

2017 SYNOD PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

SYNOD PRAYER

Almighty God, our heavenly father, the creator and the preserver of all mankind, we thank You for bringing us together as one family to witness another Synod.

The Immortal, Invisible, and only wise God, we ask for Your presence in this Holy Convocation. By the power of the Holy Spirit break, remould and use us to Your own praise and glory. Give us the power to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow You daily and closely; that we may enter into Your Kingdom at last, through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

We bring you greetings in His name, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The Architect and Controller General of the affairs of our Diocese, our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. I ask that you join me as, through Him, we give all glory, honor, worship and adoration to the Almighty God and our Father, the creator and preserver of all life, for graciously bringing us together to this second session of our fourth synod.

We joyfully welcome all our Diocesan Officers here present, my noble nominees, members of the house of clergy and their wives, council of Knights and the ladies, our distinguished guests and honorees, and all other diocesan staff members and their families. We are glad to welcome our honorable delegates, to yet another opportunity to testify to the love and grace of the Lord upon us and a privilege to seek for, and obtain divine direction for our life together as the family of God. On your behalf, we extend our show of appreciation to all our political and traditional leaders here present.

Please join me as we humbly welcome the Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Aba, and the Bishop of Umuahia Diocese, His Grace, The Most Rev'd Ikechi Nwachukwu Nwosu PhD. Your grace, on your behalf, we welcome all our brother bishops here present. My lords,

we are honored to have you. We however welcome in a special way, our grandfather and grand mentor, the immediate retired Archbishop of Aba Province and Bishop of Aba, His Grace, The Most Rev'd Dr. Ugochukwu Uwaoma Ezuoke, and Mama Hon. Mrs. Chinonyerem Ezuoke. Your grace, and Mama, may you continue to enjoy God's grace, as you remain a source of encouragement and support to us. We extend our heartfelt welcome to all security and uniform outfits here present, our choirs, the press, and the rest of us.

People of God, please permit me to, and join me in welcoming someone who wishes I was her son, but at the same time prefers that I treat her as my baby, my toughest but most sincere critic. The one who works very hard to get the best out of me, The President of our Women Ministry, Mama Aba Ngwa North, my favor, Princess (Mrs) Odionyenfe Nworoni Chinenye Kanu. Mama ayi and baby m, welcome.

At this point, we wish to appreciate all who contributed in no small measures to the success of this year's synod. We must appreciate the synod secretariat led by the Clerical Synod Secretary - the Rev'd Canon Eze Egesia, all the assistants and supporting staff. We applaud the untiring efforts of the Chairman of the Central Planning Committee, Sir Chijioke Uhie and the entire members of that committee. We just want to assure you that the Lord you serve in this capacity will reward you abundantly. With a sincere heart, we do appreciate the efforts of the board and members of Osisoma Ngwa Archdeaconry especially the supervisor and his wife, the Rev'd Canon Nnamdi and Mrs. Nkechinyere Usuka, the clergy and their wives, and all workers and members of the different churches that make up this Archdeaconry. Our special thanks go to the local organizing committee led by Chief Jonathan Chigbu Nwagbara. We pray that our good Lord will remember your sincere services and reward you all abundantly. I am sincerely indebted to my immediate office staff - secretary, clerk, Admin. Assistant and chaplains for standing the heat of this synod preparation. We are proud and grateful to God to say that these staff members are beginning to allow the Lord shape them into the high responsibility He has called them. We pray they will continue on this path to God' glory. To the rest of my family, I appreciate your prayers and support. May you all never lose your rewards.

OUR SYNOD VENUE

St. Thomas Church Umuakpara

In 1913, the Riverine oil Trading, carried on by residents of Opobo Settlers at Abayi Waterside afforded the oil producers and traders from Umuakpara opportunity of coming in contact with Christianity. As the trade link between Umuakpara people and those of Opobo Settlers developed, the oil traders from Umuakpara discovered that the Settlers refused any business transactions on Sundays, being the day they worshipped their God in the Church building they erected near the river. All the commodities carried to Abayi waterside on Sundays were kept till Monday for sales.

Elijah Mgbarine, Nnenne Amu Omongo and Paul Nwangwa all of Umueke Village in Umuakpara joined the Opobo Settlers in their worship on Sundays at Abayi Waterside. They were the first Christian converts from Umuakpara. They later took other kinsmen to worship at Abayi Waterside. They called the Sundays “Ubochi Olori”.

After a year of travelling for worship at Abayi Waterside, the three people - Elijah Mgbarine, Nnenne Amu Omongo and Paul Nwangwa brought home the church and established it in Mgbarine's compound in 1914. The Church was symbolically called “Church Nnenne Amu”. Mary Okezie was the first woman to join them when the church was brought home.

The first Church Teacher sent to them was Teacher Abednego and was given residential accommodation in Mgbarine's compound, from where he visited other nearby villages to preach the Gospel. He was fondly called “Abaningo”. Villages like Umuokiri, Umuimo, Umuagbai attended church services in Mgbarine's compound.

In 1915, all the idols in Umueke and other villages around were burnt. With influx of new converts to the church, it was moved to its present site, which was regarded as an evil forest (Ohia Nkpa). The worshippers from other villages went home and establish their own churches.

As the people grew spiritually and in faith, some members accepted to go into Holy wedlock, first among them was Joseph Ogumgbuaja and

wife who wedded on the 9th September, 1927. Then followed by Elijah Mgbarine and his wife.

Christianity has made a tremendous impact in the lives of Umuakpara people. The church gave rise to the birth of other churches of various denominations. There are eminent men and women of Umuakpara in education, religion and politics. For instance, H.R.H Sir Eze G.O. Mgbarine, (son of Catechist Mgbarine), the Traditional Ruler of Umuakpara. The resistance of strangers living in the area with the clergy has helped to develop the church. As a result, the church has grown spiritually and physically in number and in strength.

However, with the growth of the congregation, this present church building was erected. The foundation stone was laid on 22nd March, 1980 by His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. H.A.I. Afonya JP, C.O.N

In the year 1990 Rt. Rev'd Prof. Augustine Onyeyirichukwu Iwuagwu granted Umuakpara Church a Parish Status, in the same year Rev'd J.O. Ekeleme became the first Parish Priest. The Parish was elevated to Archdeaconry Status by His Lordship Rt. Rev'd Dr. Ugochukwu Uwaoma Ezuoke in the year, 2004.

Below is the list of pastors that have served in this parish: Rev'd S.O. Nwosu, Rev'd E.C. Amadi, Rev'd A.A. Ogodo, Rev'd J.O. Ekeleme, Rev'd Canon G.U. Nwaeze, Rev'd Canon G.I. Okeugo, Rev'd B.N. Nmelu, Rev'd Godfrey Onyenweaku, Rev'd Canon Samuel Baaba, Ven. Christopher Denkoro, Rev'd Hart O. Hart, Rev. John Mammah, Ven. Eric U. Ukanwa, Rev'd Kelechi Elele, Ven. Emmanuel Ogbonna.

Presently serving are Rev'd Uzoma Atuzieogu and Rev'd Canon Nnamdi N. Usuka - Vicar/Supervisor. We sincerely thank God for the testimonies and faith of the men and women who gave themselves to be used by God for this mission and for sustaining the mission till this day.

OUR SYNOD PREACHER

Rt. Rev Prof Dapo Asaju

Bishop Dapo Asaju was born in Iyara, Kogi State on 16th November 1961 to a royal family. His grandfather and father were kings over their community. He chose the priestly order rather than follow the throne of his ancestry.

Educated at Holy Trinity Lokoja, Abdul Aziz Atta College Okene, Federal Government College Ilorin and the University of Ilorin, he possesses undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Biblical Studies. He holds a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies. Bishop Asaju also studied at the Birmingham Christian College in Selly Oak, Birmingham, Uk. He has taught in the University for thirty one years, rising to become Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State University, Lagos.

He was elected Bishop Theologian for the Church of Nigeria in 2010 and serves as Vice Chancellor of Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo. He is married to Barrister Harriet Asaju the Law Librarian of Lagos State University. They are blessed with two daughters and a son.

OTHER PREACHERS & RESOURCE PERSONS

REVD. JOHN IKECHI MAMMAH

He preached at the opening service on Thursday.

REV'D. DANIEL ENYEREIBENYEM FRIDAY NNAJI

He preached at the Holy Communion Service yesterday.

REV'D SAMUEL CHIBUZOR WILSON

He preached at the Holy Communion Service this Morning.

REV'D. KELECHUKWU CHUKWUNMAEZE ELELE

He will preach at the Sunday morning Holy Communion service.

REVD. CANON NNAMDI N. USUKA

He will conduct our Synod Thanksgiving Service tomorrow.

REV. UDOCHUKWU EPHRAIM AHAGHOTU, (PhD, GDJ)

He proposed the Synod Motion yesterday.

CHUKWUDI UGOCHUKWU CHIBUZOR ESQ.

He seconded the motion.

HONORABLE JUSTICE (MRS.) ORY ZIK-IKEORHA, OUR CHANCELLOR.

She will move the motion for the acceptance of this address.

SIR CHUKS KAMANU, MBBCH, FWACS, FICS, DIPL. ART

He will second the motion for acceptance of this Address.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

ARMS:

Women Ministry

The Women Ministry of our Diocese has continued to be a strong and veritable instrument in the hand of God in the wheels of progress of our Diocese. Their 2016 Widows' Conference which took place at All Saints Cathedral Abayi Umuocham on Saturday 26th November 2016 was a display of God's favor. The Theme was "Hope in a Hopeless Situation" (Luke 7:11-15). There was Talk on the theme, aimed at encouraging the widows to always rely on God for solution to their problems. There were prayer sessions, play-let, testimonies, and economic empowerment, etc. Above all, at the end of the conference, food items worth of two million, one hundred and fifty-nine thousand, two hundred and ten naira (N 2,159,210) was distributed to over 350 widows that were in attendance, comprising Anglicans non-Anglicans. Each of them went home rejoicing to God's glory. As usual the women ended the year's activities with their Christmas Carol of Nine Lessons/End of year Party at TACP Abayi on Saturday 3rd December, 2016.

They started this year with their annual Workers Wives' Retreat held from Friday 20th - Saturday 21st January 2017 at the Cathedral, the Theme was, "The Great Commission and your Ministry; How far?" Matt.

28: 18-20. The programme featured Bible Study, Talks and Commitment Prayers. Rededication Service for all Women and Girls in the Diocese took place on Sunday 22nd January 2017 in all the Parish Headquarters. The 2017 Annual Women Prayer Conference was held at St. Martin's Akpaa 1, with the Theme: "Holy Spirit, the Greatest Power on Earth" 1 Thess. 1: 4-10, Acts 1:8. It was indeed another moment of spiritual rejuvenation as the Diocesan Women under the unction of the Holy Spirit gathered to pray for the Diocese and for their individual needs. The event took place from Thursday 26th - Saturday 28th January 2017 with Holy Communion celebrated by us.

The Women World Day of Prayer which took place on Wednesday 3rd March, 2017 was observed in all the Parish Headquarters of our Diocese. The theme was "Am I Being Unfair to You?" The Mothering Sunday Week of Activities started from Monday 27th March to Sunday 1st April 2017 with the Theme "Motherhood in A Changing World" (Titus 2:3-5). There was a new innovation this year as they added track events such as 100 meters, 200 meters, Relay and Sack Races, etc., which took place on Saturday 11th March at Ngwa High School Field. It was an enjoyable moment. We encourage this as it does not only pull us together, it also helps to keep us physically fit and healthy.

The 2017 Women's Guild Conference was held at St. Gabriel's Church Umuode from Thursday 6th to Sunday 9th July 2017 with the theme "Let God Do It His Own Way" (John 11:21). We preached the opening and thanksgiving sermons. Among the many monumental highlights of the conference was that it was the first time a member of the executive arm of Abia State ever attended any of our Diocesan functions on our invitation. The wife of the Governor and First Lady of our state, Deaconess Nkechi Ikpeazu was in attendance, and committedly so. We continue to appreciate that rare show of humility and support. The women 72 room hostel project has been decked to the glory of God.

At this point, it is proper and needful to thank and congratulate the leadership of our women ministry, the President, Vice Presidents and all officers at the parish, Archdeaconry, and Diocesan levels. We appreciate your commitment and support to our ministry and life together. May the grace of God be always made available to you.

Diocesan Council of Knights

To the glory of God, the Diocesan Council of Knights is doing well.

From Thursday 27th - Sunday 30th October, 2016 they assembled at St. Paul's Church Umuocham for their Week/Award giving ceremony, which featured a variety of activities; such as Holy Communion Service, Evangelism Outreach to Aba Prisons in-mates, Visitation to her in-door members, Bible Study, Exposition, and Talk.

We appreciate the re-kindled zeal seen in some of the members and urge them to keep it up. We pray and wish that they will become more aware of their God given responsibilities, whereby those who are not fully committed to the activities of the council and diocese should have a re-think. Nevertheless, their activities this year started with retreat and rededication with thanksgiving service held from Friday 24th - Sunday 26th February 2017 at All Saints Cathedral Abayi - Umuocham with the Theme "Let the Mighty Men Arise" Joel 3:9, Jer. 8:4. The Retreat featured, among other things, Talks, Bible Study, Holy Communion, Prayer Session and an address presented by the Council President.

We commend the President of the Council and his Team for their renewed zeal and determination to make the Council a force to reckon with within the Diocese, the Province, and at the JCK. We charge them not to be discouraged in their commitment.

The Ladies' Council was not left out as they held their own Annual Retreat from Friday 26th - Saturday 27th May 2017 at All Saints Cathedral Abayi Umuocham with the Theme "The Great Commission and Your Ministry, How Far?" (Matt. 28:18-20). To mark their week, they visited their indoor members and our schools with cash and material gifts. We applaud the efforts of the leaders of the council for good leadership approach and commitment towards success. We remind the Knights of the need to always encourage and support the good efforts of the ladies in order to build a formidable force to the glory of God and progress of the Diocese.

Ministry of Praise

Our Ministry of Praise is doing well as we can feel their impact already through the improvement in our worship experiences in our churches.

They participated actively during the burial and other programmes organized in honour of our pioneer Diocesan music director late Sir Dr. Joseph Uruakpa. Our Diocesan singing competition in different categories is going on at this time. We commend the effort of the Diocesan Chaplain, the deputy director, and other members of the music council. However, it is very important that we remind the ministry leadership that our expectations for the ministry is not to have men and women of ungodly and questionable characters singing and winning our trophies while turning our choir stalls into the devil's throne. Now that we have gotten their attention and interest towards the ministry, it is important the leadership begins to manifest and inculcate into our choristers the character and discipline that befit their calling. The character threat we are seeing among the leadership and membership of our Diocesan Choir has no place in this Diocese and must change. In the coming weeks, the pruning process will begin.

Youth Ministry

We are pleased with the activities of the Youth Ministry in the Diocese so far. Their level of commitment is commendable. They are active to their Retreats, Conferences and Trainings both in the Diocesan, Provincial and at the National levels. We appreciate the good relationship that exist between them and their leadership. As we said earlier we are still working conscientiously to see that their future will be brighter.

The leadership is visionary and ready to learn. We urge them to always be humble and obedient to the church authorities and with a simple heart diligently serving the Lord. Our plan is to set up some empowerment programs for them in line with our vision and we will do everything under God to achieve this God given task. But bear in mind that only those who are committed to the activities of their Local Churches will be recognized. One of our youth members will be joining the rest of the Anglican world in the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Israel come June next year.

On another note, we've been following with dismay the lack of interest among our priests in the future of the church. A situation where a priest cannot encourage the youth to follow Diocesan directives is only a show

of the incompetence of such priest to hold the office they occupy. Therefore this address asks the synod to resolve that part of the performance assessment for our priests will be ability to organize and sustain a strong youth group at the local and parish levels.

Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC)

Our EFAC 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 wonderful, it had the Theme: Dare to be a Daniel” (Daniel 1:8, 6:4, 10). Records available to us show that members of our churches within the Diocese participated actively in this year's celebration. As usual, our Pentecost Sunday message was read in all the churches admonishing all the members to support the Evangelical work of our Diocese because it is through witnessing that we prove our discipleship. We urged every member of this diocese to find an avenue of leading someone or people to Christ. As we all know our emphasis is much on leading those around us to the knowledge of the life transforming love of Christ and nothing shall hinder us from this mandate of the Lord of the Church Himself. As part of the activities of this year's EFAC week, assignment to organize outreaches by strong EFAC groups was given. We believe the exercise was fruitful. They participated actively at Diocesan, Provincial and National programmes within the period under review. They were an integral part of the planning and execution of the Diocesan crusade. We appreciate the commitment and efforts of the leadership of the fellowship.

Prayer Ministry

Our prayer ministry has been active in ensuring a healthy prayer culture within the Diocese. They organized several training programs and seminars to encourage congregations and members to pray and pray aright. The ministry participated in the Provincial and National Prayer Conference and Convocation within the period under review. They planned and executed a fruitful Diocesan Prayer Conference. We commend the efforts of the Chaplain and the entire ministry. We encourage all congregations to support this life wire arm of our Diocese by physically participating in their programs and or providing resources to support their services.

Circle of Prayer

Our wish to keep and maintain the practices of the early church and our understanding of the efficacy of prayer, led us to reintroduce the habit of praying for the leaders, workers and every local congregation within the diocese through our circle of prayer every week. The fact still remains that the power and efficacy of fervent prayers cannot be underestimated. In the same vein we intend to make our churches and members a praying people, and to warn them of the dangers and damaging effects of patronizing fake prayer houses, prophets and prophetesses that fill every corner of our streets destroying homes, marriages, relationships and worst of it all deceiving and sending greater number of people even our church members to early grave and hell fire.

Our circle of prayer is properly arranged in a way that every Sunday the diocese as a family prays for one particular church, the worker(s) or office with specific prayer point arranged properly in relation to that church, worker(s) or office. We encourage our workers not to substitute the use of this family prayer booklet with any other as this may mean disconnecting that church from the rest of the diocese in that communal worship. We still direct that the prayer booklet can be used daily as well.

Anglican Children Ministry (ACM)

We are glad to report that our children ministry is growing healthy, spiritually and physically. The election for the new officers was done on Saturday 13th May, 2017. We encourage the new officers to be steadfast as they serve, bearing in mind that the Lord will always reward those who serve Him in sincerity and trustworthiness. We commend the effort of the Chaplain, leaders and teachers. We ask them not to relent as God is not unjust and will 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. Remember they are the Church and leaders of tomorrow. Let us not fail to teach them those virtues they should know as children before leaving home.

This year's Diocesan ACM Holiday Camp was held from Thursday 7th - Saturday 9th September, 2017, at Ngwa High School Abayi Aba with the theme "A Living and Holy sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). A total number of 488

registered for the conference. We are grateful to the parishes and arms for sponsoring the conference and appeal to good spirited members of the diocese to invest in the lives of our children in subsequent conferences, this will create opportunity for more children to participate in the future. We appreciate the chaplain, DACM coordinator, DACM executive and the ACM teachers of various stations for their relentless effort towards the success of the children ministry.

We are glad to report to the synod that our diocese was ably represented at the Provincial ACM bible quiz competition and we took the second position. We also represented the Province at the National level and at the National level we took first position for the Province. We will be appreciating and honoring those who represented us, in this synod.

Over these years, we've been observing disappointedly the erosion of the Igbo language and culture. A situation where a child born of Igbo parents would boldly tell you "I don't understand Igbo" or "I can't read or speak Igbo", is not just shameful, it is regrettable; especially when such child had never stepped out of the shores of Igbo land. We believe as the Church, we must do something. Therefore we've directed that no confirmation service will be conducted in any foreign language, unless in the urban areas and when those to be confirmed are not of Igbo extraction. Furthermore, we, through this address direct that at least one service for the children on Sundays must be in Igbo language in the urban area, while all services in the rural areas be in Igbo language. We call on all parents and ACM teachers to conform and support this move to secure a healthy future for us as a Church and a people.

Christian Men's Fellowship (CMF)/Fathers' Sunday 2017.

We are indeed impressed by the way fathers have continued to strive in the right and Godly direction. Their level of commitment and participation in the church programs now is becoming encouraging unlike what we use to know years ago. Following the expiration of the tenure of the offices of the DCMF Executives, we held an election on Saturday 25th March at St. Stephen's Church Umuobasi - Amavor and it was successful. We congratulate the new officers for their offices and pray God to give them clear directives to serve in line with the vision of our Diocese.

We bless the name of the Lord for our Men especially during their week of celebration and encourage them to do more in living up to their God given roles and responsibilities in the home, church and society. The theme for our Fathers' Sunday and Conference this year was "A Fathers' Costliest Mistake" (Luke 2:42-46)

Reports show that the fathers participated very well from Monday 12th - Sunday 18th June 2017, in our different churches during the fathers' day celebration. Our annual fathers' novelty football Competition had some hitches and the organizers are working hard to clear it. We continue to remind our workers and fathers that honesty, sense of maturity, and sincerity are always audible evidence of our Christian testimony. We commend the efforts of the DCMF leadership so far.

Board of Mission and Evangelism

Our Board of Mission and Evangelism has been coordinating our outreach activities very effectively. Within the period, they collaborated with different groups and parishes in carrying out several mission outreach programs. The prominent among this is the Diocesan City Wide Crusade. We appreciate the leadership of the board. We solicit help and support for the board. Their mission takes them to all parts of the Diocese and so they are in dire need of a vehicle to enhance their effectiveness. We pray that someone or group may be touched to come to our aid in this regard.

Information and Communication Technology Centre (ICT)/Bookshop

In our 2013 presidential address, we promised that no matter our financial challenges we shall relocate our ICT department and Bookshop to a larger and more appropriate place for a wider public use. We also envisaged that our new site will accommodate our modern equipments and gadgets. Today we are pleased to say that the new facility is ready for use. The equipping of the facility is going on now and soon the movement of the department will take place. Our next goal is to make our Diocesan ICT Centre E-Library capable which will help both our workers and the general public to have access to the world's best libraries and learning centers just by a click of the mouse. We are grateful to Senator Nkechi Nworgu for erecting this new facility in memory of her husband Sir Dr. Roland Nworgu, we pray for more showers

of God's blessing upon her and her family. We pray that other members, families and groups in our diocese may emulate this act of service to God's glory and their blessing.

On our bookstore, we are finalizing plans with African Text Books (ACTS), an International Christian literature publishing and sales outfit to establish a distribution and sales outpost in our new facility at the Cathedral. We are looking forward to having this operational before the year runs out.

Church Land Survey

The need for our insistence on all Church lands to be properly surveyed and documented under the Registered Trustee of Diocese of Aba Ngwa North cannot be over emphasized. Every member of this Diocese should see this move as a major means of securing our landed properties against encroachment and theft. The surveyor engaged by the Diocese is still available and willing to negotiate with any church whose lands are not yet surveyed or unable to trace their documents. To those churches that have complied with this directive we commend you and ask that the documents be please submitted to the Diocesan Registrar for proper documentation and safe keeping.

Sunday School Board/ Bible Study Program

This Board has continued to coordinate the Bible Study and Sunday School program across the Diocese. They organized a Facilitators' Workshop on Saturday 8th April at the Cathedral to review what they have been doing and allowed people to ask questions bordering on how to improve the way we teach and study in our different Churches. Participants were reminded that they are not Bible study teachers rather facilitators. The goal is to improve on the handling of our Churches Sunday Schools. They have continued to produce our Bible Study Manual yearly, making for a good understanding and assimilation of our synod messages. We know that our Sunday School Manual now enjoys a wider usage, even outside Nigeria. Copies of this year's edition are ready and will be given to our parishes at the end of this synod. We continue to enjoin every church station and all our members to make the most of this manual for our spiritual growth and nourishment.

Staff Training, Development and Welfare

The Diocese has pursued with vigor her Staff training and development in addition to the prompt payment of their stipend. Some members of the Staff have distinguished themselves in different fields of study, as at this synod some have defended their either OND, HND, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.A or Ph.D. programs successfully at different institutions of high learning. We congratulate them on this feat, and encourage others to follow suit. We should remember that at the end of this synod, any clergyman who holds anything less than a bachelors degree in related discipline will be regarded as a Catechist. Those concerned should take note.

Not long ago, we signed a cheque of N3,000,000 (Three Million Naira) under the Diocesan Workers Welfare Scheme for six of our workers. This was in line with our vision to see that our workers welfare are enhanced. We expect that the funds be properly used. We hope to make this a yearly program. Plans are also on high gear towards providing a medical and health care package for our workers and their families. We encourage our members to please take the welfare of our workers seriously as the workers resolve to jealously guard the souls of the flock committed to their charge.

Diocesan Lay Readers Association

By the grace of God the Lay Readers Association of our Diocese is waxing strong in assisting in their various churches. So many of them are involve in the leading of our Mid-Matin Sunday School since we started it. Accordingly, they meet quarterly for their general meetings, which they move from one Archdeaconry to another, equally, their zonal meetings are functional too.

They began the year with their Annual Retreat from Friday 10th to Sunday 12th March, 2017 at World Bank Housing Estate Aba and the theme was "We Must Not Continue Like This" (Romans 6:1). About 139 members were in attendance. The Retreat featured among other things, Exposition, Health Talk, Plenary Session and Communique. They concluded with thanksgiving service on Sunday with the cutting of cake and award of honour to some outstanding members. We thank Christ Church World Bank Housing Estate for the able way they hosted them.

We use this medium to request the non-performing members to have a re-think before it is too late. Already our mandate is still on, without signing your License you cannot perform in your local church. So those whose License have not been renewed should cease from playing any role in their churches until it is signed by the Archdeacon. And those who are not registered members in their zones should as a matter of urgency try to do so.

Sports, Physical & Health Development

The improvement of healthy lifestyle through physical exercise is part of our goal for both the workers and members, male and female. Studies have shown that a little exercise every day can prevent certain ailments and diseases that take people to hospitals. Also the use of drugs for cases which a 10 minutes exercise would solve is not ideal. We believe the workers in this diocese are discovering and benefitting from the wonders of physical exercise to maintain a healthy living and to keep fit in fulfilling the purposes of our calling. The diocesan monthly physical/healthy/exercise/ training is duly maintained by the workers and we think they are enjoying it. We therefore enjoin every member of this diocese to adopt the habit of a healthy living through physical exercise and training as we wish you a healthy and happy life to enjoy the fruits of your labour.

Diocesan Endowment Fund

This program is now in its second phase. Current records show that our people are beginning to key properly into the program. A record of the progress so far is presented to this synod. Our major setback is that majority of the top leadership of the Diocese, for whatever reason, has refused to show leadership in this regard. We hope they will see the need to key into this program which, if supported, will place the Diocese on the path of steady progress in pursuing her projects and mission.

EVENTS:

Diocesan Harvest 2016

On Saturday 10th December 2016, we gathered as a Diocese to thank God for all His benefits towards us, it was a moment of joy, praises to the Almighty, well organized and attended more than the previous years. The Theme was “Harvest of Recovery” (1 Sam. 30:8). We are grateful to all the Archdeaconries and Mission Areas for the able way they organized and mobilized their members for this service and pray the Almighty God to continue to bless them and replenish their sources. We will not fail to thank the organizing committee ably led by Mr. Cyprian Iheanyichukwu Ubani for allowing God to use them. We are also grateful to the preacher for declaring the mind of God for His Church. From all indications this year's edition will be greater. It will be on Saturday 9th December, 2017 at the Cathedral. So pray and prepare.

Diocesan City-Wide Crusade

In our response to the revelation at last year's synod regarding the location of our Diocese at an entrance to the city of Aba, the Diocese held her first City-Wide Crusade from 7th - 11th February 2017 at Ngwa High School Compound. It was a monumental success. We appreciate the Archdeacons, and Supervisors for effective mobilization and sensitization of our people for the awareness campaign and all through the crusade. We appreciate the grace of God released through the guest preacher, Lord Bishop of Diocese of Nsukka, Rt. Revd. Alloysius Agbo. The harvest of souls that resulted from the program has continued till date. As a follow up, the Diocesan board has directed that every parish organize a monthly revival program to consolidate on the gains of the crusade. So far, reports show signs of compliance to this directive. We acknowledge and commend the effort of the Planning Committee. We are looking forward to the next outing.

Diocesan Thanksgiving 2017

It has become our culture that every year we come together as a family to thank God Almighty for His goodness and mercy towards us as a Diocese. The Theme for this year's was “Great is Your Faithfulness”. It took place on Sat 18th February 2017 at the Cathedral and the preacher was Evang. Eze Onyenso. It was a moment we all danced and expressed

our gratitude to God Almighty for sparing our lives. There was thanksgiving by Archdeacons, and Mission Areas in their rank and files. It also featured special renditions by the choirs and we were richly blessed. Our appreciation goes to all our workers for mobilizing our members. And pray God that His word in our individual lives shall not cease to keep and preserve us till next year's edition as we continue to offer Him thanksgiving as a family.

Ordination/Installation/Collation/Inductions

On Saturday the 4th March, 2017 at All Saints Cathedral Abayi Umuocham, we held induction, ordination, installation, and collation service.

INDUCTIONS:

1. Chancellor - Hon. Justice Ory Zik Ikeorha
2. Deputy Chancellor - Hon. Justice Innocent A. Nwabughogu
3. Registrar - Barr. Friday I. Nwogwugwu
4. Deputy Registrar - His Worship Eugene Eke Onuoha (Rtd)
5. Legal Adviser - His Worship Lady Ngori Nwoke and
6. The Legal Aids

DEACONS:

1. Uzoma Loveday Atuzieogu
2. Joseph Ahamdi Stephen

PRIESTS:

1. Rev. Odiwonma Blessing Ihediwa
2. Rev. Paulinus Chiemela Nwaorgu

3. Rev. David Uzoma Nwaoharu
4. Rev. Christian Chibunna Nwankpa
5. Rev. Silas Onyenkwere Thompson
6. Rev. Israel Nkemakolam Ubanze

CANONS:

1. Rev. Canon Samuel Udechukwu
2. Rev. Canon Nnamdi Usuka

ARCHDEACON:

Ven. Christopher Nlewemchi Ibe

We pray that God would grant them and their families His grace to fulfil, their calling.

Diocesan 10th Year Anniversary

To the glory of God, our Diocese clocked 10 years this year. The anniversary thanksgiving which was held on Saturday 29th April 2017 attracted members, friends and supporters of the diocese in appreciation to the faithfulness of God to His people. The anniversary featured activities such as Match Past in Archdeaconries, Drama, and Special Renditions by Choirs, Lecture delivered by His Grace, the Most Rev'd Dr. UgochukwuUwaoma Ezuoke (Rtd) and Award of Honour to some foundation members of the diocese which included the guest lecturer. The Theme of the celebration was "Great is Thy Faithfulness" Lamentation 3:22-24. We thank the Lord Bishop of Diocese of Isiala Ngwa South Rt. Rev'd Isaac Chijioke Nwobia, Ph.D for the honour of accepting our invitation and for preaching the thanksgiving service sermon. We thank the Lord Bishop of Aba Diocese Rt. Rev'd Christian Chiodoadighi Ugwuzo for his handsome donation, Mrs. Njideka Nwaobia (Mama Isiala Ngwa South) for gracing the occasion. This 10th year anniversary is a landmark to this diocese and in this synod we shall launch a book tagged:

Aba Ngwa North at ten (10) - A compilation of the efforts, struggles and activities of the founding fathers to the birth of the diocese. We therefore enjoin everybody to get a copy of this book. We will not fail to appreciate the Planning Committee headed by the Deputy Chancellor, Hon. Justice Innocent A. Nwabughiogu (KSC) for a job perfectly done and for producing a second batch of our Diocesan cloth.

Our Diocesan Cloth is available for those who don't have any and those whose cloth has torn or washed-out. Our Clergymen will show-case the beauty of the cloth during the thanksgiving service tomorrow.

RETREATS

CPC/PCC/Vestry Committee Retreat 2017

As it is our mandate to make sure that every leadership level of our Diocese must be equipped with the necessary tools and ideas that will stand the test of time in fulfilling the purpose of God in our Diocese. And in order to continue to have leaders who are well informed in the management and service of God, on 11th March and 3rd June 2017 respectively at All Saints Cathedral the Diocese gathered the leaders, PCC, CPC and Vestry Committees of every Church for training and dedication on what their roles and responsibilities are through series of study. The theme was “Wake-up the Mighty” (Rom. 6:1). We thank one of our sons Rev. Canon David Onyeike for allowing the Lord to use Him in blessing us through this retreat. The major aim was to build up our faith in Christ Jesus and prepare our hearts to be used of God in any platform we may be asked to serve His Church. People were given opportunities to ask questions bordering on the church matters and policies of the Diocese. Those who attended the retreats were made to know that it is a platform from where they could serve God and contribute to the propagation of the Gospel. We must be willing to learn so as to be able to teach and lead effectively. We thank our staff for effectively organizing the retreat.

H.O.D 2017

As it has become an annual event, we gathered over seventy (70) Officials of our Diocese from Thursday 16th - Saturday 18th March, 2017 at Ngwa High School Chapel to re-awaken our spirit & mind again on the way forward for our diocese. The Theme was “Wake-up the Mighty” (Rom. 6:1). The program which started with a Holy Communion Service, had an exposition on the theme by Engr. Dave Dimoji, we had Group Discussions, Talks, discussions on issues relating to church leadership, growth, development and prayer sessions.

Our diocesan officials were encouraged to be faithful and committed in the things of God as this diocese vows to see that all our leaders are committed to the things we do no matter the situation. The officials were reminded that the leadership of the Diocese is in their hands, instead of criticizing the bishop and pastors they should support, encourage and bring ideas to move our churches forward. They were made to see their responsibilities and the target to make sure that every member of our Diocese should be pointed to Christ, through our life style (Character). And that wherever we find themselves, we owe it as a duty to make sure that the Gospel will be preached to people even without the Bible. The retreat rose with a resolution that the diocese needs “leaders who don't know what to do but are willing to learn and to do what they are ask to do as we saw in Jesus' Ministry”.

We thank Mama Aba Ngwa North for providing food as well as others who supported us financially. May the good Lord reward you in no small measure, Amen.

Diocesan Clergy & Wives Retreat

From Monday 17th - Friday 21st April 2017, we and Mama Aba Ngwa North took all the Clergy and Wives to Ibru Centre Agbarha-otor for a set apart. It was a wonderful movement. The theme was “Called to Lead” (1 John 21:15-17). It has become an annual ritual.

The retreat featured among other things, Bible Study, Exposition, Health Talks, Body Check and Physical Exercise. There were also commitment prayers in groups. We appreciate the Diocesan Board and our churches

for approving the retreat and sponsoring us. We pray God to take care of your own needs in Jesus name. Amen.

Diocesan Prayer Conference 2017

We thank God for the success of this year's Diocesan Prayer Conference. The Diocesan Prayer Conference was held at the Cathedral between Wednesday 7th -Friday 9th June, 2017 and the Theme was “...BUT WHILE MEN SLEPT...” (MATT. 13:25). It featured seminar, bible study and special prayers offered for the Diocese, and over 400 delegates were in attendance. The exposition was done by us. It was really a wonderful moment as the testimonies abound.

In the exposition we were made to see the grave danger of Spiritual Sleeping Sickness (SSS) as in the case of Samson (Judges 16: 7-22) and Physical Sleeping Sickness (PSS) as it relates to Jonah due to the destructive effects of such habits. All of us must discover the area we are sleeping. It was also discovered that a sleeping person is more dangerous than a dead one. As powerless as the case of the farmer which Jesus used in Matt. 13:24ff, is the man who is at sleep. The conference rose with a decision that every member of the diocese of Aba Ngwa North should be awake spiritually.

One Day Synod

On Friday 30th June, 2017 at All Saints Cathedral Abayi Umuocham by 10am all the Synod delegates gathered for the amendment of section 49(2) of Chapter XII of the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) 2002, As amended. It was presided over by us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, about 193 delegates were in attendance and our resolution has since been sent to the secretariat of our National Church.

Diocesan One Day Solemn Assembly

On Saturday the 5th of August, 2017 at All Saints' Cathedral Abayi Umuocham, members from all the churches in the diocese gathered to seek the face of God in prayer for the welfare of the diocese and her members. We are grateful to Barr. Emeka Nwankpa for ministering to us in that program. It was indeed solemn, heartwarming and spiritually uplifting.

Bishopscourt Project

Work on the bishopscourt project is progressing, we commend Arms that have responded to their assignment in the work. We are in the finishing stage of the project. We also appeal to good spirited members of our diocese to donate towards completing the project.

DIOCESAN SCHOOLS

Diocesan School of Ministry

This School which we started last year is in her second year now with both first and second year students. In our vision to ensure that every church in this diocese enjoys the true and undiluted word of God, the person behind the pulpit notwithstanding, prompted the necessity for our lay workers to acquire the basic knowledge of the scripture, church leadership and management. As you can testify, those of you whose lay workers are students of this school can notice the level of change that has taken place in their ministry. We give kudos to our clergymen who double as the lecturers for their commitment and extra effort to see that this dream is achieved.

We also in this synod is of the view that those in the leadership positions of our diocese, teachers and readers of the scripture, those in the preaching ministry and born evangelists should enroll into our school of ministry in order to be efficient in this generation. We are proud to say that the curriculum of the school and the quality of the Lecturers are better than most Bible Colleges around us. You are therefore encouraged to enroll with us and watch your dream come true. Your kind and financial assistance can also help to keep the school strongly footed.

Ngwa High School Abayi - Aba

We remain grateful to God almighty on the level of reawakening, sensitization and development that has taken place in Ngwa High School through the effort of the new principal and teachers. The Parents Teachers' Association with a new executive body has been elected.. The school management is mounting a zero tolerance fight against indiscipline and this cannot be compromised. The effort and commitment of Old Boys of Ngwa High School from one session to

another has been a source of hope and strength to us. Recently, the 1993 set donated a cheque for the registration of 30 students for 2018 SSCE and organized a seminar for the students. We remain very grateful to them. The diocese and the school management are making plans to make the School an ICT Centre that will satisfy JAMB condition for the Centre to be used for the CBT (Computer Based Test) in her UTM Exams. On this we call delegate of the Synod and lovers and friends of Aba Ngwa North to donate handsomely towards the realization of this goal which could form a source of investment for the school. Ngwa High School is our own, if this is true in your heart register your wards there and help in advertising the school to your friends, neighbors and everybody.

St. Anne's Secondary School, Umuobasi Amavo

Our St. Anne Secondary School Umuobasi Amavo is coming back to life again to the glory of God. We commend the effort of the new principal, an astute teacher and manager for the lot that has taken place within the period under review. We can feel his heartbeat, he has much to deliver. The diocese will throw her weight to ensure that our school overcomes. The management through this Synod is sending an Save Our Soul letter to all the Arms, Archdeaconries and good spirited members of the diocese to assist in changing to present dilapidated state of the school. The level of structural damage we inherited in the school is beyond what the diocese can do alone as at today. The quality of learning, discipline and moral upbringing at St. Annes Secondary School Umuobasi-Amavo today is unbeatable. Therefore patronize our own School by registering your wards there and be proud tomorrow.

Foundation/Dedications/Inauguration

16/10/2016: Dedication of Marble Pulpit at St. George's Church Aro-Amano

28/10/2016: Foundation Laying Stone of St. James Church Abayi Ogbuligba

30/10/2016: Dedication of Evangelism Van of the Council of the Knights

20/11/2016: Dedication of Choir Robe at St. Gabriel's Church Umuode
26/11/2016: Foundation Laying Stone of St. Philip's Church Abayi at Ngwa High School

- 18/12/2016: Dedication of Church Building, Sign Post and Evangelism Van at St. Clement's Church Mbutu Umuojima Ogbu
- 0/12/2016: Dedication of Diocesan Resource Centre at the Cathedral
- 22/01/2017: Dedication of Marble Pulpit at St. Thomas Church Umuakpara
- 29/01/2017: Dedication of Band Set at St. Paul's Umuocham
- 23/03/2017: Dedication of Toyota Camry Car for Rev'd Canon Kelechi V.A. Eche
- 12/07/2017: Foundation Laying Stone of Ngwa High School Gate

CONFIRMATION AND ADMISSIONS

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

Date	Parish	Confirmation	MCA	MU	WG	GG	Evan. Support
23/10/16	World Bank	32	-	-	4	3	76,910
6/11/16	Ayaba Umueze 1	31		3	4	9	40,030
20/11/16	Umuode	34	7	4	8	4	49,800
27/11/16	Asa-Amoka	17	3	-	8	4	16,475
04/12/16	Umuobasi Amavo	47	19	4	3	-	41,730
11/12/16	Umuocham	40	5	1	4	-	25,350
05/02/17	Mgboko Umuocha	19	-	1	2	6	27,420
19/02/17	Ayaba Umueze	43	20	-	3	1	21,650
17/09/17	Aro-Amano	23	7	2		1	10,500

Mission and Evangelism Fund:

Money realized during our Episcopal functions within the period under review was shared in the following ways.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Tiling of Christ Church Ibibi Okpuala Altar | - N121,000 |
| 2. Completion of St. John's Umuoyoro Ngwa ACM Hall | - N170,000 |
| 3. School fees of 16 students at Church of Holy Spirit
Umumpata | - N 35,400 |
| 4. Bethel Anglican Church Obizi Mbaise | - N100,000 |
| 5. Part of ACM Hall at Church of Holy Spirit Umumpata | - N150,000 |
| 6. School fees of 3 students at Diocese of Benin | - N 48,400 |

OUR JOY

We wish to identify in the joy of our own as we congratulate our brothers, sisters, workers and friends whom has God bless within the period under review. We pray that such undeserved blessings from the Lord shall not cease from this diocese and to our friends and supporters. These families include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Rev. & Mrs. Paulinus Nworgu | - Baby Girl |
| 2. Mr. & Mrs. Emmanuel Nwosu | - Baby Boy |
| 3. Rev. & Mrs. Daniel Nnaji | - Baby Girl |
| 4. Rev. & Mrs. Kelechi Elele | - Baby Girl |
| 5. Mr. & Mrs. Christian Nwoko | - Baby Boy |
| 6. Mr. & Mrs. Levi Onyebuchi | - Baby Boy |
| 7. Mr. & Mrs. Sunday Ezenwoke | - Baby Girl |
| 8. Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Nwankwo | - Baby Boy |
| 9. Cate. & Mrs. Chinedu Amamba | - Baby Girl |
| 10. Mr. & Mrs. Chigozie Ekpeko | - Baby Girl |
| 11. Cate. & Mrs. Moses Epelle | - Baby Boy |
| 12. Mr. & Mrs. Darlington Amadike | - Baby Boy |

13. Mr. & Mrs. Christian Onwunata - Wedding
14. Mr. & Mrs. Nnadozie Esinna - Wedding

OUR SORROW

We send our heartfelt sympathy to the families of our beloved ones, friends, supporters who lost their husband, wife, friend within the period under review and pray that our good God shall console and comfort them. These families include:

1. Dr. Joseph Uruakpa
2. Sir. (Arch) Okey Nwoke
3. Ugoeze Lady Caroline Ubani
4. Mrs. Chinuru Uzoije
5. Sir Timothy Onwukwe
6. Sir Timothy Ubani
7. Sir Levi Okpara
8. Ezinne Roseline N. E. Arimadu
9. Mrs. Stella Ugorji
10. Ven. Chukwunkere Lawson Ezuoke
11. Ven. R.J.N Okoro

NEWS FROM ABA PROVINCE

Provincial Harvest: By the grace of God our Province gathered to thank God on Friday 25th November 2016 at St. Augustine's Mkpuka in the Diocese Isiala-Ngwa South. It was a glorious moment as each diocese dance with their different items to the Altar to appreciate God. We sincerely want to thank the Host Rt. Rev'd Dr & Mrs. Chijioke Isaac Nwaobia as well as the Chairman Planning Committee Rt. Rev'd Manasses

Okere for a well packaged programme. In the same vein, Aba Provincial Legal Officer's Forum was inaugurated by the Archbishop in the same service to assist the province on legal matters and fellowship together. The date for this year's is 2nd December 2017 at St. Philip's Cathedral Ahaba Oloko Ikwuano Diocese. Pray for the success of this programme as we raise funds to handle the Joint Project for our Province.

Provincial Council Meetings: Provincial Council meetings have been holding regularly with our Diocesan representatives in attendance. On February 11th 2017, Aba Diocese hosted us. We appreciate Rt. Rev & Mrs. Christian C. Ugwuzor and the entire Diocese of Aba for a wonderful hosting. The theme was "Conscience Nurtured by Word" (1 Tim. 1:5). And another Provincial Council Meeting was held at St. Stephen's Cathedral Umuahia on Tuesday 12th September, 2017 and theme was "The End of this Age and the Next Generation" (2 Peter 3:8-13). We thank our Provincial Archbishop, Mama Province and the entire Umuahia Diocese for the able way they hosted us.

Church of Nigeria Missionary Society (CNMS): This Conference was hosted by our Province precisely Diocese of in 2016. Our diocese attended en mass. On July 31st - 3rd August 2017 the Conference was held at Ilorin our representatives from the Mission Board was in attendance.

NEWS FROM FORMER PROVINCE II

By the grace of God from Wednesday 15th to Thursday 16th February 2017, the Former Province II Council Meeting was held at Nike Diocese in Enugu Province. Many issues were raised, especially matters concerning our institutions and contribution to superannuation. We thank Rt. Rev'd Prof. & Prof. Mrs. Evans Ibeagha and the entire faithful of Nike Diocese for the able way they hosted us, may the good Lord continue to bless them. On March 3rd this year, Goshen Guest House, an investment of the Dioceses East of the Niger was dedicated in Owerri. We encourage the patronage of this beautiful and well situated retreat center for group and personal relaxation and retreat.

The former Province II council met again on Tuesday 11th July 2017 at the Cathedral Church of St. Mark's Isu-Awaa, Diocese of Awgu/Aninri,

also in Enugu Province. Important issues concerning our church were deliberated upon and decisions taken. We thank the host, Rt. Rev'd Dr Emmanuel A. Ugwu JP and Mama Awgu/Aninri for a successful hosting. We commend the able leadership of the Council Chairman.

At this point we want to remind us of the several moves the leadership of our Church is making to preserve and protect the faith ones delivered to the Saints, a major of which is the establishment of Paul University, Awka. We make bold to say that of all the private universities our youth attend, none can be compared to the quality of education and character building that Paul University offers. So we recommend and encourage all parents, guardians and our youth to make the University their premier choice.

NEWS FROM CHURCH OF NIGERIA

DIVCCON 2016

The Divine Common Wealth Conference, a missionary initiative of Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, took place at the National Christian Centre, Abuja from Monday 7th - Friday 11th November 2016. The Theme was "Fear Not" (2 Kings 6:16). It was indeed a joyous moment as over seven thousand Christians across the globe gathered to study and pray together. That of last year was the sixth edition of this conference. We are very grateful to all our members and churches who worked tirelessly for the success of this conference. Over eighty delegates including youths attended the conference from our diocese. In this conference we received message of hope and comfort against all the challenges we are passing through.

Meanwhile this year's edition will be from Monday 13th - Friday 17th November 2017 at the same venue. We have appointed Sir Reuben Elekwa and his team to plan on how to raise money to enable more people attend this year. We remain grateful to those individuals who have over the years helped us in this instance. Our Diocesan coordinator Mr. Okechukwu Uzoije, is still in charge and ready to deliver.

St. Matthias's Day Fund

This year's edition was held on Sunday 24th February 2017 in all the churches in our Diocese with sincerity. After which, all the monies realized was remitted into the Church of Nigeria Account which amounted to N2, 020,150.00.

We pray that the vision of our Primate towards collection of this fund would be effectively realized. We therefore thank the members of our Diocese who have not relented in contributing towards this fund since it was introduced. May the good Lord continue to bless and keep you all and make way for you in the time of your individual needs. Amen.

2017 Bishop's Annual Retreat

Early this year precisely from 9th - 14th January, 2017 at Ibru Centre, Agbarha-Otor, Delta State, the Primate of all Nigeria (Anglican Communion) as usual gathered all the Bishops for spiritual exercise. The Retreat theme was "Sundry Issues of Episcopal Concern". We attended and it was spiritually enriching. To God be the glory.

GAFCON

We are expecting the third edition of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) if Jesus tarries from Sunday the 17th - Friday 22nd of June, 2018, at Jerusalem. We are praying for its success and to the glory of God. The Bishop, President, and a Youth member will be representing our Diocese at the conference.

Legal Officers Conference 2017

The 7th edition of the conference of Chancellors & Legal Officers of Church of Nigeria took place from 31st July - 3rd August, 2017 at the Basilica of Grace Gudu Abauja. Our Diocesan Legal Officers were in attendance. This conference is organized by Church of Nigeria with the aim of equipping the legal officers on the important position they are occupying and the support required of them in their various diocese.

CHURCH OF NIGERIA HIGHER MEETINGS.

Our National Church has been meeting to address issues since our last Synod. The first Standing Committee meeting was held at Egba Diocese in Abeokuta Ogun State from Monday 20th to Thursday 24th February 2017 and the Theme was “I am that I am”. To the glory of God we, Mama Aba Ngwa North and our delegates all attended. It was a joyous occasion to the praise and honour of God almighty who led us and granted us all journey mercies. Again from the 18th to the 22nd of last month, the national church met at St. Paul's Cathedral Diobu, Port-Harcourt Rivers State for the 12th General Synod. The theme for the synod was "Thou Shall Not Steal" Exodus 20:15.

We continue to pray and congratulate The Archbishop, Primate and Metropolitan of our Church, The Most Revd. Nicholas D. Okoh for the able way he is leading this Church of God. Mama Nkasiobi Oko, continues to attract our commendation as well. 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.

Advent Sunday Fund

This collection was introduced after the Standing Committee meeting held at Akure in September 2015 where it was agreed to dedicate all proceeds from this collection into the Church of Nigeria Secretariat Project. Since then we have been consistently participating in this project not minding how difficult things are in this part of the world. We have encouraged our Diocesan members who are handy to donate towards this project on individual basis. For it pay to serve God with our resources.

NEW BISHOPS

The Rt. Rev'd Yohanna Audu - Diocese of Damaturu

The Rt. Rev'd Godwin Robinson - Diocese of Lafia

The Rt. Rev'd Rufus Adepoju - Diocese Ekiti West

The Rt. Rev'd Augustine Ehinbo - Diocese Sanbogida - Ora

The Rt. Rev'd Abiodun Ogunyemi translated from Damaturu to Zaria Diocese

The Rt. Rev'd Timothy Yahaya translated from Jalingo to Kaduna

The Rev'd Foreman Nedison - Diocese of Jalingo

The Rev'd Markus Y. Danbinta - Diocese of Dutse

RETIRED BISHOPS

The Rt. Rev'd Prof. Cornelius Bello - Diocese of Zaria

The Rt. Rev'd S.A. Oke - Diocese of Ekiti West

The Rt. Rev'd Prof. J.O. Akao - Diocese of Sabongidda - Ora

The Rt. Rev'd M.O. Maza - Diocese of Lafia

The Rt. Rev'd Yusuf I. Lumu - Diocese of Dutse

ELECTION OF ARCHBISHOPS

The Most Rev'd Dr. George L. Lasebikan - Re-elected Archbishop of Ondo Province

The Most Rev'd Dr. Ikechi Nwosu - Re-elected Archbishop of Aba

The Most Rev'd Dr. Michael O. Fabe - Province of Lagos

The Most Rev'd Olusegun Adeyemi - Province of Kwara

The Most Rev'd Dr. Caleb Maduoma - Re-elected Archbishop of Owerri Province

The Most Rev'd Dr. Segun Okubadejo - Re-elected Archbishop of Ibadan Province

The Most Rev'd Dr. Ali Buba Lamido - Province of Kaduna

The Most Rev'd Henry C. Ndukuba - Province of Jos.

NEW DEAN

The Most Rev'd Edmund Akanya, the Bishop of Kebbi and Archbishop of Kaduna Province is the current Dean of our Church. We wish him and wife a God-guided time of service.

OUR STATE - ABIA

We are grateful to God as a people for these 26 years we've existed as a state. We congratulate our dear governor, for the many victories he has won since taking office especially the most recent. We believe that only God knew exactly what was coming against our state about a month ago. And so to Him alone be all glory for averting such doom. Our hearts go out to the victims of this very anomaly that did not have to happen. We pray God to console and graciously reposition all families that lost anyone to it. The Anglican Province of Aba, in collaboration with Abia State government will be holding a service of healing on the first of November, All Saints' Day 2017, at St. Stephen's Cathedral Umuahia at 10am. We expect to have families of victims to attend. Our state governor is expected to be at the service as well. To this effect, we direct that on Sunday October 29th, special collections be taken in all churches in the Diocese to aid victim families. Again it is a healing service and must be handled and treated as such by all.

We appreciate those who represent us at the national level for working together with our governor in addressing the many issues belaboring our state. Did I hear someone ask 'who are working together'? Well if someone did ask so, am sorry because I thought they did because they should. If they didn't, I want to remind our federal representatives that Abuja is where their offices are but that Abia State is their home, their Jerusalem, from where their blessings flow. That they can only be at peace only when Abia is.

We appreciate the governor for his infrastructural development vision and desire to return Abia-Aba, to her former manufacturing prowess. We advice, dear governor, that you take it one step at a time. As the state is in dare need of infrastructural overhauling, workers and their families also need to, at least eat and be strong enough to enjoy those

infrastructure. We understand the difficulty, but ask that you look for a good balance.

On our own part, Abians should be a little more patient with the present state government while paying our tax as well as engaging in lawful and supportive activities as the government alone cannot get us to the place of our dream. We are optimistic that Abia State's better days are ahead of us.

CRY OF MARGINALIZATION

It is obvious that no one should be, and that's why no one likes to be, cheated or deprived of what's due them. Therefore the cry of marginalization going on from different parts of our country cannot be for nothing. We believe the areas crying have some credibility to their complaint. To us in the Eastern part of the nation, am concerned more here because here is my Jerusalem, it seems we've cried for too long with little or nothing changing. Therefore I sincerely suggest to us, especially the South East, that, in as much as there is undeniable truth in our cry, but considering the fact that some parts of our area are developing fast and well, irrespective of the marginalization, that we begin to consider if our marginalization is more within than from outside. Or if it is the internal marginalization that is fueling and giving strength to the external. Am just thinking aloud to wonder, though we are not getting all we believe belong to us, if the one we are getting is fairly, judiciously, and credibility used and accounted for. I encourage us all to begin to ask these questions, because I am very optimistic that while we continue to dialogue for our rights, what we have already, if honesty and effectively managed, should place us on a far more developmental pedal than where we are today.

THE STATE OF OUR NATION

We congratulate the President and the entire citizenry of Nigeria on the 57th anniversary of our independence. We can't thank God enough for the innumerable Blessings this nation continues to receive at His hands.

We also join the rest of the world to thank God for restoring the health of our President and wish him long life and improved health condition. To this end, we advise Mr. President to sincerely listen to, and obey his body, and do whatever he personally believes is in the best interest of his long and health life, and the joy, peace and progress of the nation.

On "the fight against corruption", we appreciate the present government's interest in this new slogan that is almost becoming Nigeria's new national anthem. Saying that there is corruption in Nigeria is like saying that there is water in a river. Therefore when someone says they want to evacuate water from a river, everyone watching expects to see water being pumped out from the river. But when the machine that was supposed to be pumping the water out sits in the water and makes only noise, those expecting rescue from drowning become apprehensive, frustrated, helpless, hopeless, and restless, especially when it seems to them that the water is rising on them. Apart from the present 'fight against corruption' in Nigeria, I have never read, watched, or heard of a fight without any casualty; not even when the fight has gone on 'consistently' for years. So when those on whose behalf the fight is supposedly waged do not see any casualty (from the 'enemy's camp), they may begin to suspect a compromise between their army and the 'enemy'. Such suspicion is likely to produce some agitation.

This brings us to the issue of the current agitations coming from every part of the nation. We believe that the agitations are coming because Nigerians, irrespective of tribe or religion, have stayed too long in the muddy water of corruption and bad governance. And each time someone or group comes, promising a rescue, they've ended up satisfying themselves from the cleaner part of the river, leaving the people drowning in the mud. Mr. President, you and your government may definitely not be the architect of Nigeria's woes, but you are serving at the time the people believe they've had enough. So we believe Nigerians are asking that since it seems the river is too wide for a single machine to efficiently pump out the water, let the river be divided into portions and more machines engaged so that people will have the opportunity to use whatever equipment available to them to save themselves from drowning while maintaining and securing the integrity of the whole river. To those who are sophisticated in thinking and learning they call

it Restructuring. We might need to look back to 1963 to see if there is something we may replicate or improve on. Continuing to run a "democracy" with a military designed code called constitution will never give us the desired result. It is like young David- a civilian, being asked to fight Goliath with military outfit. We know it didn't work because the civilian boy couldn't even raise his feet in the military outfit. Little wonder why we are still crawling after 57 years.

By the way, we congratulate Mr. President and all Nigerians for being the first African country to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia. I just thought about this because I noticed watching the game, there were no agitations among the players though everyone of them came from a different club somewhere in the world. Though they all came from different club backgrounds and managements, but playing for Nigeria, they drew from their different club experiences, but obeyed one coach, played with one style, in one uniform, had one goal, and at end of the day, lifted the banner of one nation, Nigeria. So, fellow Nigerians, both the leaders and the led, I believe that a United, Peaceful, Formidable, Stable, the Nigeria of our dream is one that is Restructured, with empowered regions that pledge loyalty as well as pay royalty to the center, with a democratically designed constitution to match the new structure. I believe we can achieve it, if we put our mind to it.

OUR SYNOD THEME

THE VENDING MACHINE GOD; WHO CHANGED THE GOSPEL?" (Luke 9:23; Acts 14:22)

Christianity, though the only way of life that guarantees eternal life, has been under attack from inception - over two thousand years ago. The devil and his human agents see Christianity as a threat to their destructive grip on human soul, hence the incessant assaults and attacks.

In recent times, the Church, in addition to the attacks from the world, has faced several challenges and attacks from within. The most embarrassing of these is the Prosperity Gospel - a teaching, by some dubious, theologically misinformed, and self-acclaimed ministers of "the

gospel", that the level of one's commitment to the Christian faith should be measured by the amount of material wealth and comfort they enjoy. A belief that a good Christian should not suffer physically or be in lack materially. An aberration that reduces the Almighty God to a mere "Vending Machine" that must fulfill whatever Christians demand of Him provided they meet whatever they believe is His own demand of them. Before we deal with this anomaly, we must first re-echo the true message of the Gospel as it pertains to the expected condition of Christian believers while still living in this world.

In one of our texts, Luke 9:23, we read "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."(NKJV).

"And he said to them all". Here we see that the statement to be made by The Lord Jesus is not only to the disciples, but "to the multitude", who were now called unto him, with His disciples, as is clear from Mark 8:34. He called them all unto Himself to hear the very important doctrine which He was about to deliver. The necessity of this duty has been shown in many places in the scripture, but the extent of it is specified here - "take up his cross daily". The adverb 'daily' is peculiar to St. Luke's report. I believe, because, as a companion of Paul, Luke remembers personal experiences even as Paul would say "I die daily" (1Corinth. 15:31).

I believe we will understand this discourse by Jesus in the light of His rebuke to Peter for his opposition to the Passion. That rebuke gives to the discourse this meaning: you object to my suffering? I tell you not only must I suffer; it is the inevitable lot of all who have due regard to the Divine interest in this world. Thus the first lesson Jesus taught the Twelve on the significance of His death was that it was the result of moral fidelity, and that as such it was but an instance of a universal law of the moral order of the world. Therefore followers of Christ should live their life making sure no day passes with the cross not taken up. Even as one day follows another, so does one cross follow another, and the cross is by the figure of speech metonymy taken for the miseries of this life: for to be hanged on the cross was the most grievous and cruel punishment that there was amongst the Jews. The gloomy procession of

robbers and of rebels against Rome, each condemned one bearing to the place of death the cross on which he was to suffer, was a sadly familiar image then in their unhappy land.

This message was evidently a hard saying, and, no doubt, gave bitter offense to many of the hearers then, and little wonder some Christians still struggle with it today. "If any man will," that is, wishes to, "come after me, to follow me where I am going" (Jesus was going to His kingdom), "let that man be prepared to give up earthly ease and comfort, and be ready to bear the sufferings which will be sure to fall on him if he struggle after holiness." This readiness to give up ease, this willingness to bear suffering, will be a matter, they must remember, of everyday experience. The body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body is greatly afflicted and oppressed in this world. We must never be ashamed of Christ and His gospel.

A look at our next theme text goes deeper and clearer to confirming the true message of the Gospel concerning believers in relation to material prosperity. "Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." (Acts14:22NKJV)

Paul and Barnabas, having preached at Iconium with great success, are persecuted, and obliged to flee to Lystra and Derbe, Act 14:1-6. Here they preach, and heal a cripple; on which, the people, supposing them to be gods, are about to offer them sacrifices, and are with difficulty prevented by these apostles, Act 14:7-18. Certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, coming thither, induce the people to stone Paul; who, being dragged out of the city as dead, while the disciples stand around him, rises up suddenly, and returns to the city, and the next day departs to Derbe, Act 14:19, Act 14:20. Having preached here, he and Barnabas return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the disciples, and ordaining elders in every Church, Act 14:21-23. Confirming the souls of the disciples - The word disciple signifies literally a scholar. The Church of Christ was a school, in which Christ Himself was chief Master; and His apostle's subordinate teachers. All the converts were disciples or scholars, who came to this school to be instructed in the knowledge of

themselves and of their God: of their duty to Him, to the Church, to society, and to themselves. After having been initiated in the principles of the heavenly doctrine, they needed line upon line, and precept upon precept, in order that they might be confirmed and established in the truth. Though it was a great and important thing to have their heads, their understanding, properly informed, yet, if the heart was not disciplined, information in the understanding would be of little avail; therefore they confirmed the Souls of the disciples. As there must be some particular standard of truth, to which they might continually resort, that their faith might stand in the power of God, it was necessary that they should have such a system of doctrine as they knew came from God. These doctrines were those which contained all the essential principles of Christianity, and this was called The Faith; and, as they must have sound principles, in order that they might have righteous practices, so it was necessary that they should continue in that faith, that it might produce that obedience, without which even faith itself, however excellent, must be useless and dead.

Again, as the spirit of the world would be ever opposed to the spirit of Christ, so they must make up their minds to expect persecution and tribulation in various forms, and therefore had need of confirmed souls and strong faith, that, when trials came, they might meet them with becoming fortitude, and stand unmoved in the cloudy and dark day. And as the mind must faint under trouble that sees no prospect of its termination, and no conviction of its use, it was necessary that they should keep in view the kingdom of God, of which they were subjects, and to which, through their adoption into the heavenly family, they had a Divine right. Hence, from the apostles teaching, they not only learned that they should meet with tribulation, much tribulation, but, for their encouragement, they were also informed that these were the very means which God would use to bring them into his own kingdom; so that, if they had tribulation in the way, they had a heaven of eternal glory as the end to which they were continually to direct their views. In this text, there is something that should really stand out to all who wish to follow Christ, but more so to those who claim to have been called to teach or lead the Church. That is that the fact that suffering and hardship are inevitable path to the Kingdom of God should be a basic and foundational

teaching to converts. The people addressed in our texts both by our Lord Himself and Apostle Paul and Barnabas were those hearing and accepting the gospel for the first time. The message translation of Acts 14:21-22 says “After proclaiming the Message in Derbe and establishing a strong core of disciples, they retraced their steps to Lystra, then Iconium, and then Antioch, putting muscle and sinew in the lives of the disciples, urging them to stick with what they had begun to believe and not quit, making it clear to them that it wouldn't be easy: “Anyone signing up for the kingdom of God has to go through plenty of hard times”. As if this is not enough, our Lord Jesus Himself left us in no doubt to this truth, even as His earthly ministry was winding down. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”(John 16:33KJV). So the message of the gospel from inception is, and continues to be “No Cross, No Crown”.

Dear people of God, it is very frustrating and unfortunate, though not surprising, to know that, in spite of the clarity of the message of the Gospel as already demonstrated, some agents of the devil have infiltrated the Church with another gospel. This gospel has been ascribed many names, such as the “name it and claim it” gospel, the “blab it and grab it” gospel, the “health and wealth” gospel, the “word of faith” movement, the “gospel of success,” the “positive confession theology”, or the “Prosperity gospel”.

No matter what name is used though, the teaching is the same. For the sake of this address, we will stick to the use of, “Prosperity Gospel” and “Prosperity Theology” interchangeably. Simply put, this egocentric gospel teaches that God wants believers to be materially wealthy. Listen to the words of Robert Tilton, one of the prosperity gospel's most well-known spokesmen: “I believe that it is the will of God for all to prosper because I see it in the Word of God, not because it has worked mightily for someone else. I do not put my eyes on men, but on God who gives me the power to get wealth.” Teachers of the prosperity gospel encourage their followers to pray, and even demand, of God everything from modes of transportation (cars, vans, trucks, private jets, etc.), to homes, furniture, and large bank accounts. According to them, any Christian who suffers lack of material wealth or sickness is not matured

in faith, or is not making enough financial contribution to God through their churches and ministries.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

Theology is important because correct doctrinal beliefs are essential to the relationship between the believer and God. A corollary to this statement is that an incorrect theology will lead to incorrect beliefs about God, His Word, and His dealings with men. It is important to recognize that prosperity theology is only part of a multi-faceted and aberrant form of Christianity which validates itself through a shrill insistence on its being 'biblical' but which in fact owes more to the kind of thinking associated, for example, with the New Age Movement than to Scripture. It is theosophical; it is dualistic; it is mystical; it is gnostic; it claims an esoteric wisdom not found in other strands of Christianity. And some elements of the charismatic movement along with other parts of the evangelical church, through its disdain of scholarship, have become permeated with it. What I am saying here is that prosperity theology is only one of a bundle of unbiblical theologies which lie seductively and confusingly across modern evangelical theology. And its seductive power is rooted in the contemptuous dismissal of orthodox theology and even of common logic. There is no one authoritative theology of prosperity. Like liberation theology, it is a bundle of theologies which share a common philosophical core.

THE ORIGIN

In its American incarnation, the prosperity Gospel probably began with the theological speculations of the late evangelist Oral Roberts of Tulsa Oklahoma. Roberts encouraged his followers to "expect miracles" and to look forward with confidence to the ways in which God would reward them, materially and financially, for their trust in his providence. One of the most prominent prosperity gospellers on the scene today is Joel Osteen, the pastor of the largest church in America, best-selling author, and a former student at Oral Roberts University. He tells his millions of readers and listeners that they should not settle for mediocre lives;

instead they should trust in the Lord's ability to give them the house that they desire, the job that they deserve, and children that will make them proud. A typical piece of Osteenian advice: "friend, you have to start believing that good things are coming your way and they will!" Other advocates of this position today include the very popular televangelists Joyce Meyer and T.D. Jakes.

Dan McConnell has demonstrated with irresistible scholarship that the roots of prosperity theology in all its manifestations are to be found in Kenneth Hagin, of the Rhema Bible Institute in Tulsa, Oklahoma. McConnell argues that Kenneth Hagin took most of his ideas from E W Kenyon.

The significance of this identification of the source of prosperity teaching lies in the character of Kenyan's theology. McConnell quotes Kenyan's vision of the future to be brought about by his new teaching:

When these truths really gain the ascendancy in us, they will make us spiritual supermen, masters of demons and disease ... It will be the end of weakness and failure.

This is remarkably similar to New Age theology, a theology in which thought overpowers everything negative:

'New Age' thinking is a concept designed to unlock this potential. The key to its success lies in the exhortation: 'That which you can conceive and believe in, you can achieve'.

And there is a further possible dimension to this emphasis on the positive: personal responsibility for sin is eliminated. This idea seeks to convert traditional terms of Christian theology, such as sin, repentance, guilt into their positive counterparts, holiness, forgiveness, freedom, without passing through repentance, without a sense of guilt. Everything becomes instantaneous light, total freedom, perfect power. On the question of the meaning of the key term prosperity Kenneth Copeland comments: "True prosperity is the ability to use God's power to meet the needs of mankind in any realm of life. This covers much more than just finances, politics and society." He then develops the theme to show that Christians ought to be in such a relationship to the unlimited power of God that God's resources can be tapped into, so as to meet

human need, but particularly to meet human financial need. Ray McCaulcy generally agrees with this understanding of the term prosperity, and comments: Prosperity means being in control, so that whatever circumstances you find yourself in, you are always in control. In the same interview McCauley also makes clear the broad spectrum of prosperity envisaged in this system: There is suffering in the Christian life but I don't believe it includes sickness, financial or spiritual need - we've been redeemed from that!

BASIS

Prosperity Gospel And The Abrahamic Covenant

The main theological basis of the prosperity gospel is the Abrahamic covenant. While this is good in that prosperity theologians recognize that much of Scripture is the record of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, it is bad in that they do not maintain an orthodox view of this covenant. Prosperity theologians hold an incorrect view of the inception of the Abrahamic covenant; what is more germane to the present study, however, they hold to an erroneous view concerning the application of the covenant.

Researcher Edward Pousson best stated the prosperity view on the application of the Abrahamic covenant when he wrote, "Christians are Abraham's spiritual children and heirs to the blessings of faith.... This Abrahamic inheritance is unpacked primarily in terms of material entitlements." In other words, according to the prosperity gospel, the primary purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was for God to bless Abraham materially. Since believers are now "Abraham's spiritual children," they consequently have inherited these financial blessings of the covenant.

Prosperity teacher Kenneth Copeland wrote, "Since God's Covenant has been established and prosperity is a provision of this covenant, you need to realize that prosperity belongs to you now!" Referring to the prosperity theology of Kenneth Hagin, author Harvey Cox wrote, "Through the crucifixion of Christ, Christians have inherited all the promises made to Abraham, and these include both spiritual and

material well-being.” To support this claim, prosperity teachers such as Copeland and Hagin appeal to Gal. 3:14, which says “that the blessings of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. . . .” While it is not an understatement to say that the problems with this argument are legion, two glaring problems need to be addressed. First, in their appeal to Gal. 3:14, prosperity teachers ignore the second half of the verse, which reads, “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” In this verse Paul clearly was reminding the Galatians of the spiritual blessing of salvation, not the material blessing of wealth. Second, prosperity teachers claim that the conduit through which believers receive Abraham's blessings is faith. This completely ignores the orthodox understanding that the Abrahamic covenant was an unconditional covenant. That is, the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant were not contingent upon one man's obedience. Therefore, even if the Abrahamic covenant did apply to Christians, all believers would already be experiencing the material blessings regardless of prosperity theology.

Prosperity Theology and Atonement

A second cracked pillar upon which prosperity theology stands is that of a faulty view of the Atonement. Theologian Ken Sarles wrote that “the prosperity gospel claims that both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the Atonement.” This seems to be an accurate observation in light of teacher Kenneth Copeland's comment that “the basic principle of the Christian life is to know that God put our sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, grief, and poverty on Jesus at Calvary.” This misunderstanding of the Atonement stems from two errors that proponents of the prosperity gospel make.

First, many who hold to prosperity theology have a fundamental misconception of the life of Christ. For example, teacher John Avanzini proclaimed that “Jesus had a nice house, a big house,” “Jesus was handling big money,” and He even “wore designer clothes.” It is easy to see how such a warped view of the life of Christ could lead to an equally warped misconception of the death of Christ.

A second error of prosperity theology, which also leads to a faulty view of the Atonement, is the misinterpretation of 2 Cor. 8:9. Without

exception, this is the verse to which prosperity teachers appeal in order to support their view of the Atonement. The verse reads, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” This problem with this interpretation is, of course, that in this verse Paul was in no way teaching that Christ died on the cross for the purpose of increasing anyone's net worth materially. In fact, Paul was actually teaching the exact opposite principle.

Contextually, it is clear that Paul was teaching the Corinthians that since Christ accomplished so much for them through the Atonement, then how much more ought they empty themselves of their riches in service of the Savior. This is why just five short verses later Paul would urge the Corinthians to give their wealth away to their needy brothers, writing “that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack”. Commentator Philip E. Hughes wrote of 2 Cor. 8:9, “The logic implicit in the statement of this great truth is too obvious for anyone to miss it.” Apparently, however, the champions of the prosperity gospel have indeed missed it.

PROSPERITY THEOLOGY AND GIVING

One of the most striking characteristics of the prosperity theologians is their seeming fixation with the act of giving. Students of the prosperity gospel are urged to give generously and are confronted with such pious statements as, “True prosperity is the ability to use God's power to meet the needs of mankind in any realm of life, and, “We have been called to finance the gospel to the world.” While at face value these statements do indeed appear to be praiseworthy, a closer examination of the theology behind them reveals that the prosperity gospel's emphasis on giving is built on anything but philanthropic motives. The driving force behind this emphasis on giving is what teacher Robert Tilton referred to as the “Law of Compensation”. According to this law, which is supposedly based on Mark 10:30, Christians need to give generously to others because when they do, God gives back more in return. This, in turn, leads to a cycle of ever-increasing prosperity.

As Gloria Copeland put it, “Give \$10 and receive \$1,000; give \$1,000 and receive \$100,000... In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.”¹⁵ One of the great dangers of this is that when the law doesn't work the Christian may feel that it is his lack of dedication to God that is at the root of the problem. Since we are all of us perennially aware of our inadequacy, the search for more spirituality, longer quiet times, more earnest prayer, more giving to good causes begins. That way leads to discouragement and even disaster.

It is evident, then, that the prosperity gospel's doctrine of giving is built upon faulty motives. Whereas Jesus taught His disciples to “give, hoping for nothing in return,” prosperity theologians teach their disciples to give because they will get a great return.

PROSPERITY THEOLOGY AND FAITH

A final area of prosperity theology that merits investigation is that of the doctrine of faith. Whereas orthodox Christianity understands faith to be trust in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of His teaching, and the redemptive work He accomplished at Calvary, prosperity teachers espouse quite a different doctrine. In his book, *The Laws of Prosperity*, Kenneth Copeland wrote that “faith is a spiritual force, a spiritual energy, a spiritual power. It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function. . . . There are certain laws governing prosperity revealed in God's Word. Faith causes them to function”. This is obviously a faulty, if not heretical, understanding of faith. Later in the same book Copeland wrote that “if you make up your mind . . . that you are willing to live in divine prosperity and abundance . . . divine prosperity will come to pass in your life. You have exercised your faith.” According to prosperity theology, faith is not a theocentric act of the will, or simply trust in God; rather it is an anthropocentric spiritual force, directed at God. Indeed, any theology that views faith solely as a means to material gain rather than the acceptance of heavenly justification must be judged as faulty and inadequate.

CONSEQUENCES

Of all the great negative consequences of the prosperity gospel, the most unfortunate, which is the major concern of this synod, is that it puts man, instead of God, at the center of the Christian message, faith and life. Man's welfare, instead of God's Kingdom and glory becomes the focus of the relationship that exists between God and man. IT REDUCES THE ALMIGHTY GOD TO A MERE VENDING MACHINE THAT EXISTS ONLY TO SATISFY EVERY MATERIAL DEMAND OF THOSE WHO COME TO HIM, AFTER THEY HAVE GIVEN HIM WHATEVER THEY FEEL HE DEMANDS. This is heretic, and destructive to the Christian faith, message, and testimony.

At this point it will be necessary for us to understand the concept and use of the vending machine. A vending machine is an automated machine that provides items such as snacks, beverages, alcohol, cigarettes and lottery tickets to consumers after money or a credit card is inserted into the machine.



(Still pictures to be shown of different types of vending machine).

Now let's look at the operations of the vending machine. (Videos of people using vending machines to be played now, [Video1](#) [Video2](#) [Video3](#) [Video4](#) [Video5](#) [Video6](#)). In the videos we just watched, we see the happiness in the faces of those who got what they needed from the vending machines as against the frustration on those who could not. We need to be concerned with fact that none of those people came with

any respect or regard for the machine. Rather their whole reason and interest was in getting what they wanted from the machine. This is exactly the type of relationship the prosperity gospel and theology create and foster between God and Christians. That's why people move from one ministry to the other looking for where God, their vending machine is up and operational. So to them, God can only be relevant and worthy of their worship as long as He supplies their needs as and when demanded. This is not just ungodly as it is unchristian, it is blasphemous and a sure path to hell.

This view of, and approach to God comes with both temporal and eternal danger, being DECEITFUL AND DEADLY Luring people to Christ to get rich is both deceitful and deadly. It's deceitful because when Jesus himself called us, he said things like: "Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). And it's deadly because the desire to be rich plunges "people into ruin and destruction" (1 Timothy 6:9). Therefore the propagation of and belief in the prosperity theology is catastrophic because it has the tendency to-

1. LEAD PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus said, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" His disciples were astonished, as many in the "prosperity" movement should be. So Jesus went on to raise their astonishment even higher by saying, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." They respond in disbelief: "Then who can be saved?" Jesus says, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:23-27). Why then would anyone want to develop a ministry focus that makes it harder for people to enter the kingdom of God.

2. KINDLE SUICIDAL DESIRES IN PEOPLE

Paul said, "There is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content". But then he warned against the desire to be rich. And by implication, he warned against preachers who stir up the desire to be rich instead of

helping people get rid of it. He warned, “Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:6-10). So my question for prosperity preachers is: Why would you want to develop a ministry that encourages people to pierce themselves with many pangs and plunge themselves into ruin and destruction?

3. PROMOTE LESS FAITH IN THE PROMISES OF GOD.

The reason the writer to the Hebrews tells us to be content with what we have is that the opposite implies less faith in the promises of God. He says, “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5-6). If the Bible tells us that being content with what we have honors the promise of God never to forsake us, why would we want to teach people to want to be rich?

4. DESTROY THE ZEAL OF NEW BELIEVERS.

Jesus warns that the word of God, which is meant to give us life, can be choked off from any effectiveness by riches. He says it is like a seed that grows up among thorns that choke it to death: “They are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the . . . riches . . . of life, and their fruit does not mature” (Luke 8:14). Why would we want to encourage people to pursue the very thing that Jesus warns will choke us to death?

5. TAKE THE SEASONING OUT OF THE CHRISTIAN SALTINESS AND PUT THE LIGHT OFF.

Jesus says “Ye are the salt of the earth..... Ye are the light of the world.....” (Matthew 5: 13 & 14). What is it about Christians that makes them the salt of the earth and the light of the world? It is not wealth. The desire for wealth and the pursuit of wealth tastes and looks just like the world. It does not offer the world anything different from what it already believes in. The great tragedy of prosperity-

preaching is that a person does not have to be spiritually awakened in order to embrace it; one needs only to be greedy. Getting rich in the name of Jesus is not the salt of the earth or the light of the world. In this, the world simply sees a reflection of itself. And if it works, they will buy it.

The context of Jesus' saying shows us what the salt and light are. They are the joyful willingness to suffering for Christ. Here is what Jesus said, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth. . . . You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:11-14).

What will make the world taste (the salt) and see (the light) of Christ in us is not that we love wealth the same way they do. Rather, it will be the willingness and the ability of Christians to love others through suffering, all the while rejoicing because their reward is in heaven with Jesus. This is inexplicable on human terms. This is supernatural. But to attract people with promises of prosperity is simply natural. It is not the message of Jesus. It is not what he died to achieve.

PROSPERITY GOSPEL AND THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

One of the wonderful things that have happened to the Gospel of Christ in recent years is its growth and orthodoxy in Sub Sahara Africa. As the Gospel has constantly been attacked by the Western world, Africa has continued to provide a 'safe haven' for the survival of the authentic, biblical and uncompromised strand of the Gospel. However, and unfortunately, this 'goodnews' from Africa, like other aspects of the African life, has been infested by the Western virus of the Prosperity Theology. In fact, the cultural and socio-political landscape of Africa has, unfortunately, provided a fertile ground for this virus to permeate and now is damaging the African Christian experience than that of the West from where it originated.

The following may give an insight to the danger and damage this erroneous and aberrant strand of the Christian theology poses to the African Christian experience in particular and the continent at large.

It is mixed with occultism: Before Christianity came to Nigeria, (the most populous African nation), people visited witch doctors and sacrificed goats or cows to get prosperity. They poured libations on the ground so the gods would hear their prayers. Today similar practices continue, only the juju priest has been replaced by a pastor who drives a Mercedes-Benz or other flashy vehicles. Stories abound of pastors who bury live animals under the floor of their churches to win God's favor. Another story is told of a pastor who asked his congregants to bring bottles of sand to church so he could anoint them; he then told the people to sprinkle the sand in their houses to bring blessings. The quest for wealth among Christian leaders and followers has led many into syncretism and other forms of cultic practices with the bible in their hands. The people who follow these charlatans are reminded that their promised windfall won't materialize unless they give large donations.

It fuels greed: Any person who knows Christ will learn the joy of giving to others. But the prosperity gospel teaches people to focus on getting, not giving. At its core is a selfish and materialistic faith with a thin Christian veneer. Church members are continually urged to sow financial seeds to reap bigger and bigger rewards. In Africa, entire conferences are dedicated to collecting offerings in order to achieve wealth. Preachers boast about how much they paid for suits, shoes, necklaces and watches. They tell their followers that spirituality is measured by whether they have a big house or a first-class ticket. When greed is preached from the pulpit, it spreads like a cancer in God's house.

It feeds pride: This greedy atmosphere in prosperity churches has produced a warped style of leadership. These purported church leaders have been described as “churchpreneurs.” They plant churches not because they have a burden to reach lost souls but because they see dollar signs when they fill an auditorium with chairs. A selfish message produces bigheaded opportunists who need position, applause and plenty of perks to keep them happy. The most successful prosperity

preacher is the most dangerous because he can convince a crowd that Jesus died to give you and me the most luxurious vehicle and or house.

It works against the formation of Christian character: The prosperity message is a poor imitation of the gospel because it leaves no room for brokenness, suffering, humility or delay. It offers an illegal shortcut. Prosperity preachers promise instant results and overnight success; if you don't get your breakthrough, it's because you didn't give enough money in the offering. Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and follow Him; prosperity preaching calls us to deny Jesus and follow our materialistic lusts. There is a leadership crisis in the African church because many pastors are so set on getting rich; they can't go through the process of discipleship that requires self-denial and humility.

It actually keeps people in poverty: Many African governments are currently under international scrutiny because of fraud carried out by top leaders. The saddest thing about this is that professing Christians in these administrations have been implicated. Most people today in Africa live on less than \$1 a day, yet their leaders have been known to buy fleets of cars and property across the world with money that was not theirs. Sadly, the prosperity gospel preached in the continent has encouraged pastors and leaders to follow the same corrupt pattern. As a result, God's people have been financially exploited.

When Jesus described false prophets as wolves in sheep's clothing, He warned us to examine their fruit. Matthew 7:17 says, "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit" Churches have been growing rapidly in many parts of Africa today, yet sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where poverty has increased in the past 25 years. So according to the statistics, the prosperity gospel is not bringing prosperity! It is a flawed message, but I believe God will use selfless, broken African leaders to clean this mess.

Before we look into crucial area of how to clean this mess, let's find out "WHO CHANGED THE GOSPEL"? From where does this cancer of Christian faith come from; What kind of people chose to deceive instead of direct believers to the right path of the Gospel; Who are reducing the Almighty God to a mere vending machine? It is mind settling to know that the same scripture that contains the true Gospel envisaged this aberration.

We read "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame— who set their mind on earthly things."(Philippians 3:18-19 NKJV). Reading these lines, I wonder how much an all-time truth the Bible could be. The leadership of the church today is highly infiltrated by men and women who have no business being there. People whose only interest in the ministry is to grow rich and live big materially. Who literally worship their material desire and appetite; people who are ready to do anything, I mean anything, even with the Bible in their hands, to acquire material wealth. So the cross of Christ makes no sense to them, since preaching Christ crucified, will not enrich them materially.

In today's church we listen as such ministers brag on their affluence and wealth-glorying in their ungodliness which should have brought them shame. As Paul writes with tears, these prosperity gospel preachers only "set their mind on earthly things". No wonder that is all their ministry, theology and gospel is about. These are they who have changed the Gospel and are doing everything within their evil powers to sell their unholy message to the rest of us. In addition to this ungodly self-acclaimed church leaders, there is another group that propels the flourishing of the prosperity gospel. This group and its activities were also foretold in the scripture. As we read, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."(II Timothy 4:3-4 NKJV). The prosperity gospel flourishes because there are misguided people who want to enjoy the goodness of God without any interest in living in obedience to Him. Who want every part of the fabrics of the crown without making any step to the feet of the cross where in alone lies the crown. Every Sunday; at every gathering of ministries and prayer houses across our streets, multitude gather not to worship God, but to be promised mirage of blessings from God, their vending machine. They are asked to give, not in appreciation for gift of life and other attending grace and benefits, as a bet towards God, who must return the favor in abundance. So these

microwave Christians on whose desires fly the wings of prosperity gospel are equally guilty of changing the gospel.

Now, how then do we clean the huge mess that this message from the pit of hell has made on our life and testimony as Christians? Critical in rejecting the message of prosperity gospel as it is presented today is in understating what it really means to prosper. The Latin for 'prosper'--*prosperere*---is translated 'according to expectations' or 'according to hope'. The word prosperous also means enjoying vigorous and 'healthy growth' or 'flourishing'. According to Merriam-Webster, prosper means 'to become strong' as well as 'to cause to succeed or thrive'. To be prosperous also means 'economic well-being' and to prosper also means 'to achieve economic success. From the above definitions we can see that there are two dimensions to the meaning of prosperity- the internal state of wellness, growth, and expectancy, and the outward manifestations of such inner condition. However, it is the inner prosperity that manifests in what is evident and visible on the outside. For the prosperity preachers, prosperity is reduced to the outward-owning a big house, driving the latest vehicle, and living an opulent lifestyle. But experience has shown that there are many who live this kind of life, who live with holes in their souls.

However, prosperity is about overcoming obstacles--political, cultural, economical, emotional, relational, etc. -so that when you arise out of hardship and setbacks, you come out better than you were before. That is what it means to prosper-- to have the strength and resources to do good in spite of the bad that might be happening to you and around you. Prosperity empowers you to say that no matter what, 'I will bless the Lord at all times and His praise shall continually be in my mouth, because I trust Him in every condition'. In Deuteronomy we are reminded that it is God 'who gives us the strength to be prosperous.' (Det. 8:18). God's favor prospers us with the provision to fulfill a purpose. It is not contingent upon our circumstance, experiences, opportunities, or background, it is by the grace of God. So we should ask, when the apostle John writes in 3John 2 "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."(NKJV), which is one of the anchor passages for prosperity theology; does he mean in all material things, or in all circumstances? In Romans 8:35 Paul wrote that nothing

"tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword" could separate us from the love of God. And in Philippians he wrote "Everywhere and in all things I have learned to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need". (Phil. 4:12). With this said, 3John 2 is more than a simple prayer, it is key to true prosperity. "May you prosper in all things and be healthy, just as your soul prospers", is at the center of the Gospel message of empowerment. Our Lord Jesus made this very clear when He asked that quintessential question-" For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?"(Mk.8:36). An empowered life is a prosperous life, and true prosperous life only comes from a prosperous-strong and flourishing soul. So to the Christian, I say that prosperity is not the absence of hardship, sickness, or any other physically uncomfortable circumstance. Rather prosperity is the inner strength, supplied through faith and hope in Christ Jesus, to joyfully go through these circumstances with faith unwavering and hope undiminished.

Furthermore, we must remind Christians that the Christian faith is a theocentric act of the will, or simply trust in God. It is trust in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of His teaching, and the redemptive work He accomplished at Calvary. It is an unwavering belief that God is in control of and abundantly able to see us through any circumstance of our life. However, we must understand that our faith, no matter how strong, cannot change the will and purpose of God for our life. We cannot control God or utter His agenda by our faith. Even when we pray, whatever answer we receive must be in accordance with God's will and purpose and for His glory.

Another important touch in cleaning of the mess of prosperity gospel is in the area of giving. Our thought on this can be better presented through the fourth stanza of hymns ancient and modern revised number 357.

**If Thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine;
I only yield Thee what was Thine;
"Thy will be done!"**

These words confirm what apostle James says “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”(James1:17 NKJV). So if all we have, beginning with the grace to see this new day, comes from God, then giving back to Him can only be nothing but an act of gratitude and appreciation. Even when God asks us to give, this should be understood from the view of a loving Father teaching His children to be appreciative and to learn to share with others. We parents do same with our children. The promises that follow such injunctions are for our encouragement and not to be seen as obligation that God must meet. He would only give us that which will work out His glory in our life and situations. After all, He began to give us without receiving from us. We must then understand that nothing and absolutely nothing we offer to God, no matter the magnitude, can make Him compromise His holy and just standards.

OUR CHARGE

To The Prosperity Preachers

Hear what the Lord of the Church says “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.”(Mark 9:42 NKJV). So no matter what your guise and motives may be, this warning and promise must surely hold. Enriching yourselves at the detriment of the souls for which Christ died is a time bomb which explosion can only guarantee you a permanent place in hell. Also you must be reminded of the damning consequence of distorting the message of the Gospel of Christ-“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”(Revelation 22:18-19 NKJV). So if you are called into the ministry, be assured that your caller is able to equip and sustain you without you altering His Message or deceiving the flock. But if you are not called, believe and trust the same Lord for

another source of livelihood. He still asks ' For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?"

To The Rest of us Pastors and Church Leaders

Hear this- "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."(Acts 20:28-30NKJV). We have a God-given mandate and responsibility to save believers from the snares of the prosperity preachers whose mission is only to 'kill and destroy'. We must educate, counsel, doing all it might take to expose believers, especially new and younger ones, to the truth of the undiluted and uncompromised Gospel of Christ. In this and alike cases, we can't afford to join them if we can't beat them. WE MUST BEAT THEM.

To every member of the Church

Be reminded that we must seek the glory of God in all we do or desire. As we are admonished - "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."(Romans12:1-2 NKJV). You must present yourselves to God as a sacrifice not approaching God as your vending machine. We must understand that No level of commitment, dedication, giving, service to, or in the name of, God can ever make God do anything that is against His divine will or that will not give Him glory. Therefore whenever and whatever we give or render any service to or in God's name, it must be with a grateful and appreciative heart and as an act of worship for what He has done already. It should be left to God to choose to continue to give us or not to. God cannot be enticed, coaxed or lured against His word, will or eternal purpose. God, His worship and glory, must be at the center of our Christian faith, life and activities. We are created by God for His pleasure. His will, desire and glory must at all time take preeminence over all our needs, desires and circumstances. Everything

we do or not receive from God either material or spiritual are by His grace, and never because of our faith, benevolence, dedication or lack of thereof.

Conclusion

The Christian relationship with God is God initiated and so ought to be God centered. The blessings of God are a demonstration of His grace and love, and not an obligation. For the blessings of the present life, and hope of a richer and eternal life, we owe God all our life and resources. We then must approach God always with an appreciative heart of worship, offering ourselves as sacrifice for His glory. Therefore God should not be related to as a vending machine. Machines are installed by people who also stock and regulate the content of the machine. You go to wherever the machine is located to enjoy their services. It's not so with God. You stay wherever you find yourself, invite or accept God and He relates with you. Your relationship with and need of a vending machine ends once you get whatever you want. And should the machine not have what you need, you look for another machine that may have what you need. It should not be so with God. For what God had already done for us in Christ, no present situation should be the measure of our love and service to Him. Jesus still asks "what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul".

1. Egwu natu gi n'on'y'iro gemeri?
Ochichiri gbachiri nime, n'ezi?
Meghe ngbachi window, meghepu uzo,
K'ihe ngozi nwubata.

Koros:

K'ihe ngozi nwubata!
K'ihe ngozi nwubata!
Meghe ngbachi window, meghepu uzo,
K'ihe ngozi nwubata!

2. Okwukwe-I n'uzo nke Kraist naju oyi?
Chineke no n'elu azagh ekpere-i?
Meghe ngbachi window, meghepu uzo,
K'ihe ngozi nwubata.

3. I geji oñu naga n'uzo nke igwe?
Narap'ochichiri, nebi nim'ihe?
Meghe ngbachi window, meghepu uzo,
K'ihe ngozi nwubata.

May the Light of the true Gospel continue to shine through the Church;
May it shine brighter through our Diocese with you as a beacon. Thanks
for listening patiently. May your days be long and bright.

+Nath, Aba Ngwa North