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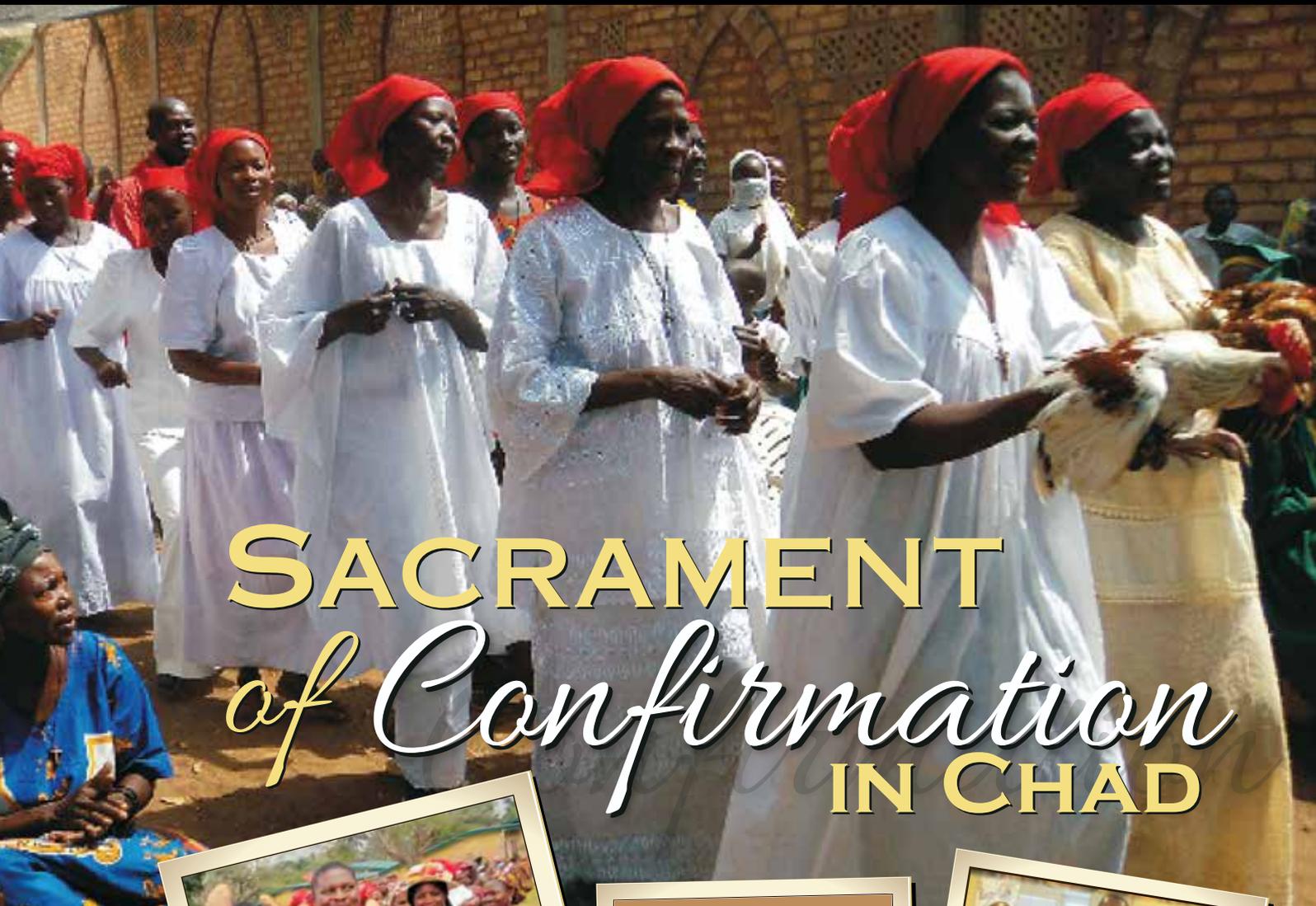


A Mission Magazine of the Missionary Society of St. Paul

Vol. 30

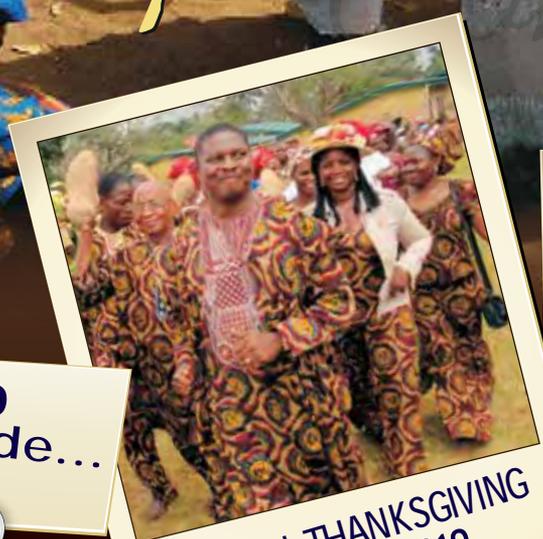
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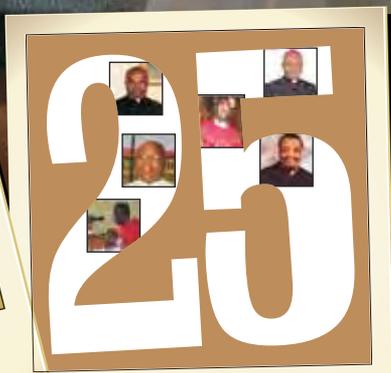


SACRAMENT *of Confirmation* IN CHAD

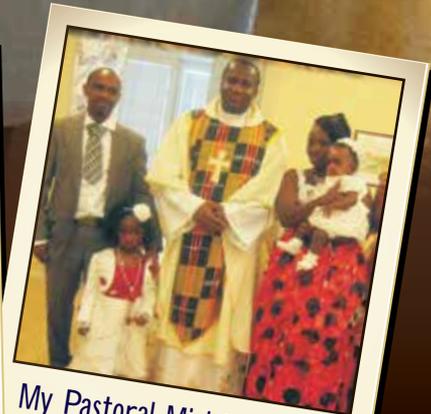
also
inside...



OPEN and THANKSGIVING
Day 2013



Silver Jubilee
Priestly Anniversary



My Pastoral Ministry among
African Catholics in Sweden

Editor

Fr Dan Ifiok Udofia, MSP

Founding Editor

Fr James Sheerin, SPS,
1980 - 1991 (d. 2009)

First MSP Editor

Fr Joseph Otoide, MSP
1991 - 1995 (d. 1995)

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Cover

Editor's Note

ONE DAY WITHIN YOUR COURT IS BETTER THAN A THOUSAND ELSEWHERE...

The truth of the gospel and the mission do not change, but neither do they remain static. St Augustine famously addressed God in his Confessions as “O Beauty ever ancient, ever new”. And as Christ leads the Church through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we can try to speak of a new evangelization and invite others to rediscover the newness of the gospel message. In the light of this New Evangelization Pope Francis said in his March 15 address: “Inspired also by the celebration of the year of Faith, all of us together, pastors and members of the faithful, will strive to respond faithfully the Church's perennial mission: to bring Jesus Christ to mankind and to lead mankind to encounter with Jesus Christ...”. This encounter is seen concretely in the mission testimony of Fr. Thomas Ameh on the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation in Tchad, and Fr Noel C Ugoagwu, MSP Easter testimony from Southern Sudan.

The Missionaries of St Paul through the years in various missions have impacted through preaching, writing and in their lifestyle the deep Christian faith with enthusiasm, great zeal, vibrant joyous liturgy, and collaboration as exemplified in the pastoral ministry of Fr Livinus Torty, MSP in Sweden, and the MSP Open/Thanksgiving day in the United Kingdom, the Bahamas, the United States of America and back in Nigeria shared in this edition.

We felicitate with the MSP ordination class of 1988 on their Silver Jubilee priestly anniversary. It seems like a dream that twenty-five years have come and gone. In this jubilant mood and looking back into the past years of faithful ministry in the missions and in the Central Administration of the Society, our elder brothers would say in contentment, “One day within your court is better than a thousand elsewhere...”(Ps.84:10). We congratulate and thank them for their immense contributions to the growth of the MSP: Most Rev Anselm Umoren, MSP (Auxiliary Bishop of Abuja Archdiocese), Very Rev. Fr. Paul Ofoha, MSP (Acting Superior General of MSP), Rev Fr. Christian Alimaji, MSP, Rev Fr. Lawrence Asuquo Ebuk, MSP, Rev Fr. Augustus Essien, MSP, Rev Fr. Augustine Ikeokwu Nduh, MSP, Rev Fr. Dominic Oguama, MSP, Rev. Fr. Brian Okon, Msgr. Anthony Okafor (now for the Diocese of Enugu, Nigeria) and Rev. Fr. Joseph Uko, (now for the Diocese of Biloxi, USA) . What a great ordination class indeed! Ad multus Annos.

There are many other interesting articles and reports which have been specially packaged for your reading delight. As you savor this edition, do not forget to renew your subscription and pick copies for your friends and colleagues. Remain blessed.



Dan Ifiok Udofia, MSP
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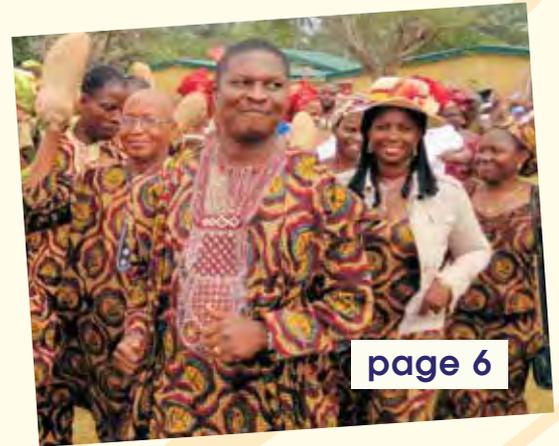
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Thank you to Fr. Michael Golden and St. Patricks Fathers



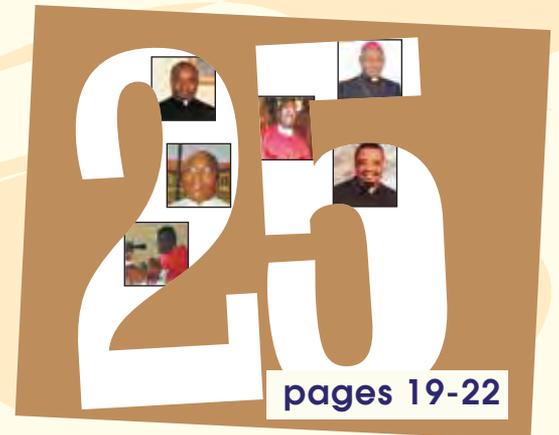
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25 SILVER JUBILEE YEARS IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD

Very Rev. Fr Paul Ngozichukwu Ofoha, MSP

“What Marvels the Lord worked for us, indeed we are glad!” (Ps. 126)

Twenty five years have passed since eleven of us knelt before the ordaining bishop on a bright and sunny day in June 1988 to be ordained as missionary priests for the Missionaries of St Paul. The day is still vivid in my memory as if it was yesterday.

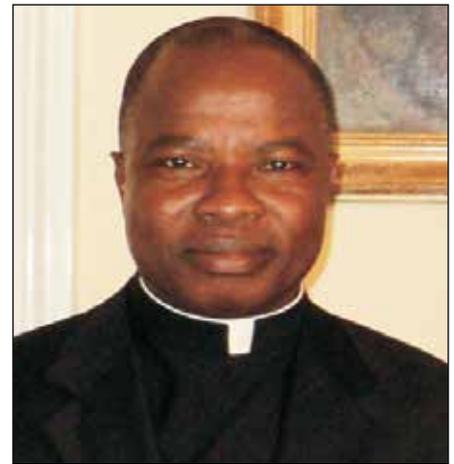
Now, I look back with a great sense of gratitude at what God has accomplished in my ministry and that of my confreres in the past 25 years. The journey has been filled with highs and lows, but through it all, God has shown his faithfulness and love. Now, I can approach the future with hope and confidence trusting in God's abiding love.

As I look back at our journey to the priesthood, this Silver Jubilee has helped me and my classmates to realize how fortunate we are to be called to service as priests. During these years, we have brought people to the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism. We have celebrated the Eucharist daily and empowered the people through the sacrament of Confirmation. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we have helped people to be reconciled to God and to one another. It has been a great blessing and part of our life as MSP reconciling people to God. That is why “We are

Ambassador for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20). We have assisted the people of God through the Sacrament of the Anointing and on some occasion given the food for the journey (Viaticum) to eternal life. Lastly, we have witnessed the sacrament of Matrimony. With one of us as a Bishop, he has also celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Orders. In truth, we preached the Word and defended it in gentleness and reverence to anyone who cared to listen (1 Peter 3:15). This is the life of the priest. It is life that endures all odds and I must be thankful to God for calling me to be his priest.

The call to be a missionary is a special vocation. It calls us to go beyond borders to preach the gospel of salvation. Sadly though, in the present circumstances, missionaries are sometimes regarded as tourists. The opportunity to travel to many places is surely a privilege. But the missionary goes with a message and that message may sometime be rejected. The missionary life has never been easy and anyone who answers the call must brace himself up for difficulties.

In a journey I made for feasibility study in 2005 on the possibilities of starting the mission in Southern Sudan, I came face to face with the



reality of being a missionary in a rugged territory. The roads were terrible and the climate unfriendly. Many times, I was forced to ask myself the question: “Why am I here?” A voice I did not know groaned inside me, “Because of Jesus Christ of Nazareth”. At that moment, there was inner peace. I dared never question my mission again. I have always drawn strength from God who continually assures us: be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

I congratulate us the Class of 1988 who have enriched the Society and the Church with our own unique contributions during these twenty five years:

Rev Fr. Christian Alimaji, MSP
Rev Fr. Lawrence Asuquo Ebuk, MSP
Rev Fr. Augustus Essien, MSP
Rev Fr. Augustine Ikeokwu Nduh, MSP
Very Rev. Fr. Paul Ofoha, MSP
Rev Fr. Dominic Oguama, MSP
Rev. Fr. Brian Okon, MSP
Most Rev Anselm Umoren, MSP.
Msgr. Anthony Okafor (Now incardinated into Enugu Diocese, Nigeria)
Rev. Fr. Joseph Uko (Now incardinated into Biloxi Diocese, USA)

Ad multus Annos

I came across the 1995 edition of your prestigious Magazine and was happy after reading it. The content was rich, informative and educative. In fact, it is an ideal Magazine for every Nigerian Catholic Christian. Thanks for your giant and distinguished efforts.

Before now, I never knew that your Magazine was in existence. Anyway, I am happy and glad to discover a Magazine of repute like yours. It is my belief that the Magazine will help strengthen the faith of Catholic youths by providing credible and reliable information that will correct the erroneous, heretical and fallacious ideals that the so called pastors and their foot soldiers are spreading.

I wish you Gods guidance and grace as you continue to work in his vain yard through your pen apostolate.

With deep sentiments of respect and regard for you,

E. M. Esomchukwu (martizo)
Martizo41uv@gmail.com
Mother of perpetual Help Girls
Juniorate
Issele-Uku, Delta State. Nigeria

Thanks so much on your article in the **Vol 29 No 5 Spring 2013** edition of the Catholic Ambassador titled: 25 years of MSP Mission in Cameroon. I want to correct some historical errors on MSP Mission in Buea Diocese. The first set of MSP in Buea Diocese were Frs. Emmanuel Isi, Maurice Iboro and Andrew Toyinbo, that was in 1985. In 1988, Fr. Michael Etokakpan and in 1989 Fr. Brian Okon. In 1990, Frs. Joseph Amuzie and Eliseus Ibeh. Fr. Charles Atuah came in 1991, Fr. Ambrose Udeze came in 1992 and Fr. Anselm Umoren came in 1995. The only person I am not so sure now is Fr. Christopher Edebianga. But I know he came before Fr. Anselm Umoren, You may check the files in Abuja.

Apart from these historical errors, your article was good. Keep it up. May God bless the works of your hands.

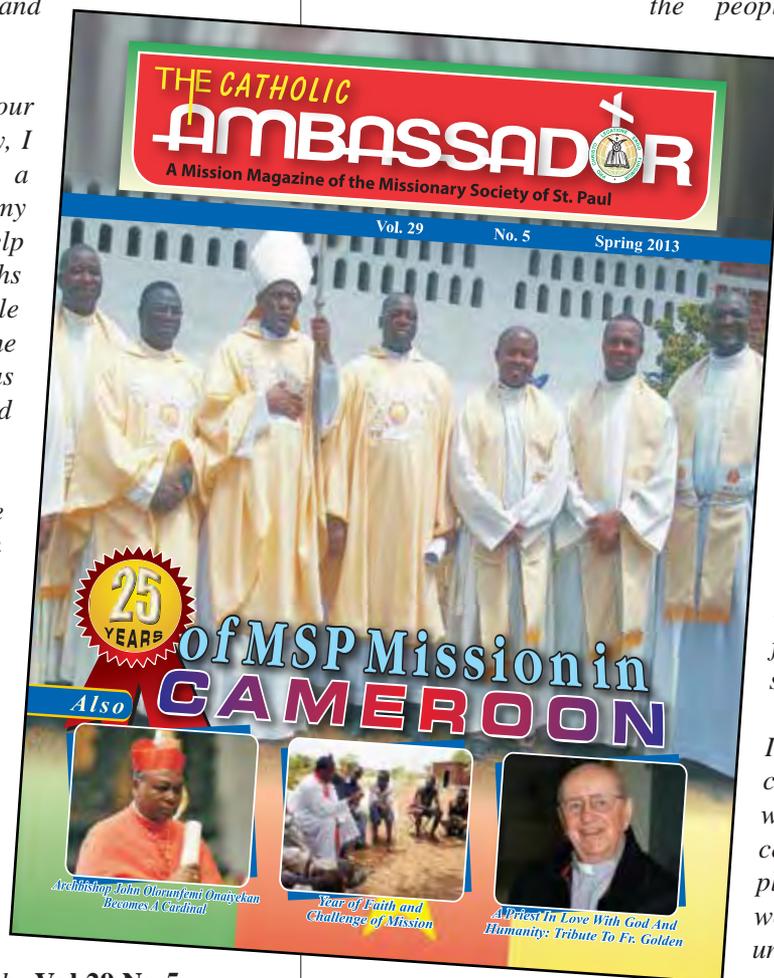
Rev. Fr. Eliseus Ogonna Ibeh, MSP
St. Benedict the Moor, Bertrandville, LA

In school, we researched various charities and societies that help others. I researched the MSP and was fascinated by the amount of change you make in people's lives. I received information about your work in Malawi helping the people, especially the orphans there. I think it is great to simultaneously teach the gospel lesson along with traditional missionary, and the MSP obviously does this phenomenally. "For Christ, we are ambassadors," is a motto used by the MSP, and I think it describes perfectly the work you do helping others physically, financially, and spiritually.

It is amazing what can be accomplished with a few dollars or cents. Life in some places where you work is almost unimaginable for me, and I pray that the others have done is making a huge difference. Greatness deserves to be recognized, and what the MSP does is truly great! Although I am unable to donate at this time, I will keep the MSP and the amazing people associated with them in my prayers. God bless!

Andy Padgett
Central Wisconsin, USA

Unsolicited articles, reports, and photographs are welcome, but not returnable. Comments about materials published in the magazine are also welcome. Letters to the Editor should be brief. They may be edited for clarity and space. All comments and suggestions must always be made in WRITING.



OPEN and THANKSGIVING Day 2013

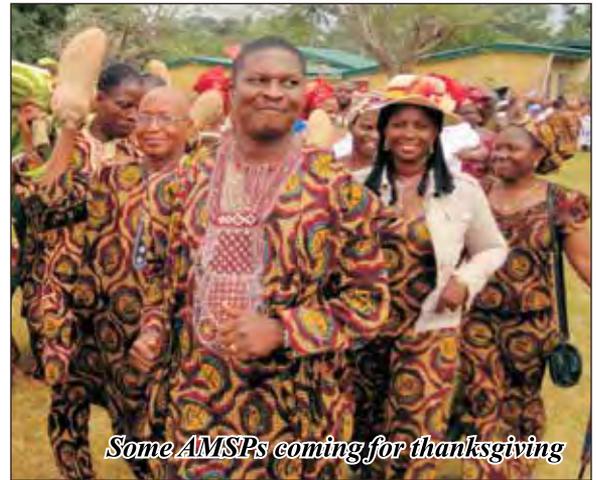
The Missionary Society of St Paul held its annual Open and Thanksgiving Day celebration on Sunday, January 27, 2013. The colorful occasion which took place at the Missionary of St Paul Formation House, Iperu-Remo, Ogun State, brought together our Associate Missionaries of St Paul (AMSP), Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary society, benefactors/benefactresses, sponsors, friends and well-wishers of the Missionary Society of St Paul from different parts of the country. The day is set aside at the beginning of every year to thank God for His favors and blessings and praying for the success of the missionary Endeavour of the MSP. It is customary that every year a particular project is projected for sponsorship and launching. This year's celebration was very unique, first, because the occasion came up during the Year of Faith. A year dedicated to the renewal and deepening of Christian faith, through new evangelization and witnessing by the clergy and lay faithful. Secondly, because this faith finds its active expression in the participation and generosity of Christians to build the kingdom of God on earth as the funds to be generated will be used in building the MSP Retreat/Conference Centre and St Paul's College.

The Eucharistic celebration started at about 10am presided over by Most Revd Dr Camillus A. Etokudoh, Bishop of Port Harcourt diocese. Also in attendance was the Chief Host, Most Revd Dr Albert Fasina, Bishop of Ijebu Ode diocese, the Acting Superior General, Very Revd Fr Paul Ofoha, MSP and his Councillors Very Revd Frs. Anthony Ekanem, MSP and Sam Igbafe, MSP, and many other priests and religious. The whole arena was colorful as people of God were gracefully dressed in their different uniforms and attire according to their respective pious societies and organizations (AMSP, Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Knights of St Mulumba etc.).

Being his first time in the MSP Formation House, Iperu Remo, since after his predecessor Bishop Alexius Makozi, Bishop Emeritus of Port Harcourt visited in January 30, 2000, Most Revd Dr Camillus Etokudo during his inspiring homily titled, "We are Ambassadors for Christ" told the people that he is so touched and happy for the MSP, for organizing an occasion like this. An occasion that brings together the AMSPs, Benefactors/Benefactresses, sponsors and friends to donate and collaborate as "Ambassadors for Christ" to build this missionary endeavor. He went ahead to highlight the humble beginning of the MSP and the heroic support of Bishop Anthony Sanusi, (Bishop Emeritus of Ijebu Ode diocese of blessed memory) and the St Patrick's Fathers who were involve in the formation of candidates. These sacrifices are bearing great fruits in the MSP as they now have three serving Bishops in Nigeria.

In line with the Year of Faith, he admonished the priests to be true ambassadors of Christ by teaching the Christian faith and catechizing the faithful on the right doctrine. Figuratively, the bishop said, "In our Christian journey, the bishop is like the Bus driver. While the priests are the conductors and the people of God are the passengers. The bishop cannot do it all alone. It is rightfully the priests who determine through their preaching, teaching catechizing and witnessing the people who will embrace the Christian faith. Unfortunately, many priests have become more Pentecostal than Catholic. Shouting and singing during liturgy without spending time to teach and catechize the people in order to deepen their faith"

By Fr. Dan Ifiok Udofia



Some AMSPs coming for thanksgiving

The bishop went ahead to say, "The Nigerian church is so proud of you. The quality of your formation is unique and different. That is why You MSPs should be proud of yourselves and remain open and docile to be called to greater responsibilities in the church". He encouraged all present to donate generously to support the noble projects of the MSP, and pray that God will continue to reward, protect and bless their entire endeavor. After the Post-Communion Prayer, a special time for "Sowing a seed of blessing" was conducted by Frs. Martin Eze, MSP and Sam Igbafe, MSP. This was the first of its kind. Special prayers and blessings filled the arena as the people of God came out to sow their seed of blessing for the year. During the mass, thanksgiving processions escorted with gifts items from different AMSP Zones in the country, Sacred Heart Society, Catholic Corpers, families and friends were brought to the altar for blessings as the wonderful melodies from the seminarians made the liturgy solemn.

The bishop made a generous donation to the society and a cow to the seminarians. Funds were raised through open donations and bazaar sales. Money realized will be used in building the MSP Retreat/Conference Centre and St Paul's College in Gwagwalada, Abuja and for the welfare of missionaries.

THE SACRAMENT

By Fr. Mark Thomas Ameh, MSP

of Confirmation

AT ST FRANCIS PARISH KOUUMRA TOWN

Sunday the 18th of November 2012 shall be a day to remember for the MSP priests and the parishioners of St Francis Xavier parish, Koumra town, in the diocese of Sarh, southern Chad. The day witnessed the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation in the parish. The colorful and well inculturated Holy Mass was presided over by Most Revd Dr Edmond Goetbe Djitangar, bishop of the diocese of Sarh. The concelebrants were Frs. Mark Thomas Ameh MSP, Leonard Okoli MSP, and Pius Asuquo Duke, MSP.

In his homily which he gave in the local language Sara and later in French, the bishop began by thanking the priests of The Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria for accepting to come over to the diocese of Sarh to share their experience of the Christian faith. He said that this shows that the Church is indeed a family which transcends nation, race, and tribe. He then drew the attention of all present to the central message of the liturgy of the day namely, the end of time. He called on all Christians not to be disturbed or worried about the end of time but rather spend each moment living-out the values of the Christian faith received, in prayer, and in communion with God and with one another. He also called on



The bishop and priests present lay hands on the candidates.

the sixty-three (63) candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation to be good witnesses of the good news of the risen Jesus in the Christian community and in the society at large.

In conclusion he prayed that during this Year of Faith, all may strive to live out the Christian faith

we have received in works of charity and prayer.



Some of the candidates bringing in gifts in thanksgiving.

Pastoral Ministry Among African Catholics in Sweden

By Rev. Fr. Livinus Torty MSP

The MSP mission in the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm, Sweden started in the year 2000 with the arrival of Fr. Damian Eze and Fr. Chikezie Onuoha. Besides its pastoral work in parishes in Sweden, the MSP mission includes the pastoral care of African Catholics. I arrived in January 2006 to join the brothers in the MSP Sweden Mission and was assigned to work as Chaplain for African Catholics. A year after my arrival, the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (a Nigerian congregation) were invited by the Bishop

of Stockholm diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr Anders Arborelius OCD, to collaborate with the MSP in the pastoral care of African Catholics in the diocese.

African Catholics in Sweden consist of mainly English and French speaking Catholics from over twenty sub-Saharan African countries. Like other African immigrants in Sweden, African Catholics face a number of challenges such as the cold climatic conditions and the struggle to eke out a living. Besides, they are confronted daily with the deeply ingrained secularist outlook in the Swedish society in which less emphasis is accorded to God, and matters of

religion are often treated with indifference. The local context of the Catholic Church in Sweden also presents certain difficulties for African Catholics. The Church accounts for about two

certain instances some Africans leave for other churches while others experience diminishing enthusiasm in religion. Few individuals stop going to church and begin to question the existence of God and the relevance of religion. But the majority of African Catholics in Sweden hold fast to their Catholic faith.

In our pastoral ministry, we seek to promote both a Catholic and an African identity by encouraging African Catholics to participate actively in their parishes in Sweden, and by providing them the

possibility and space to express and practice their faith in a manner that reflects their African Christian heritage. A fundamental principle that guides our pastoral work among African Catholics is the emphasis given to pastoral innovation and creativity. This involves a continual analysis of the pastoral needs of African Catholics in Sweden, a constant review of our own pastoral approaches and a willingness to implement new strategies with a view to enhancing greater pastoral efficiency.

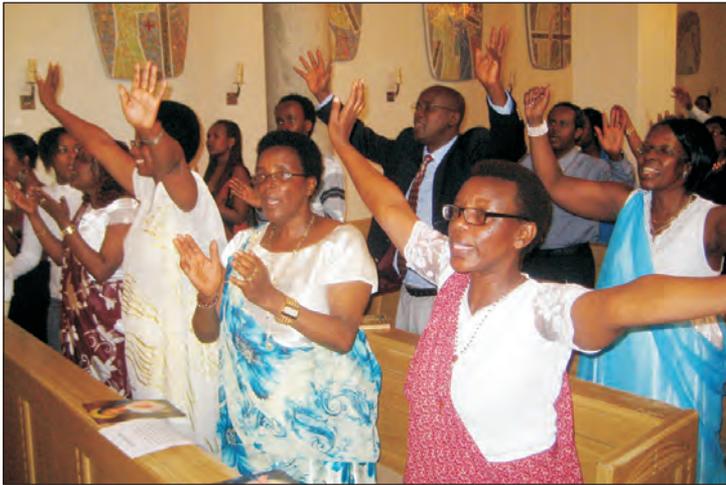
We employ both traditional and non-traditional pastoral strategies. The traditional pastoral approaches include



An African Catholic Family in Sweden with Fr. Torty.

percent of Sweden's nine million inhabitants and the Catholic diocese of Stockholm is the only diocese in the country. There are parishes in the major cities but it is common to find towns in Sweden without any Catholic Church. In some towns, the Sunday Mass is celebrated once or twice monthly, sometimes in a rented Protestant Church.

Many African Catholics experience culture shock as a result of the widespread secularist attitude in Sweden and the local realities of the Catholic Church in the country. It is an experience that tests not only their resolve and character, but also their Christian faith. In



African Catholics in Sweden with lifted hands of prayer and praise.

the Holy Mass, choir practice, bible sharing, pastoral counseling, prayer fellowship, retreats, family visits, and direct evangelization. The non-traditional approaches comprise of innovative and contextual pastoral strategies like the monthly birthday celebrations where the priest prays for all those who are celebrating their birthday and each one is presented with a souvenir. In our prayer partnership program everyone is assigned a prayer partner that one is obliged to pray for daily. Every Monday night we recite the Rosary (or the Stations of the Cross during Lent) and night prayers via telephone conference. We send inspirational Bible verses via SMS to hundreds of African Catholics in Sweden every Wednesday evening. Generally, we maintain regular contact with African Catholics through visits, telephone calls, text messaging and e-mail.

Our major feasts and ceremonies include the Conversion of St. Paul (fourth week of January) and the Ugandan Martyrs (first week of June) in Stockholm, monthly masses in different cities and towns, wedding masses,

cuisine. These occasions also serve as a forum for African Catholics in Sweden to socialize, to establish social networks and lasting friendships that cut across national boundaries, and to share vital information regarding available accommodation and job opportunities in the land.

Pastoral work among African Catholics from different countries, ethnic groups and languages carries with it possibilities for learning as well as conflict. Conflicts can arise not only in those situations in which ethnic prejudice and national stereotypes rear its ugly head but also when African Catholics assume that local church traditions in their home countries (such as the manner in which offertory is collected or when to seat, stand or kneel during mass) do have a universal appeal. Thus, in the course of our pastoral work we strive relentlessly to acquire and to promote a multicultural

memorial masses, infant baptism, Francophone annual retreat and the summer picnic. These events are lively and colorful, with song and dance, and often garnished with a sumptuous array of African

outlook, cultural sensitivity and sensibility, knowledge of other people's language, and awareness of the rich diversity in Catholic traditions and practices in different African countries.

Our African Catholic brothers and sisters constantly express their gratitude to God for our presence among them. Through our pastoral ministry, we share in their joys and sorrows, and help them grow in their faith and in their love of God.

Although pastoral ministry among African Catholics is challenging, often involving regular and long travels across the length and breadth of Sweden, in often harsh weather conditions, I remain grateful to God for the opportunity to serve among African Catholics. My joy knows no bounds when African Catholics who have left the Church return or when African Catholics from rival ethnic groups look beyond their historic feuds back home in Africa and accept one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Fr. Livinus Terty MSP has been the chaplain for African Catholics in Sweden since 2006. He is also the parish priest of St. Olof's Catholic Church, Sundsvall, Sweden.



Fr. Terty with Parishoners.

A Foundation built in Faith: *Bahamas Mission Celebrates the Feast of St. Paul*

By Fr. Paschal Ukpeh, MSP
Local Superior, Bahamas Mission

Faith is the very sum and substance of life, be it physical or spiritual and without faith human beings can't achieve anything. Religious faith binds us together irrespective of tribe, tongue or nation. Though we may stay apart physically, we are always together by faith.

In his pre-conversion life, Saul was a relentless persecutor. In the same vein the post conversion Saul now Paul became an indefatigable teacher. In his youthful and ministry days he set for himself a goal which is only achievable ultimately by faith. And that faith was the foundation of every spiritual and physical achievement that builds, sustains and continue to raise the infantile Christian churches. It is evident that this faith was not an imposition, burden, even obligation but it came from a deep conviction in his heart. This quality of faith is invaluable. However, without such faith, Paul's motivation, incentive, inspiration and drive for the spiritual growth of the Christian communities could have been completely lost.

It is the same faith that brought three young missionary priests of the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria to the shores of the

Bahama land in the wake of January 30, 2010. Travelling about 15 hours in the air to spread the same faith shows that faith remains the foundation stone of any project that is undertaken with a will to complete. History shows that, it was only by faith that Alexander the Great conquered the then known world of his time. His faith was the fuel that sustained his spirit. He never lost faith in his abilities and lived the life of a great warrior till death. If faith can encourage people so much to undertake ventures that will only last for a time, how much more faith would persuade us to run for a crown that will last for eternity?

In his homily at the celebration of the Feast of St. Paul in the Bahamas, Fr. Jude Moukwe, MSP reminded the faithful that our Christian faith calls us to be missionaries. "As we know, "the Church by its very nature is called to be missionary."(Ad Gentes, 1). Our encounter with Jesus Christ and our reception of his good news urge us and challenge us to share it with others. Jesus has given us the mandate, "Go to the whole world and proclaim the good news." (Mk16:15) What you have received, give to others. We know that some share in the work of mission by



Fr Paschal Ukpeh flanked by Frs Jude Muokwe & Henry Osuagwu with friends of MSP during St. Paul's Feast Day

praying for and giving to the mission, others by going to the missions." Fr. Jude expressed appreciation to the faithful while encouraging them to always pray for their priests. "Dear friends, we thank God for this wonderful opportunity he has given us to share in the work of missions

here in the Bahamas. You see, we came here because we are sent as ambassadors for Christ. We have made the sacrifice to share in the work of mission by going. We hope that you will share in the work of mission by supporting us through your prayers and by accepting the good news of Jesus Christ which we have come to proclaim. It is not our own message, but that of Jesus Christ which St Paul proclaimed so ardently with faith. In one of his letters, St Paul says, "Woe to me, if I do not proclaim the good news." In this Year of Faith, we are called to deepen and renew our faith so that we may share more fully in the mission of Christ and in the work of the new evangelization because without faith, there will be no evangelization. Faith is a total confidence in the power of God. May we rely on Jesus who says, "Without me you can do nothing."

Today our generation witnesses a sharp decline in care energies. The selfless commitment is cold. This is probably due to the fact that faith, which is that driving force that enlightens the candle of hope by giving strength to fight against all odds is lacking. The virtue of faith is an inner energy that fortifies us to face failures in life without losing heart. Faith is the recipe that surmounts any obstacle that comes our way in life. Thus the scriptures affirm that a little amount of faith even the size of a mustard seed is able to move mountains and build cities. It is of utmost importance that, we are gathered once again to renew that unique faith as we celebrate the feast of St. Paul the apostle our patron saint. Ups and downs are inevitable experiences in life, but with sustaining and wonderful strength from faith, we are inspired to keep the spirit alive. The celebration was drawn to a close with light refreshment. The faithful thanked God for the Missionary society of St. Paul's presence in the Bahamas.

The Inauguration

of the MSP MISSION *in Italy*

By Fr Ben Okon, MSP



arrived on June 2010. After his

nomination as the auxiliary bishop of Abuja Archdiocese, Most Rev Umoren, MSP made a brief visit to the diocese and on 20 December 2011, he requested the permission of the Bishop to erect the MSP mission in Italy with its headquarter in the diocese of Padua. On the 11 January 2012, the Bishop granted this permission and on the 13 February 2012, the Acting Superior, Very Rev Fr Paul Ofoha, MSP erected the MSP mission in Italy with a decree. With this decree the mission was founded but it still needed statute and the bull of erection which is to be issued by the local ordinary.

This is normally done in a service of inauguration. This felt need was what inspired the inauguration ceremony that took place on the 25th April 2013, in Padua.

It was a ceremony of a pontifical high mass presided over by the Bishop of Padua, assisted by the MSP Acting Superior General, Very Rev Fr Paul Ofoha and Mons Padovan, the Episcopal vicar for consecrated life. Also present in the occasion were: Fr Benjamin Okon, MSP (local superior); Fr Jerome Eruoghororere, MSP (mission bursar); Fr Valentine Iheanacho, MSP (student); Fr Daniel Ihunnia, MSP (student); Fr Patsilver Okah, MSP and other friends from within the diocese. During the ceremony, the bull of the erection of the mission with its headquarter in PARROCCHIA SAN CLEMENTE, GRANZE DI CAMIN, PADUA was read out by the parish priest, Don Ezio SINIGAGLIA. The ceremony ended with light refreshment after the mass.

MSP pastoral involvement

in Italy that began six years ago was finally inaugurated on the 25th April 2013. Why did it take such a long duration for it to be inaugurated? It was basically in order to meet up with some official logistics between the Society of St Paul and the diocese of Padua, which was the first point of contact between the MSP and the Italian Church.

The MSP missionary involvement with the diocese of Padua has the status of chaplaincy. This is destined to provide pastoral care for the Anglophone African Catholic in the diocese of Padua and its surrounding. It is not a parish but it functions like a parish in structure and pastoral activities. The activities of this chaplaincy are carried out in a parish church using all its structures and facilities. The host parish is, PARROCCHIA SAN PIO X (St Pius X), as stated above.

The initial contact with diocese of Padua was through the instrumentality of FR Benjamin Okon, MSP. In December 2007, with the permission of the then Superior General, Most Rev Dr Hyacinth Egbebo, the local ordinary of the diocese of Padua, Mons ANTONIO MATTIAZZO, requested the assistance of Fr Okon in providing pastoral care for the Anglophone immigrants. Being very impressed with the work of Fr Okon, he decided to invite the MSP, on the 22 July 2008, to collaborate with the diocese in providing pastoral care for the Anglophone African immigrants. This invitation was accepted by the then Superior General, Most Rev Dr Anselm Umoren, MSP on the 3 September 2008. This acceptance was followed by a pastoral visit of the Superior to Padua, in Dec 2008, where he met with the Bishop and the community and the terms of the collaborations were spelt out in a contract signed on the 24 March 2010. Consequent upon this contract, Rev Fr Patsilver Okah, MSP was sent to join Fr Okon and he

Ambassadors Per...



The Director of Promotions in Nigeria, Rev. Fr. Bernard Oleru, MSP blesses the less privileged of Modupe Cole, Surulere, Lagos State during the AMSP Charity Walk 2013 in Lagos

AMSP presents gifts to Ilaje Community, Lagos State during the AMSP Charity Walk 2013 in Lagos.



MSP priests dancing during the St. Paul's Day in United Kingdom



SAADU people



Seminarians singing at the Open Day Mass in Iperu-Remo, Ogun State



Cross section of participants at Walk-4 the-Mission 2013, held in Houston, Texas.



Some MSP priests at the Walk-4-the Mission 2013 event in Houston, Texas



Thanksgiving procession: AMSP Abuja Zone at the Open Day 2013 in Iperu-Remo, Ogun State



MSP priests cutting the cake to mark the Feast of St. Paul in the Bahamas

Easter Testimony in Southern Sudan **AYARAN KRISTO:IBUHU TO YE** Fr. Noel C. Abuna Ugoagwu, MSP **(FROM TOPOSA TO LOTUKO LAND, CHRIST IS RISEN)**



Hosana to the Son of David.

Crucify Him ! Crucify Him !! Crucify Him !!!

Our Journey so far

First, it was a collaborative mission in Toposa land with St. Patrick’s Missionary Society (SPS) and later it became “mission on charity” in the words of Very Rev. Fr. Paul Ofoha, MSP among the Lotuko people of Gunyoro, Okulu and Kurmush areas of Imurok, Torit Diocese, Southern Sudan. About 15 months without a defined pastoral work, the MSPs opted to work like ‘doctors’ without border since they too are doctors of souls.

The ravages of war

War might have ended in Southern Sudan but it is yet to stop. Its effects linger on and still hunt the survivors. Poverty and underdevelopment in an unexaggerated manner ply the streets ranging from lack of potable water supply, shelter, food, clothing, health facility to abundance of illiteracy, hunger and diseases. Though the needs of the Lotukos might seem endless they are neither faithless nor hopeless. They are in need of physical food as well as spiritual banquet.

Always in solidarity with the agonizing Christ

The saying in Nigeria that “a hungry man does not sing Alleluia” might be untrue here as a good number of Lotukos show sufficient zeal and commitment to the re-evangelization embarked upon by the MSP. It would be erroneous for instance,

to think that as people seen several times with ashes and mud all over their bodies, the Ash Wednesday rite of reception of ashes on foreheads could be taken for granted. Those who missed out on that day kept requesting that Abuna or Fadiri (Father) should mark them with blessed ashes even three weeks later. What a deep expression of faith!

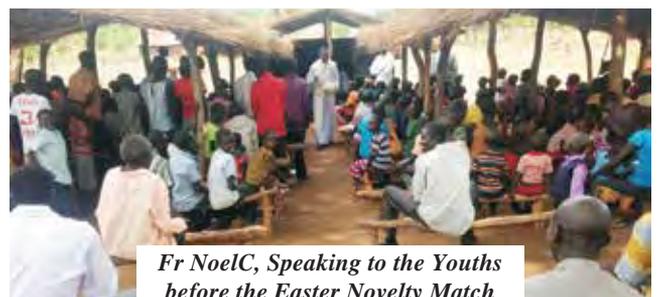
The entire Lenten season wore a sorrowful mood as unfolding events would show. The weekly bees and snake attacks during prayer hours and the discovery of several land mines close to our Mass center said it all. With bee stings and injuries from land mines blasts, we found ourselves in solidarity with the agonizing Jesus. The Palm Sunday procession and the Good Friday passion drama acted in Lotuko could not have escaped unnoticed as it took place round the community and drew the attention of many who actively participated. The Holy Thursday evening Mass witnessed a heavy downpour immediately after the rite of washing of feet. It seemed like the Peter in us requested for a full bath and we were obliged with everybody drenched. The latter spurred us into raising fund amongst ourselves to

erect a shelter for worship using bamboos and grasses.

Our Easter Joy on the football pitch

The high point of the Easter activities was the baptism of 120 young people on Saturday night. The event was concluded with a football match between the youths of Gunyoro (Bishop Ako football team) and Okulu/Kurmush (Fr. Akemu, MSP Football team). In a place where cattle raiding and killing is common amongst the youths, the football match really served its purpose of fostering unity among the youths. To the Lotuko people of Imurok, it was indeed the first in several decades and we happily say “Ibuhu to ye, Hobu, Hollum, Yesu, Humo Bebe” (Indeed He rose from the dead, my king, My Lord Jesus, thank you very much).

Fr. Noel C. Abuna Ugoagwu, MSP is one of our young missionaries working in the diocese of Torit, Southern Sudan.



Fr NoelC, Speaking to the Youths before the Easter Novelty Match

BRANDING MSP

Lesson from St. Paul's Day in UK

By Fr. Francis Eyo, MSP
working in Wales, UK

The celebration of the Conversion of St. Paul is an annual event for the Missionaries of St. Paul (MSP) and their Associate members in different parts of the world. In the United Kingdom the feast, which is popularly known as 'MSP Day' remains one of the major events that bring together all the MSP brothers, parishioners and friends of MSP. The 2013 celebration was very colorful and successful; it attracted numerous friends and supporters across England and Wales. There was a great improvement in the celebration, thanks to the newly established UK Promotion Team and the collaborative efforts of all the brothers and friends who participated. The four main components that added color to the celebration and made the day successful were:

1. Friendly atmosphere that encouraged healthy interaction and relaxation.
2. A Spirit-filled atmosphere of prayer and the celebration of the Holy Mass.
3. Availability of assorted food, drink, dessert and with entertainment for all.
4. Promotion & Appeals to MSP friends and supporters who "Go to Mission by Giving".

The Celebration took place in St. Georges Cathedral, London; it was presided over by Archbishop Peter Smith of the diocese of Southwark, a great friend of MSP. In his homily, he praised MSP priests for the great work they are doing in the UK, and commended the sound relationship and mutual trust existing between the Missionaries of St. Paul and the Bishops of England and Wales. The Bishop presented to each MSP priest a crucifix as a sign of commitment to Mission in the UK. Many people remarked that the huge turnout of people during the celebration was a manifestation of the deep sense of appreciation and respect that MSP priests have won for themselves in the last 13 years. Indeed, the celebration added more value to the reputation of the Missionary Society of St. Paul, and it was seen as the most effective way of consolidating MSP's presence in the UK.

It means that MSP has come to stay in Great Britain and there is need for the Society to constantly showcase itself as unique, special and unbeatable in quality of personnel and services rendered to God and the people. Apparently, people's expectations are high for this young missionary organization. Hence, MSP must



Priests waiting for Mass on MSP day in UK

continue to deliver in order to maintain its high reputation and meet the expectations of its numerous friends and supporters. There is need for constant branding of the Society. In the words of Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic (January 1, 2013, Harvard Business Review), "being a brand means showcasing that which makes you special, in a way that is distinctive (recognizable), predictable (consistent), and meaningful (it allows others to understand what you do and why)..." In other words, being a brand means having a valuable reputation, and branding increases and sustains the reputation of an organization, product and service through consistent and intensive promotion, marketing and support. The celebration of the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul this year was characterized by high level of participation and a broad sense of collective responsibility. The UK Mission has been enriched by so many good friends, supporters and well-wishers including many Bishops, Clergy, Religious and Laity in England and Wales. For me, it is a confirmation of the growing spirit of solidarity, collaboration, partnership and interrelation of the Missionaries

of St. Paul and the Church in England and Wales. That means a lot to us, who like St. Paul, are called to be Ambassadors for Christ in foreign countries.

We are living in a new world, where Missionaries of St. Paul need to adopt the striving spirit of St. Paul

and his drive for performance and achievement of goals: "I keep striving to win the prize which Christ Jesus has already won me for himself ... I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize which is God's call through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12 & 14). Truly, our world today is more complex, diverse, open, secular and risky. Markets, networks, intensive communication and interconnection form its main features.

In this global order, there is little or no room for complacency and poor performance. The Missionaries of St. Paul need to remain strong in their conviction to proclaim the good news by words and deeds, while upholding the values of honesty, integrity, hard-work, faith, hope, reconciliation and peace, respect for people and cultural/religious diversities. To further accelerate our progress in this direction, the Society should lean strongly towards entrepreneurship, excellent leadership and performance management. Also, the Members and Associate members must continue to promote in concrete terms the principles of equity, justice, transparency, accountability, flexible partnership, consensus building, broad institutional participation and effective decentralization of authority and functions. There can be no better path to success than healthy coexistence and co-ownership of project or vision that has global impact. In the world of markets and networks, it is believed that a good collective reputation is more valuable than a stand-alone reputation. We must believe in our collective ability to meet the demands of today's global order. It is good to always remember that someday, "those having torches will pass them on to others" (Greek proverb).

OPEN DAY in AMERICA

By Fr. Charles Atuah, MSP

S ometime last year when I was meeting with the Associate Members of the Missionaries of St. Paul (AMSP) of my Parish, Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish, Port Arthur, Texas, I shared with them the story of the “OPEN DAY” in Iperu-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. Mrs. Brenda Broussard really took it to heart. She went home, slept over it and woke with an inspiration. At our subsequent meeting she suggested that we could also celebrate some form of Open Day in our parish. The idea appealed to the members and they decided that since we could not celebrate Open Day in a big way as they do it in Nigeria, we could still organize a simple but good celebration to remind people that the Missionaries of St. Paul working in our country need our support.

They approved the project and began to work on it. They simply called it “FEAST OF THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL AND THE MINISTRY OF THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. PAUL IN THE CHURCH.” They hoped this could inspire more people to become Associates of

St. Paul especially in the parishes where they do not exist. Enthusiasm about the celebration heightened and plans were quickly advanced.

MSP priests serving in the Diocese of Beaumont were invited to come with their parishioners. Parishes in the Southern Vicariate of the diocese were also invited. Invitations were honorably extended to the parishes where MSP

priests serve in the Arch-Diocese of Galveston-Houston, Texas. It was scheduled at 4:00 pm on Sunday January 27, 2013. Both the hosts and the invitees gathered with excitement and wonder since no one knew how it was going to turn out. It was the first time trial. The Mass celebrated was the Conversion of St. Paul and it was outside of our usual Weekend Mass Schedule therefore those who attended really had the Missionary Society of St. Paul at heart.

The Chief Celebrant was Local Ordinary of Beaumont diocese, Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory. He comically began his homily by saying, “When I went to Abuja, Nigeria, in 2009 when I ordained their 12 new priests, for the first time I

Society of St. Paul. The bishop also highlighted the services of the Missionaries of St. Paul and the noble collaborative efforts of the Associate Missionaries of St. Paul and the Missionaries of St. Paul all over the world. He encouraged more people to join the AMSP.

More than 150 people attended the occasion. The priests in attendance were: Frs. Desmond Ohankwere, MSP, (Regional Superior), Anselm Eke, MSP, Edmund Nnadozie, MSP, and Charles Atuah, MSP. Associate Missionaries of St. Paul (AMSP) came from St. Anne De Beaupre Church, Houston; St. Francis of Assisi, Houston and the hosting parish,

Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish, Port Arthur. Many prospective AMSPs also came from St. Therese Church, Orange and Sacred Heart Church, Raywood.

The occasion ended in our Parish Hall with a slideshow of the work of our Missionaries in South Sudan

(prepared by then Fr. Anselm Umoren, MSP, now the Auxiliary Bishop of Abuja Archdiocese, Nigeria); Skit of the Conversion of St. Paul by Virginia Miller and the awarding of Plaques to the MSP priests by the Associates. The celebration turned out to be grand and very successful. Everyone who attended the event enjoyed every moment of it. The “Open Day” in America was both spirit-filled and entertaining.



Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., D.D., with MSP priests and AMSP on MSP Open Day in America 2013

saw people in this unique uniform and I was told they were Associate Missionaries of St. Paul. So when I saw all these people sitting here in the same uniform again I began to wonder whether I am back in Abuja.” There was a prolonged [outburst] of laughter from the congregation. Bishop Guillory gave a very inspiring homily. He spoke on St. Paul’s conversion, his missionary work, and as the Patron Saint of the Missionary

Good Fridays

Fr. Anietie Akama Ukanide, MSP

Christians all over the world designate one day in a year as Good Friday to mark the passion and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. For me, all Fridays are good as far as it concerns this year. This is the reason: I am serving my Sabbatical year in St Joseph Church, Tuskegee in Alabama. On Fridays I celebrate Holy Mass for the children of St. Joseph school. Before the beginning of the Mass at 8.00 a.m., I sit at the back pew and watch the children as they come in.

The principal, Ms. Marjorie Reese leads the kindergarten class. They start from the holy water font by signing themselves. Some touch their heads and stomachs while others touch their noses and shoulders. As they approach the sanctuary some genuflect to the altar while others genuflect to the lectern or tabernacle.

Since each class takes turn to lead in the liturgy, I enjoy mostly the K through 2nd grade kids. The commentator screams and everyone is on their feet. The entrance hymn is intoned, the children sing on top of their voices. The parents and grandparents are there to give their support. It is also a day when someone may cry because a member of the family has not shown up to watch the performance.



St. Joseph's School children and Principal Reese with Sr. Felicia Chibundu

Each class looks forward to when they will lead in the liturgy. From January 27 to February 2, 2013, the Archdiocese of Mobile celebrated Catholic School Week. One day of the week was for Letter Writing (the old fashioned way courtesy of Fr. Eddy Obi, MSP). Many of the letters referred to what happened at the Masses. The following, written by a twelve year old, is an example.

Dear Fr. Akama,
I would like to thank you for everything that you have done for our school and parish community. I know that you did not have to dedicate your life to the needs of others. Also I

understand that you could have given your services to another school or church. This is why I am writing this letter to show my appreciation to you. Although you might have been offered many different opportunities, you chose to give your life to God and your time and energy to the care of God's children. Once again I would like to thank you for supporting our school's functions and for attending our Friday morning Masses.
Yours sincerely,
Bianca Alcena
6ThGrade.

There was a time when the school did not have Masses on Friday mornings. That was when the Church did not have a priest. The Missionary Society of St. Paul came to their aid in 2004. Yes, we are ambassadors for Christ.



School children displaying their talent on stage.



Daily Prayer for MSP

Heavenly Father, you created us and you care for us: We thank you for taking the Missionary Society of St. Paul into your care. We ask you to continue to watch over us. Fill us with your love, and help us to build a family where each member irrespective of tribe, feels at home with other members and is encouraged to give his best in the missionary work.

Lord Jesus, you died for us and you call us to be your witnesses to the ends of the earth: we thank you for enabling us to participate in this your saving work among people of every race. Fill us with zeal and a sense of commitment like St. Paul, to bear witness to your love and reconciliation. Help us with a lifestyle that will make us proclaim your Word with power and conviction. Send us your grace to make good whatever is

lacking in us as individuals and as a Society.

O Holy Spirit, you enlightened the hearts of the apostles, we beseech you now to continue to enlighten us and consecrate us in the truth. May each of us realize how invaluable our contributions can be, and thus invest our energies towards the success of our missionary endeavours. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady Queen of Apostles, pray for us.
St. Paul our Patron, pray for us.

May the souls of our departed MSP brothers, AMSP brothers and sisters, and the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Amen.
(To be said daily by all MSP and AMSP)

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My Life: 25 Years as a Catholic Priest and a Missionary

By Very Rev. Fr. Paul Ngozichukwu Saviour Ofoha, MSP

I was born on July 15, 1959, in Nnerim, Umundugba, Isu Local Government Area, Imo State, Nigeria, to the family of Mr. Felix Osuchukwu Ofoha and Agnes Adamma Ofoha, (Nee Akamere). I am the fourth child in the family of six. My becoming a priest was not just an overnight decision. It was a lifelong journey of faith nurtured by varied influences. The first and perhaps the greatest of those influences were my parents.

My father's utmost desire was that all his children went to school. So much so that even in the precariousness of the Nigerian Civil War of 1966-1970, I successfully completed my primary education. I obtained my First School Leaving Certificate in 1971 from SS Peter and Paul Primary School (now Town School), Nnerim, Umundugba. From there I was sent to an older cousin of mine in Onitsha where I had hoped to learn the rudiments of buying and selling in preparation for a successful career in business. But my father insisted that I have a secondary education. After completing secondary school in 1978, I migrated to Lagos. I was employed as clerical assistant with the Nigerian Navy at Apapa and later promoted to the position of a clerical officer.

While in Lagos, I joined different pious associations in the parish. I volunteered and taught catechism. My regular attendance at Mass and active participation in Church activities gradually reawakened in me my childhood dream of becoming a priest. On Vocation Sunday I heard a religious sister speak about vocations and the need for generous young men and women to respond to God's call.

That led me to apply and was admitted into the newly established National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul, Iperu

Remo, Ogun State. I began my spiritual formation on November 20, 1980. In October 1981 I began my study of philosophy. On June 18, 1988 after completing my Theological studies I was ordained a priest by Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, then Bishop of Abuja, Nigeria.

My assignments since ordination have been wide and varied. In all this I give glory to God. After an initial pastoral year in Abakaliki diocese, Nigeria I was assigned to the USA mission where I served for 12 years before I was called upon to serve my society as Vicar General. Since February 2, 2012 I have been the Acting Superior General of the Missionary Society of St Paul. While on parochial assignments in the United States, I took the opportunity to develop myself eventually earning a Master of Arts degree in Pastoral Studies from the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas. As I look back at my journey to the priesthood, this Silver Jubilee has helped me to realize how fortunate I am to be called to serve as priest for the past 25 years. During these years, I have been privileged to be used by God as his instrument to minister to the spiritual needs of his people. I have done this mainly through pastoral ministry and in the administration of the sacraments.

The ministry of the priesthood has enabled me to meet people from different clans, tribes, races, nationalities, cultures and all works of life. In all my encounters I have found out that human beings are basically the same all over the world. People I had never met all my life provided for me, gave me water to bathe, prepared good dishes for me even when they did not have much to eat themselves, and often gave up their sleeping places for me. I have eaten different delicacies of food, fruits, seeds, leaves, and roots. Some tasted good, others sour in my stomach.



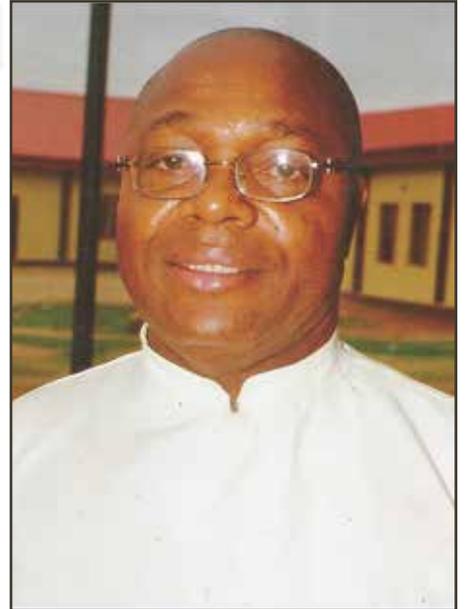
It takes a generous person to respond to this call to the priesthood. One of the mistakes some people make is to take vocation to the priesthood as personal or family owned. This wrong perception makes them view the priesthood then as personal toy they could play with at will and dictate how they live.

The most important and most desirable ingredient in the call to priestly ministry is deep genuine faith. This is accompanied with selfless dedication and obedience to the word of God and the authority of the Church. The priest must acknowledge the truth of Christ's warning that: "apart from me you can do nothing" (John. 15:5).

This Silver Jubilee anniversary, has afforded me the opportunity to celebrate and rejoice with my family and friends. I want to appreciate the Lord's steadfast love and say thank You Almighty God for your love, care, and mercy, in the journey of life and vocation as a priest. I thank my family who first sowed the seed of vocation in me. I thank my friends and all who have stood by me all these years. I thank my teachers and seminary formators. I thank my classmates and fellow MSPs. The list is endless. But God will reward you all. However, I look back on what God has used me to accomplish, my achievements, growth, successes, and failures and I want to say, take me as I am. I believe that God has called me to faithfulness in my ministry and not necessarily to success. I renew my hope and entrust the future into God's continuing protection and implore His strength to work harder in the coming years.

I Thank God for the Gift of Priesthood

By Fr. Augustus Essien, MSP



Twenty-five years is a quarter of a century. It appears very long a time when one thinks of it in the context of the future but passes very quickly when one considers it as a past. That I am 25 years in the priesthood seems like a dream, but I do not take it for granted. As I look back on these years, I know that many things have happened. The deepest memory, however, is the memory of the gift of priesthood itself. I bow in adoration and gratitude to God for finding me not so much as worthy recipient of this great gift, but for enabling me to sustain thus far.

I have nothing of my own to boast about or any achievement to show, except that through the gift of priesthood, I have enjoyed immeasurable benefits that

might not have come my way but the gift of priesthood. I do not know for sure how many lives (if any) I have touched as a priest, but I am overwhelmingly sure that many people have touched my life.

My pastoral experiences in these years seem to be very limited but not exclusive. I have encountered human beings in their various states - the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the sick and the healthy, the learned and the not so learned, etc. These encounters have taken place in various circumstances and situations, in the villages and in the cities. So what more can I ask for? I have been encouraged, strengthened and inspired by the generosity of the human spirit, but I have also been humbled by the weakness of man. All these call for

nothing but a deep sense of gratitude to God whose generosity knows no limit. Therefore, I thank God for the gift of priesthood and I remain grateful to those who, through the gift of priesthood have touched my life. May God enable God's loving men and women to benefit from the gift of priesthood!

MSP HOLDS FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER

In line with the

Constitution and Directives of the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria and after consultation with the General Council, the Acting Superior General, Very Rev. Fr. Paul Ngozichukwu Ofoha, MSP has convoked the Fourth General Chapter of the Society. This will take place in September 2013. As part of preparation for this event, a Chapter Planning Committee has been constituted.

The chairman is Fr. Edward Obi, MSP, while the secretary is Fr. Emmanuel Mbam, MSP, Fr. Raymond Aina, MSP Assistant secretary. Other members of the committee are: Frs. Iffiok Edem Inyang, MSP, Pius Ekpe, MSP and Evaristus Chukwu, MSP. A prayer has also been composed for the success of the Chapter, and is expected to be said by all MSPs, AMSPs and friends the society. A General Chapter is convoked to examine and evaluate the state of the Society and to elect the Superior General and his Council. *Please pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as MSP holds her Fourth General Chapter.*

THE LABOUR OF LOVE

By Fr Lawrence Ebuk, MSP

As Saint Paul admonishes, *“The life and death of each of us has its influence on others”* Rom 14:7. Rom 14:7. I see my missionary vocation as a gift from God. He nurtured it through my upbringing by my Parents, and enhanced it with the faith-filled environments of my Church and Catholic schools. I was born into a Catholic family that domiciled in Akon Itam village of Itu Local Government Area of the present Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The present St. Hilary's Parish of East Itam section was originally part of the larger Catholic parish of St. Lawrence of Eman Uruan in the then Calabar diocese. This parochial territory was so vast and was mostly manned by the St. Patrick Missionary Fathers. I remember vividly trekking with my Father to attend Masses or combined Services as occasions demanded. The farthest distance we ever trekked was exactly ten miles to and from my village for Sunday Mass.

My childhood faith and experience became a solid foundation in my future zeal and work in the Missions. My childhood formation by my parents has sustained and enhanced my ministry. It validates the wise saying attributed to Robert Fulghum and makes it more relevant, “All that I needed to know I learned in Kindergarten.”



I grew up to know mostly the St. Patrick Fathers, Missionaries from Ireland working in my home. Indigenous Priests by then were few. The St. Patrick Fathers encouraged local vocations for the local dioceses. The sacrifices they made captured my attention and endeared me to them. I ended up being attached to one of them, Fr. Hugo McBride, who was then my Parish Priest. He was part of our lives as he used to visit and celebrate Masses in my School St. Benedict's primary school. It was with him that I first became an altar server. He later played a major role in my life by helping me to gain admission into the Minor Seminary. He became my first Rector in this Seminary and later on became my Novice Master in my Spiritual Year formation. Others who mentored me were Fr. James Kelleher, and Patrick Corcoran.

On Saturday, June 18, 1988, eleven of us were ordained Missionary Priests at the National Missionary Seminary Chapel in Gwagwalada, Abuja, Nigeria. After the ordination, we were assigned within Nigeria for pastoral work for one year. Fr. Joseph Uko and myself were assigned to Ekiti diocese. Upon our arrival the bishop further assigned us to the Cathedral parish in Ado Ekiti.

Our excitement as newly ordained priests knew no bounds. The challenge we encountered was the celebration of the Holy Mass in the local language of Yoruba. The little Yoruba we had during our first four years of formation in Iperu Remo, Ogun State was not adequate for the ministry in Ekiti. So we had to apply ourselves notwithstanding our poor dispositions.

On Friday, November 23, 1989, the day after Thanksgiving, Frs. Joseph Uko, Paul Ofoha and myself landed at the Dulles International Airport in Washington to begin our missionary work among the African Americans. We were welcomed at the airport by the late Superior General of the Josephites Eugene McManus and his Confreres. We were given a week of orientation before we were assigned for pastoral work. I was assigned as parochial vicar of St. Francis Xavier in Houston, Texas. I owe most of my pastoral experiences, practices and skills to my pastor Fr. Ray Bomberger. Working with the African Americans was great and rewarding and it granted me the signature pastoral confidence for all my assignments.

In 2000, I went to The Gambia for my new pastoral assignment. My Parish in the Gambia was called St. Michael's Njongon. One can visit St. Michael's parish from the Capital Banjul only by crossing the river Gambia with a ferry. Upon my arrival to the Parish house I was greeted by a bushy compound with grass as tall as the highest point of the rooftop. I thank God for the generosity of the villagers who were mostly Muslims, who helped me to clear the compound to a livable ambience.

I was reassigned to Grenada in 2005 where I am still working till date. Grenada is a Caribbean island in the West Indies. My trailing the paths and walking the routes of the people of African descent in the mission lands, providentially has continued with me in a continuum of spirit. For this I say “Deo gratias!” I do not know where my next port of call will be. My only preoccupation now is being appreciative of the past, thankful for the present and entrusting the future to God. I thank my Superiors, Confreres, Formators, my family, benefactors, parishioners and friends for the blessings, prayers and support in the long walk of missionary life.

25 Years in the Priesthood as an MSP

By Fr. Christian Mary Anosike Alimaji, MSP

According to my mother, I was called “Christian” at birth. At youth, I led and founded Block Rosary Crusades in Ogbe Ahiara and Owerri Urban, joined the Legion of Mary and the Bible Society in Owerri, Nigeria. I worked in Lagos as an Accounts Clerk and Typist at Victory Correspondence College and Clay Industry (Nig.) Limited all in Ikeja division. Later I worked in our then Parish Office/SPS Regional Office. My parish priests were Fr. Jim Bermingham, SPS, and the late Fr. Pat Laffey, SPS, who knew I was contemplating becoming a priest. Having served intensively in the lay apostolates in Oshodi parish and the Lagos Archdiocese, and particularly having founded the Bible Society in Lagos parishes, and the Young Shepherds Vocations Community (now with over 70 women religious and 22 clergies), it seemed like I was born a missionary priest for Christ. My parish priests contacted the late Father Jim Sheerin, SPS, then Vocations Director, who urged me to join the National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul. The recruiter got recruited, and I joined in November, 1980 with 23 others. Eleven of us in the fourth set got ordained to the priesthood on June 18, 1988; and three others the following year. I was priest number 18. With our class, the Society was born.

My first assignment was to assist Fr. Jim Sheerin in the Promotions Office in Iperu, and with His Eminence, Dominic Cardinal Ekandem's letter of appointment two months after my ordination, I became a General Councillor. Fr. Sheerin sent me to learn the use of computer in Port Harcourt, and I brought the first computer to the MSP administration with the data base for address labels. The Very Rev. Msgr. G. P. Akpan, MSP and I went in February 1990 to negotiate for our priests to serve in Botswana. Later that year I was sent to Ireland to study Religious Knowledge and

Administration until December 1991. With Fr. Jim Sheerin taking a sabbatical early in 1992, I became the first MSP priest Bursar General and Director of the Central Administration of the MSP, and Member of the Board of Trustees. By the First General Chapter, I already served as Acting Vocations Director, Associate Editor, Councillor for eight years, the Secretary General of the Society/Chapter and the Bursar General for four years, (directing also the Projects and Missions), as well as Superior (Coordinator) of Nigeria-South. Assisting the Acting Superior General at a time when there was no Vicar General, you seemed like one. It is quite interesting to witness this Society from pioneering Stage Zero at our ordination, and like the mustard seed, has become a huge tree that shelters over 200 priests under its branches around the world.

My priestly experience took me to the length and breadth of Nigeria on promotion drive, forming AMSP Zones. My finger in the Ambassador Magazine got it re-named “The Catholic Ambassador.” The federal government had insisted that the former name be changed because it duplicated another existing since the sixties. Construction works for the Iperu Promotions Secretariat and the Fathers/Workers Chapel began during this time with the foundation blessings by Most

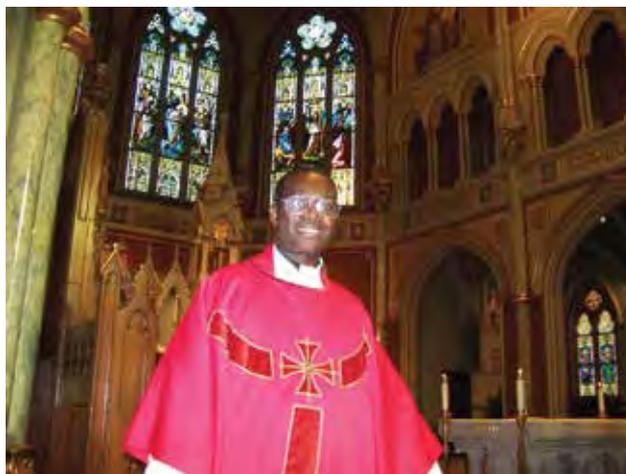
Rev. Albert A. Fasina. We drew up a plan for the present priests Retirement House in Iperu and presented it at the First General Chapter.

After serving in Nigeria for nine years, I went on mission to South Africa for another nine years. There I served as MSP Mission Superior and member of the Board of Consultors of the Diocese of Kroonstad and in several other capacities, on the national team of the Bishops Conference on Catechesis and Liturgy, and on the Pastoral Conference of Sotho Region for eight years comprising four countries, and trained catechists, lay ministers, leaders of Basic Christian Communities and deacons; and was pastor in five parishes.

After eighteen years of ministry, I took a sabbatical and spent the year 2006/2007 in U.S.A. After the sabbatical, I was then assigned to the USA Mission. I served in the Cities of Waynesboro and Savannah, GA, and as Vicar for the Men Religious of the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia and as Spiritual Director of lay organizations; and also in the Cities of Mobile and Prichard, Alabama and helped out in Mt. Vernon, making a total of five parishes in two U.S.A. dioceses and two States.

I urge missionary seminarians to eradicate tribalism. Avoid seeing the priesthood as a means of amassing wealth, prestige, or fame.

They may come your way, but not ends in themselves. To my fellow priests I say “Honesty is Life,” enjoy and respect the dignity of the priesthood, and strive for holiness. Expect martyrdom in all its shapes and forms, while holding on to faith in Christ. Always think of your earliest promptings to serve Christ and His Church. The missionary priesthood is very tasking but can be very fulfilling also. To our formators, sponsors and the Associate Missionaries of St. Paul, rejoice that you are sending the ambassadors for Christ to the ends of the earth. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!



Thank you

FR MICHAEL GOLDEN, and ST PATRICKS FATHERS

By Fr. Martin Eke, MSP

Part of my mission promotions for this year 2012, was to visit the St. Patrick's Missionary Society in Kiltegan, Ireland to arrange the shipping to the National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul, Gwagwalada, Abuja, Nigeria 43 boxes of books bequeathed to the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria by late Fr. Michael Golden.

Fr. Golden was assistant director of formation at the Missionary Society of St. Paul Formation House, Iperu-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria from 1982 to 1984. He taught Philosophy at the National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul, Gwagwalada, Abuja from 1984 to 1985. He took ill in October 1985 with a polio-like illness. This forced him to leave the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul and returned to Ireland for treatment. Fr. Golden died on 2nd March 2012. He loved the Missionary Society of St Paul. He demonstrated this love in his last will and testament by bequeathing his books to the National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul.

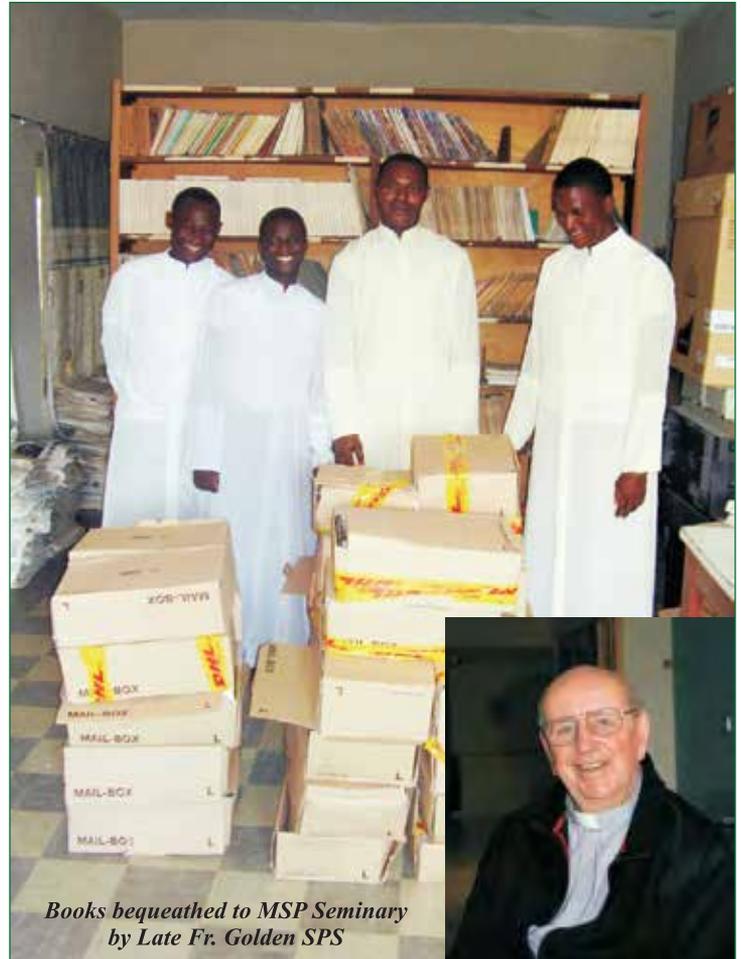
My journey to Kiltegan was on the 19th of October 2012. I was accompanied by Fr. Anselm Emechebe, a priest of the Missionary Society of St. Paul serving in

Armagh Archdiocese, Ireland. We were warmly welcomed by the St. Patrick's Fathers. Among the priests we met were Fr. Joe Rabbitt and Fr. John Lalor. Both were once formators at the National Missionary Seminary of St. Paul. Fr. Denis O'Rouke was very helpful in arranging the shipping of the books to Abuja, Nigeria.

The story of the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria cannot be told without mentioning the great and central role played by the St. Patrick's Fathers. It was the St. Patrick's Fathers, in 1977, that the Nigerian Episcopal Conference entrusted the Missionary Society of St. Paul to nurture. The St. Patrick's Fathers continued the assignment given to them

by the Episcopal Conference till 1996 when the St. Patrick's Fathers disengaged from the formation team of the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul.

However, the St. Patrick's Fathers have continued to show great kindness and support to the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria in various ways. Thank you Fr. Michael Golden. May your soul rest in peace. Thank you St. Patrick's Fathers.



Books bequeathed to MSP Seminary by Late Fr. Golden SPS

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*Fr David Okonkwo, MSP
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