

## NIGERIA'S ROLE IN GLOBAL CATHOLICISM<sup>1</sup>

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Jesus Christ, our beloved Lord and Saviour, founded the Church, his Church. A global, a universal, a Catholic or a missionary quality is characteristic of this Church. The Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria is one manifest expression of the awareness of the Church in Nigeria that the Church in this country should take part in this global endeavour. I am happy that the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria, through its National Missionary Seminary, has asked me to propose reflections to you in its 2014 Annual St Paul Lecture series on *Nigeria's Role in Global Catholicism*.

We shall approach this wide theme by first stating briefly how the Lord Jesus gave his Church a global mandate and therefore how it is essential for the Church to be missionary. After touching on the major periods of history in the evangelisation of Nigeria, tribute will be paid to some of the major actors. Our thoughts will then focus on various ways in which the Church in this country has taken part in this missionary activity, such as areas of presence, the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria, actions by dioceses, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Religious Orders and Congregations and Nigerian communities outside this large country. We shall close with reflections on possible areas of attention in the Nigerian participation in the global apostolate of the Church.

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1. Lecture given in the Annual St Paul Lecture series at the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Gwagwalada, Abuja on January 18, 2014.

## **Jesus gave his Church a Global Mission**

In the fullness of time, the Son of God, for love of us and for our salvation (cf *Credo*), came into human history and took on human nature. After his private life which lasted around 30 years passed mainly in Nazareth, there opened up the near three years of his public life. From the very beginning after his baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus gathered followers. He gave special attention to a close group of 12 Apostles and a wider circle of 70 (some documents say 72) disciples. He prepared them for their evangelising mission by his discourses in public and in private, by his miracles and by his attention to the poor, the needy, the oppressed, the sick and the bereaved. He was inaugurating the kingdom of God.

Jesus sent his 70 disciples in twos on a trial run of evangelisation “into every town and places where he himself was about to come” (Lk 10:1). He gave them detailed instructions. The harvest was plentiful, but the labourers were few; they were therefore to pray the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers into his harvest. He was sending them as lambs in the midst of wolves; they were therefore to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves (cf Mt 10:16). He instructed them to carry no purse, bag or sandals and to salute no one on the road. They were to eat what was offered them and to shake the dust off their feet in leaving those unrepentant cities, which refused to receive them (cf Lk 10:13-15). When the 70 disciples returned from this training practice, they narrated with joy to Jesus how the devils were subject to them in the name of Jesus. And the Lord replied: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven...Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10: 17-20).

All through the three years of his public life, the Lord Jesus was giving his Apostles and disciples practical initiation into evangelisation. After his resurrection he formally sent them on mission: “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you”. And thereafter “he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'” (Jn 20:21-23).

It was just before he ascended back to heaven that Jesus gave his Church the formal mandate to evangelise the whole world: “Go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16). A longer version is given in St Matthew's Gospel: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:17-20). His disciples were sent to be Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (cf Acts 1:8).

There is therefore no doubt that Jesus gave to his Church a universal or global mission.

## **The Church is Missionary**

The Church is sent by God to all nations to be “the universal sacrament of salvation” (*Lumen Gentium*, 48). Missionary activity flows from the innermost requirements of the Church's catholicity. “The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the desire of God the Father” (*Ad Gentes*, 2). God freely created us, called us to have a share in his own glory and sent us his Son and the Holy Spirit. Moreover he freely decided to call those he loves, not merely as individuals but as a people gathered together by his love.

This universal design of God for the salvation of humanity is carried out by his sending his Only-begotten Son to be our Saviour. He also sent the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to strengthen and unify the Church and keep it always faithful to Christ. It is Jesus himself who chose his Apostles and disciples, trained them and sent them to evangelise. “The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled by that activity which makes her fully present to all men and nations” (*Ad Gentes*, 5). The world gathering of Catholic Bishops at the Synod of 1974 was categorical in its statement: “We wish to confirm once more that

the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.”<sup>2</sup> Pope Paul VI, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation after that Synod, therefore declared: “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious Resurrection” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14).

All along the centuries, the Church has retained this conviction that she is sent to evangelise by her Founder and Saviour Jesus Christ, that each member of the Church shares in some way in this mission, and that this Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ is meant for all peoples, cultures and languages. “The Church believes that God has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 9).

It is now time to ask ourselves how this Gospel has reached Nigeria and how the Church in Nigeria has taken part in sharing this Good News.

### Highlights in the Evangelisation of Nigeria

Without giving the impression of presenting here anything like a concise history of the evangelisation of Nigeria, we can highlight four major periods in the planting of the faith in this country.

The first phase includes the beginnings, marked by the arrival of missionaries of the Society of African Missions in and around Lagos in 1863, of the Holy Ghost Fathers at Onitsha in 1885 and of the SMA later in Lokoja and Shendam. These intrepid pioneers set up Vicariates Apostolic. This first phase was crowned with the elevation of Lagos and Onitsha to archdiocesan status in 1950 and of Kaduna in 1959.

We can speak of a second phase in the 1950s and 1960s, marked by lively progress in Catholic school education, in the training of local clergy and in the nourishing of local religious congregations for women, with the number of new Christians

increasing in the dioceses each year.

A third period starts after the 1967-1970 Civil War when most of the foreign missionaries in the Eastern part of the country were sent away by the Federal Government. In the country as a whole there was a decade of the appointment of many Nigerian Bishops in dioceses such as Umuahia, Enugu, Owerri, Ikot Ekpene, Lokoja, Ondo, Ibadan, Ogoja, Benin City, Yola, Kaduna, Oyo, Jos, Issele-Uku, Minna and Lagos. The new Bishops worked with their elder brother Nigerian Bishops (Nwedo, Okoye, Nwaezeapu, Arinze, Sanusi and Usanga) and the veteran missionary Bishops (McGettrick, Kelly, Cotter, Dempsey, Mahony, Murray, Grimard and Fitzgibbon), with Cardinal Dominic Ekandem, as the overall senior Prelate and leader.

A fourth period of evangelization can be arguably seen from the 1982 first Papal Visit to Nigeria which saw the impressive growth of Nigerian engagement in the missionary activity of the Church. Remarkable was the carving out of six more ecclesiastical provinces in 1994 so that the Church in Nigeria now has nine of them.

Among the bigger missionary congregations to whom gratitude is owed for the evangelisation of Nigeria, one has to mention the Society of African Missions, the Holy Ghost Fathers, the St Patrick Fathers, the Missionaries of Africa, popularly known as the White Fathers, the Augustinians, the Dominicans and the Jesuits. Earlier among the Sisters' congregations are the Our Lady of Apostles Sisters, the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, and the Society of the Holy Child Sisters. Nigerian Sisters' congregations soon followed, with the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Christ, the Sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the Fatima Sisters, the Daughters of Divine Love and the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy. And more congregations of Sisters have been founded in Nigeria in these years. Among the Brothers, the Marists and the Brothers of the Christian Schools are prominent. There is also an impressive flourishing of the monastic presence in the past fifty years, especially by the Cistercians, the Benedictines, the Carmelites and the Augustinians.

2. *l'Osservatore Romano*, 27 Oct. 1974, 6.

The lay faithful in Nigeria have responded energetically to the Gospel call. The catechists are most prominent. In the earlier decades, most Catholic teachers also functioned as official and, sometimes, unofficial catechists. The organisation of the laity councils at the levels of parish, diocese, ecclesiastical province and nation has been impressive. The Catholic Women's Organisation is so well known that it is replicated even among Nigerian communities in Europe and North America.

When Blessed John Paul II visited Nigeria, on 12 February, 1982, he paid tribute to the faith that has been well planted in the country and also to the missionary engagement of the Church in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup>

Here we need to pay tribute to the pioneer missionaries to Nigeria. Some of them died within a few weeks of arrival. Those were the days before the modern answer to malaria. As those intrepid heralds of the Gospel buried one after another of their colleagues, they bowed their heads and prayed: "Accept, O Eternal Father, the sacrifice of the life of this, our brother in Christ; the sacrifice of our lives, too. But grant that over his bones and ours, a great Church will arise amidst the people whom we serve" (in J. Jordan, *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria*, Dublin, 1949, p. 17). These early missionaries trekked long distances on footpaths and did not hesitate to make sacrifices for the spread of the Word.

Also deserving of tribute are the local leaders or chiefs who welcomed the missionaries and gave them land, the teachers and catechists who were indispensable in the work of evangelization and the first generation of Nigerian priests, with Father Paul Emecheta ordained in 1920 as the leading figure.

May God bless the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome (now better known as the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) and together with it all benefactors of the missionary endeavour worldwide.

3. Cf his homily in Lagos, 12 Feb, 1982, in *Pope John Paul II in Nigeria, February 12 - 17, 1982: Homilies and Addresses* (Port Harcourt: Marian Books Centre Publications, 1982), 8.

### Church in Nigeria participates in Global Evangelization

When Pope Paul VI addressed the Bishops of Africa on 31 July, 1969, in Kampala, on his arrival from the Vatican City to inaugurate the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), he exhorted them: "By now you Africans are missionaries to yourselves. The Church of Christ is well and truly planted in this blessed soil."<sup>4</sup> Let us say a word on how the Church in Nigeria has lived this missionary awareness at three levels: in Africa, in Rome and in the rest of the world.

In Africa, the Church in Nigeria has been an active participant in programmes of the SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) from its very inauguration in Kampala in 1969. The same remark can be made regarding Nigerian activity in the regional meeting of the Catholic Bishops of West Africa. Nigerian priests and religious sisters have been working in Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo Republic, Zambia, Ghana, Gabon, Angola, Kenya, Chad, Niger and the Central African Republic.

Nigerian participation in Church life and work in Rome is growing. In the diplomatic service of the Holy See, three Nigerian Apostolic Nuncios are prominent and there is a future one in the waiting. Two Nigerian priests are officials in the Roman Curia, the Pope's central offices for his universal ministry. Four Nigerian priests lecture in the Pontifical Universities in Rome and in the past few years one of them rose to be Vice-Rector of the Urban University. There are three Nigerian religious priests working in the generalates of their Religious Congregations. A Nigerian is the prioress of a Carmelite monastery of nuns in Rome. Three Nigerian sisters are Superiors General of their congregations while three other sisters are working in their generalates. Quite a number of Nigerian Sisters' Congregations have their regional houses in or near Rome. Three Nigerian priests are chaplains to the Nigerian Catholic communities in and around Rome. There is also a Nigerian cardinal who is in semi-retirement in Rome after 24

4. Address in Istituto Paolo VI, *Paolo VI Pellegrino Apostolico* (Brescia 2001), 278.

years of service as head of two offices of the Roman Curia.

Around the world, there is an appreciable number of Nigerians who are members of Religious Congregations and Orders that operate in many countries. Examples are the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Society of African Missions, the Jesuits, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Augustinians, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Our Lady of Apostles Sisters, the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, the Sisters of St Louis, the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, the Little Disciples of Jesus, the Little Sisters of Charles de Foucauld, to name only a few. I saw in the Philippines a religious house of the last-named congregation where the Novice Mistress was a Nigerian sister. And there are Nigerian diocesan priests sent by their dioceses to work in parishes in Austria, Germany, Italy, United States and Great Britain. This means that Nigerian priests have listened to the Second Vatican Council, which exhorts diocesan priests to be willing to go on mission, even before their home diocese has enough personnel (cf *Ad Gentes*, 38; cf also Pius XII: *Fidei Donum*).

Religious Congregations of Sisters founded in Nigeria have shown active engagement in sharing the faith with people in other continents. One thinks, for example, of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Christ, the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, the Sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the Fatima Sisters, the Daughters of Divine Love and the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy. The Nigerian Benedictine Abbeys of Umuoji and Amoji Nike have been willing to send some of their nuns to help in Benedictine monasteries in Italy and Spain that have a fall in numbers.

Here it is in order to pay tribute to the National Conference of the Women Religious of Nigeria which this year is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its foundation. The Conference is to be congratulated for the collective contribution it has made to bearing witness to the Christ in our country.

The Congregations of Nigerian Brothers have most of their presence and apostolate within the country. The Church in Nigeria also needs the witness to Jesus by consecrated men who live lives of radical discipleship.

### The Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria

The Institute in which we find ourselves is a beautiful and convincing manifestation of the engagement of the Church in Nigeria to promote the missionary activity of the Church especially by preparing priest missionaries.

For years Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, even as Bishop of Ikot Ekpene and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, had been suggesting to his brother Bishops that the Conference found a national seminary for the training of future priests. Finally at the meeting of the Bishops' Conference held in Kaduna in September 1976, it was decided to establish the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul to promote the missionary activity of the Church which is in Nigeria. The Missionary Society of St Paul was founded by Cardinal Ekandem in 1977 and established by the National Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.

On Mission Sunday, 25 October 1977 the National Missionary Seminary was opened in a temporary site offered by Bishop Anthony Sanusi, Bishop of Ijebu-Ode, at Iperu Remo. For many years, priests of St Patrick's Society have been most helpful in the formation programme. May God reward and bless them.

In 1978 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria erected the Missionary Society of St Paul as a pious union. On 17 March 1994 the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples approved the canonical erection of the Society as a Society of Apostolic Life of Diocesan Right. "We are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20), as the motto of the Society, is eloquent. The fact that from among its 235 priest members the Holy Father has chosen three to serve as Bishops in Nigeria is a sign of the high esteem which the Church nourishes for the Society.

Today priests of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria serve in the Bahamas, Botswana, Cameroun, Chad, Gambia, Great Britain, Grenada, Ireland, Italy, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Sweden and the United States of America. May God bless the Superior General, members, friends and supporters of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria. Congratulations to all of you!

## Further Action by Bishops and Dioceses

The Bishops and the Dioceses of Nigeria, with varying degrees of engagement, have supported the global mission of the Church.

It is known also outside Nigeria that God has blessed the country with many priestly and religious vocations. Dioceses which can send some of their priests as *Fidei Donum* priests to dioceses in Africa, Europe or the United States of America are open to discussion on details. There is quite a number of Nigerian diocesan priests serving elsewhere. Some of the Bishops who request such priests are invited to Nigeria to see the realities of the Nigerian Church on the spot, to speak with the priests and to celebrate with the people. The Nigerian Bishops are careful over such details as clear motivation, adequate preparation for intending missionary priests, their maintenance in the new area of apostolate, and their due re-insertion in their home diocese on their return home.

The Church in Nigeria supports the Pontifical Mission Societies, that is, the Societies for the Propagation of the Faith, for St Peter the Apostle and for the Holy Childhood. A National Director is proposed by the Bishops' Conference and appointed by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Each diocese has a Diocesan Director. The financial collections on Mission Sunday in October are sent to Rome. And the local Church in Nigeria has made good progress in finding benefactors for needy seminarians and candidates for the religious life from within the country.

The Department on Mission, of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, organizes seminars for intending Nigerian priests and religious who are getting ready to go on mission. Some dioceses organize prayer sessions with missionaries on home leave and also collections for the support of their work.

## Engagement by Religious Orders and Congregations

The Second Vatican Council showed great appreciation of the consecrated life in the Church. It says that the profession of the three evangelical counsels "belongs inseparably to her life and

holiness" (*Lumen Gentium*, 44). It praises the Conferences or Councils of Major Religious Superiors: "These can make splendid contributions to several goals: helping individual communities fulfil their purpose more adequately, fostering more successful operation on behalf of the Church, distributing workers in a given territory more advantageously; and working on affairs of common concern to religious communities" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 23).

The Second Vatican Council encourages the religious life in countries of recent evangelisation, while advising discernment. It says:

Right from the planting stage of the Church, the religious life should be carefully fostered...Various forms of religious life should be cultivated in a young Church, so that they can display different aspects of Christ's mission and the Church's life... Still, Bishops in their Conference should take care that congregations pursuing the same apostolic aims are not multiplied to the detriment of the religious life and the apostolate (*Ad Gentes*, 18).

The contemplative dimension of the religious life is also encouraged: "By their prayers, works of penance and sufferings, contemplative communities have a very great importance in the conversion of souls" (*Ad Gentes*, 40).

Inter-congregational cooperation among religious in Nigeria has helped in the matter of information regarding requests from overseas for Nigerian religious candidates and on the needed discernment. Good understanding with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has also helped promote the policy that Religious Congregations which are based in Europe, and which come to Nigeria looking for "vocations", are not encouraged to collect local young people and bring them to Europe, until those Congregations first establish houses in Nigeria and learn to train their first Nigerian candidates on the spot. This reduces the problem of Nigerian candidates first joining European congregations with great joy, but later finding out that they are among much older religious and that now they are nostalgic and

want to return to their home country.

What cannot be doubted is the active involvement of the Church in Nigeria in the global mission of the Church.

### **Contribution by Nigerian Catholic Communities in some major cities in Europe and North America**

There is quite a number of Nigerian Catholics resident in such major cities as Rome, Padua, Vienna, London, New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles and Yaoundé. Most of them are workers of various types, with many who are high up professionals. They generally have their whole nuclear family with them. They as a rule attend Mass in parishes where they find themselves and strive to get inserted into the life of such. But in some cases they ask the Bishops back in Nigeria to send them a chaplain. With the active support of the local Diocese, these communities are sometimes assigned an existing church for their Sunday Mass once a month or even each week.

Such Nigerian communities bring with them Nigerian characteristics like joyful celebration of the sacred liturgy, participation in liturgical singing by the people, and even harvest and bazaar fund raising events and the setting up of some lay apostolate groups, especially the Catholic Women's Organisation. European and American Catholics are impressed by Nigerian participation in the celebration of joys and sorrows in the lives of members, and even by the Nigerian women's dress styles.

Nigerian students in Europe and North America share in the activities of Catholic Students' Chaplaincies. They bring with them a sense of freshness and enthusiasm in the Catholic faith. In Rome the Nigerian seminarians join the Association of Nigerian Priests and Religious in their occasional meetings. In such gatherings some pastoral questions of special interest to the Nigerian situation get examined and help to prepare the seminarians for their future apostolate at home.

Devotion to Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi has become an important agent for forging unity among Nigerian Catholics in large cities in Europe and North America. In England, Nigerian Catholics organize a yearly pilgrimage to Mount Saint Bernard Abbey, Coalville (the original monastery of Blessed Tansi) around 20 January, the anniversary of the death of this Nigerian hero.

When, therefore, we speak of global Catholicism, we should not think only of the activities of priests and religious. The lay faithful, with their families, are a fundamental presence and consideration and they also make a Nigerian contribution to the shape of Catholicism worldwide.

### **Nigeria's Contribution to Global Catholicism**

As we approach the end of these reflections, we can now strive to assess what specific contribution Nigeria brings to global Catholicism, and in particular to the Church at the centre in Rome. What could be the challenges on the road ahead?

Already mentioned are the Nigerians working in the various organs of the Church in Rome. As can be seen, they are not many. To them can be added the five Nigerians who are members or consultors of various Holy See offices, who indeed live in Nigeria, but who may be called to a meeting in Rome every few years, or who are consulted by correspondence. Moreover, a Nigerian priest theologian is a member of the prestigious International Theological Commission for the past ten years and another is a member of the International Biblical Commission.

What specific contribution do these Nigerians bring to the universal Church? What does the Church gain because these Nigerians take part in her universal concerns? And how do these pioneers feel in answering their historical call? What are the

prospects for the future?

In answering these questions, one must start by remarking that these Nigerians do not come to the Holy See with the declared aim of seeking advantages for their country, or of protecting any imagined interests of Nigeria, or of striving to win honour and prominence for their country. It is not impossible that some of such consequences could follow as “collateral” effects. But it is not expected that these aims are deliberately pursued.

These Nigerians are in the halls of the Holy See because the Church is catholic, because every part of the universal Church, every local Church, every particular Church, is expected to contribute in a suitable way to the apostolate of the global, universal Church. Every local Church is expected to bring its gifts and share with the rest. The magi who came to adore the newborn King are a symbol of people from all tribes and nations who come to adore the Lord Jesus, bringing their gifts (cf *Lumen Gentium*, 13).

What specific gifts does this first crop of Nigerian Catholicism bring to the global Church? Without suggesting that Nigerians have a monopoly of the following gifts, Nigerian Catholics bring joy, a sense of community celebration, respect for constituted authority, enthusiasm and commitment in spreading the faith, and suggestive colour in liturgical celebration. As a relatively young local Church, the Church in Nigeria can bring to the universal Catholic public square a type of freshness and hopeful realism which the older local Churches of Europe appreciate. Nigeria's relative boom in priestly and religious vocations is also a positive asset, with all the responsibilities and challenges regarding adequate formation which high numbers bring with them.

The pioneer Nigerians in full-time Holy See service, such as diplomats or Roman Curia officials, are also learning the needed discipline for their assignments which can entail more loneliness

than for the average priest or bishop in a home posting. They are also expected to have a deeper faith in, and love for the Church, with her divine elements, which never fall short, and her human elements which can sometimes fall below the desirable mark. It can help if the Church back in Nigeria occasionally thinks of them and associates them with some of her reflections or mutual listening sessions. This can happen even in an informal way when such personnel are home on holidays.

Looking ahead to the future in strengthened relations between the Church in Nigeria and the Holy See, one can suggest that Diocesan Bishops and major religious superiors be always willing to offer some of their best and key personnel to the service of the Holy See. Nigerian Bishops, seminary rectors, university professors and major religious superiors should regard as an important Church service the time they dedicate to answering questionnaires from Rome. The same remark applies to the attendance at Roman and other international meetings and conferences on the faith. These are services which should be rendered with joy, promptness and efficiency.

The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus the Saviour, is the Morning Star that announces that the Rising Sun will soon come to visit us. Through her we render gratitude to God for the gift of the evangelisation of Nigeria. And we request her intercession that every Nigerian Catholic may do what in him or her lies, to share in the engaging work of global Catholicism with joy, with faith, with love and with evangelical dynamism.