



A REVIEW OF CATHOLIC MEN ORGANISATION (CMO) THE HISTORY OF ST. PAUL PARISH, UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR: MY LIFE AS A CATHOLIC FAITHFUL, 2021 INTERNATIONAL FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATION ESSAY- WRITING COMPETITION RESULTS, 12TH JUNE, 2021

PROFESSOR ENO GRACE NTA

(Presented at the 2022 International Father's Day Celebration at CMO Hall, St. Paul Parish, University of Calabar, Calabar on 19th June, 2022.)

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Men Organisation (CMO) is one of the four major organisations in the Church, the others being Catholic Women Organisation (CWO), Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students (NFCS) and Holy Childhood Association. The CMO is the pillar of the Church and as its motto, "Christ is our Leader" provides exemplary leadership in the Church. Members of the CMO are heads of their various families and understand the need to plan for every member of the family. Since 2006 when the first International father's Day celebration took place in St Paul, children and students have played a key role. They have entertained the Parish with traditional dance displays, and had essay-writing competitions in 2007 and 2021. In addition, three undergraduate students enjoyed scholarship awards in 2021. Of course, the focus on students and children is not surprising since St. Paul is a predominantly student parish otherwise usually referred to as the Wisdom Parish.

Presentation

The slim publication is in paperback with a rainbow like colour display of red, black, gold medal, green, white and blue hue as the cover. The golden medal with St. Joseph the patron saint of CMO encircles a father presenting some gift to a child on the front cover. This cover also carries the title, the medallion of St. Joseph and names of the editors. It is published by University of Calabar Press and the Copyright is held by the CMO. The publication is divided into three main sections:

- i. The preliminary pages where the origin of International Father's Day and its celebration in St. Paul are presented (i – v)
 - ii. Winning essays for 2021 celebration of International Father's Day (p.1 – p.11)
 - iii. Appendix of photographs from the 2021 celebration (p. 12 – 14).
- Finally, page 15 contains the references.

THE PRELIMINARY PAGES

Origin of Father's Day Celebration

This opens with an overview of the origin of the Father's day celebration which started in the year 1909 surprisingly by a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd of Spokane, Washington. This gesture was in appreciation of her father William Jackson Smart, who though widowed early, devoted his life to raising his children single-handedly.

Celebration of International Father's day in St. Paul Parish, University of Calabar.

Contrary to what obtains elsewhere, St. Paul CMO has not been shy in celebrating fathers/men. Even before the world's adoption in 2021, of the Sonora Smart Dodd's call (1909) for such a celebration, the feast of St Joseph the Worker, had served that purpose in the Church. This celebration in fact is an avenue for showing love to the family and beyond. Each Father's Day is not just fun time but a period for living out our faith in thanksgiving, and by touching our neighbours as displayed on the Table on page v; with its summary presented here.

Eno Grace Nta, Department of English and literary Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar, Nigeria

The first celebration organised on the 18th of June, 2006 under the tenure of Prof. Barth Ekweme and had Prof. O. C. Charles as its Central Planning Committee Chairman showed that the men of St. Paul Parish recognised the importance of the day. The second celebration which made monumental history in the Parish was organised on the 17th of June, 2007. Prof. Ekweme was still the CMO Chairman while Barr. Ekpo Nta chaired the planning committee. The activities organised included an essay writing competition on the topic "My Father"; a talk on "The Role of the Father in the Family and the Church" given by Dr. Chris Udiong; gifts to the Rev. Sisters; refurbishing of rest rooms in the Church and having the men serve at Mass. The celebration was grand and remained a major feat by the men. On the 20th of June, 2021, the CMO under the chairmanship of Dr. Joseph Udosen organised Father's day. This time around, the CPC Chair was Prof. Bath N. Ekwueme and the activities included an essay writing competition on 'My life as a Catholic Faithful', with prizes given to the best three winners in each category, and scholarships awarded to three undergraduates. The 2022 edition under the tenure of Dr. Charles Njoku was moderated by Mr. Gabriel Ogban as the CPC Chairman. This held on the 19th of June, 2022 with the unveiling of the 2021 essay writing publication. In addition, an extensive medical outreach was initiated in the Church premises for the entire University Community and beyond. Issues of focus were eye check, sugar level, blood pressure check and ear examination.

2021 International Father's day in St. Paul Parish, University of Calabar.

The celebration involved Essay writing in three categories of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. At least a hundred entries were received across the three categories but those adjudged the best three from each group were published to serve as a reference document on some activities in the Parish and to encourage others to strive for better performance thereafter. The topic, "My Life as a Faithful Catholic" was the same for all categories. Participants had a free hand in selecting an essay type.

At the primary level, many approached the topic from an expository angle. Thus, it opens with some definition of the Church or the Catholic faithful. Each child displayed an awareness of some practices of the

faith such as the sacrament of baptism, the Rosary, the Saints and the efficacy of prayer. It is obvious that the home provided the firm foundation for further spiritual growth. Although an expository essay seeks to inform, the children weave in breath of freshness with their individual styles. Also, we appreciate their relative ages in how well they handled sentence construction, coherence and logical progression. The childlike trust displayed by the 3rd prize winner is most endearing.

The secondary school essays are more personalized. We easily follow each person's individual journey to being a Catholic either from training at the seminary/Catholic school, the Church and home.

The essays from the Tertiary Category are definitely very well crafted with other subthemes of interest highlighted. We read a conversion story, handling peer pressure and coping with none Catholics. The threat to Catholicism is not necessarily from other faiths but sometimes comes from overfamiliarity with the routine of Mass, devotions and prayers which could lead to apathy. We find reiterated as essential for keeping the youth in the faith, the need to encourage /mandate that they belong to different associations in the Church, that the pastoral obligation of the Church hierarchy should make catechism an ongoing process, while the youth in turn follow the uphold the lyrics of the famous chorus that advises that you 'read your Bible and pray every day.'

Generally, we appreciate the role of family, mentors, priests and the Church in the life of a Catholic. We thank God for the values and character of these ones whose essays are published. It seems the submissions had minimal editing effected. However, whatever carries the logo of the University makes a statement on the quality of the work as well as the professionalism that defines its products. It is therefore hoped that such lapses could be avoided in future.

In conclusion, the essays in the three categories have given us the uniqueness of the Catholic faith; her beliefs about the Sacraments, the roles of the Bible and tradition, the importance of the Virgin Mary, the saints and the Papacy. Clearly enunciated in the essays was the Church's mission in carrying out and continuing the work of Jesus Christ on earth. This challenge has been taken up by the Catholic Men Organisation (CMO), St. Paul Parish, Unical through the different activities introduced in the Celebration of the International Father's Day.