

SYNOD PRAYER

Oh Lord our God. God of power and might; the giver, sustainer and preserver of all life. We give You thanks, praise, honour and adoration for being good and gracious in Your dealings with us, even in the midst of the present hard times we find ourselves. May all glory and dominion be to Your Name.

Merciful Father forgive us our unfaithfulness and unworthiness. In Your mercy answer us from Your throne of grace.

We are grateful that You have gathered us again this year as a Diocese in this holy convocation of Your people. We humbly pray that You bless our Bishop and his family and all who serve You in this Diocese. Grant us peaceful deliberations in this Synod. In Your mercy and foreknowledge, reveal to us the very truth of our existence on earth, in such a way that, at the end we will be convinced that we are nothing but dust without You. May this knowledge inspire us to use every opportunity and privilege we have for the well-being of others and to Your glory; to the end that our souls may have eternal rest with You.

These we ask through Him, whose knowledge is eternal life and whose service is perfect freedom, even Jesus the Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

EKPERE SINỌD

Onyeweanyi Chineke, Onye di ike nwekwa ume; Onye n'enye, na onye nchekwa ndu nile. Anyi na enye Gi ekele, otuto, nkwanye ugwu, na ojija nma n'ih i di nma na amara ! na emere anyi tumadi, n'oge a ihe siri ike. Ka otuto nile na ichi isi nile dir i aha Gi.

Nna nke amara, gbaghara ekwesighi ntukwas i obi na erughieru anyi site n'obi ebere Gi zaa anyi, site na oche eze amara Gi.

Obi di anyi uto n'ih i na ! kpokotara anyi oz o n'af o a di ka Daiosis na ogbak o a di ns o. Anyi ji nweda n'ala n'ari o Gi ka ! gozie Bishop na ezinulo ya, na ndi nile na ejere Gi ozi na Daiosis a. Nye anyi udo di ka anyi na akparita uka na Sinod a. Site N'amara Gi, na amamihe Gi; mee ka anyi mara n'eziokwu, ihe anyi ji bia n'uw a, n'uz o o ga abu n'ikpe azu ya edoo anyi anya, na ewezuga Gi, odighi ihe oz o anyi bu ma o bugh i nani aja. Ka ihe omuma a kpalie anyi ime ka oge na ohere obula anyi nwere bara ndi oz o uru, rue kwa na otuto Gi; n'ikpe azu, ka mkpuru obi anyi nwee ndu ebighi-ebi.

Nke a ka anyi n'ari o site na Ya, Onye imara Ya bu inwe ndu ebighi-ebi, Onye ofufe ana efe Ya bu ipuzu n'oru dum, Jisus, Onye bukwa Kraist Onyeweanyi na Onye nzoputa anyi. Amin.

PROTOCOL

The Archbishops and Bishops,
Political leaders,
Diocesan officials,
Council of Knights and Ladies,
Bishop's Nominees,
Traditional rulers,
Distinguished Guests,
Synod delegates,
Men and women in uniform,
Our Brigade,
Members of the Press and Media,
Beloved Children of God,

Greetings:

It is to the glory of God, and with a heart and every sense of humility and responsibility that we welcome you to this 2nd Session of our Diocesan 5th Synod holding at Ode Ukwu Autonomous Community. As we must know and appreciate, each time we gather like this it is a clear manifestation of the uninterrupted love, grace and favor of our Almighty God and Father, the owner and preserver of all life. But this particular gathering is an added layer of such benevolence in light of the present challenges of our time. So please rise as we express our heart feelings to our Maker as we sing –

You Are A Wonder To My Soul.

! Dirị Obi m mma

Appreciation:

We sincerely appreciate our immediate constituency, the clergy and entire workforce of this Diocese, and their wives and families, for their commitment to duty and willingness to follow through thick and thin. We express our thanks to the entire faithful of our Diocese for your commitment and support to our mission and ministry. As you well know, we are just **beginning** a new era of enjoyment. And the joy and glory of the later will surely surpass those of the former.

For the success of this synod, we heartily appreciate our Clerical Synod Secretary, The Rev'd Canon Udochukwu Ephraim Ahaghotu PhD, and the silent achieving Chairman of our Central Planning Committee, Sir Okechukwu Nwachukwu PhD. With the planning committee, they have done exceptionally well to God's glory and we bless them. Umuode ARCHDEACONRY has done very well, and so we applaud the efforts of the Archdeacon and Vicar, the Ven. Levi Obinwanne Edward and his wife and Vice President, Evangelist (Mrs) Gold Edward and entire workforce of the archdeaconry. Sir C. I. Ufomba who leads the Local Organizing Committee, with his team has done well, and so they all share in our blessings. We equally bless all

members of this archdeaconry and friends who in any way contributed to this successful outing.

We appreciate the labors of the rest of the synod secretariat, my able Lieutenants - our Secretary and office staff, the Canon to the Ordinary and chaplain for their willingness to follow us through the entire laps. May you ever remain under the favor of the Almighty.

At this point it's pertinent to acknowledge and appreciate the human source of my inner strength, my family with Oluebube, Chiadiemela, and Chideha, physically represented by my darling who tries to keep me in check, Akuchinyere Obianuju Izuzuoha Kanu. Kiddos what's up y'all!

People of God, join me to welcome and appreciate my troubler-inChief, my favor, the president of our women ministry, Mama Aba Ngwa North, Princess (Mrs.) Odionyenfe Nworoni Chinenye Kanu. To everyone, we pray and believe that your involvement in this synod will be for you a memorial of unending joy and godly enjoyment to the glory of God.

OUR SYNOD VENUE

ST. GABRIEL'S CHURCH UMUODE, UMUODE PARISH, UMUODE ARCHDEACONRY.

In 1914 the good news of Jesus Christ was first proclaimed in Umuode in today's - **ODEUKWU AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY** in Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area of Abia State, by Wogu Ozuru. Before this time many Umuode people attended Church services at Abayi Water Side. Abayi Water Side occupants were Opobo missionaries and traders from Bonny. Within this same time, an Evangelist called Gabriel Ogbolari from Abayi Water Side was posted to Umuode for the spread of the gospel. His mission efforts converted many Umuode people into the fold. The Church St. Gabriel's was named after the same Evangelist Gabriel Ogbolari. The pioneer converts destroyed their juju shrine and Church attendance was no longer in secret.

Apart from the juju worship, another great set back was an epidemic of small pox. Again, the policy on marriage was also a stumbling block; many viewed the situation of the church policy a setback, due to the perceived obnoxious concept of church marriage, the growth of the Church was thus affected.

However, the Elders of the village collectively donated the present site of Saint Gabriel's Anglican Church without any hesitation. They include: Julius Azuonwu Ogbonna, Jeremiah Anaba, Amaechi Eluwaa, Esiaba Ajagba, Egege Iheduwa, Jeremiah Nwaeke Usuka, Benjamin Amaechi, Herbert Uzuogu, Ajuzieogu Amalaha, L/R. Reuben Esiaba, Frank Onwutuebe, Nwogu Woru and many others.

From 1916 the late Julius Azuonwu Ogbonna became the pioneer Church teacher. In his time, between 1916 and 1917 a mission school was established by the church with its control and management as her responsibility until after the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, when the Government took over the management of schools. Still undaunted, the church in 1991 re-established the present Nursery and Primary schools.

In 1919 the first mud church building was built which was replaced in 1930, and it was dedicated in 1950 by Rt. Rev. E.T. Dimeari. In 1982 under Mr. N.J. Asoh, the church attained a group status from All Saints Church Abayi - Umuocham. The late Ven. A.O. Akandu inaugurated the group status.

In 1986 Revd. S.D.N. Ekwenye was posted as the first priest to Umuode by His Lordship Rt. Revd. A.O. Iwuagwu. In 1988, Chief Engr. G.U. Esiaba painted the church building while others donated electric fans.

In the year 1990, Rt. Revd. Prof. Augustine O. Iwuagwu granted Umuode Church a Parish Status with Revd. M.A. Nwaka as the first parish priest.

In 1994, Mr. Solomon Chidi Nweke painted the church parsonage including the church hall.

In 1997, our faithful, dynamic son and our church members cooperated and erected this befitting church building. It is worthy of note that late Chief Engr. G.U. Esiaba donated Marble pulpit to the church during the time of Ven. Christopher Denkoro. The Parish was elevated to Archdeaconry status by His Lordship Late Rt. Revd John C. Ezirim with St. Gabriel's Umuode as headquarters.

Other Churches that make up the parish and archdeaconry are Emmanuel Church Amaekpu, Church of Epiphany Agalaba, TACP T-Junction, and Church of Advent Umuehilegbu. It is worthy to mention some of the Elders of this Church, though late, that contributed to the growth of her mission. They include:

- L/R Chief Reuben Esiaba
- Chief Sunday A. Ufomba
- Chief Johnson Uzuogu
- Shydrack Nweke
- Chief Samuel Nwankpa Woru

- Amos Amaechi
- Sir Solomon Onwuka and many others.

Here below is the list of priests that have served in this parish: Revd. S.D.N Ekwenye, Revd. M.A. Nwankpa, Revd. M.N. Okeugo, Ven. I.C. Ikpeze, Revd. G.C. Nwagbaso, Revd. Canon Akataobi, Revd. Canon Victor Kelechi Eche, Revd. Canon Victor Eleri, Revd. Canon Nnanya C.C, Revd. Nnamdi N. Usuka (Nwafo), Ven. Chris Denkoro, Revd. Udo Ahaghotu, Revd. John Otuonye, Ven. Barr. Okwunna Nwogu, Revd. Samuel Udechukwu, Revd. Amaonu Chidirim, Revd. Chimaihe P.S. Ofoji, Ven. E.C. Amadi, Revd. Christian Nwankpa, Revd. Japhet Ohajuru, Revd. Silas Thompson, Revd. John Mammah - presently serving are Revd. John Onyeaunoforo, Revd. Bernad C. Amadi, and the Archdeacon, The Ven. Levi O.N. Edward, DRS.

We congratulate and appreciate them for services rendered to God and humanity.

We thank God for the growth of the mission in this area and pray that this synod will add to its growth and sustenance.

RESOURCE PERSONS

Our Synod Preacher - The Rt. Revd. Paul S. Zamani

Rt. Revd. Paul S. Zamani was born on 16th June 1964 in Lisuru Gida in Ikulu Chiefdom in Zango Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

He attended LEA Primary School No: 7 Zonkwa in Zango Kataf LGA from 1974 - 1980, Government Secondary School from 1983 - 1988, Diploma in Theology from St. Francis of Assis Theological College Wusasa, Zaria 1992 - 1995, and Bachelor Degree in Divinity from 2004 - 2008 Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) UNI JOS.

He started the ministry as a sexton in All Saints' Church Samaru Zaria from 1988 till 1991 when he joined the full time ministry as a

Church Teacher in St. Luke's Church Hayin Audu in Zaria Archdeaconry, Kaduna Diocese. He left for Abuja Diocese in 1995 and was ordained on 15th June the same year. He served as Chaplain to Rt. Revd. Jasper Akinola, who later became the Primate of Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion from 1995 till

2000 when he was posted to head Kulo Archdeaconry now in Gwagwalada Diocese. In 2002, he was transferred to the primate's office till 2008 when he was elected as the first Bishop of Kwoi Diocese. Bishop Zamani is married to his beloved wife, Mrs. Rakiya Paul S. Zamani and the marriage is blessed with four children. We welcome you my lord as we look forward to the Lord blessing us through your ministration.

OTHER PREACHERS & RESOURCE PERSONS

1. Ven. Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Amadi was born 29th November 1950. He holds M.A. Religious - University of Calabar, M.Th - CTS, B.A. Education - Nsukka, and diploma in Theology - Trinity Theological College. One time Clerical Synod Secretary of Aba Diocese, State President of B.B/G.B Nigeria. He is married to Evang. (Mrs.) Joy C. Amadi. He preached at the opening service on Thursday.
2. Rev. Augustine Uzoma Alozie hails from Umuchima in Nnaji Autonomous Community of Isiala Ngwa North LGA. He holds Dip.Th from St. Paul's Theological College, Awka and married to Evang. (Mrs.) Dorothy N. Alozie. He preached at the Holy Communion Service yesterday.
3. Rev'd Alexander Ahamefula Arimadu was born in Obegu Ugwunagbo LGA Abia State on 21st April 1964 to the family of late Chief Edwin Arimadu. He holds BA, (Hons) in Religion Studies - University of Nigeria Nsukka and Diploma in Theology - St Paul's University College Awka. Married to Evang. (Mrs.) Ebere Alexander and the union is blessed with two daughters. He preached at the Holy Communion Service this morning.

4. Rev. Silas Ikeagwughichi Nwokocha was born on 29th March, 1973 in Umuabali-Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South LGA. He holds B.Sc. Ed. Dip.Th. Married to Evang. (Mrs.) Charity Chinenye Nwokocha and the marriage is blessed with four children. He will preach at the Sunday morning Holy Communion Service.
5. Ven. Levi Obinwanne Edward: He will conduct our Synod Thanksgiving Service tomorrow.
6. Ven. (Dr.) Emmanuel Enyinnaya Egbulefu was born on the 2nd April, 1964 in the family of late Chief John Egbulefu Ndimole Nwugo and Madam Julia Nwakwa Ogbodiya Egbulefu of Umuagbaigba Kindred, Umuaba Village in Okpu-Umuobo Ancient Kingdom - Osisioma Ngwa LGA of Abia State. He holds Ph.D in Church History, M.A. in Religion/Biblical Studies, B.A in Religion and Dip.Th & Dip.Rel. Married to Evang. (Mrs.) Pauline Ego and the marriage is blessed with three children. He proposed the Synod Motion yesterday.
7. Prof. Greg Ibe: He seconded the motion
8. Sir Onyebuchi Ememanka Esq is from Umule in Osisioma Ngwa LGA of Abia State. He is presently the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor of Abia State. He will move the motion for the acceptance of this Address.
9. Rev. Paulinus Chiemela Nworgu is a native of Asa-Amoka in Asa-Amator, Osisioma Ngwa LGA of Abia State. He holds B.Sc in Geography and Planning from ABSU, Dip.Th from Trinity Theological College Umuahia, M.Div from Crowther Theological College Abeokuta and D.Min in the same College. He is joyfully married to Evang. (Mrs.) Chinasa Paulinus. He will second the motion for acceptance of this Address.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE ARMS:

Women Ministry:

By the grace of God, our Diocesan Women Ministry has continued to be a strong and veritable instrument in the hand of God on the wheels of the progress of our Diocese. Their 2019 Widows Conference which took place at All Saints' Cathedral, Abayi Umuocham on Friday 29th November 2019, was a display of

God's Favor. The theme was **"Jesus In Me, The Hope of Glory"** (Col. 1:27). The conference featured talk on the theme, prayer session, testimonies, singing competition among the

Archdeaconries, health check and health talk. Above all, at the end of the conference over 374 widows in attendance comprising Anglicans and non-Anglicans received food items and wrappers worth of N1,300,400. Each of them went home with great joy to the glory of God.

In another development, they ended last year's activities with their usual Carol with Nine Lessons/End of Year party here in St. Gabriel's Umuode. And we preached the sermon at the service.

For this year's activities, they started with their annual Workers' Wives' Residential Retreat held from Thursday 9th to Saturday 11th January 2020, the venue was Ngwa High School, Abayi with the theme **"When The Woman Fails"** (Gen. 2:18; 3:1-6) and subtheme **"Faithfulness, Key To Profitable Service"** (1 Thess. 2:1-11, 1 Cor. 4:2). The retreat featured Bible Study, Theme Talk, and Seminar.

Again, a non-residential retreat was held from Friday 28th to Saturday 29th February 2020 at Christ Church World Bank Housing Estate for the Ladies in Council with the same theme and sub-theme. The retreat featured among other things, Theme Talks, Exposition, Bible Study and Health Talk. We thank the organizers for the job well done.

Their annual Diocesan Women Prayer Conference was also held from Thursday 30th February to Saturday 1st March, 2020 at St. Thomas Church Umuakpara in Osisioma Ngwa Archdeaconry. The expositor was Mrs. Gospel O. Ibeabuchi the Diocesan President of Umuahia. The women were spiritually enriched.

Our Mothering Sunday was successfully celebrated in all the churches in the diocese before the lockdown. The theme was **“The Beauty And Power of A Woman” (1Peter 3:1-4)**. Before this year’s women conference as it has been our culture, the women visited retired presidents with cash and gift items of not less than two hundred and sixty thousand, one hundred naira only (N260,100.00). They also distributed food items and cash to about 61 indigent members within Ngwa Archdeaconry and World Bank Mission Area.

In addition, they embarked on house to house, hospital and schools evangelism. The women preached and prayed for people they visited encouraging them to remain faithful to God, they also gave them some gift items. Also, the Home and Abroad Unit during their Annual General Meeting (AGM) carried out an Open Air Evangelism in Osisioma Ngwa Archdeaconry with the theme **“Disobedience is Dangerous”**. This year, because of the pandemic, all their AGM's were merged together. And this was held at St. Clement's Church Mbutu Umuojima Ogbu in Umuojima Archdeaconry on Saturday 29th August 2020. We thank God for the active participation of the women and the zeal, doggedness and vision oriented commitment of the unit coordinators and pray God to reward them.

Our Mothers' Union Conference was held between Friday the 10th through Sunday 12th July 2020 at Christ Church World Bank Housing Estate, World Bank Mission Area with the theme **“THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF A WOMAN” (1 Peter 3:1-6)**. We preached at the Opening and Sunday Thanksgiving Services respectively. In our message, we clearly stated that, from creation God endowed women with power and beauty that can turn the neck of every man either positively or negatively. In other words, the beauty and power of a woman can either make or mar a man. We enjoined all the women according to Peter to be godly, by being committed to the word of God, submitting themselves to their husbands by so doing, they will live to God's glory and to accomplishment of divine purpose and to turn even ungodly men to God. At a very critical time in the face of the universe resulting from the upsurge of the corona virus, the women demonstrated an uncommon devotion and commitment towards the success of the conference. We commend the leadership of the women ministry, the Planning Committee, the hosting Supervisor & wife, the hosting community and the women in general for their unstoppable zeal and love towards kingdom agenda and pray God to reward them uncommonly.

The Women Hostel Project has been receiving serious attention. So far despite the pandemic the sum of, Fifteen Million Naira (N15,000,000.00) has been spent on the

project since the last Women Conference. Following the event of things and high cost of materials generally the project is taking more than budgeted already. We have completed the decking work of the second floor. We continue to pray for God's favor as we look forward to the completion of the project.

In their caring heart and charity, the women were able to extend their love to others in the following ways:

1. Building of a two bedroom apartment for a widow at St. John's Church Umuchichi, Umuocham Archdeaconry at the cost of (N470,700.00) four hundred and seventy thousand, seven hundred naira only.
2. Payment of hospital bill for a woman who had been in Abia State University Teaching Hospital (ABSUTH) for three months after being discharged for her inability to pay. This was done through the "Weep No More" package of the Women Ministry and the amount was (N81,000.00) eighty one thousand naira only.
3. They assisted four sick women to the tune of (N260,000.00) Two hundred and sixty thousand naira only.
4. Assisted some indigent members with the sum of (N221,500.00) Two hundred and twenty-one thousand, five hundred naira only.
5. Payment of school fees to a student in higher institution to the tune of (N90,400.00) Ninety thousand, four hundred naira only.
6. Visitation to our schools after Mothering Sunday with food worth of (N 78,000.00) Seventy eight thousand naira only.

We appreciate their commitment and support to God's mandate and pray that they be rewarded richly.

Diocesan Council of Knights:

Our Diocesan Council of Knights has impressively continued to improve, growing from strength to strength to the glory of God. We now have a council which holds high hopes, though with some grounds to cover. Her Annual Retreat/Rededication Service took place at Christ Church World Bank Housing Estate Abayi from Friday 28th February to 1st March 2020, members both old and new were in attendance. We recall that on 8th February, we invested 26 new members to join in the service of the Lord and in defending the truth and authenticity of the gospel within and outside the church. As the Lord laid, we have restructured our council from zones now to batches believing God for a more positive result. Infact, their activities in the batches so far are encouraging to the glory of God. They have not failed to attend their higher meetings both in Province and Joint Council of Knights (JCK). We continue to appreciate the commitment of the leadership. We therefore encourage all members to attend meetings and be part of the council's progress. We pray God to continue to make our Knights useful instruments for Him and our Diocese.

Diocesan Ministry of Praise:

The Diocesan Ministry of Praise has improved tremendously, and the leadership is moving with the consciousness of our vision and goal. The ministry organized her Biennial Diocesan Singing Competition that involved all the churches in the Diocese led by the resident workers. On the 9th of November 2019 came the phase I of the

Diocesan Level here at St. Gabriel's Church, Umuode while 23rd November 2019 was the Phase II which was the grand finale at St. Paul's Church Umuocham. We are grateful to the host Parishes and their Vicars for the job well done and pray God to reward them immensely.

The following churches emerged the first position in different grades:

- Cathedral Children Choir - CH
- St. Philip's Church Women Choir - PWG,
- St. John's Church Choir Umuchichi - C,
- St. Clement's Church Choir Osokwa - B,
- St. Philip's Church Choir Abayi - A,
- St. Paul's Church Choir Umuocham - AS,

- St. Barnabas' Church Choir Okpu Umuobo II - SG, and
- All Saints' Cathedral Choir Abayi Umuocham - CG.

Our church choirs now live up to expectation in our worship life and service. We are truly happy with what the Lord is doing with our choirs, to Him be all the glory. The composition of our Diocesan Choir made up of choristers from various church choirs is making the Diocese proud especially during the Diocesan services and other Diocesan programs. We commend their efforts.

In our vision to ensure a wholistic worship session during our Sunday services, the workers of the Diocese have been informed that in the next Diocesan Singing Competition there shall be workers grade, between ordained ministers and lay workers of the Diocese. The modalities would be worked out soon.

This year's choir week of activities was observed from Monday 17th to Sunday 23rd August 2020 in all churches. The theme was **“Praising God with the Whole Heart” (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19)**. In our message to all choirs, we encouraged them to be steadfast in the service of the Lord as a great reward awaits them.

Diocesan Youth Ministry:

This year's Diocesan Youth Conference was held at St. Paul's Church Umuocham. Among the major outcome of the youth conference was a call challenging parishes with very weak base programmes for the youth to wake up and redress the situation. We should disregard any discouraging words from our people that our youth cannot come together under one umbrella. The practice of having multiple conferences for the youths is long gone. So we call on all to join hands as we build a united youth ministry. We cannot over emphasize the importance of building our future today by catching these precious seeds of the church young for Christ. The theme of their one day conference was **“Godliness with contentment” (1 Timothy 6:6)** and the date was Saturday 29th August, 2020. The conference featured: Exposition on the theme, Bible study, Group Discussion and reading of Presidential Address by the Diocesan Youth President. We reminded them that, their source of survival for the future is not in the hands of the government, but on whom they are in the Lord. We encourage them on the need to begin now to plan their lives within their environment, as that is contentment. Though the situation of things in Nigeria may suggest no hope for

the youths in future, we advised them not to put their hope on any man or government rather on God.

So far we are pleased with their activities at the diocesan level, and advise that it should be reflected in our various Archdeaconries, Parishes and Stations. Their level of Commitment is commendable. Our Diocesan Youth Sunday was celebrated on Sunday 13th September 2020 in all the churches, following the week of activities, with our message read to them. We are very optimistic of a brighter future for our Youth. To the glory of God.

Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC):

Our EFAC department is another area where we have been enjoying special grace of God. They have been growing from strength to strength. This year's EFAC week was observed despite the pandemic from Monday 20th to Sunday 26th July, 2020 all over the Diocese and it was successful. The theme this year as was chosen by the National Leadership is “**Understanding the Time**” (Eph. 5: 15-17). Records available to us show that members of our churches within the diocese participated actively in the celebration. As usual, our message was read in all the churches, reminding us that God is looking unto us as disciples to make disciples, as it is only through a practical Christ-like life style and witnessing that we prove our discipleship. We also encouraged every member of our church to find an avenue of leading someone or people to Christ urging them never to undermine our emphasis which is on leading those around us to the knowledge of the transforming love of Christ, and that nothing shall hinder us from this kingdom mandate of the Lord of the church Himself. They participated actively in the one day Provincial Prayer Conference held at St. Peter's Cathedral Owerinta, Isiala Ngwa South Diocese on Tuesday 21st July, 2020. And also in the National

Prayer Convention which was replaced with Prayer Convocation at Abuja Diocese from Thursday 13th to Saturday 16th August, 2020. We appreciate the effort and the commitments of the leadership of the fellowship towards the Diocesan Mission and vision directives.

Anglican Children Ministry (ACM):

We are glad observing that our Children Ministry is growing healthy, spiritually and physically. Their end of the year party which was held on 21st December, 2019 at TACP Abayi was indeed a wonderful moment. This year's activities started with their usual prayer retreat at St. George's Aro-Amano from Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd February, 2020 with the theme “**To Obey Is Better Than Sacrifice**” (1 Sam. 15:22). The retreat featured, Bible

Study, Theme Talk, among other things. On Sunday 23rd

February, the children and their leaders were rededicated to God for their activities this year. We commend the effort of the Chaplain, Leaders and Teachers and urged them not to relent as God is not unjust and would reward their labours of love. We enjoin parents to always be conscious of the spiritual training of their children and assist in leading them to Christ as early as possible, knowing that they are the church of tomorrow. We should therefore not fail to teach them those virtues and values they should know as children before leaving the homes. Our visits to our churches leave us with higher hopes of a better tomorrow. We give God all the glory.

Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF):

The Lord is moving our men to a higher ground. Their commitment and devotion to the service of God has improved tremendously. Their quarterly meetings this year were held at the designated Archdeaconries with a good number of the delegates in attendance. We commend World Bank Mission Area, Ngwa and Umuobasi Amavo Archdeaconries for hosting the men during their meetings. Despite the pandemic, this year's father's day was celebrated in all Churches with the theme “**Man Guard Your Possession**” (Luke 11:21) on Sunday 20th June 2020. Our men used the opportunity to thank God specially for sparing their lives and their families despite the ravaging effect of COVID-19. After the celebration, all the churches in the diocese visited us with gifts. We appreciate your gifts and pray God to reward you more abundantly. Their Prayer and Evangelism Team is waxing strong to the glory of God. It is on record that the tenure of the present executive expired on March 2020, and election of new officers has been conducted on Saturday 26th September 2020. They have completed their assignment of tiling the new Bishops court as directed by the Diocesan Board. We commend them for their effort and pray God to reward them. The 11th edition of their conference was held from Friday 14th to Sunday 16th August, 2020 at St. George's Aro-Amano, the theme was “**Man Guard Your Possession**” (Luke 11:21). The conference which began with the opening service featured Bible Study, Health Talk, Plenary Session and Group Discussion. We as usual presented the Address thereafter. It was appreciated by the delegates alongside launching Men's Project and cutting of the conference cake on Sunday during the thanksgiving service. We thank the host Archdeaconry and pray God to reward them.

Diocesan Board of Mission and Evangelism:

Our Board of Mission and Evangelism has been coordinating our outreach activities very effectively. Within the period under review we directed all the Archdeaconries and Mission Areas to create their own Mission Board to help gather more force. This Board has continued to collaborate with different groups and parishes in carrying out Mission and Evangelism programs across the Diocese. We continue to appreciate the leadership of the Board, ably led by Dr. Emmanuel Onyeukwu especially as he celebrated his 80th birthday recently, we thank God for his life and commitment to service and pray for more of God's favor and strength. Their mission activities take them to all parts of the Diocese. So, on their behalf we appeal to our guests and other well-meaning people of God to please assist us with a vehicle to ease this core duty of this board. You shall be blessed for doing so.

Sunday School/Bible Study Program:

Our Sunday School Board has been wonderful in the supervision of the study of the word of God in every church in our Diocese. Again, the mid-mornings Sunday school has brought testimonies to many homes. Most families in our Diocese today can on their own read and study the Bible with our own Bible Study Manual. But even at that, there is no doubt that there are still those who are yet to develop the needed zeal to make the most of this opportunity. And so we urge such people that ignorant to the word of God would not be any excuse for eternal damnation. Let's make the most of this opportunity and equip ourselves properly for our Christian journey. As expected, we will leave this synod with the manual for this synod year. Please

remember that it is against the policy and life of this Diocese for any church not to participate in the Mid-Mattins Sunday School and no other program shall replace it. This directive remains sacrosanct to the life of this Diocese with no exceptions. We commend the chairman and the coordinator with their team of contributors for a job well done and pray God to reward them all.

Prison Ministry:

Over the years we have been collaborating with Aba Diocese on the slot given to Our Communion in carrying our services and ministration to the inmates of Aba main correction facility. We are grateful that our presence as a church is being felt in that place. As we can recall, our Retired Archbishop, Most Rev'd (Dr.) Ugochukwu U. Ezuoke built for them a worship place which has boosted the religious life of the inmates and Anglican presence in the environment. By the grace of God our Diocese is not left behind in our Christian duty of attending to the needs of those our brothers and sisters in the facility both spiritually and materially. In February this year, we saw the need for Bibles, Hymn books and some other worship materials for the inmates and directed that they be provided. We spent the sum of forty thousand naira only (N40,000.00) to that effect. We appreciate and commend the effort and commitment of our Chaplain of the ministry and the members in this regard and pray God to continue to bless them.

Staff Training, Development and Welfare:

In the spirit of qualitative leadership, we believe that, for workers to perform to their best, they must be mature in knowledge, comfortable and have a sense of commitment. To achieve this, the training and development of our staff are of paramount importance to us, as well as the prompt payment of their stipend. We conduct regular seminars, training, workshops and facility update for our staff at their different levels. Plans are on the way towards providing some medical assistance to our workers and their families while trying to ease some of their after retirement issues. This proposal is geared towards providing workers with regular medical checks and treatment of illnesses at little or no cost to them and their families. We will seek the help of our health and medical personnel towards the success of this endeavor. Meanwhile, some members of the staff were distinguished in their different fields of study. Here we report with gratitude those in school are:

1. Ven. Precious Ugonna Okereke Ph.D in progress
2. Rev. Paulinus Nwaorgu D.Min. in progress
3. Ven. Kelechi Victor Aturuchi Eche Masters in progress
4. Rev. Kelechi Elele Masters in progress
5. Rev. Uzoma Atuzieogu Masters in progress
6. Rev. Joseph A.W. Stephen Masters in progress
7. Rev. Charles Añulobi Masters in progress
8. Rev. Chika Amaefula Masters in progress
9. Canon Charles Ubani B.Th in progress
10. Canon Emmanuel Ehilegbu B.Th in progress

11. Rev. Japheth Ohajuru B.Th in progress
12. Rev. Samuel Egbu B.Th in progress
13. Rev. Christian Nwankpa B.Th in progress
14. Rev. Steve Agbim B.Th in progress
15. Rev. A.C. Odu B.Th in progress
16. Rev. Ikechukwu Okechukwu B.Th in progress.

On another note, we are encouraging our workers to find some time to embark on some level of farming to augment in the provision of food for our families. We plan to allow our workers some extra time for implementation of this move. Therefore from January 2021, all Diocesan workers, excluding drivers, yard men, medical workers and those on essential duties, will only be required to work Monday to Friday. However this will not include when we have Diocesan programs and services like we are in today. We hope that this will encourage our workers to give their best to their duties knowing that one good turn should deserve another.

STAFF RETIREMENT.

As we all know, the official retirement age of our workers under the Superannuation scheme is sixty five years. However we have agreed to allow workers who attend this official retirement age to, in addition to be collecting their pensions, continue to serve for not more than five years depending on their health conditions and performance level. The number of the additional years is to be determined by the Diocesan. To this effect, we are happy to announce the attainment of the mandatory retirement age of seventy of the Ven. Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Amadi and his subsequent retirement come December this year. We join his family to celebrate what we believe is a fulfilled call and ministry and wish him good health as he will remain a consultant to many still in the ministry. For the rest who are already officially retired, we will need to sit after the synod to agree on the way forward. But before then, some should be preparing for final disengagement come 2021.

Diocesan Lay Readers Association:

The Lay Readers of this Diocese have not failed in their duty of assisting our workers in leading a transforming worship life in our churches. Reports from our churches have shown that the performance of our Lay Readers both in the knowledge, reading of the scripture and commitment to service has greatly improved. As co-laborers we encourage them never to relent especially in the face of a technologically driven world of today where the internet is leading most of our youths out of the way. Our church has adopted strategic discipleship as a means of keeping and living a Christ-like life in a changing environment, and we enjoined our Lay Readers to give themselves into it, and to live their lives both in public and private as the gospel others may read. We commend their leadership in their efforts to follow in what we are doing and pray for more commitment. The Association went on neighborhood evangelism late last year at St. John's Church Umuocheala with the topic “**Flee For Your Life**” (**Gen. 19:17**), and hosted 2-Day Crusade at Umuaba in Okpu Umuobo. The theme for the crusade was “**Chose You This Day...**” (**Josh. 24:15**), from Friday 22 to Saturday 23rd November 2019.

They couldn't their annual retreat because of the pandemic but gathered themselves for a day retreat at the Cathedral on Saturday 19th September 2020 with the theme **"We Are More Than Conquerors" (Rom. 8: 37)**. We thank the Chaplain and the President of this body, and pray God to bless them.

Sports, Physical & Health Development:

Our emphasis on the importance of healthy living remains unshakable, especially in the face of the Pandemic. Every worker in this diocese must ensure a healthy life style by exercising the body from time to time. Physical exercise has been recommended as a means of good living and therefore should not be treated with levity by both workers and members. Though our monthly Diocesan Sports and Physical exercise program was locked by COVID-19, adopting a physical exercise program should not be locked in any way within the confines of our environment. Let every delegate know that physical exercise is a good medicine for the health of the body. Set a time for yourself daily, weekly or monthly for this, your testimony will surprise you.

EVENTS:

Diocesan Harvest 2019:

The harvest has always been a beautiful and important part of life on earth, the time when the year's work bears fruit and the people are fed. It is symbolic of bounty, health and abundance. On this premise our Diocese joyfully gathered on December 14th at our Cathedral for her annual Diocesan Harvest thanksgiving service with the theme **"Harvest of Hope" (Ecc. 11:1-4; James 5:7-12)**. The Harvest was indeed a success in all angles. Members now look forward to the second Saturday of every December for this annual ritual and celebration. Money is not everything though important, but we need to remember that sowing is just as important as reaping. That is why our focus should be on pleasing the One who sent us into the field rather than on controlling the rate of growth or the amount we reap. We thanked the Planning Committee ably led by our brother Mr. Cyprian Ubani for a job well done, and also appreciated the Guest Preacher Bro. Joshua Akuche for being used of God in that service. We are hopeful that this year's edition would be better as we expect more participation from members and people of goodwill appreciating God for all He has done all through the year.

Diocesan Thanksgiving and Knighthood Investiture:

On Saturday 8th February, 2020 the whole Diocese gathered again at the Cathedral to appreciate the Lord for His immeasurable blessings, protection and sustenance of our lives and Diocese. It was indeed a glorious moment as it was held together with the investiture of 26 Noble Knights with their ladies, and rededication of our Church Workers as well as the Diocesan Officials. We congratulate the New Knights and their Ladies as they take up this highest lay position in our church and pray God to continue to guide them. We thank the team of our clergymen that prepared the New Knights for their commitment and dedication. We also commend the preacher, Ven. Precious Okereke one of our own for declaring God's mandate in that service. More so, we appreciate the Archdeacons/Mission Areas that came with different

material and items for thanksgiving and pray that God would continue to enrich them. We cannot thank God enough for His goodness and mercies towards us. This again is a yearly event underscoring the need to always thank God as one family.

Priestly / Diaconate Ordination:

The Lenten Ordination was held at the Cathedral on Saturday 20th June 2020. The following persons were priested:

- Rev'd Sampson Alozie Iheanacho
- Rev'd Morgan Ibezim Okezie
- Rev'd Felix Chibuzo Obika

Deacons are:

- Barnard Chidiebere Amadi
- Chinedum Uzoma Chijioke
- Christian Omerenma Nwoko
- Kenneth Achimba
- Emmanuel Uwaoma Onwukwe
- Goodluck Chidiebere Ekeke
- Augustine Nnabugwu Nwokoma - Charles Chinedu Emeka.

We thank God for the grace, congratulate these newly ordained families, and thank the Preacher, Retreat Coordinators, Ordination Host Parish, and pray that their services to the Lord will continue to be fruitful and rewarding.

Bishop's Birthday/25th Marriage Anniversary

The month of March every year is for Mama Aba Ngwa North and I a season of appreciation and thanksgiving to the Almighty God in honour of our birthday. Over these years, the faithful of Aba Ngwa North have not relented in praying and giving thanks to God, for our lives and for more grace in the ministry. We appreciate you for that. Added to this, this year marked the silver jubilee of Mama Aba Ngwa North and I in holy wedlock. Our initial plans towards the anniversary was that our children would be around to celebrate us, but the lockdown occasioned by the pandemic could not allow it. However we are eternally grateful to the workers of this diocese through the Chapter House for organizing a worthwhile thanksgiving service and reception in our honor on the 24th June 2020. We thank very specially our great father in the Lord, the Most Rev'd Dr. Ugochukwu U. Ezuoke and wife, Mama Province, Mrs. Njideka Nwobia for gracing the occasion. The sermon was preached by our retired Archbishop, and grandfather, the Most Rev'd. Dr. Ugochukwu Uwaoma Ezuoke, we thank him and mama for honoring us.

RETREATS:

CPC/PCC/Vestry Committee Retreat 2020:

On Saturday 15th February 2020, we gathered at our Cathedral, for this Annual Retreat with over 300 men and women from all the churches in the Diocese. The retreat featured Leadership Talks, Prayer and Plenary sessions. The theme was "Unity Among All Worshipers" (John 17:14&16). The retreat concluded with the

rededication service for all participants. The exposition of the theme was by one of our own sons, Rev'd Princewell Nwaoharu serving in Aba Diocese, and we pray God to strengthen him. We commend my office staff who organize this retreat every year. We must emphasize that effective and godly leadership is crucial to our service to God and our success as a diocese. We request our workers and members as a matter of urgency to carry the message of this retreat to our respective homes and allow peace to reign in our families, communities as well as in our larger society.

H.O.D Retreat 2020

Between Wednesday 18th to Friday 20th March, 2020 our annual retreat for the Heads of Departments, Chaplains and Diocesan Officials were held at St. Philip's Church (Ngwa High School Chapel) Abayi. The 3-day retreat which has the theme as **"Be Of The Church, Sub theme: Different Arms One Diocese"**, featured: Bible Study, Talk on the theme, Group Discussion, and plenary session. The retreat reminded the Heads of Departments of their role to ensure that unity and cooperation exist among all the arms in the church, as agents of peace, progress and unity of the church and the Diocese. Among the major resolutions of the retreat include:

- That Head of Departments/Diocesan Officials should be involved in the planning of our synods as committee members and also help in attracting their friends, and donors to support the Diocese.
- To evaluate the progress of the Arms/Departments yearly.
- Archdeaconries/Mission Areas to organize retreats for the leaders of Arms, Groups and other officers of the Church at every level from time to time.
- That the Meeting of Heads of Departments shall be ones or twice a year outside the normal retreat.

We appreciate our sons who served as resources persons during the retreat, the Rev'd. Princewell Nwaoharu - a priest of Diocese of Aba, Engr. Precious Agua our Lay Synod Secretary and the Bishop's Office Staff for organizing the programme.

Diocesan Prayer Convocation 2020

Our 6th Diocesan Prayer convocation was held from Wednesday 9th to Thursday 10th September 2020 at All Saints' Cathedral Abayi Umuocham. The theme of the convocation was **"Revive Thy Work O Lord" (Hab. 3:2; Ps. 85)**. The convocation which featured, Bible Study, Exposition on the theme, and Prayer Sessions, was well attended by Men and Women, the youths and representatives from the arms of the Diocese. The exposition was handled by us, the participants were thrilled to hear that the prophet Habakkuk in his burden was crying to God to review His punishment upon the people of Israel. The participants were made to know that the word of God cannot change, and that we should endeavor to live our life in obedience to the word of God. The warning that every disciplinary measure that cometh from the word of God against any act of disobedience would come true, was declared. Also the hope of blessing and eternity to every obedient child of God was re-echoed.

The prayer coordinator and the organizers of the programme did a perfect job, and we commend them and pray for greater anointing.

Diocesan Endowment Fund:

Our Endowment Fund drive has been going on now for some years. We want to commend and thank all who have taken keen interest and commitment towards this important program. However we noticed that a good number of our churches and individuals have not shown much interest towards the project as it is required. We need to realize that the purpose for this is to help make our Diocese financially self-reliant. Therefore we employ every member of our Diocese to take this godly venture seriously and prayerfully, and also encourage others to do so. To demonstrate the importance of this project to our growing diocese, the synod previously directed that for anyone to qualify as a subscribing member of this diocese at all levels, he or she must subscribe to this program. Also those who aspire for leadership positions or certain church rites at any level in the Diocese will be required to show proof of commitment to the endowment fund project. This directive of the synod should be maintained and adhered to in all churches and carried out by all workers.

Our hope and prayer is that all may see the need to give this fund the needed support it requires. May God reward those who have been faithful to this program. Amen.

Agricultural Investment:

To the glory of God our agricultural investment has started yielding good result despite the pandemic. The proceeds we realized from the poultry session have been encouraging. We therefore encourage our delegates/members of our diocese to patronize our products as we sell affordably. We sell divinely raised and health fortify poultry products.

With the approval of the board, plans are on the way to step up our farm to produce more products and also go into product processing. We are grateful to the committee ably led by chief Lawrence Ikpeamagheze for their effort and commitment towards the projects.

Bookshop/ICT:

Our Diocesan Book Store has been doing very well. Today the bookstore is under franchise with the Africa Christian TextbookS (ACTS). It has continued to serve the needs of our diocesan members and theological/Bible Colleges within and outside our State. This is a multi-million naira project as we all know. It is part of our endowment proceed. We sell the best educational theological and religious books. We therefore encourage our members to always come and patronize the bookshop of the Diocese.

In the same vein we are trying our best to make sure that our ICT department continues to serve the public effectively. Today many of our clerks through the help of this centre are now computer literate. And we are not satisfied yet until our goal is completely achieved which is to make this center E-Library capable, to help our workers as well as customers have access to the best world libraries and learning centers just by a click of the mouse. As we work towards the improvement of the ICT, we ask for your assistance and patronage. Presently we offer-Computer training, Direct Imaging (DI) printing, photo copying both color & black, Spiral Binding, Laminating and many more.

You can advertise your products and businesses through our Diocesan website. We thank our ICT staff and our Information and Communications unit for their dedication to duty.

Communion Wafer Industry:

God has been helping us, we are moving forward. Our product is servicing our Diocese and beyond. As we know the quality of our products is among the best. We thank the workers in that industry for making sure the quality products are available for supply always. We ask for your patronage as this is our product.

DIOCESAN SCHOOLS:

Ngwa High School Abayi and St. Anne's Secondary School, Umuobasi Amavo:

The two schools returned to us by the Abia State Government are progressively receiving attention. Ngwa High School has been adequately staffed and number of students is on the increase and have returned to boarding system as a mission school. We commend the effort of the Principal and staff and urge them to continue in doing well.

We appreciate the assistance of the School Chaplain Rev. Felix Obika in the spiritual wellbeing of the students.

During this pandemic we sponsored online learning to keep our students up to date with their counterparts. We will not fail to thank our Old Boys for their good works of renovations, registering our final year students for SSCE, financial award to the best student of various subjects and giving of palliatives to the teachers and many more. We bless them with all sincerity.

Bravo to our women ministry ably led by Mama Aba Ngwa North for feeding our students after mothering Sunday.

Due to the lockdown we postponed our annual inter house-sports and annual graduation/sendoff ceremony for 2020 academic year students.

For St. Anne's, We thank the Principal and teachers and the students who are with us in the school for their efforts and commitment to see the progress of our school. We pray God to bless them.

We appeal and challenge our members to patronize our schools by registering your children and wards. These schools have qualified staff members, great facilities and a very Christian environment. Combinations you need for godly and qualitative training and upbringing.

We are sincerely thankful to most members of the Diocesan Board, the officers of the Diocese, the clergy and other good spirited members that subscribed to this "Save Our School" project. This project affords us the opportunity to donate any amount of our choice in support of our schools, it is open to every member of this Diocese. This is outside our Education Rescue Fund.

Diocesan School of Ministry:

The Diocesan School of Ministry stands out as a unique spiritual and academic institution to train and equip ministers of the Gospel of Christ, building in them the

realities of God's Word and empowering them to carry the message of eternal life in Christ Jesus to their world, with great demonstrations of the miraculous power of God. For the 5 years, the DSM has given people, the opportunity of being tutored and empowered with the peculiar grace at work in the ministry.

After the recent Decision on Exams Cancellation for Students of all levels, we are still looking forward for conducting examination for Final Year Students. We are hoping to use this medium to educate and prepare our Lay Readers, Wardens/Ushers, and Stewards, intending Evangelists and all those who are interested in Mission and Evangelism within and outside our diocese. We encourage every member to support this vision in any way you can, so as to lay a better and sure foundation for our church workers and lay leaders in service of God. We thank the Rector and his team for their steadfast commitment and contributions and pray God to give them more strength and favor.

Foundation/Dedications/Inauguration:

Many items procured by members of our churches for the worship of God were episcopally presented to God. Also some personal houses prayed for including:

20.06.2020: Dedication of a car - Rev. Alex Arimadu

16.08.2020: Dedication of Altar Table at St. George's Church Aro-Amano

28.08.2020: Dedication of Parsonage at All Saints' Cathedral Abayi Umuocham.

30.08.2020: Dedication of Bishop's Marble Altar Seat at St. Augustine's Church Okpu-Umuobo

06.09.2020: Dedication of Marble Reading Desks at St. Clement's Church Osokwa

20.09.2020: Dedication of a Trophy for Bible Study Quiz at St. Thomas Church Umuakpara.

04.10.2020: Dedication of Marble Lectern at St. Peter's Church Umuka 1.

CONFIRMATION AND ADMISSIONS

Within the period under review, we visited the under listed Parishes for confirmation and admissions:

Date	Parish	Conf.	CMF	MU	W G	GG	Evang. Support
01.12.2019	All Saints' Cathedral A/U	39	8	19	24	11	46,695
16.02.2020	Umuobasi Amavo	32	3	6	15	-	147,720
29.03.2020	Asa Amoka	21	-	1	1	2	-
30.08.2020	Okpu Umuobo	39	13	3	17	4	18,180
06.09.2020	Osokwa	20	5	-	1	3	29,015
20.09.2020	Umuakpara	49	-	6	8	8	55,070

27.09.2020	Ahiaba Umueze	28	6	4	14	-	79,300
04.10.2020	Umuka 1	12	-	2	2	-	13,800
	Ordination						268,060
	Seminar						169,000
	Total	240	35	41	82	28	826,840

Mission and Evangelism Fund Disbursement:

The evangelism support realized during our Episcopal and other Diocesan functions within the period stated in the table above was N **826,840.00** and administered in the following:

Board of Mission and Evangelism - A Day Seminar	N59,550.00
A student from St. Gabriel's Church Umuode	N36,000.00
6 students from Holy Trinity Mgboko Umuocha	N146,500.00
10 students from Anglican Church of Advent Umule	<u>N254,700.00</u>
	N496,750.00

PROJECTS:

Bishopscourt Project:

By the grace of God, and to His glory, we are glad to report that as we speak, the work has been completed and date confirmed for its dedication by our Primate. We give glory to God for the way He has helped us to achieve this. We are grateful to all the arms as well as individuals who contributed in one way or another in achieving the feat. We pray God to reward them more abundantly in Jesus name. Amen.

New Cathedral Project

In one of our Diocesan Board Meetings last year, the board took the decision of having a 2,500 sitting capacity New Cathedral at the former All Saints' burial ground (3D pic displayed). To the glory of God on the 10th October 2019, being the first day of our last synod, the Land Breaking Ceremony was done to mark the commencement of the project. Since then we have been making consultations in preparation for the actual commencement of the project. Gladly, we have secured a date for the foundation laying ceremony by the Primate of our Church, His Grace, the Most Rev'd Henry C. Ndukuba on 11th November 2020, same day our new Bishopscourt will be dedicated. We are calling on all to graciously support us and donate to this project in this synod as we hope to actualize it timely. We know the favor of the Lord will follow you as you do so.

OUR JOY:

Rev. and Evang. Mrs. Emmanuel O. Onwukwe - Bouncing *Baby Boy*
 Rev. and Evang. Mrs. Chika Amaefula - Bouncing *Baby Girl* Rev. and
 Rev. & Mrs. Charles Emeka - *Bouncing Baby Boy* Mr. and
 Mrs. Loveday Michael - *Bouncing Baby Boy*

Mr. and Mrs. Christian Onwunata - *Bouncing Baby Boy*
Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Nwankwo - *Bouncing Twin Baby Girls*
Mr. and Mrs. Promise Pepple - *Bouncing Baby Girl*
Rev. and Mrs. Bernard Amadi - *Wedding*
Rev. and Mrs. Emmanuel Uchegbu - *Bouncing Baby Girl*

OUR SORROW

Very sadly in our hearts we lost the following members of our diocese since the last synod:

Rev. Canon Michael Amanzenta Amanze Mrs. Peace Anwuacha -
Priest's Wife
Mr. Augustine Ahukanna - *Church Teacher*
Sir Denis Nwankpa - *Bishop's Nominee*

NEWS FROM CHURCH OF NIGERIA

The New Primate:

A New Primate of Church of Nigeria was elected on 24th Sept., 2019 at Asaba, and presented as the 5th Primate on the 25th March 2020. He is His Grace, the Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba. He hails from Ogberuru Orlu in Imo State. Before his election, he was the Archbishop of Jos Province and Bishop of Gombe. We congratulate and wish him and his wife a successful tenure. Remember we shall play host to him and the wife in less than four weeks from now.

DIVCCON 2019:

The 9th edition of the Divine Common Wealth Conference which is a Church of Nigeria Annual Programme for spiritual enrichment was held in Abuja at the National Christian Ecumenical Centre from Monday 11th to Friday 15th November, 2019. We thank our diocese for the greater attendance and participation. The theme was “**O God Our Help in Ages Past**” (Psalm 90:10). Our Diocese by the grace of God came home with the gigantic maiden trophy for attending with the highest number of delegates - 366 participants to be precise. Before now, we have started launching the trophy in the Archdeaconries, but due to the COVID-19 we stopped. So bear it in mind that we shall continue before the end of the year to enable us cover the whole Diocese. The registration for this year's DIVCCON has started and at the look of things, the planning committee now led by Sir Emeka M. Ogalabu is doing well to make sure that we perform accordingly. Though the pandemic poses a challenge, we must remember that anything less than one thousand participants will mean a failure on our part.

St. Matthias's Day Fund:

To the glory of God, the St. Matthias day collection was observed across our Diocese as scheduled. This annual event is to support all the Missionary Dioceses, Institutions and other dioceses that are struggling financially. We thank God for this purse, our Diocese has been participating fully and sincerely in this programs. This year we realized a total of N2,100,935.00 (two million one hundred thousand, nine hundred and thirty five naira only) and it has been remitted to the Church of Nigeria account.

May the Almighty God open the door of mercy to you us all for this gesture in Jesus name.
Amen.

2020 Bishop's Annual Retreat:

Bishop's Retreat at Ibru Centre took place from Monday 6th to Friday 10th January, 2020 with theme “**Restoring The Oneness of the House of Bishops/Church**” (Psalm 133), the second one led by the new primate, His Grace Most Rev'd Henry Ndukuba to declare his vision for the Church was held at St. Matthias House, Church of Nigeria National Secretariat Abuja from Monday 20th to Thursday 23rd July, 2020 with the theme “**The Reign Of God In Challenging Times**” (Isa. 52:1-10). It was inspiring, challenging, Spiritual, and empowering.

General Synod Meeting:

To the glory of God from Monday 21st to 25th September 2020, we, mama Aba Ngwa North and our delegates all attended the 13th General Synod at Church of Nigeria National Secretariat St. Matthias House Gudu, Abuja. The theme was “The Priority of God (Matt. 6:33). We continue to pray and congratulate the Archbishop, Primate and Metropolitan of our church, the Most Rev'd Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba and his wife, Mama Angela Ndukuba, for the success of the synod. We pray for their sustenance and abundant Grace through Christ our Lord. The communique and pastoral letters from these meetings are part of this address as appendixes.

NEW BISHOPS:

Rt. Rev. Felix U. Olorunfemi - *Etsako Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Cletus A. Tambari - *Gombe Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Benson Chukwunweike - *Awgu/Aninri Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Scott A. Seely - *Suffragan Bishop, CANA West.*

Rt. Rev. Celestine Ironna - *Suffragan Bishop, West Translation.*

Sir Enyioma Nwogu - *Diocesan Surveyor*

Rt. Rev. Joshua Ogunele - *Bishop on the Coast*

Rt. Rev. I.O. Akintemi - *Retired Bishop of Ijebu Ijesha*

Mrs. Lois Zhumbes - *Wife of Bishop of Bukuru* Mrs. Ajiri Enamezi - *Wife of the Bishop of Western Izon* Rt. Rev. Ezekiel Ayodele Awosoga - *Bishop of Ijebu*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Samuel Olukunle Ajani - *Retired Bishop of Egba West* Rt. Rev. Anthony Nkwoka - *Retired Bishop of Niger West*

Dame Jane Efobi - *Wife of the Most Rev. C. Efobi (Rtd)*

NEWS FROM ABA PROVINCE

To the glory of God we are happy to report that the life and growth of our dear Province is a thing of joy. It is on record that our Province is among the list of the most peaceful provinces in Church of Nigeria. Our former Archbishop, His Grace, the Most Rev'd (Dr.) Ikechi Nwachukwu Nwosu retired in November 2019. He handed over

the race to His Grace, the Most Rev'd (Dr.) Isaac Chijioke Nwaobia who was elected on Tuesday, September 24, 2019 at Asaba and presented on Thursday, November 14, 2019 at National Christian Centre during 2019 DIVCCON at Abuja. We wished the retired Archbishop a healthy retirement life. We thank and appreciate the faithfuls of Aba Ngwa North for supporting us when we celebrated our retired Archbishop on 26th October, 2019 at the Cathedral. May the Lord continue to reward you all. We pray for a successful tenure of the new Archbishop and his wife.

Provincial Harvest:

On Saturday 2nd November, 2019 at St. George's Cathedral Nbawsi Diocese of Isiala Ngwa, our province held her harvest thanksgiving service. We are grateful for this godly initiative, for the joy and unity we have been experiencing whenever we gather in the celebration. Our Diocese was well represented in the harvest, and joined with the other Dioceses in thanking God. The theme was **“The Harvest Of Peace” (James 3:18)**. The proceeds from the harvest have been invested to the Provincial Hostel Project at Michael Okpara University, Umudike. We are grateful to the Diocese of Isiala Ngwa, the Bishop and Mama Isiala Ngwa for a wonderful hosting, almost all the members of the Diocese came out and with items. This year's edition is to be hosted by Aba Diocese. We pray that it will be more successful. We also thank Papa Isuikwuato/Umunneochi Diocese and his team praying God to bless them.

Provincial Council Meetings:

Our Provincial meetings have been holding regularly with our Diocesan representatives in attendance. The first one was held on Tuesday 19th November, 2019 at St. Stephen's Cathedral Umuahia with the theme **“Encourage One Another” (1 Thess. 5:11)**. Another Provincial Council Meeting was held at St. Peter's Cathedral Owerinta, Diocese of Isiala Ngwa South on Saturday 29th February, 2020 with the theme **“Over Comers” (Rev. 12:11)**. We thank the Archbishop and Mama Province for the able way they are piloting the affairs of our province so far. We give God all the glory.

NEWS FROM FORMER PROVINCE II

By the grace of God from Wednesday 5th to Thursday 6th February, 2020 the Former Province II Council Meeting was held at St. Cyprian's Church Port Harcourt, Diocese of Niger Delta with the theme **“Knowing God” (Eph. 3:10-11)** under the chairmanship of His Grace the Most Rev'd. Caleb A. Maduoma. Among the issues raised include, matters concerning our institutions, Goshen Anglican Retreat Centre at Owerri and contribution to Superannuation. We thank the Bishop of Niger Delta and his entire Diocese for their hospitality and pray God to reward them. We encourage the patronage of Goshen a beautiful and well situated retreat center for group and personal relaxation and retreat.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Oludipe - *Ijebu Diocese* Rt. Rev. Adegoke Agara - *Idoani Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Enoch Atuboyedia - *Okrika Diocese* Rt. Rev. Gabriel Elabor - *Esan Diocese*.

TRANSLATIONS:

The Rt. Rev. Jacob Bada translated from Etsako to Akoko

RETIRED BISHOPS:

Rt. Rev. Abraham Akinlalu - *Oke-Osun Diocese*

The Most Rev. B.C.I. Okoro - *Orlu Diocese* The Most Rev. Ikechi N. Nwosu - *Umuhia Diocese* The Most Rev. Nicholas D. Okoh - *Abuja Diocese*

Rt. Rev. Emmanuel Ugwu - *Awgu/Aninri Diocese* Rt. Rev. Prof. Andrew Olu Igenozza - *Rector, CGTS, Abeokuta*

NEW ARCHBISHOPS:

The Most Rev. Dr. Christopher Omotude - *Ondo Province* The Most Rev. Markus A. Ibrahim - *Jos Province* The Most Rev. Cyril O. Odutemu - *Bendel Province* The Most Rev. David O. Onuoha - *Owerri Province*.

OUR SYNOD THEME

“WE ARE....BUT DUST”

(GENESIS 3:19; 1Corinthians 15:47).

“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”(Genesis 3:19 NIV).

“The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.”(1 Corinthian 15:47 NIV).

INTRODUCTION:

Man as a creature has continued to prove that he is not just the ultimate of all creation but that he rules and controls the affairs of all the other creatures. Man's progressive physical, psychological and technological advancement continues to prove this fact confirming that man is truly “fearfully and wonderfully made.” However, the inevitable presence of pain and eventual end of man reveals the very truth about man's existence on earth - “That all men are nothing but dust”.

MAN WAS MADE FROM DUST:

“The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” (Gen. 2:7). With the rest of creation, God had simply spoken things into existence (Genesis 1:3, 14, 20, 24), but God does things differently with man.

“And The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7) is the declaration of the Scriptures, and “for dust you are” (Gen. 3:19) is the simple statement by God regarding His creation of man. Man is made of dirt. Not some special creative dust but dust of the earth, the dirt of the ground. Martin Luther's translation says “lump of earth.”

Adam's name reflects his association with the earth: *adam*, meaning “man,” is related to *adamah*, a word which means “dirt,” “ground,” “soil,” or “earth” So,

Adam (man) came from the dust of the *adamah* (“ground,” or “earth”). Not only does the account indicate that man is from the earth, but the etymological relationship of the words indicates the same fact.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:47: “The first man was of the earth, made of dust”; the text could read as in the *NASB*: “of the earth, earthy”; the *ESV* has “from the earth, a man of dust.” The testimony of Scripture is systematic and uniform—man is from the earth, that is, the ground, the dirt, the dust.

That man was made from the earth is the indisputable affirmation of Scripture, but the manner of his creation is not detailed. And so the formation of man from dust and the breathing of the breath of life we must not understand in a mechanical or any other human scientific sense. It is an event that was supernatural, mysterious, and glorious. Man lives on the earth and lives from the earth. In fact, the earth was created in order to sustain man; it is the earth and its resources that maintain man and make his life possible.

The rest of this address and the charge will be based on two important deductions made from the fact that God created man from dust unlike the rest of the created world.

First, the fact that man was created from dust makes him unique among all of God's creation. To create the sun, mountains, animal life, etc., God simply spoke. We read, “Then God said” over and over in Genesis 1. Human life, however, included the “dust of the earth” and the very breath of God. Man is a unique combination of earthly, natural material and life-giving power from God Himself. Such a mode of creation highlights the importance and value of human life.

To prove, justify and maintain its uniqueness and superiority, humankind has been in pursuit of technological advancement through the ages. Since the ways to create fire were discovered and the invention of the nail, mankind has been in pursuit of instruments of innovation. Among the wonders of man which have distinguished him from all the other creatures are:

Optical Lenses:

Invented by the Greeks, man would not have been able to improve their vision, create television sets, and improve the work being done in the field of photography and film. This ancient invention helped to give rise to CD, DVD, and other optical methods of saving files.

Paper:

A 100 B.C. Chinese invention, the paper is the basis for the document program in our computers of today. It is the basis by which people blog their thoughts and interact with people online. We don't give much thought to it today, but if the paper had not been invented, we would not have any material to record our thoughts on.

Printing Press:

Along with paper, the printing press was the method by which people's thoughts were permanently recorded and shared with others for centuries. It modernized the way

that people became intellectuals as it allowed for the printing of books and other manuscripts for the first time. The modern printing press ushered in a new era of enlightenment.

Electricity:

All modern conveniences would not have been made possible without the invention of electricity. By harnessing the power of nature, such as that coming from lightning, we were able to understand how it could power things. Without the invention of electricity, none of our modern amenities would exist because we would all still be living by candlelight.

The Internal Combustion Engine:

Before Elon Musk tried to reinvent the engine, the combustion engine was created for use in trains and cars. This predecessor is the reason that cars were invented and that airplanes could finally fly farther and faster.

Telephone:

Before the mobile phone, there was the corded telephone that needed to be used while staying in one place. This invention brought humankind out of the written age of communication and into the verbal period of interaction, which eventually evolved into the internet of things and the invention of social media.

Cars:

Coming from the dirty transportation offered by the horse and carriage, the invention of the car was thought to be able to help protect the environment as environmental pollution caused by the horse's waste material would no longer be littered across streets and towns. Little did our predecessors know that cars would bring their own share of pollution and other problems along with it.

Airplane:

Before the long - distance airplane was invented, the human was satisfied with travelling by boat from one country to another. The advent of the airplane allowed the human to reach his destinations faster and more efficiently than when travelling by boat.

Semi-conductors:

They are the technological advancement of all time. Without semiconductor chips, the computer would have never been invented. The computer would not have evolved into the laptop, and the laptop would not have been able to transform into the tablet and mobile phone. The invention of this part was indeed the turning point of technological advancement.

Personal Computers:

Having evolved from the large as room computers of the 1970's, the 1980's personal computer was a miracle. It caused the demise of the lowly typewriter as the first choice for cleanly written text because of the creation of the word processing software. The need for people to carry their computer with them led to the invention of the laptop, which spun off into the android phone and tablet. Even the laptop has evolved, as you now have gaming PCs that are unbelievably powerful and laptops

that are just a few millimeters thick. With this single invention, the face of technology changed for man. It went from the “what if” line of inventive thinking to “anything is possible” because of the size of the chip and the power that it possesses.

Throughout the centuries, one thing has been certain. The lifestyle of man has been dictated or affected by the technological advancement that each generation faced. Improvements to the technology meant that man had the ability to surpass his own limitations as a person. The help of technological advancement means that man shall always be developing newer and more innovative ideas that can help to ease our current lifestyles.

At this point it would be necessary to point out that a good number of the men and women involved in these wonderful human exploits claim not to subscribe to any **open** faith in God. (We highlight the word “open” in this statement because we do not believe that anyone in their right mind can sincerely claim oblivion of the existence of a higher power (God) over the affairs of men. We believe that claim of atheism is a way to keep conscience away from feeling responsible and answerable to any higher authority (God). Well, this may be a topic for discussion some other day). The point we are making here is that, since the unique empowerment God has given to man is not limited to those who openly acknowledge and worship Him, so also can no one escape the ultimate consequences of such uniqueness and empowerment.

From the above, one fact is clear—Though man's identification with the earth cannot be severed, yet man is so distinct from the earth that he is more like God than he is like the dirt (see: **Image of God**).

Man does not gaze down upon the ground, fascinated with the corruptible matter from which he is made, but rather his gaze is upward, drawn by Him who is man's true Source. Man has not been made for the earth but for the heavenly places and things, not for time but for eternity, not for the ground but for God. Man feels drawn from himself to something or Someone greater than himself. Man may know that he is dirt, but he also knows that he can live better than dirt.

The contrast could not be more vivid: dirt versus glory. Though formed from the dust of the ground yet man has been crowned with “glory and honor” (Ps. 8:5). Despite the fact that man was taken from the earth, man is distinct from the earth, for he has been invested with that which is far greater than earth. Man has “glory” and “honor”—qualities that are not readily identified with dirt. God uses that which has no intrinsic value and gives it incalculable worth. Yes man is the last in creation, but has turned out to become the most significant.

Secondly, the use of dust in making man suggests a certain lowliness. This second part is the focus of this address and of course this synod. It's so because it is tied to the end of all that man will stand, live, and die for. Note, God did not use gold or granite or gemstones to make man. He used dust, a humble substance. Genesis 3:19 notes man's dependence upon God and the fragile nature of human life: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

REMEMBER YOU ARE DUST

It is a common trait for men of the flesh to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think especially considering man's exploits as highlighted above coupled with his dominion and control over the rest of the created world. It is easy for us men and women to be carried away by our physical, social, educational, scientific, technological or even religious prowess and lose sight of who really we are. So a closer look at the afore cited technological advances of man reveals the limitedness of man's ability, knowledge and wisdom. Each of these exploits of man come with great unintended consequences that turn around to point to man's frailty even in knowledge. Let's take a look at the invention of the optical lenses from where we have developed photography and film making. Today the world is tormented by the negative use of the invention in producing pornographic and other unethical and ungodly films and pictures. But man can do nothing about it. How about the invention of papers which involves cutting down of trees. Today we are suffering the advert effect of deforestation, struggling to find solutions that come with even more consequences. So also is the problem of air pollution resulting from the use the engine invented by man. Air transportation has been adjudged to be the safest and fastest. But we all can testify to the destruction and loss always associated to its mishaps to which man has no control or solution.

The unintended consequences of the use of computers and chips are so on the neck of man, that some are beginning to think that their uses may lead to the end of mankind. What clear pointers that man's knowledge and abilities are limited; that his life is fragile. That he is in control of nothing. That man is nothing but dust.

Accordingly, men who glory in the vanities of this life rejoice in their exalted status before other men. Like the Pharisees of old, craving the affection and admiration of others (John 12:43), they do and say those things that bring them into the popularity of the masses, rather than what is testified to be right and acceptable before the Creator of all flesh. So it is that men raise themselves to great prominence, receiving the honour and admiration of those whom they have sought to please - yet forgetting their humble origins. When the physical or emotional pains of life come, then you will, with no doubt, ascertain the weakness and fragility of man for no matter what a man's pedigree may be, whether he be born into a rich or poor family, all men have a common humble origin response to pain. Their strength and ego vanish like the dust.

WE ARE BUT DUST—THE CORONA LESSON

Between December 9th 2019 and January 7th 2020 my wife and I with our last daughter joined the rest of our family in the United States for the graduation of our first son. About two weeks into the trip news broke out of a sort of outbreak in China responsible for some deaths. And everyone in America was wondering what China was doing in allowing such and not able to control whatever it is. About two weeks after we got back to Nigeria, America was in total lock down and so was almost all the nations of the world. The rest is a story most of us can tell better than I could. Whatever your take of the pandemic is, the truth is that the world has been unable to save the life of over one million people from a medical condition that continues to defy every known effort and advancement of man. In declaration of man's

surrender to the pandemic, every nation and people of the world, irrespective of faith, status, persuasion or conviction, have accepted a "new normal". With over two hundred and fifty thousand people dead across Europe and over two hundred thousand from America alone, one thing is clear. The lesson that man with all his medical and technological advancement is grossly incapable of finding solutions to his problems, even the ones he created for himself; that man's life is fragile; that man is nothing but dust.

"You are dust. . . ." Those who recognise the reality of the situation may well also ponder their true relationship towards their Maker. He is the Almighty Creator, yet they are mere animated bits of clay, for the most part, unable to look beyond their own limited sphere of existence, to the ultimate outworking of the Creator's purpose. The fact of man's lowly material composition ought itself to be the reason of great humility before God. Hence Abraham, in taking it upon himself to plead for the sparing of Sodom for the sake of a few men of integrity spoke: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?" (Gen 18:27). Sometimes we feel like pioneers exploring virgin territory only to discover the footprints of those who have travelled the way before us.

That we are dust is a reminder that our lives are fragile, and that the lives and hearts of those around us are as well. So we must tread lightly and walk joyously, spreading love for hate, peace for rancor, and healing for a world which is all too wounded.

That we are dust is a reminder that in our material existence there is a limitedness, a boundedness which leaves the reality of who we are all too often far from the people that we wish to be, and that we are, ourselves, all too often far too vulnerable before the lesser angels of our nature and left needing the help of our friends, family, and indeed our God to press forward. There are many things in life over which we have no control, things we cannot change, no matter how hard we may wish to change them. We are but dust. Reminding us of just this simple yet profound common reality of our existence, is the call to freedom and to patience, peace, and a humility within ourselves which can reconcile who we are in reality with whom we ideally wish to be.

TO DUST YOU WILL RETURN:

As we have seen and noted clearly, Man's origin from dust speaks of his humble beginning and his fragile existence. Man cannot boast of any intrinsic worth; his value does not reside in the material composition of his body. And because of his dust-nature, he has no real strength nor inner components that guarantee his continued existence—man is dust. Job speaks to God:

"Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again?" (10:9-11). Sober men, who are not intoxicated with the flesh-elevating doctrines of humanism, will consider their own natural state. Not forgetting where they have come from, they look to where they are to return; back to the dust from whence they were formed. And at this level - the material, physical level - men have no natural pre-eminence over animals. Both are formed from dust, and both will return to dust when the natural course of events are worked out with the cessation

of life. This fact is truly a sobering one - though he may ascend to great heights in the estimation of his fellows, and though he may be rewarded greatly in the things of this life, the end of all men is identical to that of mere, brute beasts. "...All go unto one place." There, the rich and the poor meet together in a common destiny; "the small and great are there", lying together in an undignified state of decomposition as they moulder into dust

That unto dust we will return, though, is the challenge. In a world in which man seems to be or thinks he is in control; At a time when men are expanding the territory of their power, influence and affluence. A season when the wealthy gets wealthier even at the expense of the poor, lowly and weak. When those in power seek avenues to never give up power. A time when the governance of a people is becoming a one family, tribe or ethnic group affair. When one color is working hard to wipe the other away from the face of the earth. In a time like this we are faced with the real deal; the bitter truth-**we must return to dust.**

Now is the time to cast off the darkness of our own hearts, as it leaves the world literally for the warmth and joy of eternity. Now is the time to rid ourselves of the chains, addictions, and habits which hold us bound. Now is the time to repair those wounded friendships, and to remember once again the joy that we had in them. The time is now because we are returning to dust, and there is no other time.

This is a call that goes to people of all faiths and of no faith. This is a human call, it speaks not simply to Christian beliefs, but to all of humanity which understands that life is far too short, our time to love far too brief, our joy always far too limited. Now is the time, there is no other moment. There's time and season for everything. What's gonna be gonna be. There's nothing we can do about it.

This true fact of the frailty and the transitoriness of human life is clearer illustrated in the events of **ASH WEDNESDAY**. The beginning of Lent reminds us that this world is passing and that we should put our trust instead in the eternal, in the Lord. The season of Lent is set aside for us to reorient ourselves, to gain the proper perspective on things and put our priorities in order. We take off our old self so we might be properly prepared for the Paschal Mystery.

The ashes typically are imposed with the words, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return," while the sign of the cross is marked on the forehead. This speaks to us of both humility and exaltation, of death and new life. The ashes signify our inner fragility and poverty, and the cross our salvation in the mercy of God. It dramatizes St. Paul's remark in 1 Corinthians that "since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive". The rites points in two directions, one corresponding to "As in Adam all die" and the other corresponding to "In Christ shall all be made alive."

The most important thing, the only permanent reality, is God. Rather than storing up earthly treasures, we should seek first his everlasting kingdom (Luke 12:16-34).

All this is part of our preparation for heaven. The things of the temporal order are necessarily temporary and will all be for naught. But if we recognize our humility

and empty ourselves, putting the Lord before all else, we receive infinitely more than we fear we might lose. It is in this salvific perspective that the words of Genesis are repeated in the Ash Wednesday liturgy, inviting us to an awareness of our mortal state and our need for repentance. By his Cross and Resurrection, though we be only dust and ashes, we will be made a new creation. So, in the Gospel reading for Ash Wednesday, Jesus reminds us that all that we have here has been created from 'dust' and can return to 'dust'. He reminds us that we should instead be placing our heart on the eternal and spiritual things that last forever in heaven:

'Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.' Matt. 6:20-21.

And precisely what is that which will not return to dust and of which we should be working on in Lent? It is our soul.

So on Ash Wednesday we are taken back to the beginning so that we might go forward to redemption. We are invited to see ourselves as dust again, to detach ourselves from the things of this world and empty ourselves so that we might be filled instead with God's "breath of life," that is, with his eternal Spirit.

To Dust You Will Return – We are Going to Die:

Remember that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return. Although in creating mankind, God has lifted us up from our lowly origin, we are cautioned against pride. All our earthly goods are destined to be lost. Everything we have, all our worldly possessions, will one day turn to dust, just as the great ancient empires of Egypt and Babylon, Greece and Rome have crumbled. Even before then, time, age, illness and "doctor's orders" can take away our taste for our best food and drink, or our ability to enjoy best of our pleasure. More to the point, one day our bodies will fail and die. Of course, no one goes so far as to deny that death is a real thing. Death does happen ... to other people. Well, yes, it will happen to us, too, sooner or later. The fact that we are living into our late seventies and early eighties is no guarantee that you will celebrate your next birthday in the material world. Stretch your life out as long as technology makes possible, and even there at the furthest reach of medicine, Death is still waiting for you. There is no shutting off the mortality gene. In the long run, whether you are wise or a fool you share the same fate. You will come face to face with death, death that makes a mockery of so many of our human pretentions, desires and achievements. You are dust and to dust you shall return.

The point is not to live in fear of Death, for that is to live in fear of life. Rather, the point is to realize the opportunity purchased for us by Christ's sacrifice. The point is to live in the recognition that now is the only time we have to repent and reform our lives, to order our priorities according to that recognition. Only when we give Death its full and proper immanence can we realize the immediacy of the Gospel message and begin to live it authentically - in a sense, to "live like we are dying".

OUR CHARGE

To Church Leaders:

As emphasized earlier, a major outcome of the uniqueness of man by creation is the responsibility of leadership. And the most profound of such is the leadership in the household of God. Men and women alike have been called to different strata of the Church's leadership to guide her unto fulfilling her duty of being the conscience of the society. However, and unfortunately, the church continues to be sidetracked by earthly lust and material acquisition. She has replaced the oil boom and cash crops of the 70s and 80s. Her leaders continue to fatten themselves with the resources meant for the expansion of God's Kingdom at the detriment of the souls of her members. Some subject members to humiliating practices and observances that they themselves are not willing to partake of. The gospel of Christ has been so watered down that church services are now mere feel good and entertainment gatherings. The need of Church CEOs- Churchpreneurs, has been placed over the value of the souls of members and God is watching.

We therefore charge and remind all church leaders at all levels that we are nothing but dust. Apart from our saved soul and those we won for Christ, we will be stripped of all other possessions and acquisitions and left bay to vanish like the dust.

To Traditional Leaders:

The values and life of a people are embedded in their culture and traditions. So to be called to defend, protect and uphold such traditions is a call for the sustenance and security of the people's future. So we appreciate and respect the position of our traditional leaders at all levels. But we must warn that the ungodly and untraditional disposition of some who occupy this prestigious position is posing a great risk to the future of our existences as a people. I am yet to understand how a traditional ruler who lives thousands of miles, some even continents, away from their communities could effectively be a custodian, defender of the people's traditions and oversee the daily maintenance of law and order in the community. When a traditional ruler openly or behaviorally favors one political party against the other and or sells his community for money or other material acquisitions, he loses the trust and respect of his subjects and destroys the peace in his community. The selfish desires of our traditional leaders which gave birth to the one kitchen one autonomous community system, particularly in our part of Igbo land, has succeeded in dividing us and destroying our cultural and traditional heritage. We therefore charge our traditional leaders to remember that they are nothing but dust. That a time will come when the only thing left of them will be the traditional and cultural legacies they left during their reign.

To Our Political Leaders:

ABIA STATE: We continue to express our unreserved gratitude to our Father and God for graciously preserving the life of our dear brother and Governor, Okezie Victor Ikpeazu PhD. Dear Governor, your recovery is a bold declaration and assurance by God that He is not done with you. Your life and mission, especially in Abia, have been given a new lease, mandate and approval. Therefore Your Excellency, we wish to remind you of how many people were feeling the pain you felt while in the sick bed. How many people were having the same thought going through your mind all

through the period? If our answer is same as yours, then you were alone with your faith at those moments. So we remind you that so you will alone be accounting for your mission in the state. Therefore our dear brother do not allow anyone no matter how close distract you from whatever it is you set out to do as the Governor of our state. When the chips are down like they were then, all cheer leaders will desert and look for recognition elsewhere. But one thing is sure, none who has made Christ their pillar has ever been disappointed. The Lord who found value in your life, will sustain and celebrate you. We call on all Abians especially those saddled with responsibilities of providing dividends of democracy to the people, to remember that we are all nothing but dust and so look around the state to see if there's much that can draw the light of the favor of God upon them now and on their families when they leave office and are gone. May God continue to bless Abia.

THE SOUTH EAST AND "SOUTH SOUTH":

The two areas mentioned above, is what was the Eastern region of the nation Nigeria. The area has been known for its rich natural resources which forms the major source of the nation's financial and economic muscle. Later the area become divided into three states - East Central, Rivers, and South Eastern States. Even with the creation as individual states, the area couldn't see much that divided them but remained united by their multiple similarities and cultural compliments. They also remained united in their social political pursuits. However, sometime between 1993 and 1998, the area was divided into two geo-political zones - the South East and the South South. It is expected that such development would bring more progress and development to the region. But clearly that has not been the case instead, though the region has continued to be the resource capital of the nation, the unity and cooperation that once existed among the people of the region continue to deteriorate hampering the economic, physical, and socio political development of the region. We charge the political leaders of the old Eastern region to look around the rest of the nation and ascertain if we are better divided or united.

THE NIGERIAN NATION:

If there's one country that benefitted most from the current pandemic, it's definitely Nigeria and if there's one group of people that needs to be reminded that man with all his power and acquisitions is nothing but dust, it's the political leaders of Nigeria and the well to do citizens who have refused to hold them accountable. Whether you believe that the virus is real or not, the truth is that it took the life of many Nigerians in Nigeria. Did anyone in Nigeria catch the virus and died? Answer to this may be a matter

of persuasion and conviction. But the undeniable truth is that many Nigerians, most of whom are of the elite class died because they could not access their usual abroad medical attention since there's none here at home. What a shame. A sixty year old man who watches his first son die of hunger will definitely spend the rest of his life sorrowing over his failure and irresponsibility. Our dear Excellences and honorables, should the fact that between April and September 2020, at the prime of summer, none of you made any oversea's trip be forgotten just like that? As was with the Biblical rich fool, surely many have long booked their oversea's summer vacation ticket and boom, Coro struck and we got stuck. Shouldn't it remind you that we are all dust and to dust we will return? Shouldn't this evoke some level of responsibility

in your act of governance? Which Nigeria will your children return to after their oversea education or are they sold to perpetual voluntary slavery in foreign countries? A word they say is enough for the wise. But remember both the wise and the fool will suffer same end for both are dust.

The Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA 2020):

We've decided to bring this matter up at this point because of the concern raised about it by some quarters of the Church. Though am not a lawyer by profession, I've taken some time to read, consult and discuss with other professionals on the issues concerning this new amendment to the existing Companies and Allied Matters act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with particular reference to section 839 of the act. We've made our humble take on this matter known in other discussions. As all can see and read, there's nothing in the act as it is that is a step to stiffen, or in a better church language, persecute the church. We discovered that the Nigerian version of the act is same with such acts (laws) in most countries of the world. However, we clearly understand the fear of the undeniable but unfortunate Nigerian religious and ethnic/tribal factor in the actual interpretation and implementation of the act. So again we say that calling for a change of the law because we foresee its misinterpretation and misapplication may not be fruitful.

By the way, if this be a way to persecute the Church, it wouldn't be the first and it will suffer the face of those that preceded it. All men are but dust and so are their plots and schemes. The Lord of the Church remains on the thrown and in charge. We've seen this play out in this nation and other nations severally through history. We would rather charge Church leaders to ensure that we do not give the enemy room to succeed. There is obvious need for probity, contentment, financial openness, and Christ-like leadership. The Church must match on. No gate shall prevail against it.

THE ENDSARS PROTEST:

For over a couple of weeks now, several streets and towns in our nation have witnessed the protests of angry Nigerians over police brutality with particular reference to the activities of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). It should be recalled that the Special Anti-Armed Robbery Squad - SARS, was set up in Lagos in 1992 following the desertion of the police from the streets of Lagos due to their fall out with the soldiers resulting from the killing of an army officer. When criminals took advantage of the absence of the police, the then IG of police set up the "SARS". It should also be noted that the outfit was very effective in its duty until, for some reasons, things fell apart with the centre unable to hold. Without going deeper into the issue, we employ the government never to let this issue be swept under the carpet. Please, the citizens of Nigeria cannot afford the unchecked menace of criminals on our streets and/or neighborhoods, neither must we sit and watch as those we pay to protect us turn around to intimidate, harass and even kill us. We ask that nobody or group of persons' interests be placed over the protection of the lives and properties of the citizens of this nation. The situation in Nigeria is already too volatile and the citizens under enough stress. It is a no-brainer that the Nigeria police is overdue for retraining, reform, and an improved condition of service. Please, Mr. President, do not let this one escalate. We implore the protesters and

every Nigerian citizen to refrain from any form of violence as we pray that the government will do the needful and do so in a timely manner.

To The Citizens:

We congratulate all fellow citizens of Nigeria on our sixtieth independence anniversary. But coming to think about it, what really are we independent of? After sixty years our petroleum products are imported. Majority of our food are imported including toothpick. Our education system and even our cultural exhibitions are imported. After sixty years the only indigenous thing that has remained with us is bad governance.

Fellow citizens, could you imagine what could have happen if the Corona virus was only in Nigeria? Both chambers of the Nigerian legislature would have been vacated till now. The pandemic has taught us that time has come for us to rise and take destiny in our hands. We are all dust and so should not allow fellow dusts treat us as if they are made of granite and gold. We must hold our leaders accountable now before they totally mortgage our future and that of generations yet unborn.

Conclusion:

God could have chosen to create humans in any way He desired. However, Scripture records the particular way He did create - using both natural material (dust) and supernatural power to give humans a unique place in the cosmos. The recipe of dust of the earth + God's breath emphasizes the supernatural power of God and the fragile nature of humanity. All of life, its unanswered questions and its passions, its joys and its frustrations, come from God. Human life is completely dependent upon God, and, as a result, humans are called to worship the Lord and to serve Him only.

The earth is just a tiny speck of dust in the vast universe. Man is a tiny speck of dust on earth, almost nothing, maybe a millionth tinier dust in the universe. Despite being just a tiny speck of atom, man never stops boasting! I wondered why we behave, act and think as though we are the center of the universe especially in dealing with fellow men.

It may be humbling a thought to consider that man is actually nothing but a dust with a life of breath in it. But with just a tiny achievement, with just little riches and possessions, with only a car or a mansion, or a business, man thinks he is already God, acts and behaves with an overweening pride. Forgetting the stark reality and fact, that with just one snap of time, one accident or one illness or disease, everything will be nothing and he returns to dust where he once came from. You put a lot of trouble and effort into life. But what is the point, what dividends does it pay? We are here today and gone tomorrow in a world that goes on and on and on. Life is full of many challenges and crisis.

I doubt how many of us (including me) will think - to live and breathe fresh air every day is a cause of gratitude by itself. None of us are issued with a renewable ticket for this life. For life is very fragile and totally unpredictable. I am here today, I am gone tomorrow. And all that I have done will just be a mere book at the most, a tiny little book piled under the billions of books in the archive of books throughout time. And soon will be forgotten by the next generation. The world was there before we

took our first unsteady steps upon it, and it is likely still to be there when we have taken our last faltering steps. Whatever our abilities, whatever our achievements, we remain, in the words of the hymn, “Frail children of dust and feeble as frail”.

This synod is a reminder to bow down before the Creator in deep humility, acknowledging the truth that we live because of that Creator. While it is a good thing to be active, hardworking and diligent in order to excel in life, **we must understand that our struggles are not to be “do or die”.** There is absolutely nothing ahead of us that is worth dying for. Our labor and toiling should not be made to maim or harm, but encourage others. We must run away from whatever would make others weep or suffer. We must live our life knowing fully well that **“We Are Nothing But Dust And To Dust We Will Surely Return”.**

Please join me as we end with this hymn:

MY WILL IS WEAK, MY STRENGTH IS FRAIL

1. My will is weak, my strength is frail,
And all my hope is nearly gone;
I can but trust Thy working true
To gently hold and lead me on.
2. I've tried my best, but still have failed,
E'en as before I've failed and erred;
Thy patience is my only trust
To hold and keep me to Thy word.
3. Whene'er my heart is lifted up
How very near I am to fall;
I dare not do, I dare not think,
I need Thyself in great or small.
4. Thou art my Savior, strength and stay,
O Lord, I come to seek Thy face;
Though I'm the weakest of the weak,
My strength is nothing but Thy grace.

Thanks for your audience, and may the joy of the Lord remain your strength.

**Your Brother, Friend and Bishop,
†Nath, Aba Ngwa North.**