

## **BISHOP OCHLAGHA TURNS GOLD IN THE PRIESTHOOD**

CATHEDRAL ORLU

AUGUST 26, 2010

### **A PRIEST TO ME FINGER TIPS**

#### **WE ARE DRAWN BY OUR DESIRES**

*Perhaps you have heard the legend of a girl, who could outrun all human kind. That legend was no lie. She did outrun them. She was swift as she was beautiful. Meanwhile the girl came of age to marry and went to get oracular advice. The god who heard her said: O Atalanta, run from the thought of sleeping with a man; you shall be caught with one, and yet alive, lose all that's yours, nor ever get away. She turned wild with fear. She lived within a forest, untouched by men. When young lovers came, she sent them home or said: I'm not your kind; only the man who wins a race against me may take me in his arms, but if he loses, his gift is death. The girl seemed heartless, yet her beauty fired brash lovers who saw danger as delight.*

Then **Hippomenes**, called for **Aphrodite's** help as if his voice were prayer: and took up the challenge. By her advice he carried with him three golden apples. She gave him brief instructions how to use them. Horns blew the signal for the race; both boy and girl flashed through the air as though their feet had never touched the track. She took the pace ahead. As he ran - the finish tape was still a mile beyond him, far in sight - his throat went dry; he struggled for his breath - at last he rolled an apple toward the girl. She caught the glitter of its golden light, Then swerved to pick it up, while he passed beyond her. But half a second later she outstripped him. He tossed a second apple at her feet. Again she stopped. Again she flew beyond him. The last stretch of the track rose up before them. He cried: now bless me, Goddess, with this throw. And then he tossed the third far out of bounds. When **Atalanta** saw the golden apple fly through the air, she seemed to draw her breath, uncertain whether she would risk the race. Nevertheless, she picked it up. I will cut it short - swift-footed **Atalanta** became the joyful bride of **Hippomenes**.

He led his fond bride to rest within the welcome darkness of the grotto. I leave the rest to your imagination! The gods, though they were wooden images and old, were shocked and turned their faces to the wall. They needed sterner warning. For this sacrilege they were turned into a lion and lioness.

Oh! how the apples of this life make us miss our goal! We are attracted by our desires. There's many a slip twixt the cup and lip, says Aristotle. There is a million miles between a man and his goal and very few ever reach it. Today we celebrate a man who stood like a flint unswayed by the alluring apples of life; a man of golden mind who stoops not to shows of dross; an eagle who never catches flies.

## **PREAMBLE**

I have long desired, my good people of **Orlu**, to sing the praises of your Bishop Emeritus' life and achievements, to recount his profile and work, and to tell how he suppressed a jinx of embarrassing weakness of voice and indistinctness of speech and shortness of breath which disturbed the sense of what he said by disjoining his sentences; how his persuasive eloquence impressed many; how this power was the product of toil and how he became a man of the most astonishing boldness in speech. But the vast scale of his labour deters me, because I dread that my words would fall somewhat short of his achievements, and thereby prove wholly unequal to my theme. I just need a well-warranted confidence. However, Euripides once said when a man has for his words a noble subject, it is easy to speak well. *Whoever will choose a theme within his range neither speech will fail him nor clearness of order.*<sup>1</sup>

## **GREETINGS!**

On behalf of the Good People of **Orlu**, with sentiments of undying thankfulness to my Lord Bishop Augustine Too-chukwu **Ukwuoma** for his gracious invitation to me to perform this holy business on this auspicious occasion of the Priestly Golden Anniversary of Our Beloved Father, Bishop Gregory Obinna **Ochiagha**, I greet you all with sincere affection. I greet and welcome most specially the Pope's representative to Nigeria, Most Reverend Dr. Augustine **Kasujja** and his Staff. I give my cordial greetings to His Excellency, Most Reverend Dr. Felix Alaba **Job**, Metropolitan Archbishop of Ibadan and President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. My deferent thought goes to His Excellency, Most Reverend Dr. A.J.V. **Obinna**, Metropolitan Archbishop of **Owerri**, Your Graces, My Lord Bishops, Monsignors, the Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria and his Staff, my brother Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Major Superiors and Religious both male and female. I am elated by the executive presence of the Governor of Imo State, Chief Ikedi **Ohakim**, Former Governors, Esteemed Igwe of **Orlu**, Venerable Traditional Rulers, Distinguished Civil Authorities, Eminent Representatives of the various categories of Knighthood, Dear brothers and sisters. This occasion prays for patience. For, striving to be brief, I become obscure. And aiming at smoothness, I fail in force and fire.

## **THE READING**

The first reading from Isaiah 61: 1- 3 offers a prophetic portrait of the figure of the Messiah, a portrait that attains all its meaning at the moment when Jesus reads this text in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21). At the heart of this prophetic text is a mission to service and consolation. It is the mission to serve and to bring the comfort, *parakalein*, which enables a man to pass the breaking-point and not to break. The word *parakalein* is the word for exhorting men to noble deeds and high thoughts; it is especially the word of courage before battle. Life is always calling us into battle and the one who makes us able to stand up to the opposing forces, to cope with life and to conquer life is the *paraklitos*, the **Holy Spirit**, who is none other than the presence and the power of the risen Christ. To serve others is a *liturgy* laid on the citizen of the Kingdom by God. Our Church work, indeed all work is a *liturgy* laid on

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<sup>1</sup> Horace, Arc Poetica, 40-42.

men by God. The Christian is a man who works for God and men, first, because he desires' to, with his whole heart, and second, because he is compelled to, because the love of Christ constrains him.

### **PRIESTHOOD, A SERVICE**

From this perspective, the expression *Alter Christus*, in persona Christi, assumes its true meaning. More than *dignity*, it alludes to service. It emphasizes the duties of the priest in the Church, his *priestly ministry*, carried out for the good of the Church and the faithful. The priest is a servant. With regard to the Church entrusted to him, each bishop is *Vicarius Christi*. Thus, the concept of service is the dignity of each bishop, each priest, and each of the baptized. This constrains St. Augustine to often say: *Vobis sum episcopus, vobiscum christianus*. In this light, Pope Benedict XVI reflected at a general audience that

*to be a pastor .... there must be a profound rootedness in living friendship with Christ. In fact, no one is really capable of feeding Christ's flock if he does not live a profound and real obedience to Christ and to the Church, and the docility itself of the people to their priests depends on the docility of priests to Christ.... it makes of the individual a servant of Christ and only in so far as he is a servant of Christ can he govern, guide for Christ and with Christ.*

The past fifty years of Bishop **Ochiagha's** priesthood have served *ad dandam scientiam salutis* and to make the light of Christ radiate. Today marks the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination, an anniversary of unparalleled significance, falling in the *Year for Priests*, holding up St. John Marie **Vianney**, *Cure d'Ars*, as a model of priestly ministry in the world. It is also a year that marks the declaration of Blessed Michael Cyprian Iwene **Tansi**, as the patron and model of all Nigerian priests. It is a year of an extraordinary challenge for ordained priesthood, setting up Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI a butt of senseless, mindless and shameful media attacks. Yet, the Pope urged priests to come to **Rome** to show themselves *ready and unintimidated* to serve humanity. It is a year that **Nigeria** turns gold as an independent nation.

The time has passed rapidly and the events have been intense. The former US Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleeza **Rice**, during the *THISDAY Y Nigeria at 50 awards* at Abuja made a point about anniversary:

*If we take this anniversary, if we take as friends of Africa and Nigeria, and if you take, as Nigerians, this anniversary to reaffirm the principle that Nigerian democracy will be strong and honourable and deliver for its people, I am quite certain that we will look back and say: 'a job well done; potentials fulfilled'<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> THISDAY, Monday, February 22, 2010 Vol. 15 no 5419 p.6

Celebrations often take place when something is achieved or finished. No proof of virtue is ever mild. Toil summons the best men. So young **Greg** began his journey to the priesthood to serve, because a life of practical service is a basic of our faith. Authentic Christianity is like the proverbial coin. It has two sides. On one side, it is devotion - a loving friendship with Christ. On the other side, it is duty - rolling up our sleeves and going to work. No one can doubt the central place that service held in the life and teaching of Jesus. It is reflected in all of his great parables. The story of the *Good Samaritan* is about a man who took the time to help a stranger in need. The story of the *Prodigal Son* is about a boy who wasted his money on himself, instead of investing in people.

### **IN THE BEGINNING....**

Vocation to this service demanded that young **Greg** break some jinx. At his time, the priesthood was a jinx. Aspiration to it was stoutly resisted by parents and culture. At the time in **Mbano Region**, to turn down an offer for post-elementary free education by a potential brilliant boy was a jinx. Breaking this jinx too, his eager desire to serve in the priesthood urged him on to the Junior Seminary then at **Nnewi in Anambra State** for the initial preliminary formation. He then moved on to Bigard Memorial Seminary, **Enugu in Enugu State** for the customary studies in Philosophy and Theology under the duteous Irish Spiritans. Both disciplines provided for young **Greg** an appropriate wholistic formation in view of his mission.

It was, however, chiefly on the side of the Sacred Liturgy and homiletics - a desire to be a liturgy master and a motivational communicator - that he showed unswerving determination. He believed that liturgy is dressed with decorum, underlining the importance of the observance of the Liturgical norms and the *ars celebrandi*. From this, he received a powerful stimulus for playing the role of Master of Ceremonies in liturgical celebrations. The passionate fondness for this takes possession of him at all times. Infringement of liturgical decorum, ritual correctness, or which could be termed *Liturgical disobedience* sends him into an impulsive spasm of a compulsive grunt of disapproval emitted by his chronic characteristic *cough:ngh-ngh-oo* and smudged soliloquy.

### **PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

He attained his cherished aspiration: he was ordained a priest in a ceremony suffused with grandeur and joy by a man he admired and served with ardent devotion. He now exists for others. He now exists to serve. The first *location* - the term in vogue in those days for appointment - took him to Christ the King Parish, **Aba** as a *curate*. Here he quickly won a reputation and admiration of the people and was treated with deference by the Parish Priest, Archpriest Monsignor Joseph **Nwanegbo**. Thus began the fifty years of great kindnesses, amazing generosity, unrivalled wisdom. Life grants no boon to man without toil.<sup>3</sup> For after a brief spell as a *curate*, his Bishop made an account of him forthwith and recommended him for further literary pursuit in philosophy in the Catholic University of America, **Washington D.C.**, during the dark days of the civil

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<sup>3</sup> Horace, Satires, 1, IX.

disturbances, with the civil rights jingoism: *Eye on the prize; keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on!* sirening the American air.

At the conclusion of his studies, he returned to Nigeria. What patriotism! Mid-1960's Nigeria was trapped in the vortex of the Biafran embroilment. Then Father **Greg**, exuding youthfulness and having lived the **Civil Rights Movement** in the **States**, like a true patriot, voice of the voiceless, conscripted himself into the Broadcasting Corporation of Biafra - *Voice of Biafra*. Under the programme *I BELIEVE* he gave hope to a beleaguered people. In recent times that Communications Media have taken the central stage in a Digital World, this would have earned him a *Communication and Culture Prize*.

The unplanned change occasioned by the abrupt cessation of the civil war and the mindless repatriation of all the Irish missionaries and social workers was the end of his Media Services and the beginning of his forced but short-lived exile in **Gabon** and **Ireland**. He returned to **Nigeria** during the period of *Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reconstruction*.

It was to Formation rather than pastoral, however, that Father **Greg's** most memorable services were rendered. About his significance as a Secondary School Administrator and formator of priests in Seminaries, suffice it to say that he is the supreme index of his time. This apostolate forms a history of his era. During his long spell in the area, nothing could flash light more natural than his giving direction to Sacred Heart College, Aba; upholding the standard in a post-Ahaji Immaculate Conception Seminary, Ahiaeke, Ndiume Ibeku, **Umuahia**; fostering a period of renaissance in a post-war Bigard Memorial Seminary, **Enugu**; and a *Hercules* as a pioneer Acting Rector of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, Philosophy, Ikot Ekpene Campus, now St. Joseph Major Seminary, **Ikot Ekpene**. The breadth of his formation work is stunning. He is a *Chiron* in teaching and forming priests and a *Quintilian* in pedagogy.

If **Ochiagha** Foundation - an **Ochiagha Schiderkreis** (Circle of Students) were launched, the membership would be nobly weighty and impressive. Fr. **Greg** in twenty years of priesthood saliently stands out as a *teacher*, thereby, earning that Danielic prophetic promise *that those who taught people to be just will shine like the stars for all eternity*.<sup>4</sup>

### **A PRIEST TO THE FINGER TIPS**

The Gospel pericope of today gives the admonition that *it is too late for a soldier to change his mind about fighting when he is armed in the battle line*.<sup>5</sup> Stewardship is service. It is challenging. It conveys the lesson that the point of life is not learning how to be a master but learning how to be a servant. We are called not to be successful, but to be faithful<sup>6</sup> and in the process to be as vigilant as a cat to steal

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 12:3

<sup>5</sup> Juvenal, Satire 1:58 seq.

<sup>6</sup> Mother Teresa

cream. The better part of valour is discretion. In the life of a man never the *time returns*. The readiness is all! Service is an acceptable theme in the priesthood. In any case, the Church's authority is that of service. It bears such emphasis, for, he believed that the world needs the cleansing power of the priesthood. In this respect Fr. **Greg** is a priest all in all. *Ad unguem factus sacerdos*,<sup>7</sup> eminently defines him.

### **VOBIS SUM EPISCOPUS**

How much does the fame of human actions depend upon the station of those who perform them! January 6, **1981** at the *Eternal City*, Father Gregory Obinna **Ochiagha** was clothed with the fullness of the priesthood as the First Bishop and the Chief Shepherd of **Orlu**. This title of Chief Shepherd recalls the profound teaching on the Good Shepherd that was offered to us by Benedict XVI during the Mass of Inauguration of his Petrine Ministry five years ago, on Sunday, April 24, 2005, at the Vatican. In his very first homily as the Successor of Peter, Benedict XVI said: *One of the basic characteristics of a shepherd must be to love the people entrusted to him, even as he loves Christ Whom he serves. Feed my sheep: ----- Feeding means loving, and loving also means being ready to suffer. Loving means giving the sheep what is truly good, the nourishment of God's truth, of God's word, the nourishment of His presence, which He gives us in the Blessed Sacrament.* No one, says St. Thomas Aquinas, can be a good shepherd unless he is united with Christ through charity. The office of a good shepherd, therefore, is charity. The reading from 2 Timothy 1:6-14 confirms this.

### **JUSTLY RESPECTED CLERGY**

Love is the lodestone of his shepherding the flock in the Catholic Diocese of **Orlu**, a Diocese defined as

*a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a Bishop with the cooperation of the presbyterate so that, adhering to its pastor and gathered by him in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist it constitutes a particular Church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.*<sup>8</sup>

Sallust has it that in fact, it very often happens that the man whom you have selected as a commander looks about for someone else, some people to command him to attain the common good. Bishop **Ochiagha** therefore established an entente cordiale between him, the clergy and laity of the Diocese. The proof of this is the vigorous pursuance of the ideals enshrined in his aims: *concordia presbyterorum* and *consensus Orluanus* viz a stress that the Diocese precedes the parish. Nothing short of a miracle could effect this without having a justly respected clergy, as St Ignatius of Antioch calls them in his Letter to the Ephesians, *who are a credit to God, are attuned to their*

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<sup>7</sup> Horace, Satires, 1, 5, 32: A Priest to the finger tips.

NB. The Latin expression involves a metaphor from sculpture, for the artist would pass his finger-nail over the marble, to test the smoothness of its joints.

<sup>8</sup> Canon 369

*Bishop like the strings of a harp, the result is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ from minds that are in unison and affections that are in harmony. The Saint in his Letter to the Magnesians enjoins the clergy, that beautifully-woven spiritual chaplet to be as submissive to the Bishop and to one another as Jesus Christ was to the Father and as the apostles were to Christ and the Father, so that there may be complete unity, in the flesh as well as in the spirit.*

The Bishop therefore exultantly commended his presbyterate, the work of his hands: *They are my gift to the Church, I am blessed with dutiful and holy priests. I am proud of them.*<sup>9</sup> He was literally saying to them: *Without you I cannot. Without us God will not,* retorted the priests as well. It is not difficult to speculate that their common refrain/chorus of support would run like: *Aut Ochiagha Aut Nihil.*

### **MATURE AND COMMITTED LAITY**

*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.*<sup>10</sup> This fact is of decisive importance to understand the life and mission of Christ. Jesus' invitation *Go!* is addressed first to the apostles, and today to their successors: the Pope, bishops and priests, but not only to them. The latter must be the guides, animators of the others in the common mission. To think otherwise would be as if saying that war can be waged only with generals and captains, without soldiers; or that a soccer team can be established only with one trainer and referee, without players. After this sending of the apostles, the Gospel of Luke reads, Jesus *appointed seventy-two others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come.*<sup>11</sup> The post-Conciliar Church has witnessed a flowering of this awareness. The laity of ecclesial movements are the successors of these seventy-two disciples. The laity, because of their direct insertion in society, are irreplaceable co-workers in this task. Bishop **Ochiagha** effectively built a mature and committed laity – who, according to Benedict XVI, have shifted diametrically from *considering themselves collaborators of the clergy to recognizing themselves truly as co-responsible for the being and action of the church:* the Diocese. The Catholic Diocese of **Orlu** enjoys a formidable lay work-force carrying out with splendid generosity the obligatory demands of Canon 222§ 1.<sup>12</sup> It is a Diocese solidly poised on the tripod of co-operation, corroboration and collaboration. Nothing so advantages a Bishop as this. For it is not likely that this great and mighty Diocese would have attained such dimensions or achieved such splendid results had it not been directed and governed by the principle of cooperation, corroboration and collaboration.

With the motto: *Ad dandam scientiam salutis*, Bishop **Ochiagha** formed the laypeople of **Orlu** to witness openly to their faith and to be a leaven in society, while

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<sup>9</sup> Most Rev. Dr. Gregory Ochiagha: Our Catholic Diocese Of Orlu In The Silver Jubilee Celebration, Sat. February 18, 2006, Brochure p21.

<sup>10</sup> Mark 16:15

<sup>11</sup> Luke 10:1

<sup>12</sup> The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the church so that the church has what is necessary for divine worship, for apostolic works and works of charity and for the decent sustenance of ministers. Cf also Cans. 1254§2; 422; 374§1

respecting both a healthy laicism in the public institutions and the other religious denominations. For *it is up to the lay faithful to demonstrate concretely - their personal and political life - that the faith enables them to see reality in a new and profound way, to transform it ... that charity in truth is the most effective force that is capable of changing the world.*

It is to his credit that he was able to build all the segments of the Diocese into a unified whole, in the spirit of St. Ignatius of Antioch, to have a single service of prayer, which everybody attends; one united supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and innocent joyfulness.

### **CONSISTENCY, A RARE GEM**

Consistency is rare among us. Some, sometimes, deny its importance. Emerson said: *with consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.* Shakespeare would exclaim: *Ah, consistency, thou art a rare gem!* Or as Samuel Johnson put it: *great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.*

#### **\_\_\_\_\_ IN ORDINATION AND EDUCATION**

The Catholic Diocese of Orlu's achievements are prodigious and brilliant. The most notable of all, as I make bold to say and I think all will agree with me, is that this noble rural Diocese, shepherded by Bishop Ochiagha, begot, reared and educated many priests. The priest-personnel at the inception of the Diocese was piddling 49. By the retirement of Bishop Ochiagha the Diocese had a suffocating number of over two hundred priests. In his lofty vision of a highly educated clergy, Jesuit-like, he offered them the opportunity for further training in various disciplines in view of their apostolate and demanded result. And, in short, if we need cite a convincing proof of this, we do not lack many notable instances.

*Somebody promised to give to Cleomenes cocks that would die fighting, but he retorted. No, don't, but give me those that kill fighting.<sup>13</sup>*

*Presbyterium Orluanum* is made of this stuff. The Catholic Diocese of Orlu under Bishop Ochiagha reflects consistency in its *modus operandi, docendi, regendi and sanctificandi* at an admirable level. It is her birth right.

#### **\_\_\_\_\_ IN PROGRAMMING**

Consistency is the mint-mark of his pastoral plan, annually produced in the form of a diary, embodying the programme of activity and pastoral visit itinerary. Constant as the northern star, punctilious punctuality is native to him.

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<sup>13</sup> Plutarch's Moralia, Vol. III, Sayings of Kings and Commanders; 191 p. 135



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#### IN LITERARY PRODUCTION

The episcopacy did not steal his writing powers. His literary work gave accent to it. As a literary figure, incomparably great, his pastoral letters, other writings, conferences, papers and articles are a *pot-pourri* of subjects. His work is of extensive range; imposing in bulk, diversity, seriousness and purity of execution. His surpassing receptivity, his philosophical formation, his didactic motto: *Ad dandam scientiam salutis* - lodestone of his episcopal ministry; found room for so much that is human for a host of qualities ranging from awe-inspiring solemnity to the softest of emotions and from vindictive bitterness - whereby he scoffed at gross misgovernment and the studied phariseism of Pentecostalism, to exquisite delicacy. His attachment to Rome and what some may call conservatism animates his dignified pride in recording events and addressing issues, advocating order and a protagonist of environmental holiness.

In these pastoral letters - a yearly gift message - and other writings, one finds a plethora of ingenious statements holding *the mirror up to the manners of the day*.<sup>14</sup> Of good writing the source and font is wisdom. His pastoral letter: *An Echo from the Past 1994*, is a classic. In it he displayed his unchallenged mastery of ecclesial praxis. The letter conveys the message that the placid recollection of the past is 'not without its charms, and that to enjoy past life is twice to live. The letter presages the clericophobia that has intricately grown into its ruinous zenith in recent times.

His own mobile impressionability goes far towards explaining his unsurpassable eloquence - far be it from loquacity - in pushing a point(s) that sometimes stirs and sometimes disturbs. When he intervenes in discussions it is generally revolutionary and incontrovertible. The rumour is rife that the presbyterium contemplates dedicating a library to his honour. Pardon my audacity to ask you, my dear good people of **Orlu**, to erect a statue to his honour with the inscription: *To Bishop Ochiagha, for his glorious services*.

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#### IN TALENT SCOUTING

With richly varied mental endowment, Bishop **Ochiagha** is a connoisseur and promoter of talents. He is a talent scout. Indeed, no man's talents, however shining, can raise him at once from obscurity unless they find scope, opportunity, and also a patron to recommend them. His aim for both self and diocese was lofty. It is here that he chiefly excelled.

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#### IN PRAYER

The venerable Servant of God John Paul the Great said that prayer joined to sacrifice constitutes the most powerful force in the whole of history. Prayer is the first task, the true path of sanctification for priests and the soul of an authentic *vocational ministry*. The Eucharist is prayer *par excellence*. Indeed, without the Eucharist, the priesthood does not exist. The Letter of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II to Priests for Holy Thursday 2004 emphasized this. We are born from the Eucharist. If we can truly say that the whole Church lives from the Eucharist - *Ecclesia de Eucharistia vivit*, we can say the same thing about the ministerial priesthood: it is born, lives,

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<sup>14</sup> Martial, Epigrams.

works and bears fruit *de Eucharistia*.<sup>15</sup> *There can be no Eucharist without the priesthood, just as there can be no priesthood without the Eucharist.*<sup>16</sup> He reinforces this by telling us that:

*We priests are the celebrants, but also the guardians of this most sacred mystery. It is our relationship to the Eucharist that most clearly challenges us to lead a sacred life. This must shine forth from our whole way of being, but above all from the way we celebrate.*<sup>17</sup>

The Eucharist is key to renew priestly and consecrated life. It is the Eucharist ... that enables priests to spend themselves so that Christ will be known.<sup>18</sup>

John Paul II reminds priests that it is incumbent on them to uphold the dignity and honour of the Eucharist. He laments the multiple abuses and inappropriate innovations carried out by many priests in the years following the Second Vatican Council and appeals for a renewed fidelity in celebrating the Eucharist according to Church norms.

This fidelity is not a legalistic or formalistic prescription but a *concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist through which priests eloquently demonstrate their love of the Church.*<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Pontiff pleads!

*Dear priests, who repeat the words of consecration each day, and are witnesses and heralds of the great miracle of love which takes place at your hands: celebrate Holy Mass each day with the same joy and fervour with which you celebrated your first Mass, and willingly spend time in prayer before the tabernacle.*

Our golden jubilarian is a man of prayer - contemplative prayer - demonstrated in the admirable decorum with which he lives and celebrates the liturgy and in his consistent daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in an utter ethereal recollectedness only broken/distracted by his characteristic cough. In this light, he is enamoured of this sacrament like St. Thomas Aquinas.

It can be said that a Diocese reflects its Bishop's way of thinking. The Catholic Diocese of **Orlu** is consequently avid for the adoration - *proskynesis* (in Greek) refers to the gesture of submission, the recognition of God as our true measure; and ad-oratio - cardio pulmonary resuscitation, a kiss, an embrace and ultimately love - of the

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<sup>15</sup> cf. Council of Trent, Sess. XXII, canon 2: DS 1752.

<sup>16</sup> (Gift and Mystery. On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination, New York, 1996, pp.77-78) as quoted in the Letter of John Paul II to Priests on Holy Thursday 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Letter of the Holy Father John Paul II to Priests for Holy Thursday 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Cardinal Arinze.

<sup>19</sup> Ecclesia de Eucharistia n. 5

Blessed Sacrament because her Bishop highlights the devotion. Permit me, dear brothers and sisters, to say that the entire Catholic Diocese of **Orlu is SHEKINAH** wherein the Blessed Sacrament is, in every parish and institution, daily adored. A tour of the Diocese confirms my assertion.

#### \_\_\_\_ **IN STRUCTURES**

Bishop **Ochiagha's** presence in **Orlu** ignited a revolution in consistent development of a circumscription of untapped potentials. Parishes grew from twenty-three (23) to over one hundred and thirty (130). Out-stations are fast becoming anachronistic in **Orlu** Diocese. Places do not ennoble men but men make places illustrious. So Bishop **Ochiagha** would bring places like **Uzii** from its natural **obscurity** to a blaze of glory and an exceedingly great city. My census would place **Orlu** Diocese second largest in the country. On this wavelength of structurization, seminaries of propaedeutic stage, schools, hospitals, social services, Pastoral Center of note - built on an elevation overlooking a soul-transporting Hesperian panorama of enchanting sylvan greenery which strongly inclines the mind to meditation - religious houses - communities of consecrated women, happy recipients of his genuine fatherly attention and their much needed collaborative ministry he studiously fosters and grandly appreciates - and huge halls adorn the Diocese. The rectories and Churches - many already dedicated - are unique landmarks. They are decked in magnificence and psychedelic beauty. Here he shows the artist that he is, not a craftsman. For there is this difference between the artist and the craftsman: the artist produces what he himself finds good, the craftsman what is profitable.<sup>20</sup> An aerial view of the Diocese would silhouette these structural wonders moving from the four Pastoral Regions of St. Gregory, **Amaigbo**; St. Michael, **Urualla**; St. Theresa, **Uli** and Regina Pacis, **Ihioma** to their vanishing point - this imposing Cathedral, or should I call it, a Superdome, a Colliseum with a roof, which majestically stands as the pitch and marrow of his achievement.

#### **NO CROSS, NO CROWN**

What a dizzy eminence, this man Bishop **Ochiagha**, constant to his purposes, placed **Orlu**. Gratitude wells up from our hearts. It is important, however, to bear in mind that our moments of achievement and recognition are often followed by times of trials and testing. It is a hard campaign! Love has both gall and honey in abundance.<sup>21</sup> Great achievements are attended by correspondingly great dangers.<sup>22</sup> Mishaps oft reveal the genius of an administrator, smooth going hides it.

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<sup>20</sup> Seneca, De Beneficiis, 11,33,2

<sup>21</sup> Plautus, Cistellaria, Act I, Sc.1, 71: Amor et melle et felle est fecundissimus,

<sup>22</sup> Herodotus, History VII, 50

Bishop **Ochiagha** was buffeted and harassed by harrowing problems in the course of his episcopacy. But, like the cassia, he proved best being bruised. The oft shaking of the cedar tree fastens it more at root. Problems had similar effect on our Bishop. They made him constant in his purposes, thereby, driving home the lesson that no pleasure is free from pain; in all our joys something of trouble ever comes between.<sup>23</sup> Our achievements are dearer to us the more we have to suffer for them. *For God did not confer on us a spirit of bashfulness, but of strength, love and good judgment.*<sup>24</sup>

### **I HAVE FINISHED ....**

For fifty years, Bishop **Ochiagha** served the Church and the Catholic Diocese of **Orlu** with diligence, passion and love, happy as a larry, though old age and happiness are seldom found together. He left **Orlu** as calmly as if he left the theatre. He quitted the Diocese in contentment, like a guest who has had his fill. How happier is his successor, the lucky Bishop Augustine Toochukwu Goodluck! He is the envy of every bishop, pastor, chaplain, finance committee and pastoral minister. Imagine walking into a situation where everything is newly built and no fund drives or building campaigns are seriously needed. A finished symphony, an exceedingly well established, a well ordered Diocese, is his legacy. This has graciously won for our Bishop Emeritus a crown that clings to his brow with so much glory. Thus this lyrical eulogy is apposite:

*Exegi monumentum aere perenius regalique  
situ pyramidum altius, quod non imber edax,  
non Aquilo impotens posit diruere aut  
innumerabilis annorum series et fuga  
temporum. non omnis moriar multaque pars  
mei vitabit Libitinam: usque ego postera  
crescam laude recens.*<sup>25</sup>

**Ochiagha** episcopate is rich and full of service of God and to humanity and a path followed with a sure direction. It was a glorious one in which **Orlu** experienced an era of prosperity, spiritual fecundity and splendor unparalleled in her history. For this reason, invoking the sublime unity among Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the Holy Trinity - and under the maternal intercession of Mary, Our Golden Mother, we say to you today from the depth of our heart: *Ad multos annos! Ad multos faustissimos annos!*

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<sup>23</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 453

<sup>24</sup> 2 Tim 1:7

<sup>25</sup> Horace, *Odes and Epodes: Odes Book III*, Ode xxx: I have finished a monument more lasting than bronze and loftier than the Pyramids' royal pile, one that no wasting rain, no furious north wind can destroy, or the countless chain of years and the ages' flight. I shall not altogether die, but a mighty part of me shall escape the death-goddess. On and on shall I grow, ever fresh with the glory of after time.