



# SPOTLIGHT

## ON THE PROVINCE OF NIGERIA

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THE CORE VALUES THAT GUIDE US IN OUR MISSION ARE:

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

JUSTICE

CREATIVITY

COMPASSION

COMMITMENT

COLLABORATION



## OF THE PRESENCE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY ON NIGERIAN SOIL

BY SR. FRANCISCA OPARA DC

In 1963 three Daughters of Charity from the Province of Great Britain came to Nigeria at the request of Bishop Moynagh. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 1974 the first three Nigerian girls were incorporated into the Community. The Province of Nigeria is presently made up of Nigeria, Ghana and Burkina Faso, with 171 Sisters living and working in 26 Communities.

We are very grateful to God, we are happy to celebrate the Sixtieth anniversary of our existence in Nigeria, for these sixty years, we have served God corporally and spiritually in persons who are living in poverty in different parts of the country including Ghana and Burkina Faso.

**SR FRANCOISE PETIT DC,  
SUPERIORESS GENERAL  
VISITS NIGERIA WITH THE  
GENERAL COUNCILLOR. SR  
THERESA EKE DC**

*“What a joyful day, a day of the Lord, a joyful day we are happy and glad”*

Indeed it was a joyful day when on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2023, the Sisters of the Provincial House welcomed Sr. Francoise Petit DC and Sr. Theresa Eke DC after their many visits to various communities. The days that followed saw them visit more communities around and returning with the joy of testifying to the effort each Sister and community makes in keeping the flame of the Vincentian Charism alive in different places and witnessing to the presence of the Lord in their lives, giving to the joy and deep happiness that exudes from each Sister they had encountered.

Sr. Francoise addressed the Sisters, in her message she encouraged us to *“live a Gospel based community, to keep growing deeper in spirituality, she asked; “how can we see to it that we are good soil capable of receiving*

*the Word?, How can we give new life? You must be watchful to achieve a balanced life, we should prefer the tabernacle to the computer. Avoiding excessive communication and noise, seek deeper connection with the Lord. God's time is not ours.*



*She urged us to grow in deep encounter with our brothers and sisters who are poor, listening to them is an act of faith and humanity. It nourishes our life. Listening to the cries of those humiliated and listening to their silences is not an intellectual exercise, we learn from the poor good relationships and fraternity. If we live alone we do not need constitutions, the constitution helps us to live in community and to deepen our spiritual life with a view to building fraternity within and outside the community.*

*Constitution 24....affective and effective love deepens our life in fraternity, we should express our love towards our sisters. Live more fully as missionary disciples. Desire Simplicity always, human warmth is needed in our local community and services. Simplicity in relationships helps us to forgive and live in fraternity if not it becomes an*

*obstacle. We need to be in keeping with our identity as servants. Invitation to love that which peace provides....open the gate of one's life and no longer be self centered".* We were all delighted to see our Mother Superior not in camera but in reality and to listen to her live and direct, joyful too that she took her time out to visit it us in this part of the world, she had gift for each Sister in the Province, a **TRUE MOTHER.**

Sr. Francoise had time to see the other arms of the Vincentian family, she thanked them for their willingness to collaborate with the Sisters and urged them not to relent in this collaborative ministry and networking. The flame of charity should not be quenched as the service to persons who are poor gives great honour to God. The following days saw us in active and intensive preparation for our diamond Jubilee Celebration.

## THE TRIDUM



**W**e as Daughters of Charity celebrate our Tridum every year, it begins on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November through the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, but the celebration of the tridum this year 2023 took a very

different and significant turn as we celebrate our diamond jubilee.

The 27<sup>th</sup> of November is the feast day of the Miraculous Medal a special day in the life of every Daughter of Charity because of the profound history and connection we have with the Miraculous Medal. The Miraculous Medal is one of the beautiful heritage of the Daughters of Charity. On 27 November 1830, the Virgin Mary appeared to Sr. Catherine Laboure during evening meditations and gave her instructions to make a medal of the images of the vision she had seen of her. Our lady appeared to Catherine and displayed herself, she was standing on a globe, with dazzling rays of light streaming from her outstretched hand. Around the margin of the frame appeared the words *Ô Marie, conçue sans péché, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous* ("O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee"). To honour this day there was Rosary procession from Rosalie home to the Provincial house, a sight beautiful to behold.

The Vincentian family observes the 28<sup>th</sup> of November as the feast day of St. Catherine Labouré the same person to whom our Blessed Mother appeared to. To honour this day raw foods and ingredients were distributed to those who were in need, to put smiles on the faces of those who are hungry. *"Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers....when I was hungry you gave me to eat.... (Mtt 25)"*

The 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 1633 is the founding date for the Company of the Daughters of Charity, founded for the

corporal and spiritual service of Christ in persons who live at the margins, this particular day was spectacular as we also celebrated sixty years of the existence of the Daughters of Charity in Nigeria, Sixty years of serving Christ in our lords and masters, sixty years of God's faithfulness and merciful love, sixty years of thanksgiving for God's amazing grace, sixty years of joyful collaborative service and networking with all who share our vision and values, the list is endless.

The Climax of the day was in the Eucharistic celebration officiated by His Grace Arch Bishop Augustine Akubueze, Archbishop of Benin Archdiocese, with a host of Bishops and priests who concelebrated. "The Eucharist is "the source and summit" of Christian life" (CCC 1324), the Eucharist refreshes the life of every Daughter of Charity and it is the center of our life (Const. 19b). The homilist Fr. Cletus Kpalap CM, urged us to thank God for his help and grace in these past years, while encouraging us to continue to be missionaries of the Gospel to the poor and the needy. We must not abuse the poor in our bid to serve them, but to serve them with dignity and respect as we remain open to learn from them.



The occasion was graced by the

presence of His Excellency Mr. Peter Obi, who was the special guest of honour, his presence filled all present with joy. In his speech he said *"our lives are meaningless unless we care for the poor ones among us. I congratulate the Daughters of Charity for having stayed true to this mission for the past 60years. I remain committed to any cause or project that is geared towards alleviating the sufferings of the poor, the sick and those left at the margins of our society"*.

The Visitatrix, Sr. Ifeoma Arinze DC gave her welcome address, in her speech she gave a brief history of the company, our apostolates and enlightened the audience about the training of a Daughter of Charity,. In the footsteps of St. Louise and St. Vincent, Daughters of Charity go to places where others would rather not go because we "have a vocation which obliges us to help without discrimination, all sorts of persons: men, women, children and in general every poor person who needs us." (St. Vincent). The Sisters of the Province serve children with special needs in Inclusive Schools in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In these Schools, children with special needs are educated alongside the regular children. We strive to eradicate the stereotype on people with disabilities, providing them with opportunities to be part of the society and develop their potentials. We work in homes with destitute and mentally ill women and men who we pick from the roads, treat and rehabilitate. We give them back their human dignity and make their lives worth living. We have Hospitals where we work with people living with leprosy and tuberculosis and other ailments. Our DREAM Centres in Abuja and Iwaro Oka Ondo State are

giving life to men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS. Our other services include, work with street children, malnourished children, trafficked persons, internally displaced persons, people with disability, feeding the hungry, visiting the aged and the lonely, advocating for chronically ill persons, working with victims of natural disasters, education in regular schools, work with teenage pregnant girls, destitute women etc.

St. Vincent urged his Daughters to seek out “the poorest and the most abandoned.” Our place as Daughters of Charity is with the “truly poor”. Our services, are not profit making. They are heavily dependent on funds, which is becoming increasingly difficult to come by these days. It was easy to get foreign aid in the past. This is becoming increasingly difficult today and our leaders with their kleptomaniac tendency embezzle whatever money they would have used for the poor and the marginalized. She also talked about our Jubilee project which is the building of a retreat house, at the same time she thanked all who have made themselves available to honour our invitation.

The highpoint of this epoch making event was the planting of the Jubilee tree, a significant sign to mark the diamond jubilee followed by various kinds of entertainments. Our joy knew no bounds for indeed God is with us.

**Conclusion:** With grateful hearts we thank God for the huge success of our Diamond Jubilee celebration, God was made manifest through the intercession of our Blessed Mother the only mother of the little company. We

celebrate sixty years of God's faithful love and ever-loving presence since the establishment of the company of the Daughters of Charity in Nigeria. We celebrate sixty years of God's mercy, love, grace, courage, compassion and joy as we serve him in our brothers and sisters who live on the margins of our society. These years have not been without challenges, but then God has come through for us in many ways and we are grateful. We thank everyone who honored our invitation and all who have supported all these years.



## MARY: EXTREME DEVIATION

**T**he devil, like a counterfeiter and crafty, experienced deceiver, has consistently misled and ruined many Christians' piety by employing fraudulent devotions. To this, I must say that Marian devotion is not an exception. In discussing the person and role of Mary, Mother of Jesus, two extremes (Marian Excess and Marian Defect) must always be avoided. Let me gently explain that.

## Marian Excess

The first extreme is what we call the extreme of Marian excess. This could be divided into two. The most extreme form of Marian excess makes Mary equal to God or claims that she has divine qualities. Not so. She is a creature of God who needed salvation like all the rest of us. The second error connected to Marian excess is a devotion to Mary that “eclipses” or overshadows our relationship with Christ. This usually happens unintentionally and springs from an overemphasis on Mary. Note that these excesses do not spring from the Church's official teachings on Mary but from wrong individual practices conceived in the heart of her devotee.

## Marian Defect

The second extreme regarding the person and role of the Blessed Virgin is what we can call Marian defect. This means to minimize the role of the Blessed Virgin. What is meant by minimizing the role of Mary? This would be to ascribe to Mary the role of being only a “good disciple,” a “sister in the Lord,” a mere “physical channel of Jesus,” but nothing beyond these. This is common with non-Catholics or Catholics who have a wrong view of the church's teaching of Mary.

## The Way Out for Us Catholics

First, you need to remember that from the perspective of Catholic doctrine (not the practice of individual Catholics), true devotion to Mary always leads us closer

to her Son. It is also true that some people can exaggerate Marian devotion if it diverts their attention from Christ as the center of our Catholic faith. But these cases of exaggeration are anomalies — they aren't the intention of the Church. The Church gives a revered but balanced place to Our Lady in the history of salvation and the work of redemption. Here is an official expression of how the

### Church sees Marian devotion:

“There is but one Mediator as we know from the apostle's words, 'for there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all.' The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no wise obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ but rather shows His power. For all the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin on men originates not from some inner necessity but from divine pleasure. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on His mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. In no way does it impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ” (Lumen Gentium, No. 60)

### You that Doubt

What about you, that doubt? Is it possible to love her as a mother, to honor her as a Virgin, to seek her as a Patron, and to exalt her as a Queen without any injury to solid piety and Christian good sense?

My answer is a BIG YES! She is not

merely a “good disciple,” a “sister in the Lord,” a mere “physical channel of Jesus but Mediatrix of All Graces. Familiarize yourself more with what the Church teaches about Mary and Marian devotion. Having a healthy view of Our Lady will help you in your Catholic faith and in your efforts to come closer to our Lord, as it has helped many saints through the centuries, such as Pope St. John Paul II.

You want to be careful, too, because the devil would like to sow seeds of doubt about the Church in you, especially after your journey over the years. In the meantime, stay focused on Jesus in the Eucharist and Scripture. Mary would certainly approve of that. After all, her last words in Scripture are, “Do whatever He [Jesus] tells you” (John 2:5).

**SR SYLVIE COMPORE ENTERS INTO THE NOVITATE OF THE SISTERS OF GETHSAMANE**

By Sr. Francisca Opara DC

The reception of the Sr. Sylvie a member of the Gethsemane Sister took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September the feast of the birthday of our Blessed Mother 2023 with the Holy Mass. The Priest in his homily advised that we follow in the footsteps of our Blessed Mother who is the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation in our world, as read in



the genealogy she contributed greatly to God's salvific plan and is connected to Jesus, she is not just a mere instrument, but a chosen instrument because of her attributes, in her great virtue she totally cooperated with God's divine plan. She was blessed with privileges and graces. We are called to emulate her openness to the journey of life, her unimaginable universal care to ensure that the needs of her children are met, as an exceptional mother she does not impose anything on her son. Her great confidence and trust in God enabled her to handle hard times with ease as seen at the foot of the cross. Mary is a good example for all of us to emulate, we should be open to God's will, take happily the tasks assigned to us, to genuinely dedicate ourselves to God's mission and to be courageous even in the face of difficulties.

The ceremony for the reception of Sr. Sylvie into the novitiate of the Sisters of Gethsemane through the seminary formation of the Daughters of Charity took place within the evening prayer following the laid down procedure sent by the Superior of her Congregation. A simple, solemn ceremony of welcoming officiated by the Visitarix Sr. Ifeoma Arinze DC who represents Sylvie's Superior was done and she was presented with the constitution and other needed documents of the congregation. It was a joyful day for Sr. Sylvie and all who witnessed the occasion.



# RIDDLES

What has to be broken before you can use it?

**Answer: An egg**

What question can you never answer yes to?

**Answer: Are you asleep yet?**

What is always in front of you but can't be seen?

**Answer: The future**

There's a one-story house in which everything is yellow. Yellow walls, yellow doors, yellow furniture. What color are the stairs?

**Answer: There aren't any—it's a one-story house.**

What can you break, even if you never pick it up or touch it?

**Answer: A promise**

A man who was outside in the rain without an umbrella or hat didn't get a single hair on his head wet. Why?

**Answer: He was bald.**

## OPENING OF NEW COMMUNITIES: BREAK THROUGH THE GATES GO TOWARDS, ENCOUNTER DE JACOBIS COMMUNITY, GBOKO

With the invitation of the Bishop of the Gboko diocese. Most Rev William Avenya, to take up a new mission in Gboko diocese, preparations and plans were ongoing both from the Province and the diocese. Sr. Edwina Okeawolam DC and Sr. Oyemowo Ogbanje DC were named, a new mission field for the Daughters of Charity, willingly they accepted the new mission and challenge. They were both missioned by the Provincial Sr. Ifeoma Arinze DC to “DE JACOBIS” Community, Gboko. A simple creative prayer was prepared for them and at the Eucharistic celebration they were specifically prayed for and also prayers were offered for the success of the new mission. On the 7th of October 2023 the feast of the Holy Rosary, in the company of the Provincial, Sr. Ifeoma Arinze DC and the Vice Provincial, Sr. Josephine Okwori DC, and a Councilor, Sr. Margaret Udoh DC who is also the Councilor for health commission in the Province, the sisters set out on their journey. With great joy they were heartily welcomed by the Bishop of the Diocese, Parish Priest, Religious Congregations and the neighbors who live around. They also met





## MAISON DE LA LUMIÈRE

By Sr. Victoria George DC



On this faithful day the 14th of December 2023, the Visitatrrix Sr Ifeoma Arinze DC with one of the Councilor Sr Perpetua Essien DC and two Sisters missioned to Dano, Sr Esther Ekpo DC and Sr Victoria George DC arrived Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso to continue their journey to the mission ground the next day.

On arrival in Ouagadougou, Sr Toyin Abegunde DC and Sr Lynda Okparaek, DC gave us a warm welcome, their hospitality was something to remember. On the 15th of December 2023, we journeyed to the mission ground in Dano. There in Dano, our "Fore Runner" Sisters like St John the Baptist prepared the place for us. One of the mission member Sr Cecilia Akong DC and Sr Roseline Dee DC the Sr Servant of Mount Tabor community in Nouna made us feel welcome and comfortable. The language suddenly changed to Bonne Arrivé mes Sœurs the language of the mission, it was so symbolic and beautiful. In fact, our beloved Sisters from Nouna were absolutely excellent in their welcoming Spirit.

Our large community now became the mountain of transfiguration of let us remain here, but of course, they have to return to their various Apostolates. The Parish Priest in Dano Abbé Séverin Dabire, welcomed us on behalf of the Bishop of Diebougon Diocese. Other religious congregations in the Parish visited and welcome us the following day. On the 16th of December, we were all welcomed in the Parish and the welcoming continued. On the 17th of December, the Bishop of Diebougon Diocese, Msgr Raphaël Dabire invited us to dine with him and the Counselors of the Diocese, it was a warm welcome. On the 18th of December, we visited our mission cite and prayed there. On the 19th of December 2023, Sr Esther Ekpo DC was installed as the Sister Servant of Maison De La Lumière community by Sr Ifeoma Arinze DC the Visitatrrix. On the 21st of December 2023, Sr Ifeoma Arinze DC and Sr Perpetua Essien DC left for Nigeria.

Our Apostolates Include:

- \* Inclusive Education
- \* Mental Health
- \* Social and Pastoral Services.

*To God be the Glory.*



the company of Sr. Sylvia Anyanwu DC, the Sister servant of the annexed community and Sr. Paulina Onwe DC, the coordinator for health commission in the Province. They were taken to a rented apartment as their new house and taken around the hospital and the surroundings so that they already begin to acclimatize and adjust to the new environment. The services rendered by the sisters are home visitation, hospital services at St Christopher hospital, pastoral services in the parish and at deanery level. They also respond to the needs of the poor, corporally and spiritually as no misery is foreign to the Daughters of Charity.



We thank the Provincial and her Council for taking the courage and boldly accepting to take up this new mission and also the Sisters for accepting to venture in this new mission ground. May God bless the work of your hands, protect and provide for you. May the new mission be fruitful and productive. Praying for God's blessings, guidance and protection on our Sisters.

By Sr. Francisca Opara DC



## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN NOUNA BURKINA FASO

Due to insecurity in Burkina Faso many villages around Nouna were displaced and they fled to Nouna for refuge, as a result many IDPS especially women became vulnerable in search of livelihood. The Daughters of Charity accompanied the women by reflecting with them because they believe that if you empower women, you empower the nation. the women were formed into groups for easy accompaniment and support. The first group started in July 2022 with the ideal of economic empowerment.

Accessing soft loan became very difficult for the women to enable them engaged in income generating activity, life itself was not easy, the women themselves reflected and came up with how they can sustain themselves. They decided on having their meeting once every week and each person will contribute 200 CFA every week and they will save it in a box and after two months they will open it and start giving it as loan with little interest, this contribution continues to enable them to sustain the group.

The group has got its executive as the president, secretary, treasurer and those who

hold the keys to the saving box. Their work is to coordinate the smooth running of the group and ensure that those who received loans made a refund in order for others to have easy opportunity to access loan. In the space of ten months the group has grown into 8 groups



of 400 women and more groups are still on the way to be formed. The Daughters of Charity has always accompanied the group to be self-reliant as that is the only way they can solve their situation by becoming agent of their own promotion. Today these groups are growing very strong, and they are also engaged in collective promotion for sustainability.

**Sr. Cecilia Akong DC.**

# THE INTERNATIONAL SESSION FOR SPIRITUAL AND VINCENTIAN REVITALIZATION FOR YOUNG SISTERS 7-10 YEARS OF VOCATION HELD IN MOTHER HOUSE FROM 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST – 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023. THE COMPANY IS INDEED INTERNATIONAL



The Vincentian session organised by the international body of the Company of the Daughters of Charity for Vincentian revitalisation for young sisters with the theme, 'Open **ourselves to the spirit in order to go and break through the gates**' boldly expressed the internationality of the company. It was an enriching and refreshing one for all the participants. Sisters from different continents Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia and others where the Daughters of Charity are, had representatives although not all were present..

The session began with a warm welcome by the Superioress General Sr. Francoise Petit DC and the General Councillors of each continent present. In Mother's welcome speech, she told us that we are the future of the Company and encouraged us to feel at home and open our minds and hearts to grasp the good things this opportunity will offer us in order to make our founders proud.

It was filled with lots of visits to places and sites that hold important historical values to our heritage as Daughters of Charity. We went to St. Vincent's hometown and all the places he worked in France, the same with St. Louise, St. Catherine and other important places that have our history. Other places we explored included the Church of

St. Nicholas de champs where St. Louise had her Lumiere experience, Lourdes, Buglose, Mouirer Saint Jean, Dax, Chatillon, Chartes, Folleville, Vincentian museum and others. Lots of interesting conferences were also given to prepare us for each historical visit.

**The topics of the conferences include;**

- Towards an eye wide- open spirituality, St. Vincent faith Journey and perspective.
- Saint Vincent mystic of Charity’
- Towards a culture of encounter with St. Louise
- With St. Louise, being open minded
- Towards a commitment to journeying together, identity of the Daughters of Charity
- The Mystic of living Together’
- Towards a way of living a heaven in our world, origins of the company
- The Virgin Mary and the company
- Towards a renewal of hearts and minds. Vows and life style
- Towards shared and prophetic actions. Respect for human dignity and defence of human rights.

The encounter left us with great emotion and more passion to go forward to encounter the poor. Seeing the works of our Sisters, hearing their testimonies, the zeal and love with which our first Sisters and other Daughters of Charity used to serve the poor. We have heard a lot of these stories, but seeing them gave it more meaning and filled our hearts with joy. The Sisters and the Vincentian priests working in each place we visited warmly welcomed us and we received gifts from some of them. You can see the inner happiness that radiate in their hearts seeing the young Sisters of the Company. The excitement that accompanied these experiences was really great, something that will live with us for life. We thank God for this beautiful opportunity given to us, and pray that the zeal will remain with us in our service.

The session ended with beautiful cultural display from the Sisters of each Province, portraying the uniqueness of each culture and internationality of the Company.

**Sr. Maria Goretti  
Onwuatuegwu DC**

## AN EXCEPTIONAL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

# RIDDLES

The season of love, the birth of Christ is filled with celebrations and we all celebrate together as a family. Normally, Port Harcourt zone host a gathering of love which is games and sporting activities every 26<sup>th</sup> December but this year was exceptional. The celebration of love and joy took a different tune, all thanks to God and the Sisters of the Provincial house that it was not cancelled.

The beautiful event began with a word of prayer by Sr Margaret Mary Ekanem DC. The Sister servant of the Provincial House Sr Christiana Igechi DC gave us an excellent welcoming, after which we had a magnificent meal while the Seminary Sisters entertained us with their Angelic beautiful voices. They sang beautiful Christmas Carol songs with great gestures; while they were singing, all the Sisters joined them at the carol, all were singing and dancing to the melody. Their performance was breath taking, some of the Sisters made presentations, which was fun and lively, our Sisters are greatly talented. Sr. Bibiana Dura DC sang beautifully well Christmas song. Sr. Theresa Duru DC and her team Seminary Sisters gave a lovely presentation, encouraging us to be ready and available. She dressed as a coach while they were singing and matching as soldiers, agility, smartness and availability at all times was the message they communicated and more presentations were made.

There was an amazing display of culture by our Sisters. Sr Constance Akantuglikum DC represented Great Ghana. Sr Agatha DC represented TIV culture, Sr Olivia DC represented Naadon culture in Upper East Region of Ghana and Sr Monica Penu DC represent Ogoni culture. They were stunning in their appearances and we travelled to each culture because of the way they educated us about each culture. Though it was not in the form of competition, it was an excellent exhibition. We really do have beautiful traditions and culture in Africa.

The whole celebration was really exceptional and educational. We all danced, had fun, relaxed and took group photographs. Sr Angela Onah DC appreciated the effort and collaboration of all present and we ended with the Lord. In conclusion, the event was really a splendid celebration with surplus food and graceful experience.



SR. JOSEPHINE AIPOH DC

*What gets wet while drying? Answer: A towel*

*What can you keep after giving to someone?*

*Answer: Your word*

*You see a boat filled with people, yet there isn't a single person on board.*

*How is that possible?*

*Answer: All the people on the boat are married.*

*I have branches, but no fruit, trunk or leaves.*

*What am I? Answer: A bank*

*What can't talk but will reply when spoken to?*

*Answer: An echo*

*The more of this there is, the less you see. What is it?*

*Answer: Darkness*

# WORLD DAY AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING 2023

By Sr. Ifeanyi Opara Dc

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY  
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PUBLICATION

source of that money illustrates the level of frustration and moral decadence in the society .

**T**he menace of Human Trafficking having become a global issue with many African countries serving as countries of origin, transit and destination countries, has continued unabated despite the efforts of both Governmental and non Governmental Agencies to curb it. This is as a result of its lucrative nature.

The United Nation defines human trafficking as the induction by force, fraud, or coercion of a person to engage in the sex trade, or the harboring, transportation, or obtaining of a person for labour service or organ removal.

In simple terms, it is an organized crime, that involves a deceptive and purposeful transportation of people for exploitation. Human Trafficking has become the third largest crime industry in the world. It is estimated that 1,000,000 people globally are trafficked annually .

In Nigeria, thousands of people are trafficked both internally and externally. This is largely due to the poor economic situation of our Country coupled with other factors like ignorance, greed, corruption, insecurity, religious persecutions, tribal wars, negative influence of close relations and friends, natural disasters and some other factors. For a Mother who experienced labour pain to encourage her daughter to join others and travel abroad so as to make money for the family irrespective of the

Cultures that disregard the dignity of women increase the likelihood of them being trafficked. There are cases that are being propelled by greed for certain, but majority of Nigerians get trapped into the web of human trafficking because, in their desperate situation of poverty, traffickers apply manipulative and devious ways like offer of scholarships, well paid job opportunities , fake sporting activities with remunerations attached, free holiday trips, award winning competitions, fake marriage proposals/ feigned romantic relationships and some other deceptive means. A Combination of two or three of these factors induces one to easily fall prey to human trafficking.

It is never easy to escape from the wicked grip of traffickers not only because of their strong network of connections, but also because they apply mechanisms like seizure of documents, getting into blood covenants before shrines, social isolation, and other physical, emotional and psychological abuses and threats to keep their victims under control. Often times, a victim is made to work for excessive periods of time under extremely hazardous working conditions in order to pay off their migratory debts which is often doubled or tripled before freedom is guaranteed. To facilitate the payment, victims are often forced into drug pushing, organ removal for transplants, sexual slavery and servitude or baby factory/illicit adoption and, sometimes, forced marriages that never last. There are other illegal activities involved too.

It is therefore very pertinent that we understand the saying that “All that glitters is not Gold.” The glamorous picture of oversea trips and better life out there painted by traffickers does not portray the reality especially of trips that one has no control over. With the situation of things now in Nigeria, One needs to be careful to avoid falling a victim because the ills of human trafficking are incalculable. Human trafficking exposes the victim to so many risks like the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases as one is treated like an animal with regard to sex. Victims suffer the risk of death in transit, unwanted pregnancies, drug abuse, economic exploitation, debt bondage; also of physical, emotional and psychological trauma from traffickers. Complex trauma can lead to depression, despair, anxiety, self-hatred, self-isolation, substance abuse, self-destructive behaviours, and mental disorder in some cases. There are other traumatic disorders that devastate the healthy development of self – concept, self – worth, biological integrity and cognitive functioning.

'Work together against human trafficking' is the injunction of our Holy Father – Pope Francis, to all Religious women. This year the United Nations invites us to “REACH EVERY VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING; AND TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND”. What does it mean to leave victims behind? When we, as individuals and a society, fail to identify

victims, accompany them through their traumatic experience of being trafficked, support in their rehabilitation programs, prosecute traffickers, speak against the ills that plunged them into the mess of being trafficked, we are leaving them behind.

So in response to this invitation, the Sisters from 'The Child' Community joined force with the Sisters from De Marillac Centre and their Staff and children, and in collaboration with National Agency for the Prohibition of trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the Religious Sisters of Charity, the lay faithful of Sacred Heart Catholic Church – mile 2 Diobu, and some other Agencies like the Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Nigeria Police Force (worthy of note is the Azikiwe Division, Mile 2 Diobu), the Muslim Women, Network Against Child Trafficking , Abuse and Labour (NACTAL), and some other bodies, went on a road walk from UST junction down through Ikwere road to Mile 1 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2023. We also carried out sensitization in some markets squares around Port Harcourt. Through the Nigerian INFO, we also tried to reach out to as many as possible. This is a way of being in solidarity with the survivors of human trafficking as well as enlightening the general public on the ills of human trafficking and speaking against this evil

practice. The deplorable state of Eleme road coupled with poor network connection prevented the Sisters from the Provincial house from participating in the road walk despite all their efforts and interests to be part of the float. A short extract on human trafficking was posted on the platform of the Priests from Port Harcourt Diocese, which a good number of them used to sensitize their congregations on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July which happened to fall on a Sunday.

Sisters from Okpanam community were the homilists during the celebration of the Eucharist on that day- the 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2023 at St Michael's Catholic Church Okpanam. They got a good opportunity to sensitize the congregation on the ills of human trafficking and to share their flyers.

Sisters from Umunede Community did the same at St. Joseph's Catholic Church Akumazi.

Sisters from Ukana Iba sensitized the Students at Comprehensive Secondary School Ikpe Annang, the Congregation at Holy Trinity Parish Ikpe Annang and the Diocesan Marie Gorretti group, all in Akwa Ibom State.

We already have the report from COSUDOW and Safe Child Advocacy Ghana in our platform. Thanks to His Divine goodness for the unwavering zeal and passion of Sisters in fighting this menace.

A very big thank you to all the Sisters who supported through prayers and those whose physical presence made it happen. Let us in our own little ways continue to

strengthen preventive measures through sensitization and to work against whatever may predispose people to easily fall prey to human trafficking.

We pray and look up to the Nigerian Government to put in place the necessary measures to ensure that the activities of human trafficking are brought to a halt and that human rights are respected.

## THE FIRST HOLY COMMUNION IN LINDALVA INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

**L**indalva Inclusive School Celebrates her faith and love for God as her pupils received their First Holy Communion.





This year in the history of Lindalva Inclusive School, sixteen of her pupils received their First Holy Communion; a commendable landmark in the holistic development of her children.

The First Holy Communion in the Catholic Church is a very important occasion. It is an intensely religious celebration in which a boy or girl participates for the first time in the Eucharist. It is the second sacrament of the Church after the baptism which is preceded by a time of intense catechism. The pupils were catechized for over three years. They had to endure on their journey of faith and their patient finally paid off.

The preparation was holistic; they were taught the basic knowledge of the Catholic faith, the prayer of the rosary and other simple and ejaculatory prayers, the sacraments, reverence of Christ in the sacrament and their composure during and after the reception of the Holy Eucharist. They were examined and re-examined by the Sisters and the Parish Priest. In their various encounters with the Parish Priest, the pupils tried to prove

themselves worthy, in one of their encounters, a pupil could not say the litany properly and she said; "Fr., please wait, wait, wait, I promise, I will be able to say it, trust me, I will be able". When a young lad was also told that he did not do very well in his test and so would have to wait until next year, he said: "Fr., please give me a second chance, and I'll make you proud". Actually, both of them kept to their promises and today, they join in the array of the communicants. The pupils actually did well in their test to the amazement of the parish priest.

On the eve of their First Holy Communion, they had a day retreat and were given a talk in which they were reminded and encouraged to live out what they have been taught throughout their time of catechesis.

On the morrow, Sunday, 5th March, Fr. Valentine Ezenwa (OCD) the Parish Priest of St. Michael Catholic Church, Benin City officiated the Mass for the First Holy Communion here in Lindalva Inclusive School. Everyone was involved as both parents, friends and siblings were

present to witness, support and cheer the children. Just before the commencement of the Mass, the Parish Priest heard the confessions of the soon to be communicants and they processed in for the Mass. All were beautifully dressed in dazzling white clothes that one could easily mistake them for angels. As they marched in amidst the beautiful songs, they beamed with smile. At the beginning of the Mass, Fr. Valentine welcomed everyone to the special occasion and thanked the parents for being present to show their support. It was really a joyful day in the life of the school and our new communicants.

Some of the catechumens delivered the readings with great clarity and expression. Afterwards, the priest in his homily reminded all present of the importance of the occasion which is far reaching, especially in the faith-life of the children. Also we lay a new brick on the foundation of their faith which commenced at their baptism. He reminded us of the promises we made at our baptism and how much we are all loved by God. He encouraged

the catechumens never to allow anyone take away this precious gift of the communion from them. He also encouraged them to live better lives, be respectful, quiet and recollected at Mass, obedient to their elders and school authorities, refrain from anything sinful and always keep the prescribed fast and avoid noise making and distractions at Mass.

At the end of the homily, the worshipping community professed the creed and some selected pupils took to the isle with their family and friends to



thank God for his goodness and with their dance steps processed to the altar.

Before the Mass came to a close, Mrs. Osaro on behalf of the parents thanked the priests, the school administrator

## WORKSHOP FOR SISTERS

25 – 49 YEARS OF VOCATION.

7<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023, ELEME

**ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT:  
BE A VOICE; GO TOWARDS; ENCOUNTER.  
FR. EMEKA OBIEMU, OSA.**

and staff for their effort in preparing and supporting the children. She expressed great fulfillment because her son was part of the new communicants and prayed for God's blessings on us all.

In the same light, Sr. Maryclare Olekamma., DC on behalf of the school administrator; Sr. Martha Ali, DC, congratulated the new communicants and urged them to keep up the faith, be a shining light and a good example to other pupils in the school.

The little angels were presented with gifts of prayer book, miraculous medals and cards to mark their big day. The Mass came to an end and the communicants processed out with the priest. The atmosphere was filled with smiles and celebrations as there were unending 'click' sounds from the cameras. The pupils also had some time with their parents.

The celebration was indeed a huge success to the praise and glory of God's name.

Sr. Fidelia Okezie DC

The day began with Morning Prayer and Eucharistic celebration. After breakfast, all the participants gathered in the hall at 9:00am with an opening prayer led by Sr. Margaret Mary Ekanem, DC. Fr Emeka then presented the theme as: ***Beyond Charity – Be a Voice.***



He expressed his desire to help us reconnect with who we are, as this theme is not foreign to us, but part of our lives. It is a reflection on CHARITY and THE VOICE. He went further to remind us that the entire Ephata, our Assembly's theme is related to being a voice towards a shared and prophetic action as Daughters of Charity.

The three pillars on which our Congregation stands as Daughters of Charity are our;

- Identity
- Motto
- Purpose

### Our Identity

We are rightly called poor Daughters of Charity, and what actually defines us is CHARITY. Our identity then is poor Daughters of Charity totally given to God for the service of persons who are poor. An observation of a Daughter of Charity should reflect who we are otherwise will be living a lie. What we do and say, must reflect the name we bear.

### Our motto

The Charity of Christ crucified urges us on. This animates the heart of a Daughter of Charity and sets her on fire for service. We are women who are radical and prompt in our call to service. We love and seek the truth, standing to defend it in situations of injustice at all times. In order to do this, we must constantly discover our shared prophetic action of; **being a voice for the voiceless**. In order to be a voice for others, we need to be;

- able to Unblock
- Open
- Courageous
- Listeners
- Able to empower others
- Able to speak the truth
- Able to create awareness

- Able to educate/enlighten
- Advocate

What may create blocks towards speaking out;

- Low self-image
- Fear
- Marginalization
- Poverty
- Stigmatization
- Tribal sentiment
- Revenge
- Ignorance
- Policies internalization of oppression

With reference to Micah 6:8, we are all called to seek justice, love tenderly and work humbly with God. Only then will we be pleasing to God, and our sacrifices be acceptable in His sight.

Who are the Voiceless?

We identified the voiceless as those living at the margins of our society. Those at the peripheries, excluded from the center of life.

There are three major spaces where these people exist:

- Society
- Church
- Community

Being aware that these people exist everywhere and are closer to us than we ever imagined, calls us to strive to treat everyone with respect and kindness. These little acts of kindness help to bring people who are at the margins back to the center of life where their dignity is restored. When we help

others to have that life that Jesus came to give us, we are gradually changing our world to a better place for all to live.

*What alienate people from accessing the center of life?*

- Rules and structures
- Abuse of power
- Envy/ Jealousy
- Tribalism
- Cliques
- Favoritism

The story of the Villagers experiencing dead bodies coming from a particular source without any known reason, teaches us the importance of going beyond the immediate relief, finding the root cause of any problem which will eventually put an end to it. We are called to be voice of the voiceless, and this must begin with our immediate community members. If your charity does not begin at home, that charity will be dead at arrival.

### **Purpose**

We are here together to serve persons who are poor. This defines our role and purpose of existence. Our identity and our purpose are closely connected. These are all expressed in the virtues of Humility, Simplicity and Charity, the spirit of the Company. Seeking the truth in situations of injustice, loving and defending it at all cost.

The reason why we have come together is because we want to be Open, Go towards and Encounter. The question is; how do we do this in our own time and space? We have the tendency for closing in on ourselves. Therefore, we want to reanimate ourselves to be opened again to go forth towards and encounter those living in poverty. To do this we must be able to discuss a solid and prophetic action; ***being a voice for the voiceless.***

We can achieve this by;

- Listening
- Speaking out
- Helping the poor stand for themselves
- Empowering them

In contrast, Roy argued that there is no such thing as voiceless; the dehumanizing conditions people live in, is enough word to be heard if we really care to listen. For her, people's conditions are words enough to be heard if we really care. Sometimes we deliberately silence the voice of the voiceless. Our work is to improve the lives of those suffering and not to add more suffering and pain. The actual challenge here is that we work to make sure that there are no more people in need of **bread**. It is only then that we can claim to be working for God. Otherwise, we are only working hard for our happiness and salvation and perpetuating that evil called poverty that is keeping people always at the margins.

## Be a Voice for the voiceless

We can do this by unblocking ways that perpetually keep people in poverty or vulnerable. We can advocate and educate them to become agents of their own transformation. The voiceless are those living at the margins / peripheries. Those distant from the center of life. This can be caused by anything that separates them from the core of life. We need to be genuine in our charity towards others, we must strive to treat everyone with respect at all times. When we limit the opportunities for people from attaining their fulfillment in life, we are colluding with oppressive structures in our society to push people to the margins.

Sometimes we protect Jesus too much that we take Him away from those He would want to meet. In every situation, always seek for the greater good as Jesus would do.



At the end of your journey, remember Jesus would only be interested in how many lives you changed for good and not how much law or vows you kept. Therefore, we must be careful between keeping the law and giving life to people. If we betray the purpose of our existence over preservation of the company, then we have failed. *Living our purpose will automatically preserve the company.*

Tendencies that create barriers;

- Listening with prejudice
- Abuse of power
- Envy and jealousy
- Structures
- Tribalism
- Cliques
- Favoritism

Sometimes, how we interpret our laws give room for marginalization. How we engage in being a voice for the voiceless is by going further to investigate the reasons why people are where they are; the root cause of poverty. We must try to challenge our oppressive systems, speak out for the sake of those suffering, and for the right reasons. For this is what we have been called to do. The simple reason why we have to do the right thing is because, it is the right thing to do, and your charity must begin at home, otherwise it will be dead on arrival. Our fulfillment and joy should come from living for others.

## Way forward

The reason why religious life emerged in the Church was to correct the wrong and be true witness to Gospel values. While we are providing the immediate needs of persons who are poor and hungry, let us consciously make those who are responsible for the hunger to take up their responsibility to stop the hunger. In order to achieve this, we must consciously be converted towards working for the common good, in the spirit of the company, for the purpose for which we were established. Alleviating poverty from the face of the earth.

Ephrata, Go towards. Encounter!

Sr. Paulina Onwe DC and  
Sr. Angelina Mark DC

## CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, HOME/COMMUNITY, AND PROJECTS

# WHY HOW

### Introductory Questions for discussion. What Is On Your Mind?

1. What have been your experiences with the topic of safeguarding so far regarding your projects and community?
2. What questions seek clarification as you engage in this one-day discussion on Safeguarding?



## Mistakes in the past – Ways into the future

- Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.

(Pope Francis 2018/08/21)



Sr Bernardine Pemil, DC  
September 2023

Common reactions by “the Church & Religious congregations even now especially in Africa ”

### CONSEQUENCES:

1. Retraumatization = new suffering for the victims
2. Angry faithful (How could you put our children in such danger?)



Victim:

Often unknown, hurt, angry, poor, and marred by the consequences



Priests & Religious:

Well-known, part of the system, part of the family



### Reactions of many bishops and congregational superiors:

- no openness, no belief in victims, no support
- protection of priests/religious, coverup of deeds to protect the church, no legal prosecution
- transferred perpetrators => access to new victims
- refusal of responsibility






- **Types of sexual offenses** – delicts against the sixth commandment
- Forcing someone to perform or submit to sexual acts
- Sexual acts with a minor (under 18!) or a vulnerable person
- The production, possession, or distribution of child pornography
- **Canonical consequences:**
- Immediate suspension to allow for investigation and trial
- If found guilty:  
Removal from the clerical state and/or  
expulsion from the religious community
- Rehabilitation if allegations prove to be unsubstantiated



New rules by the Vatican – Canon Law II  
2. Obligations of all priests and religious

- Report any suspicions or allegations, without delay to the superior / bishop (or their safeguarding officials)
- Report any suspicions of cover-ups
- => The respective officials will start a proper investigation and refer the case to the Vatican if substantiated
- (Lay people were strongly invited to report suspicions, but they are now obliged to do so.)



New rules by the Vatican – Canon Law  
3. Obligations of Officials

- **Officials (bishops, superiors) must:**
- Set up safeguarding and reporting measures - conduct a preliminary investigation
- Ensure that victims and their families are treated with dignity and respect
- Offer spiritual and medical assistance
- Protect the good name and the privacy of the persons involved
- Take precautionary measures - refer the case to the Vatican
- Follow the state laws of their respective countries

## DIAMOND JUBILEE PROJECT

TO THE GLORY OF GOD, WORK ALREADY IN PROGRESS  
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## DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION ROSARY PROCESSION



## ENCOUNTER WITH SR. FRANCOISE PETIT DC.





## FEEDING OUR LORDS AND MASTERS



# GALA NIGHT



# GRAND FINALE







### STAFF CHRISTMAS PARTY





# BIRTHDAY *Celebrants*

## AUGUST

01-Sr. Edwina Okeawolam  
 03-Sr. Augusta Aigbiremonlen  
 03-Sr. Margaret Ogbuja  
 07-Sr. Fidelia Unigwe  
 11-Sr. Clare Anyado  
 13-Sr. Perpetua Okolie  
 17-Sr. Gloria Aniebonam  
 18-Sr. Theresa Nwokorie  
 20-Sr. Patricia-Mary Ezissi  
 25-Sr. Monica Penu  
 27-Sr. Monica Ebuogbei  
 28-Sr. Angelina Amanfo  
 28-Sr. Anastasia Cletus Udoh  
 28-Sr. Pepetua Ezech  
 29-Sr. Helen Akparibo

## SEPTEMBER

01-Sr. Marie-Therese Ukwak  
 01-Sr. Ngozika Igwe  
 02-Sr. Maureen Anyanwu  
 05-Sr. Charity Peter  
 06-Sr. Lucy Adasu  
 06-Sr. Gertrude Amasiatu  
 07-Sr. Stella Mameh  
 07-Sr. Blessing Owoicho  
 08-Sr. Angela Onah  
 11-Sr. Cecilia Okanwikipo  
 11-Sr. Anastasia Ezedimbu  
 16-Sr. Stella Agbawa  
 20-Sr. Immaculate Lugugia  
 22-Sr. Augustina Ezeani  
 22-Sr. Nancy Ijabi  
 24-Sr. Ndidi Aroh  
 24-Sr. Mary Gbanaab  
 26-Sr. Vanessa Ndzelen  
 27-Sr. Justina Arima  
 28-Sr. Emerechi Alimnu  
 29-Sr. Funmilayo Arifayan

## OCTOBER

01-Sr. Sylvia Anyanwu  
 01-Sr. Joy Agbor  
 02-Sr. Roseline Dee  
 03-Sr. Chinenye Keke  
 05-Sr. Catherine Nkereuwem  
 05-Sr. Victoria Bulaun  
 07-Sr. Regina Akpovofene  
 09-Sr. Franca Dike  
 11-Sr. Genevieve Uduk  
 18-Sr Toyin Abegunde

## DECEMBER

01-Sr. Jenesta Stephen  
 05-Sr. Margaret Udoh  
 07-Sr. Amaka Muoneke  
 10-Sr. Veronica Ogodo  
 10-Sr. Rose-Mary Amanfo  
 11-Sr. Caroline Ologunwa  
 13-Sr. Assumpta Uruchi  
 14-Sr. Agwiye Rebecca  
 14-Sr. Victoria Kotetane  
 16-Sr. Nkechi Eze  
 16-Sr. Shereen Dewa  
 17-Sr. Christine Uwaeachie  
 17-Sr. Gladys Sunday A.  
 18-Sr. Philomena Okwu  
 18-Sr. Bibiana Dura  
 19-Sr. Fidelia Odoemena  
 20-Sr. Emilia Asuquo  
 23-Sr. Francesca Edet  
 25-Sr. Marie-Therese Okon  
 26-Sr. Felicia Ezeimo  
 26-Sr. Eugenia Onuora  
 30-Sr. Roseline Ibok  
 31-Sr. Pauline Ekanem  
 31-Sr. Maria Dabang

## NOVEMBER

11-Sr. Mariagoretti  
 Onwuatuegwu  
 09-Sr. Anthonia Iyade  
 13-Sr. Juliana Okeke  
 17-Sr. Margaret-Mary Ekanem  
 22-Sr. Agatha Nkemjika  
 24-Sr. Cynthia Obi  
 26-Sr. Christiana Igechi  
 26-Sr. Ngozi Aluka  
 29-Sr. Constance Akantuglikum  
 29-Sr. Basilia Ijeoma Anozie