

QUINQUENNIAL REPORT 2007 - 2017

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

This Quinquennial Report covers, with a few exceptions, the period from September 2007 to December 2017. The structure followed in writing this report is the schema given by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples; for the Diocese of Awgu falls within missionary territories overseen by the Sacred Congregation.

At the beginning of this report, we consider it necessary to give a brief history and general description of the Diocese which would act as a general framework or context that should guide the understanding of all other pieces of information presented about the Diocese.

GENERAL IDENTIFICATION AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DIOCESE OF AWGU

A. IDENTIFICATION:

The people that fall within the present Catholic Diocese of Awgu are drawn from three different Local Government Areas – Awgu, Aninri and Oji Local Government Areas, all in Enugu State of Nigeria. These different peoples have an almost completely homogenous lifestyle and cultural practices save for some subtle nuances detectable mainly by aboriginals.

B. BRIEF HISTORY OF CATHOLICISM IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AWGU

NIGERIA'S FIRST CONTACT WITH CHRISTIANITY

We can trace the origins of the Catholic Diocese of Awgu to the beginnings of Catholic missionary activities in Nigeria which commenced around the year 1482 at which time, the Portuguese government enjoyed an exclusive right over the coast of West Africa.

Although it is often believed that between 1482 and 1486 the king of Benin on his own initiative sent his ambassador to king John II of Portugal, it is more probable that the first Catholic missionary, Joao Afonso de Aviro, must have visited the Oba of Benin, Uzoluwa in 1482. Curiously, the Oba then desiring Portuguese alliance requested for priests from Portugal as well as arms to protect his kingdom. With the arrival of the priests in 1515 and in 1516, the missionary activities took off in the king's court.

Although the initial missionary attempt was quite unsuccessful for a number of reasons, around 1668 some Spanish and Italian Capuchins made another rather fruitless attempt to evangelize Benin. It was within that same period that some religious fervour grew in Warri. This was occasioned by Augustinian missionaries from Sao Tome who were allowed by Olu the king of Warri to preach to his subjects. By 1670 the Warri mission declined.

In 1842 Nigeria became a part of a vast Vicariate Apostolic. With this, in 1861 the Society for the African Mission arrived in Nigeria. Via their great missionary zeal, the Catholic Church spread to Yoruba provinces with headquarters at Asaba in 1881. With the papal decree of 7th April 1889 by Pope Leo VII, the prefecture Apostolic for the Lower Niger was established.

THE ONITSHA MISSION

In 1885 the then Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (founded by Pope Gregory XV in 1622) invited the Holy Ghost Fathers to undertake the Evangelisation of the Lower Niger Tribes (Le bas Niger). The missionary congregation accepted the offer and chose four of its members, Rev. Frs. Lutz and Horne; Brothers John and Hermas to make the initial attempt. Finally arriving at the shores of Onitsha in December, the mission spread from then on to various parts of the old Anambra State.

The 20th Century ushered in a new Prefect Apostolic in the person of Fr. Joseph Shanahan. In the wake of military expedition during the early part of the century, he and his colleagues pushed further into Igbo interior. In 1909, coal was discovered in Udi (Old Anambra State, presently within Enugu State) by a certain British scientist, Kitson. This discovery meant development of the interior. Fr. Joseph Shanahan did not let this opportunity to establish schools slip through his fingers. So, he sent the only Portuguese Father in the mission (Fr. Correia CSSP) to explore possibilities. Ultimately Fr. Correia settled in a spot called Eke. He was the first Resident Parish Priest of the old Eke Parish.

THE ENTRANCE INTO ENUGU AND FINALLY AWGU

Eke served as the cradle of Catholicism from which it spread to other parts of Enugu including the now Nsukka and Awgu Dioceses. The mission sojourned in different parts of Enugu; finally, the missionaries' influence from Eke was equally felt in Awgu area. The two schools established in Ezioha and Ifite Mmaku in 1919 were mandated from Eke –the parish headquarters - by Rev. Fr. Grandin. Later it was realised that the various separate units were not viable. Consequently, the two villages teamed up and put the school at Ajaba (Ezioha) in 1922, its present site. From

this year 1922, Mmaku Christian Community started asking for a resident priest, that is, that Mmaku be created a parish. Catholic authorities both at Onitsha and Eke agreed to this in principle and Mmaku became a sub-parish in 1922. She became a full-fledged parish in 1939 with Rev. Fr. Burke as the first parish priest. The parish embraced all the towns in the then Awgu Division.

In 1921 the Roman Catholic mission set up a school/church at Oke-ali, Awgu (former location of St. Michael's Church), which attracted over 100 converts in less than one year. The first Holy Mass at St. Michael's, Awgu was at Oke-ali-Ogboli, Awgu by Rev. Fr. Grandin. As history would have it, in 1949 Awgu was then created a full-fledged parish and it overlooked the evangelization of the entire area within the present Awgu Deanery (with the exception, of course, of Mmaku which was a centre of its own rights that saw to the pastoral needs of Obeagu, Inyi and Achi areas). It is necessary to note that there were not just missionary activities into Awgu from Enugu via Mmaku, there were also missionary activities that had some effect on the region which came in from Uturu in Okigwe; thus, we may safely say that what we call Awgu Diocese today is a historical effect of missionary synergy of Eke and Uturu Catholic Missions. The missionary movement into Awgu from Uturu Okigwe was orchestrated by the construction of a railway line from Enugu to Portharcourt in 1915. This made Ndeaboh Railway Station a hub mercantile and evangelical interactions. This created and provided pastoral relationship between St. Michaels Awgu and the Roman Catholic mission at Uturu, Okigwe (established in 1912). These two missions, contributed greatly to Catholicism in Awgu.

Eventually, Awgu was raised to the status of a diocese on the 8th of July 2005 by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI and was canonically erected on the 29th day of September with the Most Rev. John Ifeanyichukwu Okoye ordained as its first Bishop.

GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY OF THE DIOCESE OF AWGU

Awgu is in the Eastern zone of Nigeria, which itself is a tropical zone of the world and has two main climatic zones: the Hot-Dry zone and the Hot-Humid/Wet zone. Nigeria experiences two major seasons: the Rainy season and the Dry season.

Climatic regions of Nigeria are divided into four, viz:

- Tropical Continental North
- High Plateaux
- Tropical Hinterlands

- Sub-Equatorial South

Awgu being in the South-Eastern zone of Nigeria, is situated within the Sub-Equatorial South climatic region in the Hot-Humid climatic zone of Nigeria. The monthly distribution of the two seasons which Nigeria experiences are as follows:

- The long-wet season: April – July, characterized by heavy rain and high humidity.
- The short dry season: August break
- The short-wet season: September- October, moderate rain and humidity.
- The long dry season (harmattan): November to February, when morning is cool and misty, while the afternoon is hot and hazy.

VEGETATION

Awgu belongs to the rain forest region. It thus exhibits much of the characteristics of areas within the region. The site vegetation consists of evergreen bushes. The original thick forest in the area has been replaced by bushes due to development and continuous farming activities. The soil is highly acidic from excessive leaching due to characteristic rainfall of the region. Chemical weathering is also common.

RAINFALL

Rainfall is caused by the South Westerly wind which blows from across the Atlantic coasts of West Africa. The average annual rainfall is received between late of March and October and is about 235mm. The highest rainfall of about 340mm occurs in September and lowest of about 10mm in January. The beginning and the end of rainy season is marked with violent local storms associated with the migration of shallow pressure waves along the intertropical front. This is sometimes strong enough to pull off roofs, although not enough to constitute danger to the stability of the building structure.

ECONOMY

As mentioned above, the climate in Awgu is equatorial. Rainfall is heavy and is well over 235mm a year. Thus, favoured by rainfall, many of the Awgu people live an agrarian life, depending wholly on raising live-stock and farming staple food. In other words, the major economic activity in the Awgu area for a majority of the population is subsistence farming; and crops such as cassava, yam, cocoyam, vegetables, maize, etc. are grown. Bush fallowing, mixed

cropping and shifting cultivation are some of their farming practices. Livestock rearing e.g. of sheep, goats, poultry etc. is also common among some of the people. Palm wine extraction and stone quarrying are other economic activities also undertaken by some members of the communities.

I. POPULATION OF THE TERRITORY

A. CIVIL DATA:

1. ***Total Population:*** The total population of the territory is put at about 700,000
2. ***Number or percentage of inhabitants according to race and language:*** Almost 99% of those within the territory are Igbo; consequently, the language generally spoken is the Igbo language. The remaining 1% is made of civil servants, posted by the Government to jobs within the territory and/or Youth Corps posted within the territory for their one-year compulsory National Youth Service program.
3. ***Brief outline of the civil administration:*** The Catholic Diocese of Awgu is located within Enugu State; a state located within the South-Eastern region of the country, Nigeria. Nigeria is a country that gained her independence from the British colonial rule in 1960. As a country, she runs a Democratic System of Government and the Federal Government is composed of three distinct branches: legislative, executive and judicial, whose powers are vested by the constitution of Nigeria in the National Assembly, the (democratically elected) President, and the federal courts, including the Supreme Court, respectively. The National Assembly is a bicameral legislature consisting of a Senate with 109 members and a 360-member House of Representatives. This body is meant to guaranty equal representation of the 36 States that makes up the Federation.

Enugu State, within which is found the territory of the Diocese, is led by a democratically elected executive governor as well as a State Executive Council and a State House of Assembly.

The territory of the Diocese encompasses three Local Government Areas (led by democratically elected Local Government Chairmen). They are: Awgu, Aninri and

Oji River. They are subdivided into Local Government Development Centers as follows:

Awgu – Anike, Mbanabo North and Mbanabo South;

Aninri – Aninri South and Aninri North;

Oji River – Iyiukwu and Oji.

Awgu, where the Diocese has its Cathedral, used to be the headquarter of the old Awgu Division (which existed before the Nation’s independence) as well the headquarters of the Old Awgu Local Government Area (which covered the three Local Government Areas mentioned above.)

B. RELIGIOUS DATA:

4. **Baptized Catholics:** The total population of Catholics in the Diocese is put at about 400,000. Out of this number about 55% are women while the population of males is about 45%.

All Catholics in the Diocese are of the Latin rite. Religious fervour is high and very encouraging.

5. **Non-Catholic Christians:** There are 2 groups of non-Catholic Christians within the territory of the Diocese, namely:

A. Protestant groups such Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians.

B. Pentecostal groups.

The population of non-Catholics in the territory is about 250,000. Out of this number we have:

Members of other Christian denomination 206,000

Followers of Traditional Religion 49,000

A higher percentage of this non-Catholic group belongs to the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations, while the rest are of the Pentecostal and African independent Churches.

6. **Other groups of non-Catholic Christians:** There are no other known groups residing within the territory of the Diocese.

7. **Non-Christians:** The non-Christians are mostly those who follow the Traditional Religion. They are about 49,000
8. **Modern Neo-Pagans:** There are modern neo-pagans, but their number is minimal. This is because most of the people who leave the Catholic Church do join other non-Catholic Christian churches.

II ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURES

A. THE ORDINARY AND HIS DIRECT COLLABORATORS:

9. **The Ordinary**

Name: Most Rev. John Ifeanyichukwu Okoye

Date of Birth: 4th August 1950, at Owelli in Awgu LGA

Date of priestly Ordination: July 22, 1978

Appointed Bishop: July 8, 2005

Ordained and installed on 29th September 2005 as the pioneer Bishop of the Diocese

Mother tongue: His Mother tongue is Igbo Language, but speaks fluent English, German, Italian and French. He also reads Latin, Biblical Hebrew, New-Testament Greek, Biblical Aramaic and Spanish.

Residence: The Bishop takes up residence at the Bishop's House - St. Michael's Cathedral P.O. Box 256, Awgu, Enugu State, Nigeria.

10. **Coadjutor or Auxiliary Bishop:** The Diocese has no Coadjutor Bishop or Auxiliary Bishop.

11. **The Vicar General**

Name: Rev. Fr. Cyprian Orji

Date of Birth: April 6th, 1947

Date of Ordination: July 5th, 1980

Residence: Holy Cross Parish, Awgu

He is an ex-officio member of the Curia, College of Consultors, Presbyterial Council and Finance Commission. He is the Bishop's agent in administration, acting as second-in-command for diocesan executive matters. He also sees to the administration of the Diocese in the absence of the Bishop.

EPISCOPAL VICARS:

Vicar for Priests: Rev. Fr. Anthony Okeke

Date of Birth: 12th October 1950

Date of Ordination: 31st July 1982

Residence: Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP), Enugu

He sees to the welfare of Priests in the Diocese

Judicial Vicar: Rev. Fr. Clement Obasi

Date of Birth: 12th of April 1959

Date of Ordination: 6th of August 1988

Residence: Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu.

He, in liaison with the Bishop, exercises ordinary judicial power in the Inter-Diocesan Tribunal

Vicar for Youths: Rev. Fr. Victor Afam Ozonoh

Date of Birth: 29th July 1973

Date of Ordination: 16th July 2005

St. John's Parish, Owelli

He supervises and coordinates strategies for the faith formation of the Youths

Vicar for Public Relations: Rev. Fr. Anthony Anichebe

Date of Birth: 15th December 1976

Date of Ordination: 16th July 2005

Residence: Sacred Heart Parish, Inyi

He sees to the good relationship between the Diocese and other bodies like the Government, the media and other local agencies as well as between groups within the Diocese.

Vicar for the Laity: Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Anugwo

Date of Birth: 1959

Date of Ordination: 1993

Residence: St. Benedict Parish, Mgbidi

He coordinates the activities of the laity and helps to foster harmony between the laity and the clergy.

DIOCESAN CURIA:

1. Bishop John Okoye
2. Rev. Fr. Cyprian Orji
3. Rev. Fr. Lawrence Eze
4. Rev. Fr. Emeka Nwadu
5. Rev. Fr. Jacob Okoye
6. Rev. Fr. Anthony Agbilibeazu
7. Rev. Fr. Anthony Okeke
8. Rev. Fr. Clement Obasi
9. Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Anugwo
10. Rev. Fr. Victor Afam Ozonoh
11. Rev. Fr. Basil Nweze

12. Rev. Fr. Raphael Egwu
13. Rev. Fr. Oswald Ikeude
14. Rev. Fr. Ignatius Ohajuobodo
Oko
15. Rev. Fr. Albert Ikpenwa
16. Rev. Fr. Simon Umah
17. Rev. Fr. Michael Onyehalu
18. Rev. Fr. Kennedy Udeh
19. Rev. Fr. Anthony Anichebe
20. Rev. Fr. Peter Ezewuzie
21. Rev. Fr. Felix Eze

COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS:

1. Rev. Fr. Cyprian Orji
2. Rev. Fr. Raphael Egwu
3. Rev. Fr. Clement Obasi
4. Rev. Fr. Anthony Okeke
5. Rev. Fr. Emeka Nwadu
6. Rev. Fr. Basil Nweze

7. Rev. Fr. Simon Umah
8. Rev. Fr. Lawrence Eze
9. Rev. Fr. Anthony Agbilibeazu
10. Rev. Fr. Jacob Okoye
11. Rev. Fr. Ignatius Ohajuobodo Oko
12. Rev. Fr. Felix Eze

12. PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Pastoral Council is made up of the Bishop together with all the priests as well as some representatives of different parish pastoral councils which include: The Vice Chairman, Catholic Men's Organization (CMO) President, Catholic Women's Organization (CWO) President, Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON) President and the Parish Finance Secretary. Joined to this group are representatives of different diocesan organs viz: Diocesan CMO, CWO, CYON and Laity Council; as well as representatives of Consecrated Women Religious.

These bodies (Curia, Consultors and the Pastoral Council) have statutory quarterly meetings. They also meet at other intervals when occasion calls for it.

B. ECCLESIASTICAL DIVISIONS

13. *The Mandatum Commissum*: This does not apply to the Diocese of Awgu

14. *Any Contracts entered into between the Ordinary and Missionary bodies*: There are no such contracts.

15. *Divisions into districts or regions and those in charge*: The Diocese is divided into two deaneries and five regions.

A. DEANS AND THEIR DEANERIES:

Awgu Deanery: Rev. Fr. Jacob Okoye

Oji Deanery: Rev. Fr. Anthony Agbilibeazu

B. REGIONS AND THEIR REGIONAL HEADS:

Awgu Region: Rev. Fr. Nnaemeka Nwadu

Nenwe Region: Rev. Fr. Kennedy Udeh

Owelli Region: Rev. Fr. Victor Afam Ozonoh

Achi Region: Rev. Fr. Michael Onyeghalu

Inyi Region: Rev. Fr. Anthony Anichebe

16. *Provision for Vacant See or Impeded See*: The Diocesan provision for an impeded or vacant See follows the Universal Church's laws as contained in Canons 412-430.

III MISSIONARIES AND THEIR COLLABORATORS

A. MISSIONARIES:

17. **Priests:** The Diocese has 74 Diocesan priests incardinated into the Diocese, all of whom are autochthonous. There are 6 Fidei Donum Priests working in the Diocese and five religious priests: 3 of them belong to the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) or Franciscan Friars; the other two belong to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost (CSSp). All are autochthonous.

18. **Religious Brothers:** There are no religious Brothers working in the Diocese.

19. **Religious Sisters:** There are 17 Religious sisters residing and working in the Diocese. Below are their numbers according to congregations:

1. Missionary Sisters of Peter Claver - 2
2. Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SND) - 4
3. Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ) - 3
4. Daughters of Divine Love (DDL) – 8

20. **Lay Missionaries:** There are no lay missionary associations present within the territory of the Diocese.

21. **Full-time autochthonous catechists:** **Data Needed**

22. **Summary of the above:**

i. *Relations between the priest and the Ordinary:* The Bishop of the Diocese operates an open-door policy with priests. His house is always open for them whenever they are in need of either formal or informal consultation. The Bishop has one office day in a week dedicated to consultations with his priests. This however, does not take away the open-door policy.

Furthermore, Presbyterium meetings are quarterly, that is, four times a year. Emergency meetings are held when the need arises.

ii. *Relations between the Religious and the Ordinary:* The Bishop created, among the vicars in the Diocese, a Vicar for the Religious. He constantly has meetings with the Vicar and through him, occasionally organizes consultation sessions and meetings with the Religious working within the territory for dialogue and mutual understanding in line with the directives of the

Document: *Mutuae Relationes*. He also has weekly, an office day dedicated to consultations with the Religious.

iii. *Success of their activities*: The Catholic Diocese of Awgu is a very young Diocese (barely 12year old) and so, the primary task faced within the Diocese is faith formation and the attempt to gradually wean the people off some negative influences of a number of pre-Christian traditional practices. This mission is carried out basically through constant catechesis, evangelization programs, spiritual programs and exercises as well as via institutions and school apostolate. The priests and Religious within the Diocese have been very instrumental to this mission and the fruits of their dedication are abundant and very palpable. One of the reasons for this success is collaborative ministry.

B. COLLABORATORS:

23. Lay Apostolate Organizations:

1. Catholic Men Organization
2. Catholic Women Organization
3. Catholic Youth Organization
4. Catholic Young Men Organization
5. Catholic Young Women Organization
6. St. Anthony's Guild
7. Blue Army of Our Lady
8. Legion of Mary
9. St. Jude Society
10. Catholic Biblical Movement
11. St. Maria Gorretti Society
12. Block Rosary
13. Church Wardens
14. Altar Boys
15. Altar Girls
16. Purgatorian Society
17. Catechists
18. Mary League
19. League of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
20. Catholic Charismatic Renewal
21. Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
22. Our Lady of Perpetual Succor
23. Divine Mercy
24. Tansi Solidarity
25. St. Vincent DePaul Charity Organization
26. Catholic Workers' Volunteer Force
27. Holy Childhood Association
28. Catholic Nurses Guild
29. Nigerian Scout Guild
30. Nigerian Girls Guide Movement
31. Marian Movement for Priests
32. Knights of St. John
33. Knight of St, Mulumba
34. Association of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

35. Young Catholic Students

37. Lay Readers Association

36. National Association of Catholic Corpers

The total number of Lay Apostolate Organizations in the Diocese is

37

24. **Parish Assistants:** Such a group does not exist in the Diocese.

25. **Part-time Catechists:** There is no special group dedicated to this service, but all Lay apostolate organizations from time to time carry out catechesis in schools and at other places when occasion calls for it. More so, there are a number of individuals in each parish that assist in catechizing young children as well as assist in preparing individuals for the reception of the Sacraments.

C. MAJOR SEMINARIANS:

26. The Diocese has a total number of 108 major seminarians for the Diocesan clergy and 284 minor seminarians for the Diocesan clergy.

IV

MISSION WORK

A. PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION:

27. **Propagation of the Catholic Faith:** The propagation and deepening of the Catholic Faith has been of primary interest to the Diocese. Thus, all hands in the Diocese are on deck; the Clergy, the Religious and the Laity are all involved, in varying degrees of responsibility according to their different states of life, in this faith-building and faith-disseminating mission of the local church. But for a more fluid and organized operation, an Evangelization Commission and a Catechetical Commission was formed, whose basic task is to be the thinktanks that brainstorm to develop ever new strategies of grassroots evangelization and catechesis.

Various methods have been employed to achieve success of this missionary mandate some of these include: catechetical conferences/seminars, retreats, recollections, evangelization outreach programs, a number of didactic publications by the Bishop, various Lenten programs and pilgrimages organized by the Bishop for the clergy and laity through which he deepens faith, organization of some social activities within which exhortation and catechesis are given etc.

Many of these activities have the effect of propagating the Christian faith, especially those publicly manifested. Another great tool in this propagation is the Bishop's annual visitation of prisoners in which he exhorts and encourages them, as well as provides them with material relief etc. More recently, the Diocese, through the initiative of the Bishop, developed a novel method of evangelization and catechesis which we believe, would be much more fruitful than the earlier methods, and in synergy with the earlier methods, would bring about huge success in the evangelization mission of the Diocese.

In this new method, the Diocese, each year selects a particular theological topic. For instance, in the year 2016, it was a reflection on the Mercy of God in general and the Papal Bull, *Misericordiae Vultus* in particular; in the year 2017, whereas the Nigerian Church declared it a Marian Year, the Diocese of Awgu combined this Marian Year with our own Year of the Holy Spirit; thus, the theme for the Year was "To the Holy Spirit, in Union with Mary". And so, with the theme given, it is then broken down into three or more sub-topics. Each of these sub-topics would be reflected on in detail both theologically and pastorally by the priests, religious and laity of the Diocese by means of conferences/seminars. This is how it works: a first conference/seminar would be conducted for the priests and religious alone for a detailed teaching on the sub-topic by select individuals or guest speakers. After this, another conference (only a week later) would take place involving still the priests and religious who would act as facilitators, but this time the seminar would create room for group discussions which is basically, though not solely, aimed at a more detailed study of the theme and at discovering the best methods, strategies and categories of communicating the fruits of the first conference to the faithful in ways that the high sounding theologies would be easily comprehensible and applicable to their day to day lives as Christians. When this is concluded, the priest-facilitators are then sent out to deaneries, regions and parishes (mostly, different from their own) not simply to impart the knowledge and experience garnered from the conferences, on the faithful, but also to engage them in a dialogue of encounter with regard to the selected theme and their own faith and life-experience. This often takes three consecutive contact sessions (often three consecutive Saturdays). For each of these contact sessions, individuals are grouped according to homogeneity in order to facilitate communication and address issues specific to each different group. Thus, in the first session, the members of the (Catholic Men's Organization) CMO are involved, then the Catholic Women's Organization (CWO) and finally, the Catholic Youth's Organization of

Nigeria (CYON). At the beginning of each session, the priest-facilitators celebrate the Eucharist (Morning Mass) in the parish they have been assigned to (not in their own parish); and only after that would they begin the catechesis and dialogue. Furthermore, to ensure that the faithful attend the programme without giving excuses of other engagements, the priests would be expected to round everything within the time frame of 1hr30mins to enable the faithful attend to other businesses of theirs. This same procedure is carried out for each of the sub-topics at the end of which, one can look back at a deeply enriching faith-encounter and experience on the part both of the facilitators and of the faithful.

It should be noted that everything doesn't simply end with the laity contact sessions; as a matter of fact, the sessions are actually a beginning. The members of the different bodies that have been catechized would be expected to spread the fruits they have gained from the sessions, to the various nooks and crannies of their homes, associations, as well as with their acquaintances. Through the catechesis received, the faithful are better enabled to evangelize and make the words of Christ reach places and individuals that had heretofore not encountered him and whom the clergy, if left alone, would never have been able to reach. Furthermore, in a sort of feedback-loop, the facilitators would be expected to gather at an appropriate time to share their experiences, reflect on problems and challenges encountered, and develop strategies for improving participation and the quality of the catechetical process. This method has really proven to be a success and I believe it would help deepen the faith of the people as well as aid in grass-roots evangelization.

The major difficulty that could encumber these missionary activities of the Diocese is the growing indifference to the Church and her activities especially by some members of the Youth as well as hard-knocked syncretistic ideologies and practices of a good number of the faithful. The Diocese is aware of these difficulties, and continues to make serious efforts as well as develop strategies to combat them.

28. *Are there widespread difficulties causing people well disposed to the Catholic Faith to refuse to be baptized or to wish to refuse?* There are no known difficulties that would make people avoid baptism. On the contrary, baptism is a highly sought-after Sacrament, even at times, by those who know nothing of the Catholic Faith, for their children.

29. ***Christian initiation of new converts:*** The Diocese strictly follows the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults for all converts that are above the age of Infant Baptism. Candidates are gradually introduced to aspects of Catholic Faith and practices via regular courses for the catechumens with different stages as outlined in the RCIA.

30. ***Number of new converts baptized in the present Quinquennium:*** Data Needed

B. CHRISTIAN FORMATION OF YOUTH

31. ***For Catholic young people in parishes or mission stations:*** The Christian formation of young people in the parishes is basically carried out via the formation of a lay apostolic organization which has young people as target called Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON) which by extension, has two branches: Catholic Young Men Organization and Catholic Young Women Organization. These organizations on the parish level, are overseen by the Parish Priest with elected executive members. On the Diocesan level, the groups have chaplains who see to their faith formation, this they do in consultation and collaboration with the Vicar for Youths. Through this grouping, the youth of the Diocese, through conferences, Youth Weeks, pilgrimages, feasts and retreat programs are formed in the Catholic Faith, and themselves become agents of evangelization. They contribute greatly to the growth of their parishes and the Diocese at large. Other groups concentrated on the Christian formation of the Youth include: Block Rosary Society, Youth Choir Association etc. Furthermore, the Missionary Sisters of Peter Claver work seriously in the area of youth animation through the Pontifical Mission Society. The opportunity to gain from these strategies of formation is open to all members of the Youth but not all avail themselves of this opportunity.

32. ***For Catholic young people in school:*** The Government of the Federation has made Religious Studies one of the subjects to be taught in all elementary and secondary schools within the country, even secular schools. Some problems do sometimes arise, as recently happened with regard to the teaching of Christian Religion in secular Schools. The Government attempted to join this very important subject to be only an aspect within a wider secular subject, while leaving the Islamic religious Studies as a full subject of its own rights. This move met with great criticism from various Christian denominations and associations, which pressurized Government

to reverse the unfortunate mistake. Such issues still linger and occasionally arise, but we would continue to fight to make sure that the Christian Studies is given its due place.

In particularly Catholic schools, Religious Studies is taken seriously. Other areas of catholic education and especially human, moral and spiritual formation are especially given a place of priority. Furthermore, to deepen youth Christian formation in schools, there exists in many schools, secular and Church run, an association of Young Catholic Students (YCS) through which faith of the students is nurtured and deepened.

In addition, the three dioceses within Enugu State: Awgu, Enugu and Nsukka Dioceses, formed a State Education Commission; a meeting of which all the Bishops are members with secretary representatives from each of the Dioceses. This body organizes conferences, supervises and makes policies for the general education of students and especially, their religious education. They also organize quiz competitions, debates and other religious activities which is a way of religious formation in our schools.

33. ***Catholic formation in Catholic youth associations:*** As far as the Diocese of Awgu is concerned, the Catholic formation given in the different youth associations in the Diocese, as we have already made abundantly clear above, is quite satisfactory. Through these groups and their activities, their faith is deepened, and they become, themselves, veritable instruments of the evangelization mission. More so, on account of this formation given, some have received vocation to the priesthood or to religious life. Those that eventually get married become very active Christians.

34. ***Preparation for Christian Marriage:*** The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is a very serious and important Sacrament of the Church and it is treated as such in the Catholic Diocese of Awgu. Prior to the Sacrament, the couples would be expected to carry out a three-month marriage course program in which various experts: Priests, Catechists, Psychologists, Marriage Counsellors and experienced couples would be invited from time to time to educate the couple on the basics of their intended union. Only after the completion of this program would they be admitted as candidates for the Sacrament. More so, they are often advised to run necessary tests to check for compatibility as well as to make some preliminary inquiries about each other.

C. PASTORAL CARE OF THE FAITHFUL:

35. *Languages used for expounding the Liturgy of the Word to the faithful:* Due to the fact that Awgu Diocese falls within a rural region of Enugu State, the major language used for homilies and preaching is the vernacular – Igbo Language. Only occasionally, when there are a good number of non-Igbo speaking visitors or in areas predominated by foreigners, is English Language used.

i. *Are homilies preached regularly and properly:* Preaching of homilies is one of the important media for communication of the Faith, which the Diocese holds dear. Thus, homilies are preached regularly and are most often properly prepared, even during daily masses homilies are always delivered and are well prepared. The Bishop of the Diocese, because of the necessity of homilies, writes within the Diocesan Weekly bulletin, a reflection on each Sunday's reading.

ii. *Active participation of the faithful in the Sacrifice of the Mass:* This is an area where the local church in Awgu can be proud of: there is an almost infectious liveliness in Eucharistic celebrations in the Diocese. This is especially so with the translation of the Rites of Mass into vernacular and the composition of hymns in the language as well as characteristic up-beat disposition of the people. Their participation in the taking of readings, prayer of the faithful and their general responses are particularly encouraging.

iii. *Percentage of those attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation:* At least, 90% of the faithful attend Masses on Sundays. On holy days of obligation, the percentage is not that much; one might place attendance on such days between 60-70%. A problematic issue we have is with regard to the people's traditional market days. Whenever a holy day of obligation falls on a market day, there is a higher possibility of recording poorer attendance to Mass. We believe that with catechesis, this would gradually be overcome.

iv. *Frequency of reception of Holy Communion:* The reception of Holy Communion is frequent especially among the elderly men and women. The youths on the other hand, do not receive Holy Communion as frequently as the adults. We believe this to be a part of a bigger, global problem of growing indifference to Church activities among the youths globalized via the media. The Diocese is praying and working on this, and we believe that soon we will begin to record great improvements.

36. **Baptism: Data Needed**

37. **Marriage:**

i. *Whether polygamy and divorce are recognized by civil law and how Catholics act in these matters:* Polygamy and divorce are recognized by the Nigerian civil law. This notwithstanding, the practice, first of polygamy, has become very unpopular and one might even say abhorrent due to the influence of the Church and her position of monogamy. Divorce on the other hand, also due to the influence of Christianity, had for a long time been uncommon, but recently, it seems to be on the increase, probably due to the influence of the media and the liberalism of some neo-Pentecostal churches. For the Catholic faithful, however, divorce and polygamy are areas strictly out of bounds. Although, the number of those seeking nullification of their marriages are on the rise.

ii. *Whether mixed marriages are increasing and with what effects for the Catholic partner and the children:* From the data we have, we can say that the number of mixed marriages is not increasing but reducing; for instance, within the last quinquennial year, we have had only 20 mixed marriages. Furthermore, from reports received, mixed marriage brings about division and Luke warmness about the faith. The catholic partner, especially if she is the bride, tends to defect, together with the children, to the groom's denomination.

38. **Numbers of those giving up Catholic life and practice:** The overt giving up catholic life and practice is not a common practice within the territory of the Diocese, but this at times happens covertly, where one maintains registration as a catholic member but secretly attends some other churches or ministries. In such cases, it is quite difficult to place a number on those involved. But we can simply say that such occurrences are minimal.

Most of those who give up the Catholic Faith overtly or covertly, are often times influenced and lured by neo-Pentecostal churches who make their message enticing through prosperity preaching and deceptive promises of sure miracles. The Igbo man, being very pragmatically oriented, would prefer to hear that all his problems would be solved by the simple rubbing of some oil than to hear of having faith and trusting in the will of God. Some could have left because of some disappointment in a pastor or procedure of the Diocese. This is why the Bishop has, weekly, an office day dedicated to attending to and listening to the problems and complaints

of the members of the faithful to enable him make adjustments when and where necessary. There are also commissions through which genuine issue can be reported and handled.

D. CENTRES AND INSTITUTES FOR FOSTERING MISSION WORK:

39. *Major Seminary*: The Diocese has no major seminary of its own but together with other dioceses within the province run a number of inter-diocesan major seminaries which include: Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu; St. Pope John Paul II Seminary, Okpuno, Awka; Blessed Iwene Tansi Major Seminary, Onitsha and St. Bernard Seminary Hostel, Nchatancha, Enugu. A number of benefits accrue from this common Major Seminary system, top on the list is the inter-cultural exchange and fraternity among seminarians from different territories, which would go a long way to improving future priestly fraternity. One of the negative outcomes is the excessive number of seminarians in each of the seminaries to the effect that there is a poor student to formator ratio; on the average it is 50:1. The appointment of professors to work and teach in the seminaries is overseen by the Provincial Bishops; all of those so far appointed are autochthonous.

The Diocese runs a Spiritual Year Seminary called – Bishop Michael Ugwuja Eneja Memorial Spiritual Year Seminary, Oji, where the seminarians have a year focused on spiritual formation before they proceed to the major seminary. As of the December of the last quinquennial year till now, about 100 seminarians have passed through the seminary.

40. *Centres belonging to the territory for fostering the apostolate, for conversions to the Church, or for fostering the pastoral care of the faithful*: The Diocese has a pilgrimage centre called, Mount Horeb Pilgrimage Centre, Ugueme; as well as a Diocesan Catechetical Centre, Umuagu, Inyi. These two centres are run by directors belonging to the clergy of the Diocese. In these centres, pilgrimages, faith formation, catechesis, retreats and other works of the apostolate take place. Particularly, at Mount Horeb Pilgrimage Center, various prayer pilgrimages take place. At the beginning of Lent, the entire Diocese, together with the Bishop, go to the Center to begin the Lent as a Diocese; there, the Stations of the Cross, auricular confessions and the Eucharistic celebration are carried out. Furthermore, various groups and organs of the Diocese go during the Lenten period for their retreat and recollection programs. The Center is also the destination for the Youth March which takes place on Monday of the Holy Week (cf. Para. 43)

as well as other spiritual programs. The Catechetical Center at Umuagu Inyi on the other hand, has catechetical activities once every month. The center functions under the auspices the Deanery of Oji River, in the care of St. Stephens Parish, Umuagu Inyi.

41. *Whether there are special schools for the formation of catechists and of Catholic teacher:*

The Diocese has no special school for the formation of catechists, but she does occasionally run formative weeklong programs for catechists in which they are trained and taught by Church and theology experts invited from within and/or outside the Diocese. Furthermore, for professional training, the Diocese sends her candidates to the Catechetical School at Ugwudinsò Eke, in Enugu Diocese.

42. *Whether there are centres of institutions erected by the Mission itself for the technical and social progress of the population, especially the Catholic population; also for medical and charitable activity:* There are indeed such institutions and programs and they are as follows:

IFEANYICHUKWU MICROFINANCE BANK (IMF)

The Bishop after his installation saw the need to create an institutional arrangement that offers customized financial products and services aimed at promoting small and medium scale entrepreneurship and poverty reduction. This need gave rise to Ifeanyichukwu Microfinance Bank. This institution has offered employment to over 100 people.

BISHOP IFEANYICHUKWU OKOYE POVERTY ALLEVIATION GRANT (BIO-PAG)

With the Biblical injunction in Matthew's gospel chapter 14: 16 "give them something to eat" the Bishop, convinced that the integral salvation of man as composite being of body and soul includes the satisfaction of his basic material needs, created a poverty alleviation grant known as "BISHOP IFEANYICHUKWU OKOYE POVERTY ALLEVIATION GRANT" (BIOPAG)

The Bishop in heeding to the cries of the less privilege in the Diocese sets aside a certain amount of funds to be granted to the poor as soft loans at the annual interest rate of 3%. Over 2000 individuals have, since its inception, benefitted from this grant.

More so, the beneficiaries of this loan equally gain from the free academic programs where lectures are given to them to imbibe the primary book-keeping and financial discipline.

FEAST WITH THE POOR AND NEW YEAR VISIT TO THE PRISONS

The Bishop from the moment of the erection of the Diocese and his episcopal ordination has always had a big feast with the poor in the Diocese, where he puts smiles on their faces. He holds a lunch with the aged in the parishes around Awgu town, where they are entertained with dance and music. Food items and articles of clothing are distributed to them as take-home gifts. This helps to give them a sense of belonging and helps them appreciate God for the gift of old age.

More so, on the 1st of January of every year, the Bishop celebrates the New Year day Mass with prisoners at the Minimum Security Federal Prison at Oji River. He afterwards donates a truckload of food items and money contributed by parishes in the Diocese. Furthermore, the Diocese this year, 2017, donated to the Prison various workshops of tailoring, Hair-cut, carpentry as well as a library for the use of the inmates in order that they acquire skills that would help them rehabilitate themselves.

b. Health Assistance in the Diocese: There is a health insurance scheme known as Ndukaku Health Scheme in the Diocese. This initiative was born out of the goal to have a Community Health Insurance Scheme extended to all in the Diocese especially the very indigent ones who otherwise, would have not been able to afford decent medical services. The people contribute little fund and have access to quality health services without much cost.

c. Free medical check-up: The 3 functional diocesan hospitals namely, Mother of Mercy hospital Ihe, Achi Joint Hospital, and St Anthony's Hospital Mgbowo occasionally carry out free medical services in the parishes. There exists also a charity foundation that caters for the needs of indigent members of the Diocese who cannot pay their hospital bills.

d. Parochial organizations: There are pious organisations in some parishes that give social assistance to the poor, the lonely and the aged. Example of such organisations are St Vincent De Paul society, Legion of Mary society etc.

43. Whether there are sporting and recreational activities for Catholic young people: There are a number of sporting and recreational activities organized for the Youth; much of this is

coordinated on the parish level: football matches, quiz competitions, excursions, and a week-long program of activities during the annual Youth Week Celebration.

On the Diocesan level, on every Monday of the Holy Week, the Bishop, the Priests, the Religious with the Youth of the Diocese go on a Youth March from the Cathedral to the Pilgrimage Centre which has about 18km in between. This March, as the name implies, is strictly done on foot and the activity involves intermittent reflections on the Stations of the Cross and reading of the Good Friday Gospel – the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John – meditatively, as well as consistent and lively singing. Upon arrival at the Pilgrimage Center, the Holy Eucharist is celebrated within which the people are exhorted. Added to the numerous spiritual and social benefits of this activity are the health benefits.

44. *Whether special difficulties are encountered by any of the above institutes; whether they all meet modern criteria of pastoral effectiveness:* The greatest difficulties in these areas all boil down to a lack of finance. There are a number of dilapidating structures in our hospitals as well as a lack of some necessary amenities; a lack of recreational and sports centres for the youth and other social activities; a lack in funds to do more to assist in the alleviation of poverty within the Diocesan territory, made up of mostly peasant farmers.

E. OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS:

45. *Outline of main problems regarding the evangelization and implantation of the Church among the autochthonous population:*

i. Syncretism: The problem we speak of here is not just syncretism as a practice, but syncretism as an ideology; a good number of the faithful view the Christian God, with the ingrained lens of Traditional Religion. In other words, externally they might seem to be fervent and practicing Christians, but their practice of Christianity is done in the habitus of Traditional Religion. Consciously or unconsciously, they are influenced, in the practice of Christianity, by Traditional beliefs. This is sometimes palpable in their devotions to the Sacraments and sacramental, their burial practices, marriage laws and need for exaggerated gesticulations and babblings during prayers. With regard to the sacramentals, some see it as some form of potent charm or talisman for defence and attack of perceived or real enemies and at times, they might tend to regard these

as more valuable than the Sacraments. During burials, they sometimes are controlled by fear of not following Traditional stipulations; they are more frightened of offending the traditions and its deities than of offending their Catholic faith and God. With regard to marriage, in some families where there are no male children, the traditional practice in some areas of the Diocese is to keep a female child in the family without ever marrying her off. She stays in her father's house to bear children for the family through relations with anonymous men, for lineage continuity purposes (Technically, this is called *Ahara n'ulo*). There are many more examples which betray the fact that a number of the faithful are syncretistic. The Diocese has continued to fight such syncretism; as a matter of fact, the coming year, 2018, would be dedicated to this struggle against syncretism via the new method of evangelization already indicated in the previous paragraphs (cf. Paragraph 27). It is our belief and prayer that we shall achieve success.

ii. The Diocese as a rural Diocese, has so many dependent Christians who seek much financial assistance from the Church. This situation places much burden on the rural Diocese.

iii. The Diocese is located in the rural areas of Enugu State, and so, there is much poverty among the people which affects their capacity to support the Church in carrying out her projects. This means that in spite of the goodwill of the people and their obvious generosity, they cannot contribute beyond their means.

iv. The bad terrain of some parts of the territory makes it very difficult to reach into some parts of the Diocese or for some of those living in places with such bad terrain to constantly come out and participate in pastoral programs of the parish and the Diocese.

b. **Prospects:** It has always been the practice of the Diocese to concentrate more on our areas of strengths than our weaknesses and lacks. With this optimistic worldview, we have often found ourselves scaling through even very difficult situations. The people of Awgu are a people of unrivalled generosity and hospitality, very hardworking and with a strongly genial disposition to the Church and the Faith. It is because of this fundamental attitude that we believe that much of the difficulties encountered especially as it concerns the faith, can be conquered through constant and profound catechesis, exhortation and spiritual activities.

Furthermore, we have already begun many projects to combat the economic difficulties. We believe that with time, and through the generous assistance from foreign missionary bodies and local benefactors, we would soon become, at least with regard to our basic necessities, self-reliant.