of Studies of the Faculty of Arts, etc, and the church as the adviser of the Catholic Women



Organisation (CWO) in Calabar Archdiocese and at the Provincial level, Provincial Superior of South Eastern Province and is currently an Assistant General of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ).

In her lectures titled **MAINSTREAMING SPIRITUALITY IN HEALTHCARE SERVICES: EXPLORING THE GAMUT OF INCLUSIVITY**, Sister Anthonia emphasized the need for a synergy between authentic spiritualists and medical doctors, as each work together from different perspective to restore health. She highlighted that healthy spirituality in healthcare services is an important pathway to health and the best option to adopt, considering the big gap between the medical care of patients and the religious sensibility of the people. This gap has led to people patronizing the operators of all kinds of spiritual agencies in search of good health. She reiterated that healthy spirituality complements orthodox medical care and does not contradict it.

Again, she stated that building inclusive bridges in spirituality and healthcare services within the hospital ambiance are the best way to go, as understanding a patient's spiritual history opens the door to conversation about values and beliefs, uncovers coping mechanisms and support systems, reveals positive and negative spiritual coping, and provides an opportunity for compassionate care.

Sister maintained that it is very risky to consult/patronize inauthentic spiritualists who do not believe that scientific diagnoses and corresponding medical treatment are also gifts from God to humanity.

Furthermore, she opined that it is important for our hospitals to have effective spiritual and pastoral-care units with chaplains noted for healthy spirituality, to help patients grapple with the challenges of spirituality. In this way, inauthentic spiritualists will gradually lose their customers in their *fee-for service* spirituality which is often detrimental to patients' wellbeing.

Sister Prof. Anthonia Maurice Essien recommends that authentic spiritualists should constantly assure the patients of their prayers so that, they receive from the doctors the right medical help, proper diagnoses, right medication, and protection from harmful side-effects.

Lastly, she recommends prayers to God almighty as one of the most efficacious "assignments" that spiritualists should give to their clients.

Once again congratulations Sister Anthonia for the articulate delivery of your Inaugural lecture!.



FAITH IN THE DIVINE INITIATIVE - THE HUMAN RESPONSE

(By Sister Bertha Frimpong, HHCJ)

God, infinitely perfect that nobody can claim the credit. By faith, man himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him and to love him with all his strength.

To enable man to seek God, to know him and to love him with all his strength, God has given him the gift of faith.

What is faith? In the letter to the Hebrews 11:1 faith is defined as the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things seen. Faith is also defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church #150 as free assent to the whole trust in someone or something and in our case having confidence or trust in God.

Faith is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8 expresses this idea beautifully "because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God. Not by anything you have done, so

completely submits his own intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred scripture calls this HUMAN RESPONSE TO GOD, the obedience of faith has the second part of our theme, HUMAN RESPONSE. Romans 1:5 and 16:26 uses the term the obedience of faith or to obey in faith. To obey in faith is to submit freely to the word that has been heard. We need to say yes to God whenever we hear him speak to us. Abraham is the model of such obedience, presented to us in the Holy Bible. In Genesis 12:1-4 we read, God said to Abraham leave your country and your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you..., Hebrews 11:8 puts this beautifully, by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place where he was to receive inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was to go.

The Virgin Mary is the most perfect embodiment of obedience. Luke 1:38. By faith Mary welcomed the

tidings brought to her by the Angel Gabriel, believing that with God nothing would be impossible and so gave her fiat "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word".

As I have already said, faith is a personal adherent of human being to God. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says.

Whenever there is a call there must be a response. We were called into Christianity and we have responded positively to this call, regardless of the difficulties and challenges associated with the response. Our first call is to be Christians. The courage to live out the Christian values and virtues is one concrete way of expressing our positive response to the Christian vocation. As Christians, we are called to assume different roles in the world. Some have been called to political offices, teachers, doctors, carpenters, etc. We must



continually say yes to our Christian calling, bearing in mind that whatever we do in our various jobs is service to God and humanity. Hence, the need to do it faithfully and obediently. This is what sometimes culminate into a vocation to the priestly and consecrated life; which is a higher call to witness to Christ and his mission.

One thing that is certain about the ministry of Jesus is that he came not to do his own will but to do the will of the Father who sent him. So, Jesus went about preaching the kingdom of God.

Before his ascension, Jesus bequeathed to the early disciples the mission to carry on the ministry of preaching about the kingdom of God, "as the father sent me, so I send you." (John 20:21) This mission of the church is entrusted to all Christians, and more so, to the priests and religious who are called to intimacy with Him.

From the above one gets to know that the vocation to the priesthood and religious life is very important for the fulfilment of the mission of the church. The response to the call is voluntary. However, parents are enjoined to

encourage their children to dispose themselves for this service.

God taken the initiative by calling us to work in his vineyard. How are we responding? Matthew 9:38-39 says the harvest is great but the labourers are few.... Let us not be like the rich man in Matthew 19:16-22 who could not follow Christ because he was not ready to let go of his worldly possession.

If the Lord is calling you to be a priest or a religious be sure not to give an excuse.

If you feel called to serve God in the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, contact the Vocation Directress at the following addresses:

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2. Provincialate HHCJ
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5. Provincialate HHCJ
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6. Kenya Region
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8TH PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

With expansion of the Congregation and the spread of its apostolate, it became very necessary to decentralize the administration to facilitate the principle of co-responsibility, **effective governance, and ministry.**

Therefore, in 1997, four provinces were created, three in Nigeria and one in Ghana namely: North Western Province, Central Eastern Province, and South Eastern Province, and the Ghana Province, besides other mission territories in Africa, Europe and America which maintain direct communication with the Central Administration.

In all these provinces, the Handmaids are engaged in various apostolate of Education at all levels, including Special Education and the Montessori Education, medical work, social work, pastoral, domestic, and agriculture and vocational activities.

Expectedly, the decentralization of the administration into various level of governance would mean that Provinces are empowered and free to convene their assemblies and chapters to discuss issues that affect the administration of their respective areas of jurisdiction, as well as

make decisions for consideration and approval by the central administration. This takes place every three years. So, the first Provincial Chapter having taken place in 2000, the 8th one took place in 2022.

The Theme for the 8th Provincial Chapter was **“SYNODALITY IN THE LIFE, VISSION AND MISSION OF THE HANDMAIDS IN THE 21ST CENTURY”**

The Superior General, Mother Germaine Ocansey, HHCJ, in her address to the delegates to the chapter, and indeed all Handmaids, re-echoed the invitation of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to all the baptized in the Church to participate in this Synodal process, which invites everyone to become the living voices of the People of God through our life. In order to respond to this call and participate fully, she encouraged Handmaids to be attentive to one another's voice in the

communities and the Congregation, at large, in the context of our way of Life, Vision and Mission as Handmaids, stressing the fact that the exercise would involve cultivating the virtue of attentive LISTENING to one another and sharing sincerely the fruits of communal living. In her own words: On this Synodal path we will journey together in communion, achieve participation, and to reopen ourselves as we live our mission to achieve our ultimate Vision of our Congregation which is expressed in our vision; **“Transformation of our Communities and the World in Christ.”** In other words, we will be answering the question on how far our journey together as Handmaids has transformed our Communities by our own lives, and how it is impacting on the entire world, as we respond actively to the challenge of living it out.

Following the synodal approach, which emphasizes on listening and dialoguing with one another therefore, she also invites us to examine how we are fulfilling our mission as Handmaids: **“Faithful to Gospel values and the charism of our Foundress**



Only the best is good enough for God, no matter the inconveniences, MMCMW



and attentive to the signs of the times, we, the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, commit ourselves to the transformation of lives through our prophetic witness of vowed life, community living, participatory

leadership and apostolic ministry with a special option for the poor, women and children.”

All the provincial Chapters were successful and ended up in praise and thankfulness to God. Expectedly, new Provincial

leadership teams were inaugurated to continue the administrative functions in the four Provinces. The Mission territories also would in the near future convene their assemblies, and

Capitulars



New Leadership team



Central Eastern Province



Ghana Province

New Leadership Team U S Mission

God knows all the needs of His children in Africa and He loves them infinitely more than I do, MMCMW

The Effects of HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Sr. Gloria Itokem, HHCJ

Introduction

Human trafficking is a sad reality in our world. It is a serious and disturbing issue that affects millions of people across the world. Every society is plagued by this evil. It is present in developed countries as well as developing countries. It is a modern form of slavery that has eaten deep into the human society for centuries. It undermines the dignity of the human person and human rights. The most affected people are women and children; however, men and adults are not excluded from this menace. The practice disguises itself in the forms of sexual exploitations, forced labour, organs trafficking, etc. The United Nations in her statement noted that there are about twenty-five million people who are victims of this unspeakable crime by fellow humans. In all of these, this article is set to discuss the dangers of human trafficking and other related injuries caused by these activities.

Definition

The United Nations defines Human Trafficking as "*the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.*

"With this definition of human trafficking, the United Nations establishes that trafficking activities are injurious to the freedom of the human person and are geared towards exploitation. Certain conditions that create an avenue for human trafficking include poverty, broken family systems or families with history of substance abuse, unemployment, undocumented immigrants and refugees, cultural practices, lack of knowledge about trafficking, low self-worth. Human traffickers are skilled in preying on the vulnerable populations and they use these skills to manipulate and persuade

attractive. It is always on the grounds of false promises of employment and a promise of a better care and life.

. b). **Forced or bonded labour.** This happens when the victim involuntarily works under threats of some penalty. Consequently, the victim has no choice but to give himself/herself into labour servitude as a means to repay an acquired or inherited loan or debt. Minors and even adults are often times forced to work in inhumane conditions with minimal or deprived remuneration.

c), **Forced Marriage:** this form of trafficking refers to when an individual has no option or is coerced into consent when given into marriage by a parent, guardian or relatives. It can also include a widow who has no choice than to be an inherited wife to a late husband's relative or one who is forcefully transferred in exchange for some sort of payment.



their victims into trafficking.

Forms of Human Trafficking

Some of the common forms of human trafficking in our contemporary societies today are:

a). **Sex trafficking.** Studies have shown that girls between the ages of 12-18 are the most vulnerable victims of sex exploitation and are medically propped up to look older and meet the required statistic of young, slim and

d). **People smuggling.** This happens when humans are either kidnapped or smuggled away from their countries with promises of a better life. It happens mostly in economically disadvantaged regions of the world. Minors and vulnerable adults are lured away from their homes. Sometimes, they are forced into selling their organs into which their master or mistress take the money. Many victims die in the process of

Even our mistakes He does not allow to do injury, MMCMW



smuggling and families are often not aware of their locations or conditions because they were forced to cut off from families and friends.

psychological damage to the victims. Those who survive the horror of trafficking still end up experiencing difficulty in relationships, trust issues, memory loss, depression, guilt,

other forms of illnesses including cancer and severe infections.

They are isolated and alienated from family, loved ones and countries of origin. The guilt and shame further keep them away from reuniting with families even after being rescued. In the religious circle, victims lose faith in an all-powerful being (God) who can protect or provide lasting solace. Finally, the victims lack skills that can help in their independence because they are often denied education or skill acquisition. It takes away their freedom, their dignity and blurs their worldview.



The Effects of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking causes emotional, physical, religious and

mental trauma, shame and even suicide. Many victims sustain scars from physical injuries, rape, sexually transmitted diseases and

WAY FORWARD



A collective responsibility to look out for signs, investigate for conformation and speak out against it. The signs themselves are not a proof of trafficking but they can be pointers to trafficking conditions.

In conclusion, to curb the evil of human trafficking in our society, every good minded person must be involved. A few practical steps would include, among others:

- **Legislation from the governments at local, State, federal and global levels and sectors.**
- **Exploring ways of eradicating poverty, and providing decent housing for misplaced persons and refugees.**
- **Giving topmost priority to education to broaden people's worldview and understanding of the essentials of life.**
- **Reporting situations that involve trafficking. Like it is often said, "if you see something, say something." It can save many lives and it can be a crucial step in tackling the menace of human trafficking.**

Be docile to thine unseen guide, love Him as He loves thee, time and obedience are enough and thou a saint shall be, MMCMW



SYNODALITY **IN THE LIFE OF THE** **HANDMAID**

Etymologically, Synod is from the Greek: σύνοδος ['sinoðos] meaning "assembly" or "meeting" and is analogous with the Latin word concilium meaning "council". Originally, synods were meetings of bishops, and the word is still used in that sense in Catholicism, Oriental Orthodoxy and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Synodality should therefore be understood as the journeying together of the (assemblies) people of God in a fraternal collaboration. It indicates a way of listening to each individual as member of the Church to understand how God might be speaking to all of his creatures.

Synodality is a way of "journeying together" – of living out our faith – that calls for speaking and listening to one another with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The spirit of Synodality is to lead as to find a path forward in addressing the issues facing the Church, our Congregation, HHCJ, in our days, as we work to carry out our mission of making known the Good News of salvation in Jesus to all to experience his love.

The Synod on Synodality is a three-year process of listening and dialogue. This began with a solemn opening in Rome on October 9 and 10, 2021 with each individual diocese and church celebrating the following week on October 17.

The synodal process will conclude in 2024.

The ten pillar words of synodality according to the church are, that we as Christians and most especially Catholics, be Companions on the Journey of faith, Listening, Speaking Out, Celebration, Sharing Responsibility for the common good, have Dialogue in Church and Society, Ecumenism, Authority and Participation.

Pope Francis has declared that, synodality is what God expects of the Church in the 21st century. He has put his own transformative stamp on the meaning and conduct of synods, saying that a synod involves mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn.

The question now is, how do we put synodality into practice? Participating in a Synod means placing ourselves on the same path as the saviour Jesus. It means



Sr Emmanuella Darkarah, HHCJ

following in His footsteps, listening to His Word along with the words of others. It means discovering with amazement that the Holy Spirit always surprises us, to suggest fresh paths and new ways of speaking. It is not just an event, but also a process that involves coming together in synergy as the People of God, the College of Bishops and the Bishop of Rome, each according to their proper function," the communiqué stated.

We as Handmaids as part of the church, are called by the synodal church, to participate in the mission and vision of the church. We are called to listen more and talk less, to identify with the marginalized, to walk humbly, love mercy and do justice. We are called in this synodal period as a congregation, to make our communities home for all. Synodality calls after us as a congregation and individuals to walk the roads of Jesus, participating in his mission of listening and consoling. In the spirit of our mother foundress, Mother Mary Charles Magdalen Walker, Servant of God, the church calls us in collaboration, to respond to the sound of synodality.

It is only right that as a

God works in a special way through those consecrated and united to Him, MMCMW

Congregation within the church, we as Handmaids, collaborate with the church to journey together in living out our vowed life and our Christian faith. It is also a duty that we share and participate in responsibilities for our common mission as the people of God and the church. Long

live Synodality! long live HHCJ! Long live the Catholic Church!

References:

synod 2021-2024-USCCB

Insight Out: synodality, Laity, Pope Francis.

PICTURE GALLERY







Mother Germaine interacting with the Pre-Novices

the newly clothed Novices in Nigeria

*Others will look up to you for guidance and if anyone else feels the way you do,
you will be able to guide and direct them., MMCMW*



*If we want to learn to live with Jesus and at the same time to work for Jesus,
His mother must be our model and our guide, MMCMW*

SENIOR CITIZENS

Honouring and celebrating our senior citizens (the 70s and above) is an annual even in our congregation.

The ceremony fulfils the words of the psalmist: "The righteous will flourish like the palm tree, they will grow like a Lebanon cedar.

last episode was celebrated in a grand style.

The memorable assembly was marked with different exciting and impressive activities, such as; inaugural session, during which the Superior General, Mother Germaine Ocansey gave a welcome address and some



Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still green, to proclaim that the Lord is just..." (Psalm 92:12-15). The

words of encouragement to our elders, and praised them for their persevering spirit so far. The event thereafter continued with excursion trips to Uyo



Market Square/Mall and other exciting places. There were some pictorial representation of every activity, especially the daily liturgy.

Others who interacted with them included, Monsignor Inyanyeto, Sr Dr Angela Akpabio, HHCJ. The highlights of the celebration, which were displayed at grand finale were various entertainments by Sisters of the Generalate community, presentation of gifts, free speeches, riddles and jokes, drama, olden days Jaz music, sumptuous meals etc.

The Senior Citizens expressed their sentiments of gratitude to the Superior General for upholding the tradition of having their annual celebration at the Generalate, which they acknowledged provided them the opportunity to interact and socialize with each other. They acknowledged that it was a memorable experience, and looked forward to more of such celebrations.

It is wonderful to look back and trace the workings of Providence, MMCMW

URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI), A MAJOR HEALTH CONCERN IN WOMEN

Sr. Charlotte Sullo, HHCJ



An infection in any part of the urinary system: the kidneys, ureters, bladder or urethra. It is caused by bacteria around your genitals that enters your urinary tract. Urinary tract infections are more common in women than men. UTIs are a significant cause of morbidity in infant boys, older men and females of all ages. Most conditions involve the lower urinary tract; the bladder and the urethra, but more serious infections involve the kidney.

PREVALENCE OF UTI

It is a common clinical problem found in most hospitals around the world, with an estimated episode of 150 million encounters each year. UTI is a sequel of morbidity and high health care expenditures in all gender and age groups. The infection can occur in 40% to 50% of women and 5% of men, attributable to elements of hormonal changes during pregnancy and anatomical differences, highlighting the higher incidence in women than in men.

CAUSES OF UTI

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are caused by a range of pathogens, but are commonly caused by bacteria that enter the urethra and then travel into the bladder like *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumonia*, *Proteus mirabilis*, *Enterococcus faecalis* and *Staphylococcus saprophyticus*. High recurrence rates and increasing antimicrobial resistance among uropathogens threaten to greatly increase the economic burden of these infections. Sexual intercourse is the most common way for bacteria to get into the urethra. Other activities that can introduce bacteria into the urethra include: holding in urine for long periods, not urinating after sex, having a catheter, and being pregnant. Some women are also prone to UTIs because of their anatomy or certain behavior such as using a diaphragm for birth control.

RISK FACTORS

Some people are at higher risk of getting a UTI. UTIs are more common in females because their urethras are shorter and closer to the rectum. This makes it easier for bacteria to enter the urinary tract. Other factors that can increase the risk of UTIs:

- A previous UTI
- Sexual activity
- Changes in the bacteria that live inside the vagina, or vaginal flora. For example, menopause or the use of spermicides can cause these bacterial changes
- Pregnancy
- Age (older adults and young children are more likely to get UTIs)
- Structural problems in the urinary tract such as abnormal bladder
- Poor hygiene, for example, in children who are potty-training.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Remember that time when you were running to the bathroom every second to urinate? Oh and remember that most times, there would be a burning painful sensation every time you urinated.

Only for you to find out later that in fact it was a urinary tract infection (UTI). How embarrassing that must have been but you are not alone. Symptoms of a bladder infection may cause pelvic pain, increased urge to urinate, pain with urination, pressure/cramping in the groin/lower abdomen and blood in the urine. Symptoms of a kidney infection may cause lower back pain, nausea, vomiting, chills and fever.

LIFESTYLE AND HOME REMEDIES

Urinary tract infections can be painful, but you can take steps to ease discomfort until antibiotics treat the infection. Follow these tips:

Our Lord sees everything. You will be rewarded by Him. I want you to get your reward from our Lord, MMCMW

- Drink plenty of water. Water helps to dilute your urine and flush out bacteria.
- Avoid drinks that may irritate your bladder. Avoid coffee, alcohol, and soft drinks containing citrus juices or caffeine until the infection has cleared. They can irritate your bladder and tend to increase the need to urinate.
- Use a heating pad. Apply a warm, but not hot, heating pad to your belly to help with bladder pressure or discomfort.

PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENT OF UTI

Antibiotics usually are the first treatment for urinary tract infections. Your health and the type of bacteria found in your urine determine which medicine is used and how long you need to take it.

Medicines commonly used for simple UTIs include:

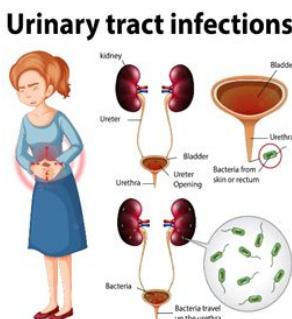
- Nitrofurantoin (Macrodantin, Macrobid, Furadantin)
- Amoxicillin/Augmentin
- Ceftriaxone (Rocephin)
- Cephalexin (Keflex)
- Ciprofloxacin (Cipro)
- Fosfomycin (Monurol)
- Levofloxacin (Levaquin)
- Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (Bactrim, [Septra](#))

WHY SHOULD I TAKE FULL DOSE?

- Antibiotics work well against UTIs. You might start to feel better after being on the medicine for just a few days.
- But even so, keep taking your medicine. If you stop your antibiotics too soon, you won't kill all the bacteria in your urinary tract.
- These germs can become resistant to antibiotics. That means the meds will no longer kill these bugs in the future. So if you get another UTI, the medication you take might not treat it. Take the full course of your medicine to make sure all the bacteria are dead.

COMPLICATIONS OF UTI

- It is very important to quickly identify and treat UTIs in order to avoid these severe conditions; frequent recurrences, pyelonephritis with sepsis, renal damage in young children, preterm birth and complications caused by frequent antimicrobial use, such as high-level antibiotic resistance and *Clostridium difficile* colitis.



PREVENTION OF UTI

Prevention measures include:

Personal hygiene. Here with some tips on how to remain UTI free:

- Always wipe from front to back after urinating. This will prevent germs from being transferred from anus to urinary opening.

- Try to urinate at least 20-30 minutes after sexual intercourse. This will reduce the chances of transferring post coital bacteria into the urinary tract.

- Avoid taking prolonged bubble baths, because the water maybe contaminated and therefore, prolonged stay may allow the bacteria to reach urinary opening. Therefore, ladies, think twice before running yourself a hot bubble bath, take a warm shower instead.

- Please don't hold your urine for long periods at a time, holding your urine will only give the bacteria a chance to multiply.

- Drink plenty of fluids especially water not soft drinks or juice concentrates.

- The only juice you are permitted to drink is cranberry juice. Water and cranberry help to flush out bacteria from the urinary tract.

- Avoid using scented vaginal products such as scented douches and sprays because they can cause UTIs and other infections.

- Stay away from all these perfumed products designed for your intimate area, they are harmful. Avoid too much sugary foods as excess sugar decreases your body's ability to fight infections.

- Wash and dry your underwear's under the sun for the sun rays to kill any bacterial on them. If they are not well dried, you can iron them before use.

- Change (discard the old ones) your underwear's (panties) after treating a UTI.

- Disinfect public toilets before use if you have to sit on them

TRAUMA HEALING FOR EVERYBODY

Trauma is the consequence of a stressful events that affect us deeply in a way that leads to upsetting emotions and memories. Trauma can also be described as the response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms our ability to cope, leading to feelings of hopelessness, a diminished sense of self and inability to feel emotions. A traumatic event is an external event that is perceived by the victim as life-threatening. We all at one time or the other go through these.

Everybody needs to get in touch with his/her inner self and brokenness, and of course, the need for trauma healing. This is not because all are traumatized, but because everyone must have had one or more traumatic experiences right from childhood. Imagine for instance, when a child is born, it cries. Why? Because, it has left its comfort zone in the mother's womb to an unknown place. Everybody prefers to remain in his/her comfort zone. When we are taken away, we feel different. Some people go as far as reacting negatively to this change.

Life is a journey from the womb to the tomb. It is a journey to discovery, transformation and healing as everyone gets wounded and broken from time to time along the way. Life's journey is full of different experiences (ups and downs)- joys, pains, happiness, sadness, excitement, gloom, hurts, fears and brokenness from time to

time. Some of these experiences could be traumatic. We human beings therefore need trauma healing in order to function more and better in the society.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said,

"The greatest disease in the world today is not TB or leprosy, it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are more dying for a little love. The poverty in the world is a different kind of poverty – it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There is a hunger for love as there is a hunger for God."

I don't know which trauma you might have experienced, but all I know is that, the hunger for love and hunger for God have gone a long way to bringing about trauma and traumatic experience to people, the world over. Many have taken to crime and terrorism, causing so much unrest to others in the society. People now live in perpetual fear as nobody is ever sure of safety in the very next minute, leading to more and more traumatic experiences. This therefore makes the need for Trauma healing treatment very necessary, and possibly a mandatory pill. In summary, whether we like it or not, life is full of ups and downs and at one time or the other, we are

expected to leave our comfort zones to where life dictates for us, we become shattered and broken when life takes us unawares by its definitions, judgements and expectations, leaving us feeling unprepared or even incompetent to face its challenges. Rejections and abandonments that come with spiritual growth equally transient our capacity to cope at times. Sometimes we become confused, perplexed and even sad. These are the thorns in the roses of life. At some point, we would begin to feel broken and thereby begin to need help in other to manage the situation or to cope with it. Trauma healing is one best therapy that can help us conquer the troubled times. Listen to what your body and your spirit are saying to you. Leave the definitions of the world for once.

Tools for Trauma Healing

To go through the process of healing from trauma, we need some tools to help us heal: Awareness, Understanding, Compassion, Forgiveness, Learning and Transformation.

Awareness:

It is always said that, "if you remember it, it is significant" Awareness helps one to get in touch with and have knowledge of oneself and thereafter recall all the painful experiences. It's a time to explore oneself to see where and when he/she has been traumatized. Then talk about the trauma or traumatic experience.

If the Caritas Christi has really gripped the soul, its urging to Apostolic labours will at once be felt, MMCMW

Talking about it brings healing.

Exercise

Jot down all the painful events you have experienced from birth till date.

Ways to Cultivate Self-Awareness

Create some space for yourself. Leave yourself some time and space every day for some leisure.

Practice mindfulness: this involves paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment to your body, non-judgmentally.

Journaling: Writing not only helps us process our thoughts but also makes us feel connected and at peace with ourselves.

Practice being a good listener. Listening is not the same as hearing. Listening is about being present and paying attention to other people's emotions, body movement and language

Gain different perspectives: Ask for feedback. Sometimes we can be too afraid to ask what others think of us. We can never know everything about ourselves. A little feedback from others would go a long way to tell us more about ourselves and to help us improve.

Understanding

Awareness of perceived trauma brings about knowledge and understanding. As the saying goes,

“The wound is where light enters you.”

It is in brokenness that we grow. We do not grow in moments that everything is okay. Tough times bring about our growth and development, for, “out of the

darkness comes light. Out of the challenges, growth comes.” Understanding here is, what the whole situation means to the individuals and what the traumatic events are meant to bring?

Compassion

In Matthew 15:32, Jesus called his disciples and told them,

“I feel sorry for these people. They have been here with me for three days, and they have nothing left to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, or they will faint along the way.”

Compassion for Jesus is feeling for others (Love) and acting on the feeling. Compassion is going an extra mile to uplift a burden on others. It has to go beyond loving them. Love them, feel for them and do something to uplift them and ease their burden. Compassion for us therefore means love of self, love of others and love for God all for God's sake. When I keep a grudge or anger against someone, I cause myself pain and heart break. I am at that time not compassionate to myself. When I refuse to forgive or help my neighbours, I am not showing compassion to others and when I refuse love or forgiveness from God, I am not loving God.

Forgiveness

Do not judge other people for their challenges and their struggles. Forgive their mistakes.

Oprah Winfrey said, “Forgiveness is giving up the hope that the past could have been any different.”

Yes! Whether we like it or not, what has happened has happened. We just have to forgive and let go. In life, we need to forgive ourselves for the

mistakes we must have made in the past; forgive others for their mistakes and wrongs and then accept forgiveness from God. Sometimes we go for confessions and thereafter begin to believe that our sins are too big for God to forgive us. This means refusing to accept forgiveness.

Learning

The experience one goes through should teach him/her some lessons for life. Whatever one learns should not be wasted, but used to help the person grow better and stronger.

Transformation

Everything that happens in life, happens for us and not to us. We should therefore practice having gratitude for our pains. Gratitude is a step to the healing process and transformation. You can begin to keep a gratitude journal to see all God is doing for you in spite of everything life throws to you.

We all have formed stories in our minds about ourselves and those stories come from the faulty definitions that the world has given us. Transformation is working hard to re-write our stories with a heart of love. Look for love in your story and re-write the story in the way that serves you. Let your story not be against you. This love is what one needs to heal from Trauma.

Love is indeed the answer to all our problems and questions.

SR HELEN EGBERI, HHCJ

THE JOURNEY OF A SOUL

The clarion call to serve the Lord always remains a feeling that agitates the mind of whoever is chosen to carry out the onerous role. At a time, the colonial masters regarded African continent as a crude, a Sister of Charity, Mary Jesus, which had her schoolmate Charles Magdalene Walker of and friend, Mary Amadeus as the opportunity to begin exploring the

By 1929, her work in Nigeria was overwhelming for an individual. It was at this time she appealed for Sisters from both her Her prayer for genuine vocation was answered, when four of her pupils expressed the desire to be and the Society of the Holy Child like her. She saw this as an opportunity to begin exploring the

understand the Native mind as they themselves do, nor can we have the same influence on the people.”(MCMW)



English origin left the comfort of her country and came out to Africa with the intent of 'liberating the minds' of the African people who were regarded as barbaric and uncivilized.

On her arrival in Nigeria she took over the management of the Covent school in Calabar, where she undertook educational, pastoral, social and Medical activities, reaching out to everyone at all level. Besides evangelizing, she established convents, hospitals, and dispensaries, organizing catechism classes and marriage counseling centres, vocational institutions for skills acquisition, as well as orphanages and twinnaries for the protection of twins, who were regarded as taboos in that part of Nigeria.

Superior possibility of founding a General. She had earlier cried to the Lord thus: “I need companions; I need co-workers, so send them, if you want the work to go on” Charles Heerey. (MCMW).

The later responded by sending three of her Sisters in 1930, to assist Sister Mary Charles Walker from her work, even after she was in the various apostolates. Of course, with many hands on deck, where people will leave in activities began to grow and expand to other parts of Nigeria, in spite of all the difficulties. It was for the glory of God. Indeed this during this period of her was the foundation of the missionary activities that she saw as the only way to ensure continuity of effective evangelization in Nigeria. In her own words: “We can never really

She wanted her dream to outlive the ecclesiastical superiors, Bishops Joseph Shanahan and Charles Heerey. She nursed a fervent desire to expand the congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, the foundation with four African girls.

These girls, Lucy William from the Cameroons, Kathleen Bassey from Calabar, Agnes Ugoaru from Umuahia and Mary Christiania Waturuocha from Owerri braved this new life by becoming the foundation members of the congregation.

These are the real pace setters

She formed them in her spirit, apostolate and charism until

January 1934, when in obedience to her then ecclesiastical superior,

Bishop Charles Heerey, she had to leave for London via Bojongo, where she also assisted in their schools for a year before leaving for London .In London, she also worked and helped to start a

Devon until her return to her congregation on January 18, 1956 for further assignments.

Suffices to say that it is in fulfillment of this desires of Sr. Mary Charles Walker “to decentralizing unnecessary consecrate the rest of her life to the bureaucracy procedures in the Nigerian Mission” (as written in congregation.

her petition to the Holy Father,

Pius XI in 1922,) that God called her to another African Mission, (though not in Nigeria) in Lusaka, Zambia-East Africa. Here again, at the age of 75, she assisted in the care of souls. She has over the training of an already existing years promoted the spirit of joy, African Sisters at Chikuni (a openness, optimism, and unison, permanent mission established by the Jesuits, North of the Zambezi), founding character – unity in Handmaids of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and thereafter retired to a

humble job of making altar bread for the Diocese of Monze until her death on February 27, 1966. She was buried at the Chikuni Mission Cemetery, Bowever.

To honour her wish of wanting to 'die and be buried in Nigeria', her remains was exhumed from

Chikuni and re-interred at the place is known and called the “Mother House” of the congregation.

This indeed, is a journey of a soul that gave up all the comforts of Europe, so as to sow God's seed of love in Nigeria and beyond.

Just as Mary was a vessel through which Christ came into the world,

so was Mary Charles used as a vessel to make Christ's ministry spread from Nigeria to other parts of the world. The congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child has grown from strength to

To the glory of God, there is a continuous increase in number of

vocations and geographical spread, with each of the provinces

actively engaged in the decision

making process with a view to

consecrate the rest of her life to the bureaucracy procedures in the congregation.

The congregation has truly lived

her to another African Mission, to the essence of self-sacrifice, cooperation, involvement of individual and community in the at the age of 75, she assisted in the care of souls. She has over the training of an already existing years promoted the spirit of joy, African Sisters at Chikuni (a openness, optimism, and unison, permanent mission established by the Jesuits, North of the Zambezi), founding character – unity in Handmaids of the Blessed Virgin diversity- is preserved and Mary, and thereafter retired to a sustained.

The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have continued to evangelized souls through their various apostolates in health care delivery, education, pastoral and social services, and public sectors.

Bureaucracy

off ceremony

The plans to mark the 100th year anniversary of the arrival of Mother Mary Charles Magdalen Walker, RSC, foundress of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus are under way. The Vicar General, Sr. Francis Ngozi Utu, HHCJ, who represented the Superior General, Mother Germaine Ocansey, disclosed this at the 8th Provincial Chapter of the South Eastern Province.

The Superior General, Mother Germaine Ocansey, HHCJ has officially directed the chairperson of the Heritage Committee, Sr. Mary Liguori Okure, HHCJ to commence the necessary preparations toward the celebration. Information about the date for the Congregational celebration would be communicated by the Superior General in due course.

The events covered:

1. Tracing the footsteps of our foundress in Akwa Ibom.
2. Publicizing the events on media.
3. The celebration was two day event
 - (a) 25/11/2022 – Carnival float at Uyo and Ikot Ekpene town
 - (b) 25/11/2022 – Lecture by Msgr. Professor Sylvanus Iniobong Udoidem, on Mother Mary Charles Magdalene Walker, the great woman missionary, a retired professor of the University of Port Harcourt and a former Rector of the Catholic Institute of West Africa, CIWA.
 - (c) 26/11/2022 – The Eucharistic celebration at St Joseph Catholic

There is much good in the girls, but we shall need to go very slowly and to lay deep foundation, MMCMW

Church, Anua followed by a launching towards the renovation of the discovered dilapidated convent at Asong. Many Handmaids and a good number of the lay faithful graced the event.

As part of the kick-off to the celebration, was the tracing of historical residence (convent) of



our foundress. These included the following places: Anua, Edem Ekpak, Ikot Ekpene, Oron etc. The most surprising and exciting of these places was Asong, where the Parish Priest, the Catechist and the Parish Chairman accompanied Sisters Mary Liguori Okure and Stella Usen to view a structural frame of a four-room bungalow with broken windows and doors, and the roof and walls, which clearly showed that it was once a convent of the Sisters, opened in 1931 by Mother Mary Charles Magdalen Walker with Sisters Lucy William and Christiana Waturoacha.

The Parish Priest and his group later took the Sisters to the village head, where he accorded them a royal reception and assured them that the property still belongs to the Handmaids.

The group sourced for funds and received generous support from the clergy, Handmaids' schools, some church associations and lay faithful in Uyo diocese and beyond, including government officials. The Priests

The high point of the celebration was a celebrated thanksgiving Mass officiated by the Bishop of Uyo Diocese, Most Rev. John Ebebe Ayah and

many Priests from Uyo, Calabar and Ikot Ekpene, some as representatives of their Bishops. Father Michael Etim who gave the homily, highlighted the our mother's evangelical and educational foundations, which impacted greatly on those who came across her.

The Mass was followed by the launching of the project for the renovation of the Asong Convent. This was done to create an awareness that Mother's property at Asong, acquired in 1931 was still there, and that we were still willing to revive and occupy it.

The events climaxed with various entertainments, including poems depicting the Servant of God, Mother Mary Charles Magdalen, RSC.

A TRIBUTE TO A 'NUN OF CALABAR'

As the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus marks a milestone year, we remember the long journey made by Mother Mary Charles Magdalene Walker, who did all the groundwork for the foundation-laying of our great Congregation, the first indigenous congregation of female religious in Nigeria.

Having kept alive her hope and desire of coming to the Nigerian mission from 1913, when Bishop Joseph Shanahan made the demand of her Congregation, Our dear mother arrived Nigeria on **3rd October, 1923** to begin her missionary work. Note that she patiently waited until the due processes were completed and approved by the Pope.

'It takes a dream to get started, desire to keep going and determination to finish'

A woman with a vision and lofty desires to commit herself to the mission that brought her to Africa, this 'nun of Calabar', as she was fondly called, left her legacy in all sphere of human endeavours, following her hard work for ten (10) uninterrupted years. Integral to the role of the developing local Church: she was a Nurse, a Catechist, a social worker, a designer, an architect, pastoral worker, a teacher, and much more.

Providentially, she had a very good team of pupils who imbibed her teaching and emulated her exemplary life-style. They were as dedicated and spent as many hours as possible, applying their time and energy and supporting



her vision of ensuring that the education of the girl-child for which she accepted the invitation to Nigeria was realized.

These pupils and many, many others in that great institution, really gave their lives to that project.

A century later, the Congregation shares our mother's mission of participating in various apostolate that have transformed the lives of many people across the globe, a continuation of what the pioneers accomplished. It might have seemed like an impossible task when she arrived on a barren land. Today, Handmaids take their position in Religious life, equipped for various task in God's vineyard and impacting positively on humanity.

I'm therefore very proud to say 'I am in the right place.'



As children from this great foundation, we are challenged to emulate her values and virtues and invent new ways of evangelizing so as to attract more vocation to our congregation and religious life in general, with creative expression, using

positively the new technology.

One of her many talents was 'writing.' We are told: She wrote many articles and papers on Education, which were published in Magazines and journals to boost her apostolate. Her articles, 'Education of Girls in Southern

“It takes a dream to get started, desire to keep going and determination to finish”

Nigeria" published in the international Review Missions, 1928 (ppg 505=514) was a testimony of her writing skill.

To our dear mother and countless many, whose collective legacy has unfolded in the most remarkable way, we say, Thank You.

APOSTOLATE IN TANZANIA

The Handmaids are witnessing in Mungumaji in Singida Catholic Diocese of Tanzania, which is part of the Kenyan region our congregation. It is a Muslim dominated area, where children have no access to education because of the distance to where the situated, and there are many school drop outs especially girls. The Sisters are able to offer the children western Education. The indigenes are poor and

marginalized. They also organize and train the women in various skills like; tailoring, catering, home ethics and aesthetics, among others.



Bravo Sisters, for fulfilling our mission statement, '...SPECIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR, WOMEN AND CHILDREN.'

Every step of my life God has led and I have followed, MMCMW

JUBILEE CELEBRATION

Every year the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus celebrate with pomp and pageantry the Golden and jubilee of her Sisters. 2022 was one of such years. We gathered around 4 Golden and 11 Silver Jubilarians for the usual fanfares. As it is our practice, the celebration began with a gala night, during which many exciting presentations were made in honour of the jubilarians. It was an opportunity for 'bros' to meet and reminisced the novitiate days, memories of that period of their formation before they were professed and missioned to different parts of the world.

The Jubilee Mass was celebrated at the St. Anne's Cathedral, Ifuho. As always, the Most Rev. Camillus Umoh, Catholic Bishop of Ikot Ekpene Diocese, presided over the Jubilee Mass on the 3rd of December, 2022, after which the jubilarians and guests were treated to a colourful reception at the Ikot Ekpene Diocesan auditorium. The most thrilling of the entertainments was a drama on the arrival of Mother Mary Charles Magdalen, RSC, Servant of God in Nigeria, cultural dance by students from some of Handmaids' owned institutions.



It is in the school that we must get a hold on the children and bring them within the influence of grace, MMCMW

CENTRE FOR WOMEN STUDIES AND INTERVENTION (CWSI) ABUJA

CWSI is a non-governmental organization owned by the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ) and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission since 1999. The thematic areas of CWSI work include;

- Human rights, Gender and democratic governance
- Migration and Human trafficking
- Economic empowerment
- Environment and sanitation
- Research and documentation

In a bid to sustain the work of our mother foundress Mother Mary Charles Magdalen, CWSI launched a Girl Child Mentoring Course in four local government areas (Bekwarra, Yala, Ogoja, Boki) in Cross River State. The program which was an unintended outcome of the United Nations Trust fund and Spotlight Initiative Project titled 'Action to Eliminate Violence Against Women.' was specifically designed for girls between the ages of 10 and 18.

In the same vein, as part of efforts to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking in rural communities, CWSI is currently implementing an 18 months project in Ogoja (Ekajok Kingdom), Yala and Bekwarra local government areas of Cross-River state titled '**Communities mobilizing to stop Gender Based Violence and Human Trafficking (GBV-HT)**'. The general objectives of implementing the project are to ensure that obnoxious customary laws are changed, community institutions are established within target communities to prevent and intervene in incidences of GBV and human trafficking. Below are some pictures captured during activities.



For more information, SUPPORT and CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT training, kindly contact CWSI through the following numbers: 08036700282 or 07067555376.

*I love the people old and young. Human nature is the same everywhere
And kindness opens the heart of all, MMCMW*



THE JOY OF BEING A RELIGIOUS

By Sr Thelma Nora Fynn, HHCJ



Religious life also known as consecrated life, is a vocation in which a person makes himself or herself a total gift to Christ and his Church for the service of God and his people. It is a state of life in the Catholic Church lived by those who voluntarily respond to the invitation to follow Christ in a more radical and exacting way.

Religious life is a vocation which invites members to live in a community with a shared apostolate or mission, vision, charism and spirituality. It offers a stable way of life to those called by God to profess the Evangelical Counsels according to the example and recommendation of Jesus.

Religious life comes in different forms. Some are active, meaning that they have an apostolate among the people to aid or assist them with physical or spiritual necessities (teaching, Missionary work, Care of the sick and poor, etc.. Some are contemplatives, meaning that they primary

apostolate is prayer for the Church and the world. Many communities mix the two (active and contemplative life)

Some religious institutes are active, meaning they have an apostolate among people to aid or assist them with physical or spiritual necessities such as teaching, pastoral and social work, care for the poor and sick, etc, while some are contemplative, meaning their primary apostolate is prayer for the Church and the world. Many communities mix aspects of the both active and contemplative life. The Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus is a mixture of the two (Active and Contemplative), because we work among the people and still return to our communities for prayer for the Church and the world.

There are four main types of Religious institutes:

Monastic Religious Life: Members are known as Monks (men) and nuns (women). They live a contemplative life where prayer and communal life is central, and may undertake work or ministry proper to their way of life.. They may be either enclosed or free to minister outside their monastery. Examples are the Benedictines, Augustinians, the Carmelites, among others.

Generally, Religious who live communal life, follow a regular times of communal prayer, based

on the psalms and prayers, called the Divine Office. They engage in some work to support themselves, such as growing food and making altar bread.

Societies of Apostolic Life (Apostolic Religious institutes): Members do not take vows, but live communal life and exercise charity as expressed in Mathew 25: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, etc, all about love and service in the name of the Church. They strive for perfection through observing the constitutions of their society

Missionary Religious institutes: Members are committed to proclaiming the Gospel, strictly following Jesus' commission to 'Go into the whole world and proclaim to every creature. (Mark 16:15). In keeping with their calling of evangelization, they dedicate their lives to humanitarian services in different countries, marginalized areas, or among non-evangelized people, respecting the diversity of cultures, races and faith traditions. It involves risk-taking as they sometimes proclaim the Gospel in very difficult and volatile environments Examples of Missionaries, include: Spiritans, Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Missionaries of Charity, Maryknolls, among others.

Cloistered Contemplative Life:

I must leave all to God and wait and pray, MMCMW

This is a variant of monastic life. They maintain the practice of withdrawing from the world and outside ministries to dedicate their time entirely to contemplation. Specifically, their life conforms to Jesus in prayer on the mountain and to his paschal mystery, which is death for the sake of the resurrection.

There are other category recognized by the Catholic Church which includes those living as hermits or consecrated virgins.

Religious life in its various forms is a call to promote the charity of God in a manner proper to our time, and a challenge to dedicate oneself totally in self-sacrifice for the sake of Christ and His church. It requires the “laying down of one's life” (i.e. one's own personal interests and comforts) to serve others and God. Generally, members live in community with a shared apostolate or mission, charism and vision.

The three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience are the vows that are professed by members of religious congregations. These vows form the basis for living a life of radical consecration to God for the good of the church. **Evangelical** because the vows and lifestyle are in imitation of the Gospel values, and **Counsels** because they are admonitions and not obligatory. These vows helps the religious to dedicate themselves in love to God alone, and to free themselves for service to the Church.

The vow of chastity is a manifestation of their dedication

to God with undivided heart (1 Cor. 7: 32-34), and frees a religious to give herself in love totally to Christ and His Body. Chastity is the renunciation of marriage and sexual activities whiles remaining pure in thought, word and deed for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matt 19:12). Chastity is integrating one's sexual desire into a genuine love for God and his people. She is to refrain from anything that threatens this state of life.

The vow of poverty proclaims that God is man's only real treasure., lived according to the example of Christ who, though was rich , became poor)2 Cor. 8:9) helps a sister to detach herself from material things for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matt 19:27-29). Through this vow, a sister disposes of her possessions to grow into a more profound spirit of self-giving. Material possessions should not become a stumbling block to living one's authentic calling. Poverty proclaims that God is man's only real treasure. In living this vow, the sister depends on the community for her needs as all things are shared in common.

The vow of obedience is a practical imitation of Christ, whose food was to do the Father's will Jn. 4: 34). Obedience is discerning the will of God through the superiors. It is submitting to authorities in humility. It is a willing service rather than slavish submission.

Community refers to a group of people of the same religion living together specifically for religious purposes, often subject to formal commitments such as religious

vows, as in a convent or a monastery. Community living discourages individualistic lifestyle and promotes communal exercises. It gives joy and deepens our communion with the Lord who has called us. Religious community shares in each other's sorrows, joys, ideas, gifts, talents, cultures, languages, and dressing, eat together from the same pot, recreate together, correct, forgive one another, pray together and even serve one another. What a beauty in living together as one man's children.

In a nutshell, religious life is uniquely powerful in a way that creates meaning and motivation, and is fully and richly rewarding. However, it may contradict the worldly understanding of what makes people happy. While the religious do not have their own spouses and children, they take the whole church as their family and are free to be present in all lives uniquely. While they do not collect any possessions, they possess true joy and purity of heart and have more than material possessions, which is the love of God. And while they have bound themselves in obedience, the freedom of trusting entirely in Divine Providence brings profound peace and happiness. There is indeed joy in the religious life as it deepens our love and closeness to God and our hidden prayers and sacrifices are of major importance for the overall good of the Church.

It is just about having an identity and making a difference in a simple, clear, but very unique manner.

THE VIRTUES THAT MAKE *One Make A Difference*

1. HARD WORK:

Hard work does not kill; no one dies because of hard work. What kills is laziness and doing nothing; when you work hard, you multiple the talents. If you do not work or do not work hard you bury the talents. Work is a vocation; we are all called to work. Human work is the activities that a person is involved in; like studying hard, tending flowers, gardening, cooking, etc. Don't ever look at any work as inferior. Every work has value. Working hard enables you to make a difference.

2. INTEGRITY:

A person of integrity, does not compromise values, or virtues or the good things he or she has learnt. They keep them and use them. People who maintain integrity are known and called principled (persons) because they stand on something and they are ready to die for something. Don't be someone that **lives for nothing, stands for nothing and dies for nothing**. You go to a party; they ask you: what will you drink? You say -anything. Don't be Mr. or Miss nothing. Don't be cheap; try and be costly as possible. Always have a choice. And if they don't have what you want, forgo the rest. Stand up to this principle and you will make a difference.

Almost all the deprivations of some people have turned out to school them in the value of integrity and character building. The content of integrity is honesty, truthfulness, consistency and accuracy of action.

3. PASSION:

You must have some passion for something; it is not let me do this or that because others are doing it, but I am doing it because I love it, because I can do it. All who have manufactured one thing or another; they went into their true self and chose to make a difference in life by first asking themselves the question: How can I make a difference in the world?

For example, when Bill Gate was asked; what do you think will make a difference in the world? His reply was; when every human being in the world has a PC and identity to write to anyone in the world, then I have made a difference. He followed his heart, his dream. Today he is a multi-billionaire, and right now, his company is funding a lot of projects around the world, including Nigeria.

The Apple Phones/Computers many of us use today; we press it and send an sms, mails, chats, etc came because one man founded a company that produces it.

God has created each human person as an identity, very differently. Each human person has a fault and each human person has a dignity. It takes each person to recognize his or her identity, it takes you to recognize your identity and to say to yourself; I am someone made in God's image and likeness and I will make a difference, because I accept myself, the way I am, a child of God; I can make a difference in the world. Each person is speaking differently, contributing to resources, to

character formation, to knowledge to thoughts; we are all different. Making a difference therefore is not to do it the way others are doing it but to add value beyond that by living out your dream and doing what you can passionately.

4. HUMILITY:

The word comes from a Latin word: Humus-the soil, near to the earth; when you are humble and not proud. Humility makes you not to look down on others, or put yourself above every other person, because your father is a doctor and your mother is this or that; no you are you. It makes you to respect and appreciate others and choose to serve rather than to be served.

5. Commitment:

This is putting your whole time, talents, energy into doing very well any assignment or work you are given. Many people are given jobs to do, but they are not committed to it, and they do it anyhow they want. You can commit yourself to study hard, work hard do many other things; and by so doing, make a difference.

6. WALKING ALONE:

The ability to make a decision not to follow the crowd; to say; all others are stealing I shall not, all others are telling lies, breaking the rule; I shall not; I will be myself, and I will be in the position to say no and even to be alone in doing so. Jesus did it, and he told us that the road that is wide is taken by many, but the road that is narrow is taken by a few, and sometimes by you alone.

So walking alone sometimes enables you make a difference.

7. OPTIMUM USE OF TIME:

Wasting time is not just killing time, but it is also committing suicide, because you are not utilizing God's gift very well. The time you have daily is to be optimized. But people have learnt how to kill time and to bury their talents. You can maximize time by being busy doing useful things that add value to the world; waking up in the morning, doing your morning exercise; trying to prepare the basic things, reading a book, and even saying to yourself; I want to write a book, I want to describe this or that occasion in my school, I want to draw; to sew, to type, to write my life history, history of my life, now that I am young and my memory is still sharp. You will so engage yourself usefully that even from morning till night you will say; I am too busy to engage in idle talk. Learn something and you will know something, know something and you will be somebody; Say something and you will have something to make a difference.

8. PRAYER:

It is the lifting up our hearts to God in conversation. The greatest human beings who have changed the history of the world are people of prayer; they are people who are able to withdraw from the crowd once in a while, to be alone, and when the launch back into the world, they are able to make a difference, to transform the society. Look at Christ, look at Moses, Ghandi, Nelson Mandela, even in our families, in schools, classes, there were people who have made a difference in life because they

were able to withdraw from the distractions around them. Prayer is therefore a great moment for a reunion with the Divine. The union with the divine is where we get all our energy and strength. Know that is in maintaining personal and constant contact with the Divine that you can do many things. Don't say I am too modern, I have everything, I am too tall, I am so pretty; I don't need any other thing from God. Learn to kneel down and live out the good values.

9. WORK FOR PEACE:

You are unique and beautiful. Therefore, be a person of peace, and reflect it to others.

Some people know what they want, the kind of things they want to do in future to make a difference in our world, in our society and they begin working passionately and enthusiastically toward attaining them, because it begins now. Don't say; when I get to a certain age, when I become this or that. No; it is not tied to the future; it is now. What do you want from life? What are your dreams? You can even begin now to think about it and make a list of your answers.

Let no one say, "I am too young or there is plenty of time", because time waits for no one.

Tiger Woods was three years old when he shot 48 for 9 holes on his home town golf course in Cypress, California

Julie Andrews was eight years old when she mastered an astounding four –octave singing range

Mozart was eight years old when he wrote his first symphony.

Charles Dickson was twelve years old when he quit school to work in a factory, pasting labels on bottles of shoe polish, because

his father had been imprisoned for debt.

Anne Frank was thirteen years old when she began her diary.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was fourteen years old when he enrolled at Harvard.

Paul McCartney was fifteen years old when John Lennon invited him to join a band.

Bill Gate was nineteen years old when he co-founded Microsoft, and was thirty-one years old when he became a billionaire.

Plato was twenty years old when he became a student of Socrates.

Joe DiMaggio was twenty-six years old when he hit safety.

Ralph Lauren was twenty-nine years old when he created Polo.

William Shakespeare was thirty-one years old when he wrote Romeo and Juliet.

Thomas Jefferson was thirty-three years old when he wrote the Declaration of Independence.

Henry Ford was fifty years old when he started his first manufacturing assembly line.

Neither should anyone say; 'I am too old to do anything'

Oscar Hammerstein 11 was sixty-four years when he wrote the lyrics for The Sound of Music.

Winston Churchill was sixty-five years old when he became Britain's prime Minister.

Nelson Mandela was seventy-one years old when he was released from a South African Prison, and four years later was elected President of South Africa. Michelangelo was seventy-two years old when he designed the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Dimitri Yordanidis was ninety-eight when he ran a marathon in seven hours and thirty-three minutes, in Athens, Greece.

Ichijirou Araya was one hundred years old when he climbed Mount Fuji.

All these achievements have come not by getting involved in thuggery, fraudulent or cheating activities or holding on to political offices, but through hard work, discoveries and determination to make a difference and impact on the life of others, as well as leave their foot prints on the sands of their time. So no matter how young or old you think you are, the rest of your life is ahead of you. We cannot change one moment of our past, but we can change our whole future. And, now is the time!

Perhaps these questions will help us to live purposefully and to make a difference in the world.

Questions;
Who am I?
Where did I come from?
What am I here for?
How do I do it?
Where am I going?

FACTS ABOUT LIFE

Life avails everyone at one point or the other the opportunity to make a choice of how and or what he or she wants in life. A life well spent is a manifestation of the concrete decision arrived at an early stage, and a fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose in one's life. Life's decision today would either make or mar you tomorrow.

One of the greatest healing Evangelist Kathryn Kulman, once said, "Do something with life, or else life will do something with you". Whatever situation one finds her/himself, the situation affords the opportunity to determine where exactly one wants to be in some years to come.

LIVING A PURPOSEFUL LIFE AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

Life is full of vicissitudes. There are hundreds and thousands of youths roaming the streets, running after moving vehicles, begging for alms or what in the parlance of the Nigerian Union Road Transport Workers (NURTW) is known as "Egunje". Some of these unfortunate youths at times get knocked down by these vehicles; while those who survive the hustles may not even make it in life. Some serve as ready-tools in the hands of politicians who hire them as thugs during electioneering campaigns.

The amazing aspect of this is that a sizeable number of them never planned to find themselves in such odd situations. Apparently, by not making a decision to have a fulfilling life, they had decided to accept whatever comes their way. Do you want wealth? Yes, because you believe that with wealth, you can afford all the good things of life. But, research has proven that those who eventually become the wealthiest had humble background. One can also make much money pursuing legitimate vocation, acquiring skills and sound education.

Life comes with its abundant opportunities. It is essential that one does something about what he or she thinks is possible, legitimately. As days emerge, it is important one makes use of the opportunities life offers in order to move forward.

In this part of our world, some people often say that 'time is money' but it is much more than that. According to Gbenga Fatogun (vine news 2008) your

time is your life. The more value you give to it, the more productive you become. Fatogun continues "I am yet to meet an achiever that made it to the top by spending his time in the TV set, partying and hanging around friends that are not serious minded. Time will eventually tell the world how you used it, If not now, in a few years. Rather spend time, invest it, read books, hang around with the right people, learn a new skill. You will definitely need it someday, somehow".

In Nigeria today, people are fun of saying our leaders have failed us. At what time do you ponder over this? One can start by making his own input if one desires a change in his or her country of residence. One should avoid the talking and do the walking. It is high time we start getting realistic about our life existence, our being, how to impact positively on the growth and development of Nigeria. There should be a paradigm shift from doing the talking to doing the walking. One must strive hard to make an appreciable impact on the socio-economic development of Nigeria. Our leaders must not see their exalted position as opportunity to acquire wealth illegitimately. The citizens of a nation show their leaders as people held in high esteem. They should rather be seen as a holder of public trust. Kukah(1997) said, a Nigerian leader must be able to trust himself and his followers through a sincerity of purpose. This enables people to pay their taxes and make positive contributions to the national growth. The leader must have faith in God and the human capacity of goodness.

The darkest hour is before the dawn, MMCMW

IKOT EKPENE DIOCESE

At 60

HANDMAIDS VOICE INTERVIEW WITH THE VICAR GENERAL OF IKOT EKPENE DIOCESE

HV- Good day Father, we are the editorial crew of Handmaids Voice, a publication of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus.

Why the need for the 60th anniversary of the Diocese?

VG- The 60th anniversary of the Diocese is not just significant in terms of number of years since our creation. It is a unique time for growth in faith, rekindling the enthusiasm of the Mission we received and thanking God for the years that have passed.

When we recall our humble beginnings as a Diocese and look back to see how much God has done for us and among us, there is need to give thanks. And so there is need to thank God for what He has done in the Diocese. To take stock of how far we have gone in the mission entrusted to us by Christ "go into the world and preach the good news", and imbibe new strategies that will enhance our pastoral ministry. In preparation for the emergence of a more dynamic diocese during our centenary celebration, which will come in the next 40 years.

HV - What is the theme for the anniversary?

VG- The theme of the anniversary is Communion and Mission in the Journey of Faith

HV- What influenced the choice of the theme?

VG- The theme of the 60th Anniversary was largely influenced by the Pope's call for a Synod on Synodality in the Universal Church with the hope of making the Church more Synodal. As a response to this invitation, we in

HV-

VG-

common mission to be of service to one another and to the world.

Please May you give us a brief History of Ikot Ekpene Diocese

The missionaries came to evangelise us from Ireland, and thus our Diocese was created on the first of March 1963, few years before the civil war. We had about five



Ikot Ekpene Diocese held our second Diocesan Synod on the theme: Communion and Mission in the Journey of Faith. The intended goal was to undertake a careful self evaluation with the aid of the Holy Spirit in order to discover more fruitful way to promote communion within the Diocese as we journey together with a

(5) indigenous priests. May they rest in peace! During the civil war, all was scattered, and our enthusiasm was dampened a little, but not killed! So, we came together after the war to continue the mission of Christ. Since then, the Diocese has produced three (3) Bishops who have shepherded the diocese, and an Auxiliary Bishop (Late), who later became the Bishop of

Idah Diocese. We also have a religious who is currently the Auxilliary Bishop of Abuja. Now we have many male and female Religious Congregations working in the diocese and about two hundred and ninety-three (293) priests, including the religious. We now have priests on Fidei Donum (Missionaries) to other places. We are there to evangelize as we were evangelized. We also have chaplains in the Army, and all these are signs that God is at work in His church.

HV- Kindly walk us through the program of the Anniversary

VG- We are opportunely to have our Second Diocesan Synod within the context of the Anniversary. We also have an inclusive and fruitful program involving the Youths, CMON, CWON and Priests. And to ensure we carry everyone along, we visited some of the villages around our parishes, celebrated Masses with them, had interactive sessions with the village heads, and prayed with the people, we equally shared our giftedness with the less privileged around. This reaching out to the people has always been a sign of good collaboration between the church and the laity of the diocese, as well as with the communities in which we live.

We sensitized the people on their civic rights and responsibilities towards the state, and had a fruitful communal labour (clearing the road, fixing the port hole etc) and we hope to continue in this regard, even after the anniversary. It is worthy to note that the essence of the

celebration is more of pastoral than social.

HV- What is the role of the Priests, Religious and the Laity in the Anniversary?

VG- Priests are at the forefront in the pastoral Ministry, and so play an important role in the catechizing of the Catholic faithful and administering of the sacrament. Fully aware of the fact that many people are ignorant of the faith they profess, priests, through intensive catechesis help to enlighten Catholics on the rudiments of the faith. The Religious collaborate with the priests to achieve the aforementioned, and to take the gospel to the people. In their various apostolates, they are signs of God's presence among our people as they variously strive to spread God's love to all people. So these were intensified within this period of the anniversary, and we hope to see more people well-grounded in their faith. The Laity also collaborate with the priests and religious by making themselves available, and creating a favourable environment for the gospel to thrive. They serve as the eyes, hands and legs of the church in their different localities. Since they (Laity) are in the secular sphere, they have a unique apostolate of sanctifying the world in which they live. As such, in their houses, communities, work places etc, they bear witness to the faith by the example of their lives. Special thanks to our chief shepherd, Bishop Camillus Umoh, whose fatherly role has always been a unifying factor between the priests, religious and laity.

HV- Any anniversary project

in mind to commemorate the anniversary

VG- Since the essence of the anniversary is more of pastoral than social, we plan to expand the faith of the people through creation of more stations and parishes, so that we take the gospel of Christ closer to His people. This is much more than any structural edifice. To have a retrospection of what God has done for us and how we can reciprocate in Love.

HV- Can you help us understand how the climax will be, in terms of date and venue

VG- The Venue for the climax will be at the Cathedral, and will take place towards the end of the year 2023. Though no definite date has been fixed. Considering all that God has done for us as a diocese, it's going to be a joyous one. We will gather as a family to celebrate.

HV- Your final message to the people of the diocese

VG- God has been with us and the Holy Spirit who began this work in the diocese after the war, is still at work among us. As we celebrate this 60th Anniversary, we are invited to no just preach communion but to live it out whether a Priest, Religious or Lay. We are also called to handle with care the deposit of Faith handed down to us by the early Missionaries. More so, we need to work harder to transmit what has been entrusted to us to other generations, so that God's work will continue to thrive.

HV- Thank you very much father for your time. We wish you a fruitful and a successful anniversary celebration.

IKOT EKPENE DIOCESE COVOKED THE SECOND DIOCESAN SYNOD -HOPES FOR GREATER ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

By Rev Fr Stephen Udo

A synod is an ecclesiastical council, usually convened to decide on issue of doctrine, administration or application. It is both an event and a process where clergy, religious and the laity gather to discuss important matters of the faith. Synods are transformative events that lead to renewal in the Church's life. Indeed a Synod is an ecclesiastical gathering with the goal of discerning what the Holy Spirit is asking of the Church at the time and for the future.

Since its creation on 1st March, 1963 with late Dominic Cardinal Ekandem as her first Bishop, the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene has had one Synod. That first Synod was held in 2003 with the Theme: Reconciliation and Renewal of Service and convoked by the then Bishop, Most Reverend Camillus Etokudoh. That synod was an opportunity to reflect on the welfare of the entire worshiping community while recognizing the place of the Sacraments in the life of the faithful of Ikot Ekpene Diocese.

In his Prolegomena to the First Diocesan Synod, Udoekpo (2023) noted that the first Synod

of the Diocese was an opportunity to "acknowledge our failures as well as assess our achievements, aspirations, potentials, and vision for a better future...a soul searching experience" as well as "unite and reconcile our thinking with that of the Church". It was the opportunity to "encourage one another, promote healthy

synod which began on 30th April ended on 6th May, 2023. It is the firm conviction of the Bishop that this Second Diocesan Synod be "indeed an occasion to evaluate our journey so far while investing for a better future of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene". In the words of the Diocesan Bishop, "We have many issues that we



relationship and reflect on the welfare of the entire worshiping community while recognizing the place of the Sacraments in the life of the faithful of Ikot Ekpene Diocese (Lineamenta for the Second Synod Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, 3-4).

Twenty years after the first synod, and in his thirteenth year as the Bishop of Ikot Ekpene, Most Reverend Camillus Umoh saw the need to convolve a second synod this 60th year of the existence of the Diocese with the theme: Communion and Mission in the Journey of Faith. This

need to sit and discuss, listen and discern as a Diocese (That they may have Life, 39; Lineamenta, iii). Bishop Umoh in his forward to the Lineamenta also noted that the Second Diocesan Synod "is indeed an occasion to evaluate our journey so far while investing for a better future of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene" (Lineamenta iii)..

The principal aim of a Diocesan Synod is to aid the Bishop to adjust the rules and regulations of the Catholic Church to local conditions, indicate the way and manner of

The people themselves often appreciate the faith which lies behind our service of them, MMCMW

apostolic work in the diocese, solve difficulties connected with the apostolate and management, as well as correct mistakes in terms of doctrine and customs, if such occur in the diocese. A synod gives also the opportunity to perform holy actions that contribute the most to the strengthening of faith, piety and apostolic zeal or a new beginning in the entire diocese.” (Congregation for Bishops, Directory Ecclesiae mago, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1973, 163)

The Lineamenta for the Second Synod Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene was published in January, 2023. With that publication, the stage was set for the study and discussion of the catechetical topics as well as respond to the Questionnaires at the end of every Chapter. The input from the different organizations, parishes, religious groups, clergy etc. in the form of responses to the questionnaires were an expression of active engagement and participation of the faithful of the Diocese in the Synodal process. They expressed the desire of the faithful “to sit and discuss, listen and discern as a Diocese”. The topics treated in the Lineamenta were indeed very catechetical, directional and mind opening for the faithful.

With the conclusion of the study of the Lineamenta, and responses submitted, the Preparatory Committee was now saddled with the responsibility of collating, analyzing and compiling these responses and therefrom produce the Instrumentum Laboris of the Synod. This document which

was published in March, 2023, was distributed to the prospective delegates of the Synod in the different Parishes/organizations during the month of April.

After a Synod occurs, the Church emerges different and is changed. The celebration of a Synod is meant to mark the beginning of a new phase in the Church. For this reason, the Bishop in his homily at the opening of the Synod noted that the synod affords the opportunity “to reflect together the possibilities and the challenges facing our Diocese and the possibilities open to us and the way forward”. He called on the synod members 'to open minded and sincere and generous .generous in the sense of being responsible for the present church and the church of the Future”

It is hoped that the fruits of the synod will be felt beyond the Catholic world as it is geared to creating generational bridge of the consciousness of the Catholic Faith and its practices. It shall foster continuity in the delivery of the works of faith and charity in the Church and to the entire society at large. It is expected that it brings renewal of faith and new vigor in the life of the Church.

Delegates to the Synod was drawn from all the Parishes, organizations, different diocesan establishments and the religious communities within the Diocese in accordance with the canonical provisions of the convocation and membership of the Synod. It was the responsibility of these delegates to recognize that they are voices of the different organizations

and Parishes as well as the religious bodies they represent. In this representational capacity, they bring in the thoughts and desires of the faithful for a diocese that will be seen to united under one shepherd to carry out the mission to evangelize even as we embark together in this journey of faith.

We acknowledge that although the “Catholic faith in Ikot Ekpene Diocese, after Sixty years has witnessed a remarkable growth...there are still certain areas that need to be improved upon.” This is therefore the very foundational reason for the convocation of the Second Synod: the growth of faith and evangelization in the Diocese. Hence the theme: Communion and Mission in the Journey of Faith. Thus, the Bishop in his keynote address noted that this synod “will have a way of opening the eyes of the Bishop to see what the people are actually looking for and to help him to take decisions affecting the diocese”

Synod manifests and actualizes ecclesial communion in a diocese. It builds up and fosters unity. It is expected that it brings renewal of faith and new vigor in the life of the Church. As the synodal session ends, and as we anticipate the Acta of the Synod, it is our firm hope that the synod brings about positive transformation in the Church and empowers the faithful of the Diocese to greater evangelization.

NIGERIA Goes CASHLESS

It was on the 26th of October 2022, that the Governor of the central bank of Nigeria, Godwin Emefiele, announced that new naira notes will be introduced to replace the 200, 500 and 1,000 naira notes. The redesign was effected on the 15th of December 2022. And consequently, the old notes seized to be a legal tender, with effect from the 31st of January 2023. A lot of concern was raised with regards to the adverse effect of the policy. Tension was rife, considering the fact that Nigeria, though a homogenous entity, has a lot of people in the suburb (rural areas without effective banking system).

People believed effective sensitization and awareness was not properly done to address burning issues, and so the policy was perceived as improperly planned and executed. The central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) had limited the amount of cash withdrawal by individuals and corporate bodies for effective cash management.

The deposit of naira to the commercial banks has also led to the scarcity of naira, since there was limited access to the

new naira notes, and the banking industry apparently, seemed not to be transparent enough. Nigerians had to resort to buying Naira, like other foreign currencies.

Again the exercise coming at the time of the general election was criticized by many as politically motivated by a section of the political class. In some rural areas, people were not even aware that there was going to be currency change, while majority of those in rural areas had no banks or POS to benefit them. The senate had urged the central bank to extend the withdrawal date of the old currency to June 30th 2023, so as to curb the long queue in the banking hall across the nation, as a result of people trying to get access to the new Naira notes.

Many reasons have been propagated for the redesign of the currency;

1. To address the issue of currency hoard i.e. those who have amassed and stored the Naira notes.
2. To curb the rate of inflation, considering the fact that inflation skyrockets during election and provides room for votes buying.
3. To checkmate the growing kidnapping and ransom industry (Insecurity of life and property)
4. To control the amount of money in circulation, and in the long run, mop up currency outside the banking system, thus ensuring reliable data on money supply.

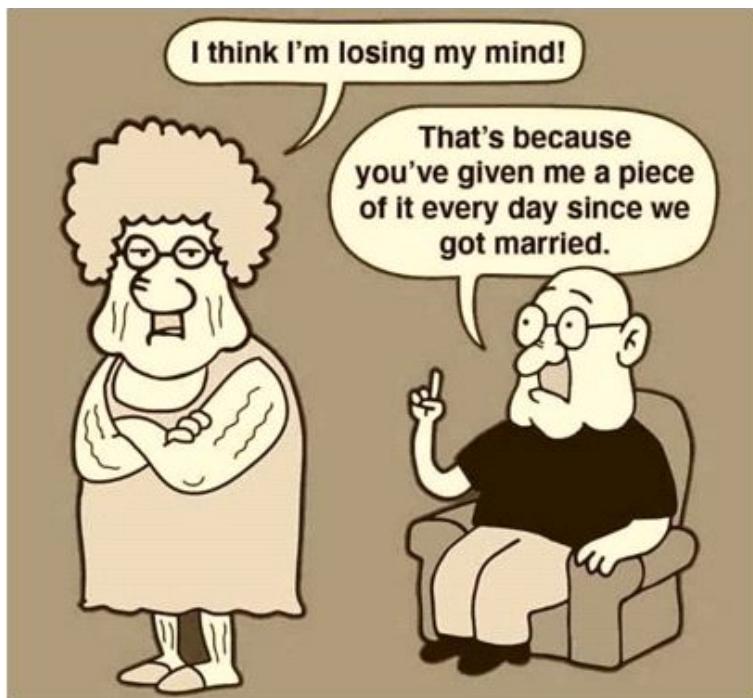
So far, the policy has ushered in or rather increased the use on electronic banking, which has further expanded the number of participant in the financial system, widen transaction channel and financial access points. We are encouraged to endure all the inconveniences because, in the Long run, the cashless policy is intended to further sustain the achievements of the payments system (safe, credible and efficient) that will be the envy of all and the pride of Nigeria.

Lastly, the joy of seeing cash, which was really a scarce commodity at the time made traders reduce prices of goods for cash payment; a subtle way of curbing inflation.

**SR RUFINAC. ONWUMELU,
HHCJ**

I cannot take back the consecration I have made of myself to the missions, MMCMW

LAUGH! LAUGH!! LAUGH!!!



Three fathers are talking about their sons. The first father says "my son is a successful doctor he just bought his best friend a Lamborghini" The second father said, my son is a successful hedge fund manager, he is so rich, he just bought his friend a yacht. The third father says, my son is the CEO of a big company, he is rich, he bought his best friend a castle. Right then the fourth father walk in and ask what they were talking about, the other three says we are talking about our sons, what does your son do? The fourth father says, well my son is gay stripper." The other fathers say "oh you must be really disappointed." The fourth father replies, "well not really, he's doing well. His boyfriends just bought him a Lamborghini, Yacht and a Castle.



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