

CHURCH OF NIGERIA
(Anglican Communion)

DIOCESE OF OWERRI

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Delivered By

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President, Men's Ministries (ACFF & AAMA)

AT THE

6TH BIENNIAL DIOCESAN AAMA CONFERENCE

Holding At

ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH, UZII, OWERRI
UZII ARCHDEACONRY

ON SATURDAY, 25TH JUNE, 2022

THEME:

WATCH AND PRAY – A Universal Call For All Men To
Accomplish God's Work (Matt 26:40-41).

INTRODUCTION

In the year of our Lord Two Thousand and twenty, we had our 5th Diocesan All Anglican Men's Association (AAMA) Conference held at St. Michael & All Angels Anglican Church, New Owerri, New Owerri North Archdeaconry from 18th – 21st July, 2020 with the theme "I Planted . . ." Biblical Reflection of St. Paul the Great Church Planter (1 Cor. 3:6). Since after the Conference, we have demonstrated a keen interest and advancement of Christ's kingdom that we can work together, plant, nurture and grow together. We thank God for God's Kingdom expansion in the See of Owerri.

AAMA Conference is here again, a biennial conference for ALL MEN. What a vision! Men are gathering from all parts of our Diocese and beyond to this Church, planted in car garage that has grown to become the Archdeaconry Headquarters of Uzii Archdeaconry. Praise the Lord! So many men of God and children of God have jointly planted and watered this Church and we are reaping its fruits because the foundation is strong and the structure well built and the Lord is making it to grow. To God be the glory. By the grace of God from yesterday, 24th to tomorrow, 26th June, 2022, we shall be discussing the spiritual and physical growth of our homes/families, Church and society, with the theme: **Watch and Pray – Universal call for all men to accomplish God's work.** Matt 26:40-41).

WELCOME AND APPRECIATION

We salute all men throughout our Diocese and in particular delegates to this all important conference. This year has recorded a lot of gruesome killing, high level of kidnapping and high rate of insecurity and religious intolerance in our God-given nation.

We have come to seek the face of God through Jesus Christ in this conference with His prophetic theme **Watch and pray**. We need to pray but first we need to watch so that we can direct our prayer in accordance to the happenings around us, according to our needs and to ask appropriate forgiveness from God. We need to watch and pray as soldiers of Christ.

We welcome in our midst, our father in God, brother and mission partner, all the way from Kaduna State, the Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Ikara, the Rt. Rev'd Yusuf Ishaya Janfalan. We welcome you Sir to Eastern Heartland, the centre of Christianity in Igbo land.

We appreciate our Venerable Archdeacons and our respected priests and our evangelists for always allowing God to use them in piloting the affairs of His Church. We thank God for Sir Baldwin Onozie, our Diocesan Lay Coordinator, the Diocesan Executive of our Men's Ministries, Archdeaconries, Parishes and Stations Coordinators together with their team.

We thank Ven. Dr. Obinna Oke and his wife, Mrs. Chinwe Oke and the good people of St. James Uzii and Uzii Archdeaconry. You have prepared the place very well for the hosting of this conference. We welcome our Chancellor, Hon. Justice Lady Evelyn Anyadike, the Registrar and Clerk, Sir Chukwuma Ekomaru (SAN) and other learned Legal Officers of our Diocese. Our prayer is always on you.

Finally, we thank all those who continue to plant at the same time watch and pray thereby fulfilling that which is required of us as Christians.

You are all welcome!

THE HISTORY OF ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH UZII, OWERRI

The church St. James Metamorphosed from Christ Church Owerri due to the out-reach to form the Children Ministry (ACM) in centres at Mbaise Road, Old Ogbosis, Oyima Street, Lobo Street and Amaram Street.

The ACM group rather than stayed at the various centres proposed, were moved into Uzii Mission Compound because there were some Anglican families leaving at Uzii Mission Compound, then namely: Mr. Felix Ibe (Late), Mr. Iroka (late), Mr. Albert Irechukwu, Mr. Goddy Ebimnamaonye, Mr. Chukwuemeka Oti, they started a church service at Uzii. To caution the ACM Service which have kicked off, However, Mr. G.U. Ezeigwe (Late) a relation of late Ven. J C I. Oparaocha who came on transfer and was accommodated by Rev. Canon J.C. Oparacha (then), joined them at Uzii Mission worship.

The First Sunday School Teachers were; Mrs. Joy Ibe (now Mrs. Nwachukwu), Sis. Joy Ebonirie and Bro Lasbrey Alozie. They were conductors and preachers for children service, consequent upon the increase in number of the worshippers, Revd Josiah Alozie (late) who was a priest in Christ Church but resident at Uzii wrote the Archdeacon at Christ Church Owerri, then Ven. Silas Aaron requesting for more experienced teachers to take charge of the Children's Ministry. The request necessitated Bro. Udo Onumaegbulam (Late), Bro Maxwell Ohuakanwa and others to be assigned to be worshipping at Uzii ACM Service, on 28th March 1992 was their first service to take over the running of the children services from the pioneer teachers who then assisted them. The Ministry was then addressed as the "SHEPHERD CHURCH". Mr. Felix Ibe (Late) was appointed as the treasurer of the Shepherd Church by Revd Josiah Alozie (late), the first children harvest was held on 11th October, 1992 with some adult members who had joined the church. The Revd. Alozie was handling the church affairs, though in Christ Church until when the Revd. Edward C. Osuegbu (Now Bishop) was posted officially to Uzii as the first substantive resident priest. He started the full adult service on 3rd April, 1994 with twenty members in attendance at the car garage. His administration was more of a family affair and that led to the church motto:

"THE CHURCH THAT CARES". As the church grew in numerical strength: through Evangelism, Prayers, goodwill, encouragement by the priest, the priest saw the need for an expansion to accommodate the worshippers, so canopy served as better alternative. This gave the church another name, "CATHEDRAL UNDER CANOPY".

The priest celebrated the First Holy Communion to communicants numbering sixty-three. As a result of the increase in attendance in subsequent church services, the priest saw the need to conduct/elect the first PCC. Bro. Isaac Emeghara (Now Venerable) was appointed as the pastor's warden by the priest while Bro. Udo Onumaegbulam (Late) became the people's warden. Other members were : Sis. Glory Ofurum – Secretary, Mr. Felix Ibe – Treasurer, Mr. Chukwuemeka Oti – Financial Secretary, Bro Moses Mbagwu, Lady Sussan Onyirioha, Mrs. Doris Tasie (Late), Bro. Martin Uzoma, Mrs. Charity Kalu, Mr. Godfrey. U. Ezeigwe (late), Bro George Uzoagba. The priest appointed Bro. Marshall Nwafor (now Venerable) as the church sexton.

The Priest Rev. E.C. Osuegbu (Now Bishop) group the congregation into two families namely; St. Peter's led by Nze E.C. Opara and St. Mark's led by Bro. Isaac Onyeje. With further increase in the number of the congregation, additional families emerged namely: St. John's, St. Andrew's, St. Paul's, St. Stephen's and St. Philips. It is pertinent to know that there are other arms of the church formed then which include: the women's ministry led by the priests wife Mrs. Chinenye Osuegbu (now Mama Okigwe). Because of the nature of her work, she needed an assistant and Lady Sussan Onyirioha was chosen as the woman leader to help her. The Anglican Youth Fellowship

(AYF) formed in 1994 was ably led by Bro. Emeka Nwagerue, the EFAC group was led by Bro. Moses Mbagwu (Now Church Teacher), the Boys and Girls Brigade created in 1995 were co-ordinated by Bro. Chinenyeze Tasie and Sis Joy Ibe (now Mrs. Nwachukwu) respectively, the girls guild was co-ordinated by Sis. Chinyere Anyanwu (now Mrs. Chinyere Onuoha).

It is apt to note that our mother Church, Christ Church Owerri laid the foundation of the church building up to DPC level, we are very grateful, the foundation stone of that building was laid by the Archbishop of Province II and Bishop of Owerri Diocese, His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Benjamin C. Nwankiti of the blessed memory on 24th July, 1994 with Rev. Edward C. Osuegbu (now Bishop) as the Priest in charge. The Bishop named the church "St. James" after the brother of Jesus.

To carry on with the building project, building committee was inaugurated with Mr. Basil Onyirioha (Late) as the Chairman and Mr. Davidson Duru as the Assistant Chairman. Other members include: Mr. D.D. Durunna (Abuona 23, Late), Mr. Olewunne – Treasurer, Mr. Isaac Onyeje, Mr. Martin Uzoma, Mr. Onyekachi Atomunonye (late), Mr. Goddy Onyejiuba, Arc B.U. Chimara (Late) and Lady Comfort Ezeigwe. They were charged to device means of raising fund for the on-going project. The means they devised included: "Nye Aka Ruu" that stands till date, appeal cards donation and fund raising.

By the posting of Rev. Austin Ugbo (now Venerable) in 1997, he faced the church building and awarded the contract of the building in agreement with the PCC to ZOMAS Construction Company on 15th November, 1998 and work progressed. The first new members into the women Guild were inducted into the women's ministry and the wife, Mrs. Ogechi Ugbo was among them. The priest formed the fathers association and named it "BROTHERS OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE" in 1997 with Bro. Kingson Nwogu as the first leader. Other arms he formed the same year include "THE PROGRESSIVE" and the "CHOIR" led by Mr. Benneth Okere (Late) with Mr. Rufus Onyirioha as the first Organist.

In 1998, Rev. Emma Maduwuike (now Bishop) was posted to the church, he continued with the church building. His charisma drew a lot of people to the church and that led to the expansion of canopies. He completed the initial building of the church and led the congregation into the church building through marching and dancing with song "Oh when the saints, go marching in..." "His church services manifested lots of praises, testimonies and prophecies. He was a man of songs and a visiting priest to his parishioners. He approved the establishment of the nursery and primary schools of the church that was brainchild of the women ministry. The school was managed by the following women: the priest wife- Mrs. Anuri Maduwuike (now mama Ikeduru), Lady Comfort Ezeigwe (Chairman), Mrs. Joy Okere (Secretary), Lady Sussan Onyirioha (Treasurer). Other members include; Dame Uloma Igwe, Mrs. Mabel Njoku, Mrs. Anthonia Uba, and Mrs. Beatrice Ekewuba (late). Mrs. Eunice Onyeje was the first headmistress, while Miss Esther Nwachukwu managed the Day Care Section.

By the year 2000, another priest - Rev. Chukwudum T. Onwuka was posted to St. James Uzii. He initiates the first expansion of the church building. He functioned as a great administrator. He built the parsonage annex where the curate lives.

Part of the school block was built during his tenure, under him, St. James stores were erected together with the hall foundation. He established the first chapel under St. James Church Uzii, St. James Chapel at Emmanuel College Owerri, Bro. Chris Mejuru (now Canon) was charged to handle the chapel. The chapel is what has metamorphosed to Bishop Cyril Okorochoa's Anglican Church at West End, Owerri.

St. James Church Uzii became a Parish and Rev. Dr. Chris Mbah (now Venerable) became the first Parish Priest. The inauguration of the Parish and the induction of the priest was on 8th June, 2002 by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Cyril C. Okorochoa, Ph.D. (Rtd). Rev. Dr. Chris Mbah created the Levites family and provided a register for the priest family. In his magnanimity, he played host to a church member and family who were victims of fire accident that made them lose everything they had. He gave them succor for a period of time.

Rev. Chike Samuelson (now Venerable) who was posted in 2005 saw the need for further expansion of the church, remodeled the entire church building to the height and shape it is now. Kudos to him because he brought Arch. Ephraim Nwanguma who did the design and supervised the construction of the building with little or no charge. The priest and his then curate Rev. Engr. Evans Ndubuisi worked tirelessly and supervised the construction of the iron truss for the roofing. His curate used his expert skill to ensure that trusses were correctly placed.

The Revd. Chike Samuelson still in his tenure was able to execute other projects like, building the parsonage annex II that is housing the non-clerical workers, the reconstruction of the main vicarage called "villa Fide", the gatehouse, the refreshment and the fencing of the church compound. He introduced the offering envelopes of three colours and appointed Bro. Moses Mbagwu as the church Sexton. He increased the number of family groups from seven to twelve and changed the names from saints to the following Goshen, Jubilee, Mt. Zion, New Bethel, New Canaan, New Covenant, New Eden, Sharon, Shekinah and Shiloh.

Rev. Canon Chris Ogbugh assumed office in 2013 in St. James Church, Uzii and worked relentlessly to the colorful stage the church is now. Though there are still remaining some finishing touches. It is worthy of note that the church standing here today had undergone through lots of changes, modifications, restructuring and reconstructions from foundation to become this structure that will stand the test of time by many generations to come. To the glory of God, this edifice was dedicated by the then Bishop, his Lordship, Rt. Rev. Cyril C. Okorochoa, Ph.D. (Rtd) on 8th April, 2018 under the Chairmanship of Mr. Oparaku Udoka. It is pertinent to note that this church building was achieved by people's magnanimity, labour, sacrificial giving, encouragement and commitments. We appreciate the past priests and the congregation. Infact it is God who did all. Rev. Joe Amako stood in the gape for the church after Rev. Canon Chris Ogbugh retired before another Vicar was posted, Rev. Joe Amako was replaced by Rev. John Elekwachi, who was a co-labourer with the Vicar Ven. Echi Nwogu.

Ven. Echi Nwogu layed the foundation for the women ministries kitchen up to DPC level and he gave them task to carry on. He appointed Bro. Ndubuisi Anyanwu as church sexton. The church was named Uzii Missionary Archdeaconry Head Quarters in his tenure by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Chukwuma Chinekezi Opara Ph.D, JP at the Synod of the Diocese at St. Luke's Achi Mbieri in the

year 2019. On the 22nd November, 2020, the Uzii Missionary Archdeaconry was pronounced, Uzii Archdeaconry during the tenure of Venerable Dr. Obinna Oke to the glory of God and growth of Evangelism.

When the vicar was on his retirement leave; Rev. Ikechukwu Onumaegbulam (now Rev. Canon) faced the backlog of the assessment contribution to the Diocese which was reduced.

UZII MISSIONARY ARCHDEACONRY:

The Uzii Parish of Christ Church Archdeaconry was made up of two stations viz St. James Uzii and Bishop Cyril Okorocho Anglican Church, Owerri, was pronounced Uzii Missionary Archdeaconry during the synod at St. Luke's Achi Mbieri, in the year 2019 by the Bishop Rt. Revd. Chukwuma Chinekezi Opara Ph.D, Jp.

In January 12th 2020, Ven. Dr. Obinna Oke was posted to St. James as the first Archdeacon of Uzii Missionary Archdeaconry. He was confronted with backlog of Assessment to the Diocese, abandoned Church Hall Building, dilapidated children place of worship, finishing touch of the main church building, poor band equipment, electricity, local depts. etc. It is worthy of note that this history will not be complete without the mention that our Archdeacon came, saw and ensured that our obligation to our assessment to the Diocese was paid. He started by fencing the vicarage for safety and beauty. With faith he build the church hall grand floor, the electricity problem was solved by the Archdeacon/Vicar Ven. Dr. Obinna Oke by buying the Sound Proof Generator and Gen Set, the Band problem is now a story of the past, we thank God for his visions.

SILVER JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:

The Archdeacon, in his vision and mission style of evangelism, created and executed the celebration of Silver Jubilee of St. James Uzii, which was on record the first Church that celebrated their twenty-five years in such manner, It was at this service, on 22nd November 2020 that the Bishop, Rt. Revd. Chukwuma Chinekezi Oparah, Ph.D, JP. graciously pronounced the Missionary Archdeaconry to a full fledge Archdeaconry. The service was graced by Mama Owerri, Dr. (Mrs.) Chidiebere Opara, Mama Okigwe, Mrs. Chinenye Osuegbu and other dignitaries.

ORDER OF PRIEST/VICAR

S/N	PRIEST/VICAR	YEAR	POSITION
1.	Rev. Josiah Alozie	1992	Priest at Christ's Church
2.	Rev. Edward C. Osuegbu (Now Bishop	1994-1997	Priest
3.	Rev. Austin Ugbo (now Ven)	1997-1998	Priest
4.	Rev. Canon Emma Maduwuike (Now Bishop)	1998-2000	Priest

5.	Rev. Chukwudum T. Onwuka (now Venerable)	2000-2003	Priest
6.	Revd. Dr. Chris Mbah (now Archdeacon)	2003-2005	Vicar
7.	Rev. Canon Chike Samuelson (Now Venerable)	2005-2013	Vicar
8.	Rev. Canon Chris C. Ogbugh (Rtd)	2013-2018	Vicar
9.	Ven Engr. Echi Nwogu (Rtd)	2018-2019	Vicar
10.	Ven. Dr. Obinna Oke (JP)	2020-till date	archdeacon

OTHER PRIEST/EVANGELISTS/CHURCH TEACHER WHO SERVED IN ST. JAMES CHURCH, UZII ARE:

11. Rev. Isaac Emeghara (now Ven)
12. Rev. Kenneth Nwokoro
13. Rev. Evans Amadi (now Venerable Dr.)
14. Rev. Kingsley Njoku (now Rev. Canon)
15. Rev. Raymond Onukwugha (Rtd)
16. Evang. Daberechukwu Onuoha
17. Rev. Onyinyeoma Onyeagocha (now Venerable)
18. Rev. Chinemerem Uche (now Rev. Canon)
19. Rev. Engr. Emma Onyemaobi
20. Rev. Chris Mejuru (now Rev. Canon)
21. Rev. Mike Chinonyerem Obi (now Rev. Canon)
22. Evang. Chukwudi Ihezue (now Venerable)
23. Rev. Engr. Evans Ndubuisi
24. Rev. Dr. Joe Amako
25. Rev. John Elekwachi
26. Rev. Ikechukwu Onumaegbulam (now Rev. Canon)
27. Evang. Christmas Ofuru (CT)

CONCLUSION:

In concluding the history of St. James, we will appreciate the Women Ministries the way they furnished the Personage, the Congregation of St. James Church Uzii and Bishop Cyril Okorochoa Anglican Church. We return all thanks to God Almighty thus far He has led us. The church that started in a car garage now having a baby Church and her Silver Jubilee (25th years Anniversary) into what is now a big edifice to the glory of God. We pray that God will continue to see us through to tackle other projects, to the glory of God.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF RT. REV. YUSUF ISHAYA JANFALAN LORD BISHOP, ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF IKARA

The then **Mr.** and now **Rt. Rev. Yusuf Ishaya Janfalan** was born on the **6th September, 1968** at **Gidan Shawai na Buta of Janfalan in Ikara Local Government Area, Kaduna State.**

He attended his Primary Education from the year 1974 - 1980 at L. E. A. Primary School Janfalan. He sat for his GCE/WASC Examination in June, 1985 at the then Government Day now Government Secondary School Ikara. After staying home for a year without admission to enable him further his studies he decided to learn hand trade. Fortunately to Yusuf, he gained admission into Business Apprenticeship Training Center (B.A.T.C.) Ikara from **June 1986 – June 1989** where he learned Bricklaying and Masonry with a monthly allowance of eighty (N80. 00k) Naira only. Yusuf was one of the best students in his field as he successfully passed his Labor Trade Test and all the Subjects he sat for.

Bishop Janfalan is a graduate of:

- i. St. Francis of Assisi Theological College Wusasa-Zaria in the year June, 1998.
- ii. Theological College of Northern Nigeria Bukuru in May, 2015 with a second class upper.
- iii. Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta as a Master of Theology (Old Testament) in June, 2016.
- iv. Hold Master of Art (Old Testament) from Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo in the year
- v. He is currently a PhD Student at Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, Abeokuta.
- vi. Bishop Janfalan attended numerous courses and Seminars that space and time will not allowed us to mention.

EMPLOYMENT.

In 1991, he gained employment with Ikara Food Processing Company Ltd. Before he received and accepted a call from God to join the pastoral ministry in 1992. Bishop Janfalan is currently a part-time Lecturer in St. Francis of Assisi Theological College Wusasa-Zaria.

HIS CALLING TO THE PASTORAL MINISTRY.

The Lord decided to single him out from his extended Family and the Company work to serve Him in pastoral ministry in the year 1992 where he served as an Evangelist. Made Deacon on the 28th June, 1998 at St. Luke's Church Malumfashi in the Diocese of Katsina by His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. James Shekari Kwasu (of blessed memory) and the same Bishop, Ordained him Priest at the Cathedral Church of St. John G. R. A. Katsina the following year, 1999. Janfalan served in many Parishes of the Diocese, he served as Katsina Diocesan Clergy forum Secretary, Katsina Diocesan Synod Clerical Secretary, Katsina Diocesan Missioner and has been the Boys and Girls Brigades Chaplain from 1999 to Christmas eve of 2009 when he was folding away for his pre-consecration retreat. In fact, many Bishops knew him then, as a Brigade Boy. He was preferred Statutory Canon of the Cathedral Church of St. John Katsina on the 4th September, 2008 by the present Bishop of Katsina Diocese, the Rt. Rev. Jonathan Sani Bamaiyi, fortunately, the Lord chose him in November, 2008 and was elected Bishop for the Missionary Diocese of Ikara. Consecrated on the 10th January, 2009. Yusuf was duly Enthroned as the first Bishop of Ikara Missionary Diocese on the 16th January, 2009. He served as Kaduna Provincial Episcopal Secretary under Archbishop Edmund E. Akanya..

MARRITAL LIFE.

The then Mr. now Bishop Yusuf Ishaya Janfalan is married to Mrs. Hauwa Yusuf on the **7th January, 1988** and are blessed with **Sadiq (Melchizedek), Precious Tani and Peace Jummai .**

This Bishop will always say that number **8** is a unique number in the history of his life, ***born in 1968, married 1988, made Deacon 1998, preferred statutory Canon 2008 and elected Bishop in this Church 2008. Praise the living God!***

NEWS WITHIN THE DIOCESE

2021 ACCF CONFERENCE

The 12th Diocesan ACFF Conference was held at Ebenezer Anglican Church, Ekwereazu Ogwa, Ibeama Ogwa Archdeaconry from Thursday, 24th to Sunday, 27th June, 2021 with the Most Rev Marcus Amfani Ibrahim, Archbishop of Jos Province and Bishop of Yola Diocese as our Guest Speaker. Special features during the Conference was Dedication of Dental department equipped with the state-of-art modern equipment by Dr Bennett Iheanocho in memory of their late father Pa Dennis Ihenacho on Friday 25th June, 2021, the foundation-stone-laying of the Diocesan Retreat Centre - Ebenezer Camp of Prayer & Retreat Centre ("*Obi Ekpere Ebenezer*") was done on Friday, 25th June, 2021 and most importantly the delivery of presidential Address by the President and the Diocesan Rt Rev Chukwuma Chinekezi Oparah, PhD, JP. To God be the glory.

FATHERS' DAY CELEBRATION 2022

The Fathers' Day 2022 was celebrated on Sunday 19th June, 2022 throughout our churches in the Diocese. It was an avenue for new members to be inducted as Anglican Christian Fathers. The celebration brought restoration and rededication among fathers in our churches as many of our churches had revival programmes within the week.

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER FOR RETIRED PRIESTS & CHURCH WORKERS AND WIVES

The retired Church Workers and wives Christmas get-together was held on Sunday 16th January 2022 at the Cathedral of Transfiguration of Our Lord (CATOL), Owerri. We thank God for it was another day of refreshing in God's presence for all our retired Priests and other church workers and their wives. We bless the Lord for an opportunity to gather His generals(people) who have once laboured in His vineyard and retired. We thank their Chaplains, Rev. Canon Chima Iwuchukwu and Rev Canon Chidubem Dabrinze for their labour of love.

DIOCESAN ELDERS PRAYER FORUM

The Elders Prayer Forum of our Diocese had their Annual Thanksgiving on Wednesday 26th January, 2022. They had their Christmas get-together with the Bishop and Mama Owerri on Sunday 16th January 2022 at the Cathedral of Transfiguration of Our Lord (CATOL), Owerri. We thank God for their lives and prayers for the Diocese.

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER FOR CLERGY AND WIVES

This was held at St Peter's Church Irete on Friday, 17th December, 2021. We thank God for that grace of fellowshiping together and time of refreshing in God's presence.

RETREATS IN THE DIOCESE

We thank God for His enablement as we continue to carry out our mission of Kingdom Expansion in the area of training and re-training of the church workers for effective ministry; and as such the following clergy and wives retreats as well as church teachers and wives were held:

1. Diocesan Clergy and Wives Retreat at St James Church, Uzii with the Theme: The Role of the Presence of God in the Effective Ministry of the Pastor, his wife and the congregation from

17th – 20th January, 2022. The retreatant was the Rt. Rev. Jezreel Vandah, Lord Bishop of Zaki Biam Diocese.

2. Diocesan Church Teachers & Ordinands and their wives retreat at St. James Church, Uzii from 25th – 27th February, 2022 with the Theme: “The Role of the Presence of God in the effective ministry of the Church teacher, Ordinands, his wife, and the congregation. The retreatant was Ven. Barr. Festus Opara, Ph.D, Archdeacon of Ikenegbu Archdeaconry.
3. Prayer/Retreat on insecurity in our nation – the challenges and solution was held for the priest and their wives on the 21st June, 2022 at St. Mark’s the Evangelist Chapel, Bishop’s Court, Owerri.

PROPOSED COLLEGE OF NURSING SCIENCES, OGWA

This project was handed over to the Women’s Ministries of our Diocese to execute. We are happy for the work already going on the site. The proposed College of Nursing Sciences building/complex as at today work is going on for the second decking. Please join us as we continue to pray for our Women’s Ministries. The foundation laying of the Ogwa College of Nursing Sciences building will be on Sunday, 28th August, 2022 by 11am. Please your presence is highly needed. All fathers are invited.

OGWA (MISSION) GENERAL HOSPITAL OGWA

We thank God that Ogwa (Mission) General Hospital is meeting the needs of the patients. We are praying for more support for the hospital. The maternity building is currently being renovated by Ogwa Community Association, United Kingdom and Ireland. We pray that our God will continue to keep them safe and provide for them to be able to accomplish the project in Jesus name, Amen. We thank Abazu Medical Outreach in partnership with CBN AFRICA and in loving memory of Mr. & Mrs. Bennaiah Ezeoha on their free medical outreach in collaboration with Ogwa (Mission) General Hospital held from 24th – 29th January, 2022. We request prayerfully that individuals/groups will assist in any way the Lord is leading them.

ST. LUKE’S HOSPITAL, UZII MISSION COMPOUND, MBAISE ROAD, OWERRI

St. Luke’s Hospital, Uzii Mission Compound, Mbaise Road Owerri is also doing well. It also meeting the needs of the patients.

We thank God for the staff of both hospitals. May God continue to empower them for the task ahead in Jesus name, Amen.

NEW DIOCESAN SECRETARIAT

The new Diocesan Secretariat is a two-storey building that will house so many Diocesan offices. It has reached its second decking stage awaiting to be decked. We pray that our good God will send labourers for this task ahead as we call for more supports towards this project.

ST. MARK’S THE EVANGELIST CHAPEL, BISHOP’S COURT OWERRI NEW BUILDING

The new chapel building was dedicated on 10th April, 2022 (Palm Sunday) to the glory of God. St. Mark’s the Evangelist Chapel meets every Wednesday from 8am to 10 am for Healing Service, Holy Communion, fellowship and counselling. Please join us every Wednesday morning as we fellowship together in the beauty of His holiness. We thank all God’s people and our churches who made themselves available for this noble work. May God bless you all.

EBENEZER CAMP OF PRAYER & RETREAT CENTRE (OBI EKPERE EBENEZER), OGWA

This is modelled to give a befitting Retreat Centre of all classes of people and race. Ebenezer Anglican Church, Ekwereazu Ogwa opens the venue for the Camp. We commend the Diocesan

Men's Ministries for undertaken to pioneer the initial bungalow in this Retreat Centre. On Saturday 11th June, 2022, the second building took off with the foundation stone laid as one of our sons who pledged to remain anonymous for now undertake to handle the project together with his wife and children. We pray that our God of grace and providence will continue to provide for them as they undertake this project in Jesus name, Amen.

We equally request some good spirited individuals, families, congregation, groups/associations, etc who are touched and are led to sow seed to God Almighty by building a hostel, hall, bishop's apartment or any specific building in the Retreat Centre; as it can be used to immortalise a dear one and the building will be dedicated to God as a memorial to such a person or family. God bless you as you sow in God's vineyard.

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF OWERRI CLERGY ESTATE

We want to thank God for this vision of acquiring a large expanse of land for the Clergy of this Diocese known as Anglican Clergy Estate where our clergy will retire to with each having his own house after retirement so as not to be abandoned after retirement. Today this vision has been accomplished as about 206 plots of land has been acquired at Amakohia-Ubi, Owerri West for this project with 50 plots out of that dedicated for other Diocesan Projects. We thank God for the grace and also pray for as many that will want to queue into this project to please do as perimeter fencing is important in securing the land, which needs to be done. The allocation of the plots to individual clergy will soon be done as the parcellation has been completed. We commend the efforts of the Clergy Estate Land Acquisition Committee ably led by Ven Dr. James Onyekwelibé, Ven. Onyinyeoma Onyeagocha, Ven. Barr. Festus Oparah, Ph.D, and the entire team. May God bless them abundantly, Amen.

BISHOP'S FOUNDATION FOR MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the already existing mission projects, the foundation has instituted scholarship scheme at secondary school level preferably for orphans and half orphans, who will be trained in our Diocesan mission schools. Presently we have more than 36 less-privileged persons who are being trained in our Diocesan Mission Secondary Schools. Please we solicit your support on this project through the **Bishop's Foundation for Mission and Development; Account No: 4090849092; Polaris Bank.**

DONATIONS/SUPPORTS

We want to acknowledge the following donations/supports:

- (1) Sir & Lady Nnamdi Iroegbu (UDU) are currently renovating the ADJS dormitory.
- (2) An anonymous donated Eight Hundred Thousand Naira (N800,000.00) for eight widows at St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Amankuta Mbieri. Each of them received One Hundred Thousand Naira (N100,000.00).
- (3) Bishop and Mama Owerri under the Bishop's Foundation for Mission and Development gave business men and women including farmers of Holy Trinity Church, Ifakala the sum of Three Hundred and Forty Thousand naira (N340,000.00). Fourteen business men and women received N20,000 each while 6 farmers received N10,000 each.
- (4) Anglican Church of the Redeemer, Toronto Uratta received from the Bishop and Mama Owerri two trips of sand, 50 bags of cement, one power generating set and N20,000 - personal gift from Mama Owerri.
- (5) An anonymous donated a parcel of land and promised to build the Church at Irete Missionary Archdeaconry; and the building is now at the lintel level.

- (6) Bishop Lasbrey Girls' Secondary School, Irete Old Girls (1995 Set) sunk a borehole in the school as donation to the school.
- (7) Diocesan Women's Ministries through the President of the Women's Ministries, Dr (Mrs) Chidiebere Oparah (Mama Owerri), donated another set of bands, megaphones and plastic chairs to some churches/chapels in addition to over 10 set of bands, 10 megaphones, and plastic chairs earlier donated. The following churches/chapels that benefited now are: (i) St. Paul's Chapel Ubomiri (ii) St. James Church, Okwu Ogbaku (iii) Good news Anglican Church, Owerre Nkalu, Nwaorieubi Parish (iv) St. Paul's Chapel, Umunkwo Extension Umuguma (v) St. Paul's Chapel Umunwanyi, Umuguma

DIOCESAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Our 2021 Christmas Cantata was held on Sunday, 5th December, 2021 at CATOL by 2.00pm with different choirs drawn across our Diocese. The Easter Cantata was held on Sunday, 24th April, 2022. It was all glorious by the grace of God. Our Diocesan Music Council is doing a great work. They equally organised a Diocesan Music Retreat.

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF OWERRI POWER-PACKED ANOINTED CONVENTION (ADOWPAC)

This convention is a Diocesan Yearly Revival Programme, which comes up every last weekend in November. It was a great gathering of people of God in this Diocese at CATOL, Owerri. The 2021 edition was held from Wednesday 24th to Sunday, 28th November, 2021 with the theme **Harvest is plentiful, Labourers are few** with Rt Rev Ephraim Ikeakor, Lord Bishop of Amichi Diocese and Rt Rev Godfrey Ekenisi, Lord Bishop of Ika Diocese as Guest Speakers.

This year's ADOWPAC convention will hold from Wednesday 23rd to Sunday 27th November, 2022 at CATOL Owerri. May God bless you as you come in Jesus' name, Amen.

TRAIN-A-PASTOR (TAP)

As part of our **mission** for Kingdom Expansion, training and retraining of priests are paramount to us. This is to ensure that our priests have a sound theological education. In line with that, Trinity Theological College, Umuahia has a Study Centre in this Diocese, located at Basilica of God's Grace Anglican Church, Orodo.

We are happy to announce that forty-nine (49) persons (priests and ordinands) graduated from Trinity College Umuahia from our Study Centre on Friday 3rd June 2022. Their wives were sent on one week workshop at Trinity College Umuahia from Sunday 29th May to Friday 3rd July, 2022. Our Diocese is currently sponsoring Rev. Etim Mkpa, a priest from Uyo Diocese in Theological Training. He is on our Diocesan Scholarship for Bachelor's Degree in Theology. He will be with us during the period of his study which will last for three years among others. Please if you are led to train a priest let us know. Some of our Church Teachers will be admitted for study into Trinity Theological College, Owerri Study Centre. Those successful will be admitted in July, 2022.

DIOCESAN SYNOD

The 1st Session of the 22nd Synod of this Diocese was held at St. Peter's Church, Ikenegbu, Ikenegbu Archdeaconry from Thursday 30th September to Sunday 3rd October, 2021 with the theme: **Encouragement: An Inevitable Tool in Kingdom Expansion – The life and work of Biblical Barnabas** (Acts 4:32-34). The synod was presided over by the President of the Synod

and the Diocesan, Rt. Rev. Chukwuma Chinekezi Oparah, Ph.D, JP. The Guest Preacher and Bible Study Facilitator was Rt. Rev. Stanley David Fube, Lord Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Langtang. We thank God for the success of the Synod.

This year's 2022 Synod comes up from Thursday 29th September to Sunday 2nd October, 2022 at St. Peter's Church, Irete with the Theme "**Discipleship: The Basis for Christian Growth and Societal Transformation**" Matt. 28:19-20. We request your presence on Saturday, 1st October during the delivering of the Presidential Address.

ORDINATION/PREFERMENT 30/12/2021 - **ORDINATIONS**

Advent Diaconate Ordination

1. Rev. Prince Ugochukwu Okii
2. Rev. Sampson Chinedu Ekezie
3. Rev. Patrick Ozoemenam Eze

Advent Priestly Ordination

1. Rev. Chibuzor Sunday Ezeanyika
2. Rev. Prospect Nnamdi Okereke
3. Rev. Benjamin Chisom Ugorji

10/04/2022- COLLATION OF ARCHDEACONS & INSTALLATION OF CANONS

Installed Canons:

1. Rev. Canon Joseph Nnamdi Onyekuru, Ph.D
2. Rev. Canon Ikenna Chidi Achuko, M.Sc.
3. Rev. Canon Chima Chigozie Iwuchukwu, B.A.
4. Rev. Canon Michael Chinonyerem Obi, B.Th
5. Rev. Canon Ikechukwu Nwabueze Onumaegbulam, B.Sc.
6. Rev. Canon Anthony Meremikwu Okebaram, NCE
7. Rev. Canon Oliver Chukwudi Amajuoyi, NCE
8. Rev. Canon Engr. Chidubem Basil Dabrinze, B.Eng.
9. Rev. Canon Joseph N. O. Igbo, M.A
10. Rev. Canon Christian Akuwudike Oparaojiaku, B.Sc.

Collated Archdeacons

1. Ven. Gideon Iheanacho, M.A
2. Ven. Basil Ubochiegbu, B.Sc.
3. Ven. Christopher Ndukuba Mba, Ph.D
4. Ven. Benjamin Nwandikom, M.Sc.
5. Ven. Obed Ikechukwu Nosiri, B. A.
6. Ven. Uneze Rowland Ukaegbu, B.A.

PARISH INAUGURATION/INDUCTION OF PARISH PRIEST

29/08/2021 -Inauguration of Amakohia-Ubi Parish with the Headquarters at St. Matthias Church, Amakohia-ubi and the induction of Rev. Johnson OdiwonmaEgbujor as the Vicar.

24/04/2022 -Induction of Rev. Canon Ernest Mbah as the Vicar of Orji Parish

01/05/2022 -Induction of Rev. Canon Donald Awujo as the Vicar of Amaulu Parish
12/06/2022 -Induction of Rev. Gabriel O. C. Ekekwe as the Vicar of St. Paul's Parish,
UmuezeOgwa

ARCHDEACONRY INAUGURATION

12/09/2021 -Inauguration of Akwakuma Archdeaconry with the Headquarter at St. Luke's Church, Akwakuma. Ven. Benjamin Nwaneri was inducted as the first Archdeacon.

27/02/2022 -Inauguration of Uratta Central Archdeaconry with the Headquarters at Holy Trinity Church, Uratta. Ven. Dr. Evans Amadi was inducted as the First Archdeacon.

CREATION OF MISSIONARY ARCHDEACONRIES

On the 30th December, 2021 at the occasion of the Dedication of Basilica of God's Grace, Orodo Central Rectory Church building, the following Missionary Archdeaconries were created:

1. Ohii Missionary Archdeaconry
2. Amaike Mbieri East Missionary Archdeaconry
3. Ubomiri Missionary Archdeaconry
4. Awo Mbieri Missionary Archdeaconry
5. Archbishop Benjamin Nwankiti Missionary Archdeaconry
6. Amaulu Mbieri Missionary Archdeaconry
7. St. Cyprian's Rectory

Orji and Ogbaku Administrative Area were upgraded to Missionary Archdeaconries.

Also new Administrators and Rector were appointed. The are:

- (1) Rev. Canon Kingsley Njoku
- (2) Rev. Canon Donald Awujo
- (3) Rev. Canon Timothy Ashama, Ph.D
- (4) Rev. Canon Chinemerem Uche
- (5) Rev. Canon Christopher Mejuru
- (6) Rev. Canon Ernest Mbah
- (7) Rev. Sam Duru
- (8) Rev. Chima Nworie, Ph.D.

PLANTING OF NEW CHURCHES/CHAPELS FROM 19TH NOVEMBER 2018 AFTER OUR ENTHRONEMENT AS BISHOP OF OWERRI – 25TH JUNE, 2022

1. 23/12/18 - King of Kings Anglican Church, Ogbaku
2. 23/12/18 - Our Saviour Anglican Church, Ogbaku
3. 23/12/18 - Anglican Church of Advent, Ogbaku
4. 27/01/19 - St. John's the Evangelist Chapel, Christian Kingdom Egbeada
5. 19/02/19 - All Saints Church Chapel, Orji
6. 03/03/19 - St. John's Church Ekeihitte, AmauluMbieri
7. 10/03/19 - St. Augustine's Church Ofeogbara, AmaukwuOrodo
8. 10/03/19 - St. Michael & All Angels Chapel, Imo Housing Estate, New Owerri
9. 07/04/19 -Triumphant Anglican Church Umunwanlolrete
10. 26/05/19 - Good Shepherd Anglican Church Akwakuma
11. 28/07/19 - St. Peter's Church Chapel, Okwuelelrete

12. 05/08/19 - St. Mark's Church Chapel, UmudurudomUmunoha
13. 11/08/19 - Bishop George Cockin Anglican Church, Wetheral Road, Owerri
14. 08/09/19 - New Generation Anglican Church, Knights Secretariat, Owerri
15. 08/09/19 - Holy Trinity Anglican Church Chapel, ObazuMbieri
16. 08/09/19 - St. Peter's Church Chapel Umuohialrete
17. 08/09/19 - St. Peter's Church Chapel Technical School Umueyelrete
18. 08/09/19 - St. Augustine's Anglican Chapel, AmaukwuOrodo
19. 08/09/19 - Christ Church Chapel Umocha-Ubomiri
20. 08/09/19 - GoodnewsAnglican Church,Owerre-NkaluNworieubi
21. 08/09/19 - Christ Church Chapel Umuchilewelfakala
22. 08/09/19 - Anglican Church Chapel UmunjamMbieri
23. 28/09/19 - New Life in Christ Church, Military ZoneUmuelelelrete
24. 13/10/19 - Archbishop Benjamin Nwankiti Anglican Chapel, Onitsha Road, Owerri
25. 10/11/19 - True Vine Anglican Church Egbeada
26. 08/12/19 - St. Michael & All Angels Chapel, UmuebingaUmunwekeAmaulMbieri
27. 15/12/19 - Holy Trinity Chapel, Oburo, Ifakala
28. 09/02/20 - St. Paul's Chapel, New-Cross Hospital, Road Orji
29. 26/02/20 - St. Silas Church Chapel, AmawireUratta
30. 22/03/20 - Victory Anglican Church AbohaOhii
31. 22/03/20 - Bread of Heaven Anglican Church, Igwe/Obi Ohii
32. 22/03/20 - St. Bartholomew's Anglican Church, EshimeshiOhii
33. 12/04/20 - St. Peter's Chapel, Igweocha, AlaenyiOgwa
34. 10/05/20 - Emmanuel Church Chapel Area L. New Owerri
35. 31/05/20 - Anglican Church of the Pentecost Area Old D. New Owerri
36. 31/05/20 - St. Titus Church Chapel UmuobaUratta
37. 31/05/20 - Holy Trinity Church Chapel ObazuMbieri
38. 31/05/20 - Holy Trinity Church Chapel ObazuMbieri (Umuchoke)
39. 31/05/20 - Ascension Anglican Church UmunekeMbieri
40. 31/05/20 - All Saints Church Chapel Amudam, AwoMbieri
41. 31/05/20 - All Saints Church Chapel UmuduegwAwoMbieri
42. 31/05/20 - All Saints Church Chapel UmuochaAwoMbieri
43. 31/05/20 - Christ Church Chapel ObilubiMbieri
44. 31/05/20 - St. Michael & All Angels Anglican Church Chapel UmueremOfekata, Orodo
45. 20/09/20 - Nazareth Anglican Chapel ObiakaboOhohia
46. 20/09/20 -Beautiful Gate Anglican Church ObeokuOrodo
47. 14/02/21 - Anglican Chapel DimorjiObokweMbieri
48. 14/02/21 - Anglican Chapel Umudu
49. 31/01/21 - St. Philip's Chapel Choice Area OhiiOrogwe Road
50. 31/01/21 - St. Augustine's Chapel UmueleAmaukwuOrodo
51. 31/01/21 - St. Michael & All Angels Chapel Umueze&UmuomaOrodo
52. 31/01/21 - All Saints Church Chapel UmuaguUmuguma
53. 31/01/21 - All Saints Church Chapel Diamond Estate, Umuguma
54. 31/01/21 - All Saints Church Chapel UmunkwoUmuguma
55. 14/02/21 - Christ Church Chapel UmuduruMbieri
56. 21/02/21 - St. Mark's Church Chapel Uba Orogwe
57. 23/02/21 - St. Mark's Church Chapel UmunumoOrogwe
58. 28/02/21 - St. John's Church Chapel Okuku
59. 21/03/21 - St. John's Church Chapel UmuezuNdegwu
60. 21/03/21 - St. Thomas Chapel, Obabo, EziamObiato
61. 04/04/21 - St. Matthias Church Chapel UmuikeAmakohia Ubi

62. 11/04/21 - St. Paul's Chapel Umunaa/Umuabali Layout, Ubomiri
63. 08/08/21 - Anglican Church of the Redeemer, Umuori, Uratta
64. 22/08/21 - Emmanuel Church Chapel, Umuehintavu
65. 29/08/21 - St. Peter's Church Chapel, Umekwunelrete
66. 05/12/21 - Maranatha Anglican Church, EziomeMbieri
67. 19/12/21 - St. Titus Chapel, Umuokirika, Toronto Uratta
68. 13/02/22 - St. Andrew's Chapel, Amaeke, AlaenyiOgwa
69. 06/02/22 - St. Paul's Chapel, Ara, Umuguma
70. 06/02/22 - St. Paul's Chapel Umunkwo Extension Umuguma
71. 20/02/22 - All Saints Chapel UmuomeUmuguma
72. 27/02/22 - All Saints Chapel Akanuwu Estate Umuguma
73. 24/04/22 - St. Stephen's Chapel Orji (Orji Secondary School)
74. 17/04/22 - St. Paul's Chapel, Duruoji, OburoUmuezeOgwa
75. 01/05/22 - St. Paul's Chapel, Central Ubomiri
76. 01/05/22 - Christ Church Chapel AmaorjiOforola
77. 25/05/22 - Archbishop Benjamin Nwankiti Chapel, Egbeada (Orlu Road)

A total number of seventy-seven (77) churches were planted since our episcopacy in November, 2018. We thank God for all our priests and their wives, evangelists/wives, individuals and collective participations in Church planting. You are doing well. Congratulations!. Please, let us do more.

FOUNDATION STONE-LAYING

- 21/07/2021 -Transfiguration International Christian Academy, CATOL, Owerri
- 25/01/2021 -Emmanuel Church Hall, IhitaohaUratta
- 25/06/2021 -Ebenezer Camp of Prayer & Retreat Centre (Obi Ekpere Ebenezer), Ogwa
- 08/08/2021 -St. Michael's Church building Obinze
- 29/08/2021 -St. Mathias Church Parsonage Amakohia-Ubi
- 19/12/2021 -Goodnews Anglican Church, Owerre-Nkalu Church building
- 09/01/2022 -Emmanuel Church, Oforola Church building
- 09/01/2022 - Christ Church Oforola Church Hall
- 30/01/2022 -Anglican Church of the Pentecost Church building, Owalla, Uratta
- 30/01/2022 -Anglican Church of the Pentecost Parsonage building, Owalla, Uratta
- 27/02/2022 -Anglican Church of the Redeemer churchbuilding, Toronto, Uratta
- 13/03/2022 -Anglican Church of the Pentecost building, Old Area D, New Owerri
- 03/04/2022 -St. Michael's Church Stores, AmauluMbieri
- 20/03/2022 -Emmanuel Church Parsonage, EziomeMbieri
- 20/03/2022 -Maranatha Anglican Church building, EziomeMbieri
- 05/06/2022 -St. John's Church, New Owerri School building
- 11/06/2022 - Second 12-Room Bungalow Lodge at Ebenezer Camp of Prayer (*Obi-Ekpere Ebenezer*), Ogwa

DEDICATION OF PROJECTS: The following projects were dedicated during the periods under review.

- 30/12/21 -Basilica of God's Grace Anglican Church building, Orodio Central Rectory.
- 09/01/22 -Christ Church Parsonage, Oforola
- 10/04/22 -St. Mark's the Evangelist New Chapel building, Bishop's Court, Owerri
- 24/04/22 -St. Stephen'sUltra-Modern Church building, Orji
- 01/05/22 -St. Michael's Ultra-Modern Church building, AmauluMbieri

27/02/22 - Holy Trinity Ultra-Modern Church building, Uratta (built by Chief & Lolo John Madu)
 27/02/22 - St Michael & All Angels Parsonage building.

CONFIRMATION: We visited these Parishes for Confirmation to the glory of God. Our joy is that through the grace of God, these confirmed candidates accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour. Praise God. We pray for their sustenance and growth day by day in Jesus name, Amen. We commend the efforts of the Episcopal Pastoral team led by the Bishop's Senior Chaplain, Rev Canon Jonah Nwebo. They are as follow:

S/N	DATE	PARISH/AREA/ARCHDEACONRY	NUMBER
1	28/07/2021	Uratta Parish	100
2	15/08/2021	Owerri Parish	134
3	22/08/2021	AmaukwuOrodo Parish	44
4	12/09/2021	Akwakuma Parish	55
5	26/09/2021	Ikenegbu Parish	90
6.	26/12/2021	Amankuta Parish	21
7.	09/01/2022	Oforola Parish	34
8.	23/01/2022	Umuoba Parish	58
9.	01/05/2022	Amaulu Parish	57
10.	22/05/2022	AlaenyiOgwa Parish	48
11.	05/06/2022	New Owerri Parish	134
12.	12/06/2022	Orogwe Parish	70
		Total	845

ARMS OF THE CHURCH

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

The Women's Ministries by God's grace are doing well. The women's two-storey building for College of Nursing Sciences, Ogwa second decking work is going on now. We pray that our God will touch men and women of this Diocese and beyond to be veritable instruments in actualising this project. We commend the efforts of Mama Owerri – Dr (Mrs.) Chidiebere C. Oparah, the Women Executive and the entire women of the Diocese. May God continue to use them in Jesus name, Amen. Our Women's General Conference this year will hold from Thursday 17th to Sunday 20th November, 2022 at St Paul's Church, Ubaha Orodo.

MEN'S MINISTRIES/ACFF CONFERENCE 2021: The 12th Diocesan ACFF Conference was held at Ebenezer Anglican Church, Ekwereazu Ogwa, Ibeama Ogwa Archdeaconry from Thursday, 24th to Sunday, 27th June, 2021 with the Theme "The Beautiful Gate Experience: The Expectation of Every Christian Father" (Acts 3). It was a great Conference of revival and we thank God for the success of the Conference. The Men are currently handling the first 12-room bungalow at Ebenezer Camp of Prayer & Retreat Centre, Ekwereazu Ogwa whose foundation stone was laid on Friday 25th June, 2021.

COUNCILS OF KNIGHTS

The Council is doing well under the leadership of Sir Chinweuba Amachi as the President, Sir Henry Ogojiaku as Vice President I, Sir Emma Nnawuchi as Vice President II, Sir Godswill Nwanguma as Secretary and Lady Phina Onyekuru as the Lady President. The Council's Annual Trooping of Colours was held from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th February 2022 with the theme "**Take**

up your cross and follow me” Mt 16:24. They have been on with their Business meetings. Their annual harvest will be on 11th September, 2022.

The Knights are currently embarking on the Church building project for New Generation Church located inside the Knights Secretariat whose Foundation stone and naming was done on Sunday, September 13, 2020 by the Lord Bishop, Rt Rev Chukwuma Chinekezi Oparah, PhD, JP. The Lady Auxiliary has commenced work on their Mega Hall project. We commend the efforts of our Knights and Ladies and pray for God’s providence and grace upon them.

EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION (EFAC)

Our Diocesan EFAC is doing well and even at station level as well. The EFAC National convention held from 16th to 22nd August, 2021 at Ajayi Crowder University Oyo State with the theme **“Empowered to manifest” Act 1:8** was attended by our EFAC members. The Diocesan EFAC/Owerri Sub-Zonal Convention was held at St Andrew’s Aladinma from 26th April to 1st May, 2022 with the theme **“Empowered to Manifest”**. The EFAC National Convention will be from 15th to 21st August, 2022 at Paul University, Awka, Anambra State with the theme **“The Kingdom Mandate”**

ANGLICAN YOUTH FELLOWSHIP (AYF)

The Diocesan Anglican Youth Fellowship Conference was held from Wednesday, 28th July to Sunday, 1st August, 2021 with the theme **“Go Forward”** (Exodus 14:15) at St. Paul’s Anglican Church, Ubaha Oredo. The Conference was successful to the glory of God. The **Joshua Generation Youth Conference** organized by Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) was held at the University of Nigeria Nsukka from 5th to 10th April, 2021. The Church of Nigeria AYF National Bible Conference was held at Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Diocese of Ohaji/Egbema from Wednesday, 11th to Sunday, 15th August, 2021 with the theme **“Go forward”** (Exodus 14:15). Our youth attended in their great number. The second edition of Joshua Generation International Conference was held at Moshood Abiola Stadium Abuja with the theme **Be strong and Courageous” Jos 1:9** from Monday 18th to Friday 22nd April, 2022 and our youth attended in their good number and the trip was sponsored by the Diocesan. We thank God for the success of the conference and the hitch-free journey granted to them. We congratulate our dear Primate, Most Rev Henry Ndukuba on these worthwhile innovations. The Diocesan AYF conference for 2022 will hold at St Mark’s Anglican Church, Amakohia from 28th to 31st July, 2022 with the theme **“Be strong and Courageous” Jos 1:9.**

ANGLICAN CHILDREN MINISTRY (ACM)

Our ACM from the Diocesan level to station levels are doing well. Great thanks to our ACM chaplains and teachers. ACM Conference this year was held from Wednesday 4th to Saturday, 7th August, 2021 at St. Mark’s Church, Amakohia. They also participated in the National ACM Conference held at Ika Grammar School, Boji-Boji, Owa, Diocese of Ika, Delta State from 2nd – 5th September 2021 with the theme **“Obedience is better than Sacrifice”** 1 Sam 15:22. This year’s Diocesan ACM conference will hold in August at Christ Church Owerri. The National Conference will hold at Faith Plaza, Bariga Lagos State from Thursday 1st to Sunday 4th September, 2022 with the theme **“ Be strong and of good Courage” Jos 1:9, 1Tim 4:12.**

CELEBRATIONS AND JOYS

To the Glory of God, we received numerous mercies and blessings from God as some of us were healed from illnesses, some were promoted, some married, some got appointments, some had babies. Below are some that we were able to capture:

- 11/08/2021 -We thank God for the release of of Dr. (Mrs) Ojiugo Akakuru, wife of Ven. Chukwuma Akakuru (Rtd) and their daughter from kidnappers.
- 11/09/2021 -Golden Jubilee Wedding Anniversary of Sir & Lady Sunny Nwosu.
- 18/04/2022 -Wedding of Mr. Chinedu & Mr Obianuju Iwuanyanwu (Son of Engr. Sir Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu)

OUR SORROWS

The following joined the Saints Triumphant:

- 09/07/2021 -Burial of Most Rev. Caleb A. Maduoma at St. Stephen's Church, Awalla, Ideato Diocese.
- 12/06/2021 -Burial of Rt. Rev. Dr. Augustine A. Omole, Bishop of Sokoto Diocese
- 27/08/2021 -Burial of Hon. Justice Sir Duke Njiribeako (former Chancellor of Diocese of Owerri) at CATOL, Owerri.
- 10/09/2021 -Burial of Mrs. Eucharika Mba Onyeji at St. Paul's Ubakuru Mbieri
- 17/09/2021 -Burial of Ven. Chris Okeke at Diocese on the Niger.
- 24/09/2021 -Burial of Mrs. Peace Nwakama (Mother-in-law to Rev. Bright Emeribe).
- 28/09/2021 -Burial of Mrs. Vidah Iwuoha (mother of Rev. Gospel Iwuoha) at Nazareth Church, Ohohia Mbieri
- 7/10/2021 - Burial of Mrs Dorathy Nwanyannwu, wife of Rev Canon Boniface Nwanyanwu (Rtd) at Christ Church Umuahii.
- 8/10/2021 - Burial of Chief Godwin Egbuchulem at St Michael's Church, Amaulu Mbieri.
- 22/10/2021 - Burial of Ada Zion Ijeoma Ahunam, mother in-law of Ven Onyinyeoma Onyeagocha at St James Church Umueze 1, Isi Mbano Diocese.
- 22/10/21 - Burial of Sir Ben Ekedebe at St Paul's Cathedral Ezeoke-Nsu, Okigwe South Diocese.
- 22/10/21 - Burial of Mrs Justina Osuagwu, mother in-law to Rev Canon Ben Nwandikom at Emmauel Church Agbaja, Orlu Diocese.
- 19/10/21 - Burial of Lady Catherine Onyeme, elder sister to Rev Nneji Anuka, at St. Philip's Church, Ohii.
- 18/11/2021 - Burial of Sir Martin Ononuju at St James Church, Ochii Ogwa.
- 02/12/2021 -Burial of Rev. Ferdinand U.J. Osunwa at Cathedral Church of Christ, Ezihe, Isi Mbano Diocese.
- 08/12/2021 -Burial of Sir Godwin Ohanaka at St. Luke's Church Achi Mbieri
- 09/12/2021 -Burial of Lady Ezinne Theresa Emerole wife of Sir Raymond Emerole at Christ Church, Owerri
- 28/12/2021 -Burial of Mrs. Adline Ikpemo, wife of Ven. Shedrack Ikpemo (Rtd) at Mbaise Diocese.
- 07/01/2022 -Burial of Mrs. Cecilia Iheanacho, wife of Ven. Bathram Ihenacho (Rtd) at Ebenezer Anglican Church, Ekwereazu Ogwa.
- 26/01/2022 - Burial of Sir Lambert Oyoyo Nosiri at Holy Trinity Church, Obazu Mbieri.
- 28/01/2022 - Burial of Rt. Rev. Prof. A. O. Iwuagwu at St. Stephen's Church, Umunkwo, Isi-Mbano Diocese.
- 04/03/2022 - Burial of Lady Esther Ngozi Onozie (Dame Victoria Akanwa's brother's wife)
- 04/03/2022 - Burial of Late Ezinne Mercy Aaron (mother -inlaw to Rt Rev Emmanuel Maduwike, PhD) at St Peter's Church Umuoziri Inyishi, Ikeduru Diocese
- 22/03/2022 - Burial of Mrs. Sussanah Eregwo Uzoho at All Saints Church, Abazu Ogwa.
- 18/03/2022 - Burial of Dame Nnennaya Maduagwu (mother of Sir & Lady Emeka Maduagwu) at Umunneochi, Abia State.
- 30/03/2022 - Burial of Lady Bridget Ogwudire at St. John's Church, Umuomumu, Mbieri
- 29/04/2022 - Burial of Lady Patience Ehirim

06/05/2022 - Burial of Mrs. Nkechinyere Anyasodo (mother of Rev. Chisomaga Anyansodo) Holy Trinity Church Nekede, Egbu Diocese
20/05/2022 - Burial of Rev. Samuel Samuel Chukwumaeze Okoroafor at Christ Church, Izombe, Diocese on the Lake.
27/05/2022 -Burial of Ezinne Dorathy Opara at St. Luke's Church, Achi Mbieri
03/06/2022 -Burial of Ezinne Esther Ihuoma Nwanjo, mother of Barr. Osita Nwanjo at St. Mark's Church, Idem Ogwa.

We commiserate with all these families and others that lost their dear ones. May they rest in peace and rise in glory, Amen.

NEWS FROM OWERRI ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE

Mission And Strategic Workshop on Mission Catalyst

The Province organised a Strategic Workshop on Mission and Evangelism with the theme "Preparing the Church and her workforce for the 21st Century Mission". Forty-five persons attended from the Diocese of which all groups/departments were represented.

Thereafter, this same workshop was organised in our Diocese. It also produced mission oriented results and capacity for mission. We thank Ven. Paul Nwozuzu, the Director for Mission and Development and his team for organising this programme to the grass root. We thank God for the success.

Owerri Provincial Council Meeting

The Diocese of Egbu hosted the Provincial Episcopal Synod and Council meeting from 14th – 15th September, 2021 with the theme "The Power of Praise in a time like this" 2 Chro 20:20-23.

Also, the Diocese of Ideato hosted the Episcopal and Council meetings on the 16th and 17th March, 2022 with the theme "The Presence of God" Exo 33:14. We thank God for our participation in all these meetings.

Imo Prays Rally

The Province had a one-day Prayer Rally on November 19, 2021 at Admiral Ndubuisi Kanu Square, Owerri. It was a huge success. We thank our priests for great mobilisation of God's people in our Diocese. This year's rally will be on Friday, 18th November, 2022 at the same venue. We appreciate our Archbishop, The Most Rev. Dr. David Onuoha for anchoring the programme and the planning committee led by Rt. Rev. Chidi Oparaojiaku for work well done.

NEWS FROM CHURCH OF NIGERIA

Christian Men's Fellowship

The leadership of the National Steering Committee of the Christian Men's Fellowship is headed by Rear Admiral Segun Adebari (Rtd). He is the National Chairman from Abuja Province. The interest of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) is to have this Men's Fellowship at the National Church. The formation is new. We pray that it will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Divine Commonwealth Conference (DIVCCON)

DIVCCON is an annual conference of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). Last year's conference was held from 16th to 20th November, 2021 at Christian Centre, Abuja. The theme was

“We are more than Conqueror”. Our Diocese was well represented. This year’s DIVCCON will be from Monday, 7th to Friday, 11th November, 2022.

St. Mathias, Advent And GAFCON Collections

These are special Church collections meant for our National Church, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). Please whenever your priests/evangelists call on you do well to comply and support these funds. The fund is purely for evangelism, helping some Missionary Dioceses and development of our National Church projects.

Retirement

The following Bishops and Archbishops retired from administrative Episcopal position within the period under review:

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| (1) | Rt. Rev. Samuel Sowale | - | Diocese of Ilesa |
| (2) | Rt. Rev. Justus Mogekeku | - | Diocese of Asaba |
| (3) | Rt. Rev. David Bello | - | Diocese of Oturkpo |
| (4) | Rt. Rev. Ralph Ebirien | - | Diocese of Niger Delta |
| (5) | Rt. Rev. Fredrick Orogbemi | - | Diocese of Ilaje |
| (6) | Rt. Rev. Segun Okebadejo | - | Diocese of Ibadan North |
| (7) | Rt. Rev. Christopher Omotunde | - | Diocese of Ekiti |
| (8) | Rt. Rev. S.K. Eze | - | Diocese of Ukwa |

We wish them well in their retirement.

Election And Consecration of New Bishops

The following Bishops were elected, consecrated and enthroned within the the period under our review.

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| (1) | Rt. Rev. Prof. Nneoyi Egbe | - | Diocese of Calabar |
| (2) | Rt. Rev. Victor Okporu | - | Diocese of Western Izon |
| (3) | Rt. Rev. Kingsley Obugh | - | Diocese of Asaba |
| (4) | Rt. Rev. Ishaya Baba | - | Diocese of Zaria |
| (5) | Rt. Rev. Randi Wonoke | - | Diocese of Bari |

May God bless their episcopacy in Jesus name, Amen.

Translation

- | | |
|-----|--|
| (1) | Rt. Rev. Manasses Okere of the Diocese of Isiukwuato/Umuneochi was translated to the Diocese of Ukwa |
| (2) | Rt. Rev. Prof. Dapo Asaju was translated to the Diocese of Ilesa. |

STATE OF THE NATION

Nigeria has not recovered from her sickness of which we as a Church have been watching and praying for her recovery. The ailment is so severe, every part of hers is affected and each day she experiences a new symptom of a different ailment, in addition to the already existing ones.

The root cause of Nigeria's problem is bordered on leadership, both present and past. The truth is that the top political class is recycling themselves for the past 20 years plus and decamping from one political party to the other, which shows that most of the political leaders have no meaningful agenda for this country. Nigeria needs visionary, selfless, fearless, dynamic leaders, who can champion the eradication of ills in this country. The masses are crying. Human life is no longer anything as compare to the lives of animals. People are being slaughtered on daily basis in the name of ritual killings, herdsman, banditry, kidnapping, Boko Harm, insurgencies and the likes.

Fifty passengers on Kaduna – Abuja train attacks are still under captivity including those of schools attacks. God is watching.

Religious intolerance is now on the increase. A two hundred level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto State, Deborah Samuel was just stoned to death for no just course, only for exercising her faith as a Christian and it was mis-constituted as blasphemy. There was equally a similar incidence in Abuja the Federal Capital territory. Please our government must shun this bastard act and put an end to it.

Corruption has taken over this God-given nation. Who can deliver us? The poor and the less-privileged even the average Nigerians are suffering, hence their children and wards cannot grow higher because they cannot pay to get what they want in this country. Excellency is now a thing of past in the country. Money has become the article for trade by barter in our country. People pay for employment, admission into the universities, for ones' files to be carried from one table to the other, for contracts to be awarded, to get overseas visa, for kidnapped victims to be released, to be appointed into federal and state positions, and even to be a party delegate in the just concluded primaries. Which way Nigeria? Where is the fate of the common man in Nigeria? Our health sectors are in shambles as our health personnel – doctors and nurses leave the country daily on mass exodus for a greener pasture. Government should also look into the plight of our medical personnel to ensure they are well catered for in order to retain them in our country for better services to their fatherland.

We equally call on the Federal Government to resolve issues with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) on the lingering strike actions so that our children will go back to school. We want to encourage the federal government to put an end to all these incessant strike actions as it is never to the good of this country and her image outside as well.

As a Christian/Christian leader in this nation, we have observed that the last hope for common man out there is the Church. Most people fill the Church not only because they want to see Jesus Christ but because they are tired, confused and depressed. Even in the Church, there is fear and insecurity as there has been incessant attacks on Churches claiming lives of innocent citizens and worshippers. We condemn in all its entirety the desecration of St Francis Catholic Church Owo, Ondo State where some many of her worshippers were killed and many sustained injuries on a Sunday worship on 5th June 2022. Even on Sunday 19th June we had similar incidence in Kaduna where lives were lost and many injured. We condemn all these attacks on churches and the recent kidnappings targeted on Church Leaders especially the kidnapping of the Methodist Prelate of Nigeria His Eminence Archbishop Samuel Uche, Bishop Dennis O. Mark, Methodist Bishop of Owerri and Rt Rev Aderogba Adeyinka, his wife the Anglican Bishop of Jabba and his driver, as well as numerous others who have suffered the likes, we call on our Government to secure the lives and property of her citizens. It is so disheartening that some people no longer fear God. But know that our God is still God of vengeance; so, let not your hearts be troubled, only believe in God and also believe in Jesus Christ.

The 2023 elections are around the corner. We encourage everybody that is up to 18 years of age to go for his/her permanent Voters Card (PVC) as with that we can vote for the people of our choice. We want to encourage INEC to go completely electronic in the conduct of 2023 election in all the elections processes including vote casting by making use of machines like the ATM's in the banking industry. We believe we can achieve that so that vote buying will be eradicated and also to ensure people's votes count and no rigging will be done as machine will do the entire work. We must commend INEC on the conduct of the Parties' primaries and also the Ekiti State elections.

Dear Fathers, guide your homes, church and families. Let us contribute positively in building our nation/state and we believe that our united efforts will be crowned by God. God loves this, Nation. All we need to do is to repent on behalf of this country, constantly upholding her in our prayers, let us shun evil of any kind; expose every unwholesome act around our environs; trusting God for total deliverance upon our nation and State while we watch and pray for we have a friend who knows all our grieves and pains let us join the hymn writer and sing **CoNH 810 – What a friend we have in Jesus.**

CoNH 810 – What a friend we have in Jesus.

1. What a Friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and grief to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer
O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.
2. Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
3. Are we weak and heavy laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our refuge,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
In His arms He'll take and shield you,
You will find a solace there. Amen.

CONFERENCE THEME

WATCH AND PRAY

A Universal Call For All Men to Accomplish God's Work (Matt. 26:40-41)

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 26:36-46 follows from Jesus and the disciples' discourse into a place called Gethsemane, on the Mount of Olives. Another name for Gethsemane is a place of prayer. Jesus took Peter, James and John aside from the main Apostles, and prayed to God the Father in an indescribable intense anguish. He prayed a sincere wish, but entirely submits to the will of God the father. The disciples cannot stay awake, despite being warned more than once by Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed three times, before pointing out at Judas, 'the betrayal', who was coming with a crowd to arrest him. These events were also recorded by St Mark (Mk14:32-42) and St Luke (Lk 22:39-46).

The Jewish religious leaders (not Christian religious leaders) furthered their plots to arrest and kill Jesus as they found a willing traitor in Judas Iscariot, after a woman anointed Jesus with oil during a dinner at Bethany. Jesus and the disciples had the Passover meal in the upper room where Jesus predicted His arrest and introduced the sacrament of Holy Communion. He prayed in an unimaginable agony in the garden of Gethsemane before being betrayed by Judas and captured. The disciples deserted Him as they scattered. Jesus boldly made a claim to be divine before the high priest. They convicted Him of blasphemy and sentenced Him to death. This followed Peter's denial of knowing Jesus as was predicted by Jesus and he ran away in shame, but later repented. In all these things, Jesus did not sin against God – the Father who sent Him to the world as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. This issue of Peter simply reminds us as Christians that we don't need to trust onself, for the arm of flesh will fail you, but to depend only on God through the enabling of the Holy Spirit day by day. No wonder Jesus Christ reiterated to His disciples to watch and pray so as not to fall into temptation, therefore let's quickly look at the two important key words: watch and pray.

Watch

Watching means sleeplessness. It means to be awake and aware of surrounding realities. In the scriptures, it means to be spiritually alert, having a mind that is renewed by divine realities. A watchful person in our context is guided by the knowledge of God. Such a person abides on the Word of God. He has a very rich knowledge of God through the scripture by the experiential

knowledge of Christ. Apostle Paul rightly states in Colossians 3:16a that the Word of Christ should dwell in us as Christian. This Word enables us to discern even in the midst of danger. A watchful person rejects the wisdom of this world. He knows it is foolishness because it denies the ultimate reality of God, the Author of creation and ruler of all universe. He knows that it denies the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, to watch is simply to be alert in spirit with the consciousness of the outward manifestation that only the will of God concerning every circumstance/situation must be done. In other words, it is knowing the perfect will of God and living it out in our lives as a reflection of the life of Christ.

A watching father is spiritually alert and very aware that sin still dwells in the world. He knows that Jesus Christ defeated Satan by His death on the cross, but he is also conscious that Satan and his agents are still given freedom to rule and tempt all people including believers. That father is aware that Satan the enemy of his soul is constantly prowling about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour every believer. Therefore, fathers should be spiritually prepared and on guard to deal with the evil forces/schemes of devil in this world using God's weapon by putting on all the whole armour of God as in Ephesians 6:10 in order to overcome.

Pray

Pray is to petition or solicit help from a supernatural or higher being. It is to humbly beg a person for aid. It is simply to talk to God from religious point of view. In our context, the supernatural or higher being is our God Almighty. He is higher than the highest and also greater than the greatest; the ultimate being and the creator of the universe. Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, that this, simply how to obtain help or aid from the Father Almighty (Mt 6: 5 -15). Jesus Himself went to pray at Gethsemane when He was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death knowing the impending danger ahead of Him. It was in that occasion that He reprimanded His disciples for not being awake and praying as He said: "could you men not keep watch (tarry) with me for one hour? He then told them to watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation (Mt 26:40-41). This may probably be one of the reasons while Jesus in St Luke's Gospel told His disciples men ought to pray and not faint (not give up) Lk 18:1.

EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 26:40-41

40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping, "could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? He asked Peter.

41 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak”.

As Jesus was with His disciples at Gethsemane, He asked them to stay there and He took specifically Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John) to pray. Jesus began to be sorrowful and troubled and He said to them (Peter and the two sons of Zebedee) “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” Jesus gave Peter and the two sons of Zebedee specific instruction, which is “Stay here and keep watch with me”. The names of the two sons of Zebedee were not mentioned in this passage although we are familiar with the two sons of Zebedee when Jesus called them (Mt 4:21). Jesus went a little farther and prayed a prayer which we believed may have been motivated by the human nature in Him “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me,” (v39a). At this point Jesus has foreseen the ‘cup’ – trouble, suffering, sorrow, the weight of sin He was to bear and being in Human nature had wished the cup be taken away from Him. At this point Jesus was tempted to find if there is an alternative to the cross.

But because He is also alert in Spirit and knowing why His Father sent Him and always ready and willing to do His Father’s will, He quickly opted that it is not His will to be done rather the will of His Father as He expressed “*nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*” (v39b).

This He has earlier stated that His food is to do the will of He who sent Him and to finish His work (Jn 4:34). He also taught His disciples in the Lord’s prayer “Thy will be done” (Mt 6:10b). So, without drinking of the cup, His work will be incomplete – the perfect redemption of mankind. Through this prayer Jesus was strengthened to face death on the cross. This Jesus’ second part of prayer is in line with the words of the Hymn writer:

A & M 356:

Thy way, not mine, O Lord.

However dark it be;

Lead me by thine own hand;

Choose out the path for me

Not mine, not mine, the choice;

In things or great or small;

Be thou my guide, my strength

My wisdom, and my all.

The first time Jesus came back to the three disciples whom He has instructed to keep watch for Him, He could only see them sleeping contrary to His injunction to them and that prompted the exclamation and question posed by Him to the three disciples but with particular mentioning of Peter. Perhaps Peter may have been the eldest among the three or the one who even needed to watch more as He is easily prone to falling into temptation (Jn 21:3- 7; Mt 26 :69 - 74) as it is stated *“What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?”* In the contemporary society, when people are given instructions to carry out some duties, there is every tendency that the leader or the eldest will be asked to give an answer or explanation to what has happened. No wonder the question posed to the three disciples was directed to Peter (v40b). This question: *What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?* Jesus perhaps may not have been expecting an answer (verbal answer) rather for them to self-examine themselves if actually they are keeping watch in line with their Master’s injunction. Jesus could also be gingering the disciples to see the danger ahead of which they can only avert only by keeping watch as He emphasized “could you not even see the danger ahead or even the suffering you are to face after I might have left? The only way you can succeed is only by watching and praying as I have foretold you even before it comes (Jn 16:4, 20, 32-33). Rather than being awake and pray, you are sleeping. Fathers are we sleeping? At this point the disciples were both physically and spiritually asleep, but Jesus was not distracted by their sleeping rather He was focussed and committed to the course of His actions.

In verse 41a, Jesus explicitly told the disciple to watch and pray in order not to fall into temptation as thus: *“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”*

In this verse, Jesus was so emphatic to the disciples that unless the watch and pray, they will definitely fall into temptation. He simply made a clarion call to His disciples by letting them know the implication of watching and praying (v40a). Jesus told them the resultant effect of watch and pray is to not fall into temptation. On the other hand, that statement could be a warning on the negative consequences of not watching and praying.

When Jesus instructed the disciples to watch and pray, He was simply telling them to be spiritually alert (watch) and be connected to God for strength (pray) to be able to withstand all the schemes of the devil even as the devil tempted Jesus (Mt 4: 1-11).

Elliot’s commentary for English Readers says the first word in ‘watch and pray’ is eminently characteristic of our Lord’s teaching at this period (Matt 24:42, Matt 25:13); which became the watchword of the early disciples (1 Corinthians 16:13) “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.” (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Peter 5:8). Pulpit commentary

in interpreting watch and pray sees that as the summary of Christian duty as watchfulness sees temptation coming while prayer gives strength to withstand it. The Apostles needed the injunction at that moment, for their great trial was close at hand even as it is needed by the Christians of today.

Watch and pray go hand in hand. The fact remains that there is no way you can watch without prayer. Watching will help us know the angle to channel our prayers, while prayer connects us or ascend our request to God. People may see watching as to either physical or spiritual. Physical in the case of Peter drawing his sword and trying to fight for Jesus while He was with them. That is simply self-defence. Peter was acting carnally, no wonder he denied Jesus shortly. The question is, are we to use sword, guns etc to defend ourselves in times of invasion or attack? Remember, Jesus told one of His companions "Put your sword back to its place, for all who draw the sword die by the sword (Mt 26: 51-52). Jesus in talking of watching was simply referring to spiritual alertness/vigilance which is metamorphosed in the outwards control of the physical in line with God's will and not physical as the case of Peter drawing out his sword contrary to His Master's will. Let it be known that unless the Lord watches over a city, the watchman watches in vain (Ps 127:1).

Verse 41b states: *"The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

This is an added motive for vigilance and prayer. The spirit is indeed willing – ready, eager or better to do God's will. The Master recognises the element of good intention of the disciples, their readiness to go with Him to prison or to death, in their higher nature. But the spirit and the flesh were contrary to one another (Galatians 5:17), and therefore they could not do the things that they would, without a higher strength than their own. This affirms that you don't depend on your own strength as self must surely fail. No wonder Apostle Paul states thus:

"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal,
sold under sin...for what I will to do, that I do not
practice; but what I hate, that I do."(Rom 7:14 - 15)

According to Matthew Henry, Christ took with him into that part of the garden where he suffered agony, only those disciples who had witnessed His glory on His transfiguration, by implication, supposed to be matured brothers, yet they disappointed Him. This should call to our minds that we are not to trust on our 'self' or human ability, rather we should learn to depend on God alone as without Him we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). Those that were best prepared to suffer with Christ, who have by faith beheld His glory; yet could not yield to the Master's will when needed. In fact, to be secured in this world from fall into temptation and do the Master's will, we should watch and pray,

and continually look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2). Indeed the spirit –God’s spirit or God’s nature in man is always willing/ready to do what God desires should be done, but the flesh - the inner man in man, or human nature in man (carnality) will always act carnally except it is compelled by the Spirit of God - the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17, 26) to yield to the detects of Christ.

A Universal Call for all Men to accomplish God’s Work

Christ was a surety, who undertook to be answerable for our sins. He was made sin for us, and suffered for our sins; the just for the unjust, and scripture ascribes His heaviest sufferings to the hand of God. He had full knowledge of the infinite evil of sin, and of the immense extent of that guilt for which he was to atone; with awful views of the Divine justice and holiness and the punishment deserves by the sins of men, such as no tongue can express, or mind conceive. Yet, Christ suffered being tempted; probably horrible thoughts were suggested by Satan that tended to gloom and every dreadful conclusion; these would be harder to bear from His perfect holiness. We do not need to neglect the great work of salvation (Heb. 1:2, 2:3).

God has given us salvation in Christ Jesus by His death on the cross and Christ has commissioned us to go for the lost sheep so that they will be brought into the sheepfold.

A universal mandate given to all men in St Matthew’s Gospel chapter 28 verses 19 – 20 ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”***

In order to carry out this universal mandate, there is essential ingredient needed to accomplish this task in line with the Master’s will, **which we must heed to**; hence a universal call to watch and pray.

To answer/obey the universal call to watch and pray for all men, one must possess the following attributes:

(1) Be A Christian in Behaviour:

Christians are the people called by God through His Son Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey all His command. They are known to be Christ like in all aspects of life including in behaviour/character. That is while the Scriptures

say that they are the salt of the earth and the light to the world. People see their good work and glorify your father in heaven (Mt 5:14-16). They win others over by their conduct (1 Pet 2:11 -17). They are believers by example (1 Tim 4:12). In our different Church stations and communities, let us be an embodiment of Christian character so that through us others will come to Christ.

God hears their genuine prayers offered according to His will (Jn 15:7, 9:31). St James admonishes us that the effective prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16).

(2) Be Spiritually Minded and Humble in Heart

Be heavenly minded and seek those things that are above (Col 3:1ff). Know that God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). Humble yourself therefore before the Lord and He will exalt you (4:10). For whatever is born of God overcomes the world (1 Pet 5:5-6).

(3) Be a Believer in Prayer

Believers must have faith that God has answered their prayers. James wrote, "But let him ask in faith without doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven out and tossed by the wind. (James 1:6). Christians are enjoined to pray without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17). And to seek God with all our hearts and in faith as God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6b). Remember that contrite and broken heart God will not despise (Ps 51:7). Paul and Silas understood the secret of watching and praying as in Act 16:25-30).

(4) Be Hungry and Thirsty After God's Will

Jesus said "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled (Mt 5:6). The will of God is explicitly expressed in the Word of God. So, we need to hunger for God's word, and appropriate the Word in our lives and this will motivate one to hunger and also thirst for righteousness.

(5) Be Knowledgeable of/in God's Word

We must watch the Word and also pray with the Word. Our prayers must be according to the will of God. The disciples realised this when they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1). John also wrote, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 Jn 5:14). Therefore, in order to pray

according to God's will we must know God's will as you asked and do not receive because you ask amiss (James 4 :3).

(6) **Be Knowledgeable of the Needs of the Church and the need of the time**

You must know the special needs of the church as a whole and as individuals in order to be able to watch and pray for the needs of the church and the times. Watching enables us to identify the needs of the Church in line with the time. And prayer enables us to render our needs to God in accordance with His will.

(7) **Be visionary in Prayer**

It is time that we must pray for the physical things of life. Jesus wrote, "is anyone among you afflicted? Let him pray" (James 5:13). However, keep in mind what Jesus also stated "the harvest is truly plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest so that He will send labourers into the harvest (Matt 9:37-38). Without watching one will be spiritually blind to know there is harvest to ask God of Harvest for labourers.

(8) **Be born again**

The bottom line is that is that you must be born again (Jn 3:7). There is need for a life in Christ, that is being a new creature(2 Cor 5:17) by accepting the salvation in Christ Jesus for the hope of glory to come (Jn 3:16, Col 1:27). Without watching and praying there is no hope of glory as the time will come to one unawares for no one knows the time or the hour of Jesus' return (Mt 24:42).

Implications of the theme

The following are the implications of this theme to individuals, the church, and the society at large:

- 1) We are in the midst of enemy which we may not physically see but exist and looking for who to destroy or devour (1 Pet 5:8)
- (2) The enemy is out to destroy as it has no good intentions for anyone and for the Church (Jn 10: 10).
- (3) We must be careful, vigilant and prayerful so that we do not fall into the trappings or be used by the enemy in order not to be destroyed.
- (4) Our weapons to defeat the enemy are not carnal, rather God's powerful weapons as they are mighty pulling down every strongholds (2 Cor 10:4-5)

- (5) The warfare are not carnal as we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places (Eph 6:12).
- (6) The battle is not ours but it is the Lord's battle as the Lord will fight your battle, while you hold your peace; only let it be known to Him in prayer (Ex 14: 13 – 14, Mk 4: 37-39, Phil 4: 6).
- (7) Do not be afraid of the battle or the wicked as you will only see with your eyes the destruction of the wicked (Ps 91:8, Ps 83, Isa 41:10-16)
- (8) Don't do anything on your own power/strength; always inquire of the Lord as the arm of flesh will fail you (1 Sam 30:8, 2 Chro 32:7-8, 20 -22, Ps 146:3, 147: 10-11).
- (9) The Lord is your strength as you have no power of your own (Jer 17:5-9, Jn 15:5, Ps 28:7-8)
- (10) Only put your trust in the Lord God of Host- the God Almighty who has manifested Himself in Christ Jesus – He is our friend, our burden bearer. Only let it be known to Him in prayer.
- (11) The days are evil therefore be watchful and prayerful in order to overcome the evil days (Eph 6:18)
- (12) The coming of the Lord is near (Mk 13:33, 1 Pet 4:7)
- (13) It exposes us to understand all the schemes/subtleness of the devil Gen 3
- (14) The flesh is indeed weak therefore subdue the flesh and do not fall into temptation (Gal 5:17)
- (15) The times are evil so do not entangle yourself with the things of the world so as to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world(2 Tim 2: 1-13, Mt 5: 13 -16)
- (16) You are God's watchman in all areas of life and to Nigeria as a nation as Ezekiel was to the nation Israel to warn them to turn away from their wicked ways (Ezek 3:17).
- (17) It helps us to be ready for the Master's return (Mt 24:42, 25:13)
- (18) The secret of the victory over sin and devil is to watch and pray (Mt 26: 41, A & M 308).
- (19) It is the power of effective/effectual prayer
- (20) It helps us to be heavenly minded and keeps us far from the distractions of this world; Jesus was not distracted; He was focussed to His goal which was heavenly minded.

Conclusion

Spiritual watching coupled with fervent prayer gives one the strength to survive temptations and difficult situations in this temptatious world. It is an enabler for us not to make wrong choices; our

strength to do what is right and in accordance with our Master's will, and to be awake to righteousness. The times are evil and dreadful; it becomes very imperative that we must watch and pray to overcome the evil days and times. The devils roar like a lion seeking whom to devour. Know ye that the battle is not carnal. But the Lord is our strength as He watches over us and the entire universe.

Dear people of God, watch and pray and don't get weary. Know that time is of essence as life is time. To waste time is to waste life. Let us make wise and godly use of our time while it is still day. Study the Word always, meditate on it and appropriate it to your life and pray with the Word; do not watch the word only like a picture (Jos 1:8). Also know that you are God's watchman over your household, the church and the nation Nigeria, just as Ezekiel was to the nation Israel to warn them to repent of their wicked ways or else suffer dire consequences (Ezek 3:17). Let all fathers be good instruments of God in propagating the gospel of Christ.

Watch and pray therefore for you do not know when the Master of the house is coming. And what I say to you fathers, I say to all, watch and pray!

A & M 308

1. 'Christian, seek not yet repose,'
Hear thy guardian angel say;
'Thou art in the midst of foes:
Watch and pray!"
2. Principalities and powers,
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thine unguarded hours;
Watch and Pray
3. Gird thy heavenly armour on,
Wear it ever night and day;
Ambushed lurks the evil one:
Watch and pray
4. Hear the victors who o'ercame;
Still they mark each warrior's way;
All with one sweet voice exclaim:
"Watch and pray!"
5. Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,
Him thou lovest to obey;
Hide within thy heart his word:
'Watch and Pray!

Abu 226

1. Onye-Kraist, achol'ura,
Nur'olu Onye-zota-i;
I no n'etitind'iro:
"Chenche, kpe".
2. Nd'isinand'ike nan jo
Nachikondi-agma-ha,
Necheremgb'Inoghnanche;
"Chenche, kpe".
3. Kei he-agma-I nk-igwe
Neyiyaogenile;
Ekwensu niche anwu:
"Chenche, kpe".
4. Ge ntiolundi-nmeri;
Ha neleayin'ogu-ayi;
Ha ji otu olusi,
"Chenche, kpe".
5. Nkekasi, nur'oluKraist,
Onye I hurun'anya;
Zobeokwu-Yan'obi-i:
"Chenche, kpe".
6. Che, dikanananiya
Genye I nmerin'ogu-gi:
Kpe, k'ezidat'iy'e'aka:
"Chenche, kpe".

6. Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray, that help may be sent down:
Watch and pray!

Thank you for listening.

Your Brother, Friend and Bishop,

+ Chukwuma Owerri
Trinity 2022

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