

**WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND PASTORAL DEVELOPMENTS IN
ONITSHA ARCHDIOCESE 1967-2015: A STUDY OF IMMACULATE
HEART SISTERS.**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Congregation of the Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Christ, Nigeria who sacrificed so much in order to uplift the pastoral growth of Onitsha Archdiocese.

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Abstract

This dissertation is on Women Religious and Pastoral Development in Onitsha Archdiocese 1967-2015: A study of Immaculate Heart Sisters. The human person across generations has the ontological problems of scarcity, of contingency and of powerlessness. This immediate yearning propelled him to seek advancement and betterment of his species. Fraught with all those limitations, he recurses to any agency or organisation that has the potency of alleviating his conditions. One of such cooperate entities capable of lifting humanity from the quagmire of economic recession and poor social atmosphere is the Church which was instituted by Jesus Christ for the well-being of her members, which is anchored on the pastoral development that entails the advancement in all ramifications of the pastoral activities. Pastoral development is a tool used by any pastoral agent in a given Church locality in the process of evaluation, imagining and planning to help the community stay in touch with the changing circumstance of life and faith. The Women Religious who through the profession of evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience consecrated themselves to God and set apart for the service of God and humanity is a very indispensable organ through which the Church realizes this pastoral mandate. It is on this premise that this research x-rayed the pastoral developments of the Immaculate Heart Sisters in Onitsha Archdiocese from 1967- 2015. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Data were analyzed using deductive and historical approach. For the critical examination of the study, Blumer's interactionist theory, Durkheim's functionalist theory, Mary Parker Follet's theory of human relations and theory of African historiography were used. Using the functionalist, interactionist, and human relations theories, the work has succeeded in bringing the positive aspect of the pastoral contributions of the Women Religious (Immaculate Heart Sisters), which had been overlooked over the years in Onitsha Archdiocese. The activities of Immaculate Heart Sisters have cleared the perceived vagueness and ambiguity that surround the concept "Women Religious". The findings also have put to rest the wanton skepticism that has accompanied the identity of Women Religious and their work in the society. The study concluded that all Women Religious primarily through prayer and penance as stated in Canon 673 advance their apostolate as a witness of their consecrated life. They employed in full mention their feminine qualities which aided their pastoral acumen in these functions. Immaculate Heart Sisters therefore have made remarkable contributions to the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese, but needed to be more pragmatic to the present challenges and employ all avenues in developing the present society pastorally in line with information communication technology appliances devoid of the influence of materialism in the world today.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The human person across generations has the ontological problems of scarcity, of contingency and of powerlessness. This immediate yearning propelled him to seek advancement and betterment of his species. Fraught with all those limitations, he recourses to any agency or organisation that has the potency of alleviating his conditions. One of such cooperate entities capable of lifting humanity from the quagmire of economic recession and poor social atmosphere is the Church. The Church was instituted by Jesus Christ for the well-being of her members. This well-being is anchored on the pastoral development, which is the advancement in all ramification of the pastoral activities, be it the universal Church, the Diocese/Archdiocese or a Parish.

According to Wright (2013), pastoral development is a process by which a faith community, with a deep appreciation of its past and an understanding of its present strengths, and weaknesses, seeks to respond to the spiritual and pastoral needs of the people within and beyond the community. In order to resolve particular pastoral issue, effective structures and processes are needed to facilitate communication and coordination, create opportunities for people to use their gift and encourage all the people of God to participate in the mission of the local Church.

The Church in Onitsha Archdiocese was established on the 5th day of December, 1885. For at least one hundred and thirty-one of those years, people were confident that they understood what it meant to be Christians and felt their salvation rested in doing what the

Church told them. Pastoral development is a tool used by any pastoral agent in a given Church locality in the process of evaluation, imagining and planning to help the community stay in touch with the changing circumstances of life and faith. In this way, the mission of Christ entrusted to the people is constantly reviewed and re-visioned and its life and faith remain refreshing, enlivening and prophetic. Pastoral development is essential for the ongoing life and vitality of the Church.

In *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001) Pope John Paul II wrote about the process of pastoral development. According to him, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would rather become mechanisms without a social mask of expression and growth. The spirituality of communion supplies institutional reality with a soul. This by implication means that mere structures in itself is of no help to building up of a person if the spiritual life of the person is neglected. Therefore, for a holistic formation, there is need for vibrant pastoral plan that will help to bring to reality the mission of the church to the people of God.

Pastoral development is all the plans and approaches set in place for the advancement of pastoral activities in a given locus. A very indispensable organ or arm through which the Church realizes this pastoral mandate is the Women Religious groups. These are the women who through the profession of evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience consecrated themselves to God and are set apart for the service of God and humanity. Prior to second Vatican Council, the Women Religious live in cloister offering prayers day and night with little or no contact with the secular world. These Women Religious were so insulated from the society; that most times people do not consider them

as being able to handle their immediate needs. A human loner in the words of Madu (1996) is a contradiction in term. By this, it implies that man is egalitarian in nature. He lives for his society and society lives for him. His well-being to a large extent means the well-being of the society. This view is corroborated by Leed (2007) when he avers that without humanity there will be no society. This means that man does not live for himself alone.

Moreover, Christian theology presents man as the prince of creation. From the anthropological and sociological points of view, man is a measure of all things. He is a viceroy of God in regeneration and advancement of the created order. Buttressing this point, Ituma (2012) opines that human beings are custodian of God's creation. Following the divine – human liason, man maintains the balance intended by the divine creative intelligence; and becomes accountable to God. The challenges of scarce resources and poor living condition of man acts as clog in the wheels of achieving his God's given destinies. It is against this backdrop that Women Religious stepped in with the aim of integral and holistic emancipation of Christian faithful especially within the Onitsha Archdiocese. The Immaculate Heart Sisters, at the dawn of this apostolic and pastoral drive, had the onus, to impact positively in the lives of the autochthonous people. This positive missionary exploits of the Immaculate Heart Sister form the background of this research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The inherent human problems of selfishness and greed dither him from being his own brothers' nay, sisters' keeper. The various government policies propagated for the good of the people in a geographical area failed to see the light of the day because of this virus of selfishness and greed. At one epoch or the other funds voted for the well-being of the

people of God are diverted without the reprobation of the law. As it were, the rich continued to get richer and the poor poorer. This yawning gap between the haves and the have not become progressively widened. Unfortunately, those who find themselves at the fringe of the society lack a recognized voice to plead for their cause. Thus, the problems of this research are the inability to understand the meaning and the life of Women Religious by majority of the people. Many people in the society do not understand the kind of life these Women Religious live, and why these Women Religious choose to remain unmarried.

The believe by some people that being a Woman Religious is a waste of human resources and an escape route from certain responsibilities. The conception of some people that these Women Religious are women who want to run away from certain responsibilities in the families and civic obligaton in the society.

The questions of what really are the functions of Women Religious in the Church and society at large. Some people are already at crossroads over why these women chose to be unmarried and what really their functions in the Church and society are. They often ask the question of what they do differently in the Church that other women cannot do.

The pastoral essence of Women Religious, often times, questions arise of whether these Women Religious are recognised in the early Church, and if they are, what were their pastoral essences or duty. This is especaially when they see the priests as performing all the necessary spiritual work.

Women Religious are been seen as people who belong to the class of women entrapped in the web of spinsterhood whose only option is the veil. These unresolved queries form the problems of this academic work.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Religious life is a stable form of life ordained by God for the propagation of His Kingdom on earth (Matthew. 19: 1–2). It is a foretaste of the kingdom yet to come (Luke 20: 34-36). It is an eschatological life that fore – shadows the life of the elect in Heaven. This form of life is not meant for all but only for those who can accept it (Matthew. 19:12, 1 Corinthians 7: 1-17). In that sense, Religious life is a vocation (John 15:16, Amos 7:14) meant only for the called, who rely on God for their sustenance and daily direction. The purpose of this study therefore is to re-establish the meaning and life of Women Religious.

Bring into lime-light the various ways through which these Women Religious enhance the pastoral development of the people of God with specific reference to Onitsha Archdiocese.

X-ray the extent the Immaculate Heart Sisters has undertaken the grass-root pastoral development of the people in Onitsha Archdiocese.

Correct the impression that Women Religious belong to the class entrapped in the web of spinsterhood whose only option is the veil. They are normal human persons that can make informed choices concerning their destinies.

To expose how well grafted in the ecclesiastical and societal milieu these Women Religious are.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is divided into three; the content, geographical and periodization. Content scope focuses on Women Religious and pastoral development: A study of Immaculate Heart Sisters.

Geographically, the study is on old Onitsha Archdiocese. In the context of this work, Onitsha Archdiocese comprises all the Catholic dioceses of the present Anambra state. They are Onitsha Archdiocese, Awka Diocese, and Nnewi Diocese. Periodically, the study covers from 1967-2015. The choice of this period was informed by the significant roles played by these Women Religious during the civil war in 1967 and the eventual handing over of the Catholic Church in Igboland to an indigenous leader in the person of Archbishop Francis Arinze (who is today a Cardinal) by late Archbishop Charles Heerey who was the last expatriate missionary leader. Also the study terminated in 2015, coinciding with the year of the consecrated persons (men and women), which started in 2014 and globally ended in 2015. During this period, the life, meaning and purposes of the consecrated persons was reviewed and celebrated world-wide by the Catholic Church.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research work is significant in so many ways. The benefits of this study to both the Women Religious and the society are numerous. Thus, the significance of this study are as follows; it will challenge the general public to value the contributions of Women Religious to pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese and the entire society at large. It will encourage more women not just the Women Religious to willingly and effectively add more efforts to societal development for the good of both the Church and humanity.

It will increase the zeal of young girls not just in Onitsha Archdiocese alone but in the larger society to join this Religious body, thereby increasing the number of Women Religious.

It will enable the general public who constantly probe into the meaning and life of these Women Religious, to understand their essence in the Church and the society. It will make the society to appreciate these Women Religious more than before and also not to see them as people belonging to the class entrapped in the web of spinsterhood.

It will motivate the Immaculate Heart Sisters towards improving their pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese and the entire society. It serves as a document which future researchers can always consult while working on related topics.

1.6 Methodology

The nature and purpose of any historical investigation determines the sources and methods of data collection. This research is Christological, empirical and historical. In carrying out this research, the researcher employed deductive and historical approaches for the data analysis. Deductive approach involves classic process of reasoning. As a historical research, it involves extensive fieldwork. The researcher in the spirit of investigation and enquiring gathered information from primary and secondary sources. The primary source involves oral interview from persons selected randomly especially from among those that lived and had one thing or the other with Onitsha Archdiocese.

This research as well employs secondary source as a means of data collection; hence previous works of both foreign and indigenous scholars that wrote specifically on relevant issues about Women Religious and pastoral activities in journal, magazines, newspapers, books of readings, seminar papers and the likes were consulted.

Finally, the theories adopted in this study are the interactionist theory projected by Herbert Blumer (1969), Functionalist theory on by Emile Durkhiem (1973), Human Relations theory by Mary Parker Follett (1926) and theory on African historiography by Ogbu Kalu (1986) as means of impacting on the people of God the pastoral activities developed by Immaculate Heart Sisters to enhance the pastoral life of the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese. The functionalist theory on religion posited by Durkheim (1973) exposes the reasons for the functional aspect of Religion, stating that Religious have social functions which are essentially necessary for persons and communities. Women Religious especially the Immaculate Heart Sisters have carried out lots of Religious functions in the bid to enhance pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese and one cannot function without interaction which builds human relations and these have proved the contributions of the indigenous missionaries in enhancing and sustaining the Gospel deposit. Hence, the choice of the four theories.

1.7 Definition of Terms

In order to have an in-depth understanding of issues raised in this study, it is germane to define or better still, describe the terms that are prominent.

Religious Life

Etymologically, religious comes from Latin word *re-ligare*, which refers to the bond of human life; the bond that unites, draws together God and humanity; men and women who have consecrated their lives through the profession of evangelical counsels in which they follow Christ closely under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to Him, who is supreme love. The definition of a Religious, in the context of religious life within the Roman Catholic Church, is stated in its Code of Canon Law (1983) thus: Religious life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church the marvelous marriage established by God as a sign of the world to come.

Religious, thus, consummates a full gift of themselves as a sacrifice offered to God, so that their whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in charity. From this juridical delineation, the Religious is a woman or man who professes public vows in complete self – consecration to God in response to the divine call which expresses the virtue of religion. She/he lives a common life among others who together form a Religious institute and is considered separated from the world a renunciation of the worldly, as the vows express and signify. Arinze (2014) defines Religious life as a “life developed from the life and teaching of Christ” (p.4). Thus, for Schneider (2001) “being a Religious is not primarily something one does but something one is” (p.5). This implies that no one takes this honour on him or herself, therefore God calls according to his own design and men and women he calls.

Women Religious

Canon law (1983) states that by divine institution, among Christ’s faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are called clerics; the others are called lay people.

Drawn from both groups are those of Christ's faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels through vows or other sacred bonds recognized and approved by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and promote the salvific mission of the Church. Their state, although it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, does pertain to its life and holiness.

In the context of this research, Women Religious are female members of Religious institutes, who are called by God to the practice of evangelical counsels and who make profession of them; they bind themselves to the Lord in a special way. They follow the virginal and poor Christ who redeemed and sanctified the world in obedient to God, which did not exclude dying on the cross. John XXIII (1964) defines women religious as "those who have given themselves completely to God and have become familiar with the exercise of prayer and of most fervent charity" (p.3).

Battelli (1990) defines Women Religious as those "women who embrace a life of perpetual virginity for the love of Christ" (p.5). Akosa (nd) opines that "women religious are group of consecrated women whose primary work is PRAYER" (p.9). Nwagwu (2000) calls these women Reverend Sisters. In the context of this work, Women Religious, Consecrated Women, Reverend Sisters will be used interchangeably for they mean the same group of people.

Pastoral

Baker (2012) defines pastoral as a term that comes from the Latin *pastor*, meaning shepherd and this refers to the work and concern of the shepherd for his sheep. Muorah (1995) defines pastoral as relating to shepherds or herders used for the keeping or grazing

of sheep or cattle. It is also the work of a priest or teacher giving people help or advice especially in addition to her or his normal duties and responsibilities. In Christianity, the Bible does not explicitly define the role of a pastor, but does associate it with teaching (Ephesians 4:10-12). In the context of this work, pastoral is the works, activities and concerns of the shepherd for his sheep.

Development

Development is all encompassing. It deals with the holistic formation of a person. It is progressive. It is ongoing. According to Business Dictionary (2007) development refers to a change or increase in something or a situation. It is the state of growth and the process of economic and social transformation. Onwuchekwa (1992) defines development as “what indices sustained growth and income” (p.98).

According to Encarta (2009), development is the process of changing and becoming larger, stronger, or more impressive, successful, or advanced, or of causing somebody or something to change in a better way. Development is the process in which someone or something grows to change. Development in this research has to do with transformation process that brings about all round growth and transformation.

Pastoral development

This is difficult to define because there is no subject that is pastoral development. Rather one has to understand the two basic terms in order to sieve out a definition. Pastoral development is a combination of two words comprising of pastoral and development. For this work to achieve its goal, it will be taken as one word. Pastoral development therefore is

the advancement in all ramifications of the pastoral activities, be it the universal Church, the diocese, or a parish. Anigbo (2015) defines pastoral development as all plans and approaches set in place for the advancement of pastoral activities in a given locus. This includes training of personnel and human development; establishing of institutes for training. Pastoral development is a process by the developer to map out his plans depending on the situation at hand to achieving the goal set up concerning the welfare of those under his care. Pastoral care is derived from the Biblical image of shepherd and refers to the solicitous concern expressed within the religious community for individuals in trouble or distress.

Pastoral development is an ongoing process that involves shepherding the flock. Shepherding itself involves protection, tending to needs, strengthening the weak, encouragement, feeding the flock, making provision, shielding, refreshing, restoring, leading by example to move individuals on their pursuit of holiness, comforting and guiding as stated in (Psalm 78:52). Since development is all encompassing, which involves all that it takes to give man holistic formation which in other words means caring. As a result of these, pastoral care and pastoral development will be used interchangeably in this work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review serves as an avenue to study and objectively analyse works done by other scholars in the related field of study with the major aim and for the purpose of improving on such works. This is because, in any serious research work, knowledge of what has been done in the chosen area of interest is important in determining what remains to be done and the direction the present researcher should follow. Not really much has been written on Women Religious. Scholars who wrote on Women Religious did not go into their pastoral development. Thus this research work went deeper into the study of the history of Women Religious and their pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese, which re-establishes the meaning and life of Women Religious.

The yearning for knowledge is a natural instinct in human person. It stems from the man's desire to order his own life and better his knowledge and his environment. This passionate desire is well expressed by Nwagwu (1996) who stated that:

Religious life has been subjected to an avalanche of questioning in most recent times. Close scrutiny follows all practices of Religious style of life that hitherto have been shielded from public gaze and introspection. Traditional religious practices such as: the evangelical counsels, the three vows; the common life; the prayer patterns, and exercises of piety and penance, the apostolate and ministries; the formation and training given to members; the media and relaxation facilities etc, have been questioned, criticised as constituting obstacles to human development and personal fulfillment. (p.139).

This sentiment which is within the human heart hinges on the basic desire of all human beings for self – respect. And their own self – respect, their sense of personal dignity depends on the status. It is status which determines the attitude of others towards them, and gives support to their sense of personal worth. By implication, people have different views over issues as a result; no single approach should be applied to the definition of Women Religious and pastoral development. Therefore, since no definition of Women Religious and pastoral development would command universal acceptance as such, definition necessarily would stress aspects considered relevant to the social and Christological phenomena under review to the neglect of others.

Primarily, this chapter takes a critical look at the existing research that is significant to this study. This chapter therefore looks at these works as part of this research so as to, first of all, provide details of other studies related to this topic. Secondly, this chapter reveals gaps or contradictions in literatures. The literature review is therefore organized under the following sub-headings:

Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Framework

Empirical Studies

Summary of Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The need to seek a clear definition of Women Religious and Pastoral development can never be over emphasized. More often than not, people ask question as to why ever being perturbed regarding determining a clear cut definition of Women Religious and their works.

Martin (2010) affirms that such questions are all irrelevant, hence his submission that “asking this question is essential in order to uncover the motives behind and purpose of the desired definition, as well as to ensure that this pursuit is more substantive, value than simple semantics” (p.9). Thus, defining Women Religious and pastoral development is essential in order not to be carried away with the euphoria of tagging anyone who dresses in sisters’ habit as a Woman Religious.

Women Religious

By virtue of their dedication lived in fullness and in joy, Women Religious are called in a very special way to be sign of God’s tender love towards the human race and to be special witnesses to the mystery of the Church, virgin, Bride and Mother. Eboh (2000), states that Women Religious are group of women consecrated to God to help people understand the possibility of immortal being mortal. According to her, Women Religious are pointers unto eternal values. Larivere (1977) opines that Women Religious are group of women who by virtue of their religious profession have been called to restore a sense of values as fundamental as love, work, justice and freedom. He does not believe that being a sign of God is the role of individual religious but it has to be community affair.

Bourgeois (1993) defines Women Religious as those women called to live intensive spiritual life by their quality of presence in the society. The point Bourgeois is making is that the life style of the Women Religious within the confines of their jurisdiction should be the light that illumines the place. By implication, their presence is a reminder of the divine. Though, Nwagwu (1999) opines that Women Religious have dual nature of the proclamation of the word of God, which is by proclamation through preaching and the

silent proclamation through witness of life. This implies that Women Religious are not just proclaiming and preaching the gospel by word of mouth but by mere presence for their witnesses of life greatly influence the environment and achieve a spiritual renewal that transforms the entire society. Therefore, Women Religious role is very relevant in the Church as a family and the society at large. John XXIII (1964) defines Women Religious as “those who have given themselves completely to God and have become familiar with the exercise of prayer and of most fervent charity” (p.3).

Akosa (1979) opines that “Women Religious are group of consecrated women whose primary work is PRAYER” (p.9). In line with this, John Paul II (1988) defines Women Religious as those women who are “to engage in different work such as evangelization, education, active participation in formation of priests and consecrated person giving spiritual support and promoting the fundamental values of life and peace” (p.54). In the context of this work, the researcher adopts as a working concept is that group of consecrated women whose lives and presence are pointers unto eternal values. This injunction calls for the need for development.

Development

Development is the state of growth and the process of economic and social transformation. Obi (2009), defines development as “what indices sustained growth and income” (p.63). Nwana (1995), states that development is the harnessing of available resources by a people for the realisation of this major objective, solving their major articulated problem without deliberately creating new problem situations. Alao (1991), in line with this idea defines development as;

A multi objective process designed to achieve among others, the eradication of poverty and disease, the liberation of the individual, increased productivity within a balanced ecosystem, justice and equity, individual freedom and social security, cultural buoyancy, and the stable society.(p.63).

Development defines within a wider context as above means providing for the people who make culture - the essential and basic facilities and means of civilized living such as shelter, portable water, sound education, transport and communication, physical, social and physiological security, good governance, means of economic self-sustenance and wellbeing, freedom and enjoyment of fundamental human rights. Women Religious being drawn from among the people as opined by Souza (2005) has an intimate relationship with life and its processes: birthing and, nurturing, and life substance. Perhaps because of the experience most women have gone through in birthing and nurturing of life they seem to be more sensitive and compassionate towards the weaker members of the family that make them particularly sensitive to the repercussions of a project on the weaker section of the society, be it minority, the handicapped or the disadvantaged.

Supporting this, Anochie (1994), states that spiritual motherhood takes many different forms. According to her Women Religious are spiritual mothers who live in accordance with the charism and rules of their various apostolic institutes can express herself as concern for the people, especially the most needy, the sick, the handicapped, the abandoned, orphans, elderly, children, young people, the imprisoned and in general, people on the edges of society. Thus, these spiritual mothers are to help bring forth, educate and protect a higher type of life, and divine unending life in the souls of countless children and

adults entrusted to their care. By implication one yearns for pastoral development that will empower man in his efforts to attend to his final end. Having seen the meaning of Women Religious and the need for development in order to ameliorate the faith condition of the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese, it becomes pertinent to explore the pastoral means by which Women Religious can help better the Church and society.

Pastoral development

Pastoral development is as well pastoral care. The term pastoral care: the word “care” according to Eneh (2008), expresses concern and the word “pastoral” gives the depth and direction to that concern. Pastoral care therefore, is distinctly different from “medical care”. Pastoral care is the practical demonstration of the love of God through care and compassion. According to Wise (1988),

Pastoral care is the art of communicating of the gospel to persons at the point of their need. Thus pastoral care is not a theoretical discipline, although it maybe undergirded by such disciplines as theology or Biblical interpretation. Pastoral care in this instance is not pastoral theology, especially when this term denotes a set of principles for the conduct of a specific activity. Pastoral care is more of a function than an activity, more of a living relationship than a theory or interpretation, more of matter of being than of doing. It is the manifestation in relationship between the pastor and the persons, either individuals or groups, of a quality of life that points to and gives a basis in the experience for, the realization of the love of God. (p.xviii).

Pastoral care can also say to mean a means of achieving a mission of the Church entrusted to her by Christ. Monye (2016) opines that in Christianity, the Bible does not explicitly

define the role of a pastor, but does associate it with teaching. She went further to state that pastoral care involves shepherding the flock. Shepherding itself involves protection, tending to the needs, strengthening the weak, encouragement, feeding the flock, making provision, shielding, refreshing, restoring, leading by example to move individuals on their pursuit of holiness, comforting and guiding.

Pastoral care according to Monye (2016) is derived from the Biblical image of shepherd and refers to the solicitous concern expressed within the religious community for individuals in trouble or distress. Historically and within the Christian community according to Seaward (1958), pastoral care is in the cure- of souls tradition. In this perspective, cure may be understood as care in the sense of carefulness or anxious concern for the soul of individual entrusted to one's care. Pastoral care refers to the more intensive dimension of the larger tasks of ministry, the conversation with individuals/groups who seek interpersonal, moral or spiritual guidance. Seaward (1958), defines pastoral care as "functions of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling" (p.836). Pastoral development therefore is all the practical activities designed and employed by the Women Religious to progressively attend to the pastoral challenges that befall a soul under her care.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is an organised and systematic articulation of a set of statements related to questions in a discipline that are communicated in a meaningful whole. This section examined a number of theories on interaction between religious bodies and the society. The theories dealt with the society and the developments in the society and the

Church as a result of the good human relationship between the religious bodies and the society.

2.2.1 Functionalist theory

Functionalist theory on religion propounded by Emile Durkheim in 1973. This theory states that religion has social functions which are essentially necessary for persons and communities. He went further to state that religion has always permeated, mediated and pervaded the lives of persons, relationships, institutions, processes and structures. This theory believes that religion exercises authoritative and universal power in all societies. Religion commands, compels and coerces its adherents or believers. This theory holds that religion has pervading, continuing and universal power in all human societies. Therefore, religion is not an illusion or a fantasy. Durkheim in this theory, states that religion is a factual social reality whose study can be observable, testable and verifiable with consequent valid and reliable results or findings. This theory also holds that religion reinforces a given social structure, retrains deviant behaviour and encourages change by its sacred authority and absolute control of human and material resource within religious institutions. Religion sets values and makes rules, strengthens social harmony and solidarity, promotes obedience and loyalty. Thus, Durkheim wondered how societies could manage their affairs without religion. For Durkheim, religion is an expression of collective consciousness.

Nwadiibia (1991) opines that functionalists “perceived society as a system composed of interrelated institutions (parts) such as family, economy, religion and education which perform function essential for the survival of the society” (p. 65). This suggests that all the

social institutions in the society depend on each for survival. Thus Women Religious is one of the arms that Onisha Archdiocese uses to function in order to achieve her set out goals. Haralambos and Holborn (2008) states that “Durkheim believed that religion was the basis for the collective conscience-the shared moral beliefs and values of a society” (p. 667). Durkheim described collective conscience as the totality of beliefs and sentiment common to average citizens of the same society.

What he described as collective conscience is nothing but social group that come together in religious rituals full of drama and reverence. Together its members express their faith in common values and beliefs. In this highly charged atmosphere of collective worship, the intergration of the society is strenghted. Members of the society express communicate and understand the moral bonds which unite them. Therefore, Women Religious are expected to be playing important roles which are part of the social functions that are esstially necessary for persons and communities as propounded by Emlie Durkhim in sustaining and enhancing the development of Onitsha Archdiocese through their pastoral contributions in areas like their prayer life, medical apostolate, educational services, pastoral works, and social works.

2.2.2 Theory of interactionism

This theory was propounded by Herbert Blumer in 1969. This theory states that human beings act on the basis of meaning that they give to objects and events, rather than simply reacting either to external stimuli or internal stimuli. Blumer (1969) believed for example, that human act towards things and towards others, based on the meaning that they have for them. This meaning comes from social interaction, not from within the object. Thus,

humans choose to act, they are not caused to act. He emphasised that groups were individual collectivities working together. Eventually, this group action will result in cultural and societal formations, maintenance or change. Joint actions, networks and social functions take on a character that is separate from individual; but they do not operate automatically. Through this, society is continually renewed by the actions of individuals and groups. From this background, the actions and activities of the Immaculate Heart Sisters hope renew and continued renewing the Onitsha Archdiocese and society at large through their pastoral development.

McBrien (1994) opines that one lives in an age of rapid and substantial change. Some believe that the changes have been, for the most part, beneficial to human community. Others believe that these changes have been harmful, even destructive. Each side takes its stand on the basis of some understanding of what it means to be human. By implication, one cannot, after all, have an opinion about what contributes to human progress unless one first has an understanding of what human beings' needs, and identifies those needs in the light of one's perception of the fundamental structure and purpose of human person. He maintains that meanings arise from the process of interaction, rather than simply being present at some degree. Meanings are created, modified, developed and changed within interactions rather than being fixed. He further avers that meanings are the result of interpretative procedures employed by actors within interaction context. Thus, the meaning that guides action arise in a series of complex interpretative procedures.

Haralambos and Heald, (2001) aver that interactionism is concerned with interaction which means actions between individuals. Action for them is meaningful to those involved. It therefore follows that an understanding of action requires an interpretation of the meanings which actors give to their activities. Interactionism involves negotiation and interpretation of situation and individuals. Negotiation and interpretation therefore create room for the understanding of the situation in question which symbolic interactionism portrays. The use of symbolic interactionism will help in discovering that man's action is a symbol in interacting with the larger group of people in the society as well as its communicative effect with the outside world. This means that the relationship between the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese and the Women Religious especially the Immaculate Heart Sisters can be interpreted in the light of their activities geared towards pastoral development in order to make better Christians and citizens for both the Church and societal development.

According to Haralambos and Holborn (2008) interactionism is concerned with "interaction which means action between individuals" (p.12). As a social animal, man cannot survive without interacting with his social environment which includes the people around him, the norms and values of his society and the environmental facilities around him. Interactionism emphasizes that social interaction is symbolic in nature and that social reality is constructed by people's perceptions. Thus, pastoral activities of Immaculate Heart Sisters can only be effective through the interactive relationship with the people they are caring for.

Ogunbameru (2010), observes that Blumer who popularised Mead's ideas believed "that humans act toward things and toward others, based on the meaning that they have for them. Meaning comes from social interaction, not from within the object. Humans choose to act;

they are not caused to act” (p. 98). Interactionists therefore see human beings as active, creative and pragmatic actors who continually adjust their behaviour based on what they see and hear; hence the main ideas of interactionism, the objective world has no real meaning for humans except for subjective definitions they give to things. Humans are able to adjust their behaviours and actions only because they are able to interpret and treat the actions and those of others. This is further aided by human beings ability to think and react to their actions.

Goffman (1958), a prominent social theorist in this tradition, discusses roles dramaturgically, using an analogy to the theater, with human social behaviour seen as more or less well scripted and with humans as role-taking actors. Role-taking is a key mechanism of interaction, for it permits people to take the other’s perspective, to see what people’s actions might mean to the other actors with whom they interact. Interactionists tend to study social interaction through participant observation, rather than surveys and interviews. They argue that close contact and immersion in the everyday lives of the participants is necessary for understanding the meaning of actions, the definition of the situation itself, and the process by which actors construct the situation through their interaction. This is the reason for Immaculate Heart Sisters involve themselves in all the practical activities that bring hope and consolation to the people of God as a means of enhancing pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese. Given this, interactionists make explicit use of their values in choosing what to study but strive to be objective in the conduct of their research.

Interactionism is micro-sociological and believes that meaning is produced through the interactions of individuals. According to Blumer (1969) interaction refers to;

peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or “define” each other’s actions instead of merely reacting to each other’s actions. Their “response” is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behavior. (p. 180).

Ogunbameru (2010), defines interactionism as a social constructionist approach used in understanding social life that focuses on how reality is constructed by active and creative actors through their interaction with others. Kunhiyop (2008) defines Religion as a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful permable and long lasting moods and motivation in men by formulating conceptions of general order to existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. Fairchild (1965) describes;

a symbol as that which stands for something else, particularly, a relatively concrete explicit representation of a more generalized, diffuse, intangible object or group of objects. A large part of social processes is caused on by the use of symbols excites reactions similar to, though perhaps not quite as intense as those created by the original object. (p. 314).

Ejizu (1986) avers that symbolism is the basis of human communication, since man is by nature, *a homo symbolicus*, a symbolizing conceptualizing and meaning seeking animal. Supporting this idea, Plummer (1979) notes that this perspective is not just concerned with

the individual or with society, but “with the joint acts through which lives are organized and societies assemble” (p.195). Rather, it involves consideration of how others view a person, and how the person responds to and develops his or her own responses to this, Plummer (1979), notes that “we can never be alone with a ‘self’ (p. 195).

In terms of an overall perspective on the social world, this approach is concerned with collective behaviour and the social world as active and interactive. The interactionist theory enables researcher, understands the meaning of activities as interpreted by the actor drawing from the analysis of actual human interaction. As a result, Immaculate Heart Sisters who engage in many activities that enhances the pastoral development of the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese are succeeding because of their functionality which is made possible through interaction that leads to human relationships. Thus research by interactionists focuses on easily observable face to face interactions rather than on macro level structural relationships involving social institutions. Whereas for the functionalists, socialization creates stability in the social system for interactionists, negotiation among members of society creates temporary, socially constructed relations which remain in constant flux, despite relative stability in the basic framework governing those relations.

In the same vein, interactionism brings people closer to each other through communication and interaction. As different individuals, cultures and tradition come together which synthesis in acculturation (process of cultural and psychological change); noticeable group level effects like changes in culture, customs and social institutions that will manifest in changes in food, clothing, language and even means of communication will be observed in society. Moreover, interaction has a great impact on religion. Human society is

characterised by interpersonal relationship and communication, and also with interaction with spiritual beings which is the domain of religion. The interactions could be verbal or non-verbal through signs and symbols. To understand religion in terms of symbolic interactionism, we must understand our sacred symbols and what they represent.

The religious symbol that the adherent use such as the rosary, crucifix (a cross), Bible for a Catholic Christian, a Buddhist or Islamist Mandala, the traditional offer and all other religious talismans that people know, help to define the users. Immaculate Heart Sisters through their pastoral activities have interacted and continue to interact with the people of God in order to foster harmonious relationships in their places of work. The people's belief in these religious iconic objects is much engrained in them because over the centuries, they have been told what they stand for. Ezenweke and Ogada (2012), state that "Religious symbols have unique ability to manifest the sacred, to encompass a multitude of structurally coherent meanings and to reveal the continuity between the structures of human existence and cosmic structures" (p. 147).

The aim of interactionism is to bring people closer to each other through communication and interaction. Different individuals, cultures and tradition come together to express their opinions and through that there could be acculturation which explains the process of cultural change and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures. The effects of acculturation can be seen at multiple levels in both interacting cultures. At the group level, acculturation often results in changes to culture, customs, and social institutions. Noticeable group level effects of acculturation often include changes in food, clothing, and language. At the individual level, differences in the way individuals'

acculturation have been shown to be associated not just with changes in daily behaviour, but with numerous measures of psychological and physical well-being.

Nmah (nd), states that in spite of the missionaries' pietistic theology, they created a culture which kept only one eye fixed on heaven, while the other was focused quite firmly on earth. It is as a result of this that Women Religious with particular reference to Immaculate Heart Sisters making real impact on the life of the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese, concerning themselves with the pastoral of the people through healthy interaction that brought about good relationship between them and the people of God. The participation of the Women Religious in pastoral development have helped and still helping in boosting the faith of the people of God living in Onitsha Archdiocese.

2.2.3 Human Relation Theory

This theory was developed at about 1926 by Mary Parker Follett and further developed by Elton Mayo and co. It was in reaction to the principles of scientific or classic models of administration that Mary Follett, the champion of the movement on human relation contended that the central problems of any enterprise or organisation are the building and maintenance of harmonious human relations. She argued that coordination is the underlying essence of effective administration of organization. According to her, coordination involves four principles namely;

Coordination by direct contact with the people concerned

Coordination in the early stages

Coordination as the reciprocal relation of all the factors in a situation

Coordination as a contriving process, that is, right from the beginning to the end you have to coordinate people, their works and the resources.

It was Elton Mayo, F. J. Beethlisberger and W. D. who suggested empirical data in support of human relations theory. Their experiments at Hawthorne factory of Western Electric Company (1923-1926) produced interesting results – The experiments were conducted to study the influence of quality and quantity of illumination on efficiency in industry. They found out that each time they introduced anything new, there was improvement in production, but when they were cut off, productions still increased. So they have to discover why there was no fall in production. It was then they realized that human relations were the major factor. According to them, the movement, the management starts invoking at workers as human beings and considers their welfare; they will start to develop the feeling of belonging to the organization. In other words, human relations create in the workers, a sort of inner feeling or sense of belonging to the organization.

According to them, their sense of acceptance and high morale matter more than monetary and economic incentives and other mechanical improvements. Application of this theory to Women Religious and Pastoral development is apparent because, as Immaculate Heart Sisters are living and working with and among the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese to enhance their pastoral development, they are to be sensitive to the feelings of the people and thus coordinate them in such a manner that they will have a sense of belonging. Hence, this will lead to the general improvement in the Church which leads to Church growth.

The activities of these Women Religious in the society promote good harmonious relationship between people in the society. This is because any society that is devoid of good human relationship witnesses stagnation and retardation of development. But these Women Religious with specific reference to the Immaculate Heart Sisters have over the time built and sustained this good human relation amongst the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese through their pastoral development. For the critical examination of this study, Durkheim's functionalism on religion, Blumer's interactionism and Mary Parker Follet's human relations theory were adopted. However, for a better understanding of this position the empirical frameworks of this research will surface.

2.3 Empirical Framework

This section of the literature review aims at highlighting salient features of some related empirical studies by some scholars whose findings have relevance to the present study. Udemba (2014) is emphatic when she states that "Women Religious have participated immensely to the advancement of societies that it has become practically impossible to ignore their contributions" (p.7). In line with this opinion, John Paul II (1988) avers that from the beginning of Christ's mission, women show special concern to him and his ministry which according to him is characteristics of their femininity. Bruce (1996), pointed out the roles of males and females in the family stating that "males defend the family from outside; while females maintain its integrity on inside" (Pp.51-52). In modern society, the role of hired women for care in the family is on the increase, the everyday world of women is capable of being a parable of reality. The Igbo culture care as belonging to women's world.

On the same note, John Paul II (1996) observes that:

following a glorious tradition, a great number of consecrated women carry out their apostolate in the field of healthcare, according to the charism of their perspective institute. Down the centuries, many consecrated women have given their lives in service to victims of contagious disease, confirming the truth that dedication to the point of heroism belong to the prophetic nature of consecrated life. The Church looks with admiration and gratitude upon many Women Religious who by caring for the sick and suffering contribute in a significant way to her mission (p. 73).

This implies that life of the Women Religious is a sure hope for the continuity of the universal Church and the Onitsha Archdiocese in particular through their prayers and pastoral activities. Moretti and Pirelli (cited in Mbonu, 2014), avers that “The bodies of all Women Religious are bodies to be broken for the others and their blood to be poured out for the healing and salvation of mankind” (p.53). This simply means that Women Religious are the primary keepers and sustainers of the less privilege in the society. Udemba (2014) describes the embodiment of this claim in the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta thus:

In the life of mother Teresa of Calcutta we have clear examples of God’s power working through Women Religious to transform the lives of the people and society. In the midst of utter human depravity and over pouring ordo of death, one always find her serene and radiating joy to help the people to die with dignity, she heard the cry of the hungry, gave home to the homeless, lifted the half naked, dying destitute on pavements and at railway stations. Women Religious help to build an alternative future that can enkindle hope in the hearts of those who search for viable alternatives for the future. (p.5).

John Paul II (1996) also observes that:

in the face of the desperate need of Africa, Women Religious are emerging as a strong source of hope for the future. These women, who are deeply trusted by their societies work to improve the course of life by serving where the needs are the greatest in school, healthcare and service centers across the continent.(p.73).

In support of this idea, Okure (1981) describes Mother Mary Charles walker, the foundress of the Congregation the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus as:

a special friend of the poor and the needy, many of whom she helped to self-reliant. She saved many twins and their mothers from extermination which was practiced among the pagans at the time. She built orphanage and at winery in Anua-Uyo in 1929. (p.10).

Pastoral care is the practical demonstration of the love of God through care and compassion. It is through this avenue that the Women Religious are concerned with the specific processes within the individual that give rise to attitudes, and they understand that at least some of the effects of destructive experiences and relationships can be overcome by creative and redemptive relationships and processes. These women heard the cry of the disadvantaged and were always available to the weak members of the society giving their time and energy to them, ensuring that there will be no more tears in their eyes. By their self-giving, Women Religious disposed themselves to serve children, women, girls and others in the society. To strengthen the assertion that women are prominent partners in transformational developments in societies, Okure (1991) recounts the practical response of the Mother Charles Magdalene Walker to the needs of her context thus: “Mother Charles

Magdalene Walker opened pre- marriage canter in Calabar and Anua - Uyo where women were thought formal lessons in domestic science, home management and crafts” (p.10).

Still on the altruistic serving of the aspirations of human societies by Women Religious, Souza (2005) asserts that;

Women have acquired and developed certain psycho-social assets during the course of history, through the gender, specific socialization within the private’s sphere of their homes. These traditional psycho-social strengths such as attention of life capacity for nurturance and body intuition, facility for relationship, connectedness and communication, sensitivity for issues of pace, non-violence spirit of sacrifices and commitment, have helped them to contribute to the well-being and maintenance of their homes (p.178).

In extreme circumstances, women Religious bore the responsibility of the education and upbringing of the children, heeding the call of John Paul (1988) to “consecrated person to take up again wherever possible the mission of education in schools of every kind and levels including universities and institution of higher” (p. 84). Moretti and Pierli (cited by Udemba 2014) note that:

Consecrated women are able to be especially effective in the education activities and so offer specific contributions. The history of antiquity down to our own day is full of admirable examples of consecrated women who have sought and continue to holiness through their involvement in education, while at the same time proposing holiness as the goal of education. Indeed many of them have achieved perfection of charity through teaching. They teach the people to love in as much as they are

unconditionally loved, to know the face of God through their neighbors. When these are lacking society suffers violence and becomes in turn the progenitor of more violence. The New Testament affirms the significance of a good teacher. In fact, teaching is one of the commandments contained within the great commission (Matthew 28: 18-20). These women inculcate holiness in the lives of the people through education. (p.8).

Paul (2010) states that “Mother Teresa of Calcutta established the school, educating the poor children and also aided the poor of their sickness; she was joined in her effort by a group of voluntary helpers” (p.85). Udemba (2014) in affirmation of the enormous contribution of Women Religious especially in the areas of social and economic to enhance pastoral growth of the people avers that “these women – fully consecrated and fully women – are true, authentic answer to the challenge of the present day society, they build alternative future for the hopeless” (p.9).

Udemba (2014) also asserts that;

Women Religious have made a unique contribution by being at the frontier of education, with its pioneering abilities. Wherever a Catholic school or college has been established people of all castes and communities have flocked to it, acclaiming its academic excellence, good discipline, personal care and attention given to students, the inculcation of values, dedication of the staff, promotion of healthy staff-student relationship, excellence in extra-curricular activities and all round formation of the students. A large number of these institutions are managed by Women Religious where the evangelical witness of consecrated life is made dynamically alive and effective at the service of the people. (p.41).

This implies that Women Religious are significantly and actively present in the Church and in the society, and they help to shape the society. Okure (1981) describes the concrete social actions for the growth and development of persons and society by mother Charles Magdalene walker in this manner:

Mother Mary Magdalene Walker gave an all-round, utilitarian education seasoned with strong character formation. She quickly reorganized the St. Joseph's Girl school, Calabar which was at the point of being closed down, when she took over in 1924. She introduced the Montessori Method for a more effective training as well as the student/teacher system to cope with insufficient staff. She enlarged the curriculum to include domestic science and home management. The school reached high standard that after government inspection in 1926, it was classed A+. Bishop Joseph Shanahan was overwhelmed with joy and wrote in appreciation of Mother Mary Magdalene. (p.42).

In the same vain, Njoku (1987) brought to light how Immaculate Heart Sisters were able to save the Church economically and pastorally by safe guarding the properties that would have been confiscated after the war by the Nigerian Government. She states that;

Immediately after the war, the Missionary Sisters were deported\expelled by the Nigerian Military Government-all the Church Hospitals Managed by the missionary Sisters were left vacant. Everything Medical seemed to be paralyzed and all hope to be lost, but God used the Immaculate Heart Sisters, who spared no effort in freeing our people from the slavery of disease through medical services when the war ended in 1970, most of the Church Hospitals were badly destroyed and the equipment

looted, as was the case in Borromeo Hospital at Onitsha. Others are Ihiala, Ozubulu, Nsukka, Adazi and Emekuku to mention but a few partly destroyed and equipment totally looted. Some of these were occupied by the international Red Cross Teams. When life became calm before the vacation of soldiers and Red Cross people, the hospitals would have been handed over to the government if not for the Immaculate Heart Sister's intervention. (p.30).

Anochie (1994) states that;

on account to give the girls sound and moral education and train them to be self-reliant, Immaculate Heart Sisters opened pre-marriage centres at Nnewi, Aba, Nkpor, Urualla, Enugu, Adani, Nguru where young girls are prepared as christian mothers. In addition to the usual domestic science, weaving, girls in the schools learn thoroughly the Church's teaching on marriage and responsible parenthood. (p.102).

These activities of Immaculate Heart Sisters negate the idea of the categorization of native agents by the European historiographers. African historiographers as written by Kalu (1986), opines that "Africans must be evangelised by the Africans" (p.16). This implies that the contributions made by the indigenous missionary had always be left behind when the account of missionary activities are to be written by European Church historians. But according to Kalu, without the indigenous missionaries, the missionary enterprise would not have taken root not to talk of continuing. This work is one of those that x-rayed the missionary enterprise of the indigenous missionaries exemplified in Immaculate Heart Sisters especially from 1967-2015 within the old Onitsha Archdiocese.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

Ever so often, the Religious, especially the Women Religious are been seen by the people as those who just satisfy themselves with simply quoting the injunction of Christ to his followers: “You are the Salt of the earth... You are the Light of the world” (Matthew 5:13). The people understand His followers are expected to influence the world, lead it and exercise a directive force and power in it. The Women Religious through the reviewed literatures have shown and proved not just quoting the injunction in Matthew 25:35-36 “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave something to drink, I was a stranger and you brought me in and welcomed me and lodge me. I was naked you clothed me, I was sick you visited me and in prison you came to see me” but are doers of the injunction through their pastoral developments.

These Women Religious do this according to Onyeneke (1987), through the Spirit which inspired Saint Paul to his great missionary sacrifice as he explains in the full text thus;

So be on your gaurd remembering how night and day for three years, I never failed to keep you right, shedding tears over each one of you. I never asked anyone for money or cloths; you know yourself that the work I did earned enough to meet my needs and those of my companions. I did this to show you that this is how we must exert ourselves to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord who Himself said: I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave water, I was naked and you clothed me. (p.54).

In the review of the related literature first highlighted are the concept and importance of Women Religious and their pastoral developmental contributions in the Church and in the

society. It is necessary to establish rich conceptual basis of Women Religious and their pastoral contributions in the society, from which all future studies will proceed. Also highlighted are the related theories underlying the present study, which have implication for Women Religious and pastoral contributions in the Church and the society.

According to Nwamaradi (2007), theoretical framework is characterized by the view that the driving force in learning is internal. Theoretical framework reviews also unveiled the values and assertions related to the study of Women Religious and pastoral development. Also it is worthy of note from the literature so far reviewed that the principles or tenets underlying these three framework are obtained in the practice of religion and culture. Furthermore, it was unveiled from the reviewed works examined the interrelationship between Women Religious and development with a result that both work hand in hand, they interwoven in the sense that Women Religious exist in order to help others live a meaningful life as a result, Women Religious' role in the society is an indispensable aspect of the Church. Therefore, this research has realised that the life and work of Women Religious evolves in Christ. That is to say, it is historical, it is Christocentric in nature and in practice and because most of the scholars as cited in the reviewed literature did not identify clearly these aspects, it becomes imperative that this gap as created in the literature review is filled up in the course of this research work. Again, the idea of Kalu (1986) on the concerning the African historiography will run through this work.

CHAPTER THREE

ONITSHA ARCHDIOCESE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter discusses the history of Onitsha town, the history of Onitsha Archdiocese, Men in Onitsha Archdiocese, Youth, and Women in Onitsha Archdiocese. It goes further to discuss some heroic deeds of Women in Onitsha Archdiocese and the challenges of Catholic Women in Onitsha Archdiocese. The history of Onitsha town is undertaken to enable one understand and have a knowledge of the town in which the Archdiocese is established though this Archdiocese comprises of the dioceses within the present Anambra State. This is so because of the periods this study covers and Catholic Archdiocese of Onitsha cannot be studied in isolation. It must be anchored somewhere; hence Onitsha.

3.1 History of Onitsha Town

Many historical accounts exist about the origin of Onitsha people. These accounts based mostly on oral tradition and stories passed on from generations to another tell us about a migration led by Ezechima, the founding king of Onitsha around the sixteenth century A.D. The differences stem mostly from details of what caused the movement as well as few facts regarding the origin of the migrants from Ile-Ife in Yoruba heartland or Edo/Benin. All the accounts, however, agree on the movement from the Mid-West parts of Nigeria with the predominant version placing Onitsha people in Edo/Benin at the time of Oba Esigie. All the accounts also point to Ezechima as the founder of Onitsha. Based on this, Azikiwe (1970) wrote thus:

In tracing my paternal lineage, I could say that both parents of my father are direct descendants of Ezechima. As for me, I can trace my paternal ancestry in this wise: I

am the first son of Chukwuemeka, who was the third and first son of Azikiwe, who was the second son of Molokwu, who was the third son of Ozomaocha, who was the second son of Inosi Onira, who was the fourth son of Dei, the second son of Ezechima, the founder of Onitsha. (p.1).

Onitsha as a town is in the east coast of the Nigeria. Onitsha is in Anambra State in the Eastern part of Nigeria. According to Okeke (2012) Onitsha metropolis has a geographical area of 1,146 square miles and a population of about 2.4 million people. It is situated at 6.15⁰ North Latitude, 6.79⁰ Longitude and 72 metres elevation above the sea level. Okeke (2012) states that Onitsha was known as *Ado N'Idu* by citizens who departed from the vicinity of the Kingdom of Benin near the far western portion of Igboland near what is now Agbor, after a violent dispute with the Oba of Benin that can be tentatively dated to the early 1500s. The Yoruba accounts claim that the name Onitsha is a corruption of the Yoruba word, *Orisha*- a deity seen as an emissary of Olodumare – Yoruba for God. The full names, Onitsha *Ado n'Idu* according to Azikiwe (1970) mark a complete reference to this combined ancestry of *Ado* – another reference to the Yoruba and *Idu* - Benin.

However, Idubor (2016) wrote that:

The history of Onitsha began with the migration of the people from the Benin Empire towards the end of early part of the sixteenth century AD. This migration was as a result of the wave of unrest, war and displacement unleashed by the Islamic movement from North Africa. It was during their passage through the outskirts of Ile-Ife that they acquired the name Onitsha a corruption of the Yoruba word *Orisha* and *Udo*, the famous shrine worshipped by the people. As time went on, the

combination of the two words, Onitsha for *Orisha* and *Ado* for *Udo* culminated in the present name, Onitsha *Ado* (p.1).

Thus, the people of Onitsha left the out skirts of Ile-Ife and resettled in the Benin kingdom and soon established themselves as one of the clans in Benin kingdom exercising all the rights and privileges attached therein. Due to long process of acculturation in Benin, the Onitsha people jealously guarded their acquired right particularly with regard to their revered shrine *udo*. Idubor (2016) wrote that the reason why the Onitsha people quarreled with Oba Esigie, (1404-1550), of Benin was because of the slight, the Oba gave their shrine-*udo*. He stated further that, it was customary for newly installed Oba to pay homage to all important shrines in the Benin Kingdom by slaughtering a cow in the shrines enclave. Oba Esigie failed to do this at the Onitsha people's *udo* shrine, hence the quarrel.

Okeke (2012) states that "traveling eastward through what is now Western Igboland (and various towns also called "Onitsha", for example *Onicha-Ugbo*, farmland-Onitsha, the Onitsha which was led by one Chima eventually crossed the Niger River (Igbo *Orimili*) and settled on the east bank in their current location"(p.1). According to Idubor (2016);

It took the Onitsha people several years before they got to Obior and Illa and finally crossed the River Niger and established Onitsha Ado. They stopped at several places in the then Mid-West now called Delta state, places like Agbor, Issele-Uku. This explains the affinity with the inhabitants of Delta state like Illa, Issele-Uku, Obaamkpa, Onitsha- Olona, Onitsha Ugbo, Agbo, Obior, Onitsha Uku.(p.1).

The affinity to Benin people is most evident in ancient Onitsha customs and *Ndichie* titles which have undeniable similarities to what exist in Benin as names such as *Iyasele*, *Osodi*, *Osuma*, *Ozoma*, *Onira*, *Osiwa*. Moreover, aspects of the Benin account suggest that Onitsha

people left Benin as a result of strife with Oba Esigie orchestrated by an altercation with the Oba's mother who had trespassed on farm lands belonging to the Onitshas. The resultant unrest forced Ezechima, the originator of Onitsha to move East with his family and supporters in search of a new homeland.

Onitsha is an Igbo speaking town; a commercial city, educational, and religious centre and river port on the eastern bank of the Niger River in Anambra State, southeastern Nigeria. Okeke (2012) posits that the population in the early 1960s, before the Nigerian-Biafra civil war officially recorded as 76,000 and the town was distinctive in a number of dimensions. Abanobi (2007) states that Chinua Achebe characterized it as harbouring an esoteric region from which creativity sallies forth at will to manifest itself, a zone of occult instability. He stated further that though, it experienced great suffering during and after the Nigerian – Biafra civil war, by virtue of its still-strategic geographic position Onitsha has continued to develop, and by 2001 had an estimated population of 511,000 with a metropolitan population of 1,003,000.

Abanobi (2007) states that Onitsha is currently one of the fastest growing cities in the world and the indigenous people of Onitsha are Igbo and speak the Igbo language. It is here worth noting that Onitsha should not be confused with the other municipalities of the same name *Onicha* lying further east in Nigeria: *Onicha-Uboma*, *Onicha-Uburu*, *Onicha-Agu*, *Onicha-Nwenkwo*, *Onicha-EnuguEzike*, *Onicha Ngwa*, *Onicha Nkwerre* and so on. On the west bank of the River Niger exists also *Onicha Ugbo*, *Onicha Olona* and *Onicha Ukwuani*. All of which speak Igbo as their native language. Azikiwe (1970) wrote that the name Onitsha is derived from *Onini* - to despise and *Ncha* – others, meaning one who despises others.

Abanobi (2007) avers that most theories on the word *Onicha* described them as arrogant, they are also known to look down on other people, hardly integrating with their hosts though also feigning friendliness. Not surprising foreigners see little motivation in investing and residing in their homeland. The reason for their arrogance and why they despise others is also given by Azikiwe (1970) as “we descended from the Royal House of Benin and so regarded ourselves as the superiors of other tribes who had no royal blood in their veins” (p.1). However, the existence of quite a number of communities bearing *Onicha* in the eastern Igbo hinterland, whose history do not relate to Edo, did severely jeopardise this hypothesis. After their arrival on the east bank *Onicha-mmili*, the community gradually became a unitary kingdom, evolving from a loosely organized group of royal and non-royal villages into a more centralized entity. Eze Aroli was apparently the first genuinely powerful Obi of Onitsha, the ruler of the city.

The Obi of Onitsha is the traditional leader of Onitsha, Anambra state southeast Nigeria. The post of Obi according to Okeke (2012) is recognised by the state and Federal Government of Nigeria, and the Obi himself is seen as a representative of the people of Onitsha in the state and Federal levels of government. The current Obi of Onitsha is Igwe Ugochukwu Alfred Nnaemeka Achebe (Agbogidi).

3.2 The Culture and Religion of Onitsha People

There are many definitions of culture but all point to the people’s way of life. According to Anyaokei (2015), culture is referred to as;

the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, attitudes, religions, notions of time, roles spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (p. 39).

Culture is a way of life of a group of people, the beliefs, values, behaviours and symbols that they generally accept without thinking about them; and that are passed along by communication and initiation from one generation to the next. Human beings are passive creatures and do whatever their culture tells them to do. Different cultural groups think, feel and act differently. Thus, there is no scientific standard for considering one group as intrinsically superior or inferior to another. The Onitsha peoples' mode of living was in strictest adherence to the moral laws. They were very strict in the rearing of their children according to their customs and traditions.

Chukwudolue (2010) states that, a young man was not allowed to marry until he was over twenty five years; a girl who went to her husband, not in state of virginity was used as a sacrifice to the gods. Twins were also forbidden and it was treated as a taboo. Again, Onitsha people believe so much in their culture, especially the *ozo* titled men who are respected more than any ordinary person, as he possesses greater freedom of action. Anyaokei (2015) states that *Ozo* title is regarded by Onitsha people as the first step that opens them to their spiritual and natural life. *Ozo* title therefore confers on the initiate, the basis to the highest degree of social standing in Onitsha community which *Ndichie Ume* and gives him the right to stand and address the village assembly. He maintains that *ozo* title initiation is a second basis for legitimacy and sense of belonging in Onitsha society. This therefore, is solely because of his being in position of wealth or influence, to exert his

demands. This simply is not the right to exercise authority as a person but much of honour and respect paid to him for his title. The women are not left behind in the Onitsha cultural milieu. The Onitsha women takes the title of *Odu* which also places them in a very high respected position among their mates and make them look highly religious.

One needs a broad conceptualisation of Igbo religion to better grasp the full significance of its influence. Religion, it should be recalled, is the womb of the culture in the traditional Igbo background. It permeates most aspects of life, and infuses them with meaning and significance. The indigenous religion and cultural practices remained intact before the coming of the Whitemen, who introduced alien religion without warning and without deliberate preparation into Onitsha. Onitsha like other alienated and colonized communities in Igboland was invaded by a foreign culture. Though many factors combined to challenge and weaken the traditional beliefs and practices in Onitsha, it is observed that prominent among them were the explorers who came to open up the dark continents of Africa to civilization; the administrators and imperialists who introduced a new system of government, laws and order; the merchants who established trade and finally, Christian missionaries who brought Christianity and campaigned vigorously against the traditional religious faith.

Historically, Onitsha people, who are descendants of Edo (Benin) kingdom, are highly, religious people, with absolute belief in one God, the Almighty. The concept of God is not unique to any human group or race. The Igbo according to Nmah (2003), “are a religious people” Ozigbo (1988) also stated that;

Religion is one of man's inherent attributes. It stems from his ability, to think abstractly and also to symbolize. From time immemorial, African has been very religious, and like other people of the world, their religion has known many forms. (p. 26).

Since man is uncertain of how he came into being in the world and where he goes at death, he continues to probe into discovering and knowing the forces behind the existence of the universe and how they interplay and control it. As a result of this Emefiene (cited by Mgbemena, 2012) wrote that;

The apparent awareness of the existence of some supernatural forces surrounding him and wielding influence over his life, subjects man to seek to establish and maintain cordial relationship with the supernatural. Thus arose all forms of religious beliefs, practices, and superstition. (p. 39).

Traditional religion was practised by the people of Onitsha prior to the advent of the Christian religion and they were similar in one way or the other to those found in other societies. It acted as a powerful instrument of cohesion among the people. In Onitsha, religion was centered on the existence of a supreme *Chukwu* who is regarded as the great God and the author of heaven and earth. Their belief in the supernatural existence of *Chukwu* or *Chineke* as the Supreme Being is a pan – Igbo belief, presented by the Christian religion. Thus Mgbemena (2012) states that He is the Supreme Being that creates and exists to control His creatures, but was not created. They also believe in ancestors as guardians and deities as intercessors. Anyaokei (2015) states that today, there are over fifty shrines and deities in Onitsha, scattered all over the nooks and crannies of the metropolis, which is manifestation of the people's deep love and respect for their traditional religion. About six

of the deities and shrines are jointly owned and worshipped by the entire Onitsha people. Anyaokei (2015) listed those four deities and shrines as *ANI ONITSHA*, situated at the entrance of *OSE-OKWU-ODU*, via old Market Road, *OBINNA MMILI* at the tributary of River Niger and Nkisi stream, *NDENDE*, *OLINRI* and *OBALA OGBI* all along the Creek of River Niger” (p.18). One may be tempted to ask why all these shrines and deities in this 21st century of Onitsha. But one important fact to note here is that these shrines and deities serve as the remaining link between the past, the present and the future of the people of Onitsha Ado N’Idu. There is a belief that bad spirits are always around, so special charms and amulets which is normally called *ogwu* are worn to avoid their attacks.

As highly religious group, they guard them jealously and worship the mystery of gods of the land, the sea and river. The people of Onitsha have special regard for the worship of *Ani* (God of the land), represented by Egbo tree, to which a white piece of clothe is generally hung. The *Ani* is considered so strong and sacred that any crime committed against *Ani* is considered sacrilegious. Odife (1996) remarked that what the *Ani* sanctioned constituted right and whatever she condemned was taboo. They also observe spirits within the bush, streams, rivers, gigantic trees such as Iroko, Oak, and Apple trees as symbolic creation of the uniqueness of God. Orakwue cited by Anyaokei (2015) gave a good account of how the people of Onitsha worship in their shrines or deities as “an art of grace and benevolence, prayers are usually offered to God with kolanuts to show honour and goodwill and as a means of expression of desire for some favour or act of forgiveness” (p. 20). All these go to show the deep love and respect the people have for their shrines and deities as sacred and revered places.

3.3 History of Onitsha Archdiocese

The Catholic Church in Onitsha Archdiocese was not established in a virgin land. European explorers and other Christian missionaries were already at Onitsha. Butressing this point, Gray(1969), states thus:

Exploration, steam-power, medical advances and the Maxim gun, all contributed to the astonishing extension of Christian missionary activity in nineteenth century Africa. These products of the industrial revolution powerfully assisted the penetration, survival and reinforcement of the pioneer missionaries, and in part the Christian Gospel floated in, on the rising tide of European influence. (p.14).

The researcher by this is saying that it is not as if the Church on her own just came on mission rather, it was as a result of the European exploit. And in order to establish its sustainability, the Church then came on board and this is the 1857 expedition. Though history has it that the first Christian contact in Nigeria occurred in the fifteenth century when the Portuguese introduced Roman Catholicism in Benin and Warri. This corroborated by Mgbemena (2012) who wrote that the Catholics through the influence of the Portuguese traders were the first missionaries to set foot on Nigeria soil. Thus in 1857, British palm oil traders established a permanent station in the city of Onitsha. Araka (2010) stated that Christian missionaries joining them were headed by the liberated African bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther a Yoruba receptive and Reverend John Taylor an Igbo receptive. In 1900 Onitsha became part of a British protectorate. The British colonial government and Christian missionaries penetrated most of Igboland to set up their administration, schools and churches through the river port at Onitsha. The Onitsha Archdiocese of 1967 comprises of the present Awka, Nnewi Dioceses and Onitsha Archdiocese.

According to Obi (1985), the history of Onitsha Archdiocese begins with the arrival of the French missionaries; Reverend Fathers Lutz, Horne, brothers Jean Gotto and Hermas on December 5, 1885. Nwosu (1985) says that the pioneer French missionaries who came to plant the seed of Catholic faith did not come to a virgin land. According to him they met Royal Niger Company and Church Missionary Society (CMS) who were already there before their arrival. The Royal Niger Company accommodated them until they got settled.

3.3.1 Acquisition of a Permanent Site for Settlement

Ukaegbu (2007), Eze (2005), and Nwosu (1985) state that in January 1886, Father Lutz and his team went and paid courtesy visit to the leader of Onitsha Chief Obi Anazonwu and made a request of a piece of land to establish their mission. This request was granted, though according to Nwosu (1985), the Catholic missionaries later exchanged the land that was given to them, with the one on an elevated ground near Nkisi River. This is because the land was already ceded to the Anglican mission four years before the date. But when Fr. Lutz met the Anglican Bishop on that request and he responded according to Nwosu (1985), thus: "I acquired this piece of land for God's cause. Take it" (p.18). When the land was acquired, Fr. Lutz began work since they have not built a house of their own. The foundation of the first mission house was dug on January 25, 1886 and on April 7 of same year they packed into the house. The official opening was on Easter Monday April 25, 1886.

3.3.2 The Expansion of Onitsha Archdiocese

Eze (2005), states that the Metropolitan See of the Roman Catholic Church in Onitsha has behind it a wonder story of the proverbial mustard seed. It started with the arrival on

December 5, 1885, of the pioneer Catholic missionaries (Two Holy Ghost Fathers) Fr. Joseph Lutz C.S.Sp (*Congregatione Sanctus Spiritus*) and Fr. Horne, and two brothers Hermas and Jean-Gotto after what they described as “nine days of painful journey” up the River Niger.

Monsignor Joseph Lutz who had headed the new mission since 1885 died in 1895 at the age of forty-three and was succeeded by Monisgor Reling who after his resignation in 1898 was succeeded by Fr. Pawlas. He died two years later in 1900. The rapid death of missionaries during this period has been aptly described as the roll-call of death. The mantle of leadership next fell on a big and robust Norman missionary Monisgor Leon Lejeune. Joseph Shanahan was greatly influenced by him and admired above all his fighting spirit was Monsignor Shanahan's lot to lead the fight after Monisgor Lejeune death in 1905.

When Father Ignatius Shanahan C.S.Sp (*Congregatione Sanctus Spiritus*) took over the leadership of the prefecture in 1905, the mission witnessed tremendous progress and growth, and he gave a sense of vision and direction to missionary evangelism by missionary methods, especially, through the schools. It can rightly be said of him that he made the Catholic Church in the East of the Niger and South of Benue rivers what it is today. Prior to his arrival on November 14th, 1902, the young mission had in July 15th, 1889, been officially erected into the Prefecture of the Lower Niger and had boundaries at the Rivers Niger, Benue, Cameroon and the Atlantic Ocean. It had earlier been administered from far away Gabon. His success lay largely in his personality, vision and method as well as somewhat favourable environment he had. He took personal interest in peoples' lives and aspirations

and saw that they were already deeply religious. He realized that what was needed was not a destruction of those religious values but transformation of them into Christianity. This he tried to do. The method he chose as most effective was education. Bishop Joseph Shanahan finally retired from work due to ill health in 1931. He left behind him the foundation of a great Church among a great people.

According to Nwosu (1985), the able successor of Bishop Shanahan in 1931 was Archbishop Charles Heerey, CSSp. He was a man of great wisdom and commanded enormous respect among the people of Nigeria as well as the clergy and religious. He became the first Archbishop of Onitsha in 1950. At his time, most Priests and religious in the country were missionaries. He continued in Shanahan's footsteps and indeed widened his goals, especially in the areas of higher education, indigenization of the clergy and religious. Just as Bishop Shanahan founded the Holy Rosary Sisters, Archbishop Heerey founded the Immaculate Heart Sisters who are indigenous sisters. Another remarkable effort of the Church during the time of Archbishop Heerey's leadership was an attempt by the Archbishop to found a society of Religi

ous Brothers in 1948 which he named The Brothers of St Peter Claver at Uturu Okigwe. The new congregation however was short-lived. Indeed a measure of growth and success of the Church could be seen in rapid creation of a new Prefectures and Vicariates as soon as ArchBishop Heerey took over. July 1934 saw the establishment of the Prefecture of Calabar from which Ogoja, Ikot Ekpene, and Abakaliki Dioceses grew: 1948 saw the establishment of the Vicariate of Owerri from which the Dioceses of Owerri, Umuahia,

Port Harcourt, Orlu, and Okigwe grew. What was left of the old Onitsha Vicariate became an Archdiocese in April 1950.

When Archbishop Charles Heerey died in February 7th 1967, a new chapter was opened in the history of the Archdiocese of Onitsha and indeed in the Catholic Church in the South-eastern Nigeria. First, his successor was not an Irish missionary, not a Holy Ghost Father either, but the 35-year old Nigerian born Francis A. Arinze who was his co-adjutor. It was like a *Nunc Dimittis*. It signaled, as it were, the end of European missionaries' work as well as the climax of their achievements. He came into office during a huge political crisis in Nigeria, and within a few months, the Nigeria/Biafra war broke out in full scale. It was his entire province that was Biafra. The war lasted from 1967, until 1970.

At the end of the civil war, there were fresh problems for the Church in East of the Niger. The military government forced out all expatriate missionaries within the then Biafra territory and the Church was left with few indigenous Priests and religious to fill the vacuum created by the exit of the expatriate missionaries. In addition, the mission schools, which served as schools and Churches, were confiscated.

The problem was enormous and almost insurmountable. However, by divine providence, the Church weathered through these difficulties and flourished in very many ways, namely, vocations to priesthood, religious life boomed, more Churches were built and parishes created, more Dioceses developed, and lay faithful, who grew in great numbers, were encouraged to play their role in the Church and society. It was a golden era in the growth of the Church in Igboland, built upon the strong foundations laid by the missionaries.

During Archbishop Arinze's era, the spiritual life of the people of God was very high on the agenda. Every parish organized annual retreats for all groups in the parish and participation in different Church celebrations, seminars, and rallies were encouraged. The Priests had their annual retreats together and in addition, a monthly day of recollection was introduced. Special attention was given to catechists.

Their position in the ministry of the Church was duly recognized. He made the laity more involved in the apostolate of the Church and also encouraged many religious congregations to establish their houses in the Archdiocese. Two monasteries were established, - the Benedictines for women and Cistercians for men. He founded the Religious Congregation of the Brothers of St Stephen whose special charism is catechesis. When in 1982 Pope John Paul II made a historic pastoral visit to Nigeria, he met a fast growing and vibrant Church, which exudes hope for the Church in Africa.

Nwosu (1985), states that today Archdiocese of Onitsha, which became a vicariate in April 1920 and was raised to the status of an Archdiocese and Metropolitan see of Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province in April 1950, has today 18 Dioceses. According to the websites of Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha Archdiocese, she has the total number of one thousand, two hundred and fifty-two (1,252) priests managing four hundred and forty-eight (448) parishes. These figures are for the diocesan priests of Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha and their parishes. These priests give qualitative mental and corporal soundness to Christ faithful. The Archdiocese has since the early seventies manifested and still remains interested in the missionary activities of universal Church. She does this through sending her Priests to help

in various Dioceses within and outside Nigeria. According A. C Asoanya, (personal communication, June 20th, 2016) the Priests of Onitsha Archdiocese serve in Abakaliki, Nsukka, Ijebu Ode, Minna, Idah, Abuja and Lagos Dioceses in Nigeria, and in various institutions of higher learning.

The Archdiocese also sends the priests to Dioceses in other African countries like Chad, Cameroon, Burkina Faso to name but a few. Outside the shores of Africa the Archdiocesan Priests and Religious serve in United State of America, Italy, Britain, Germany and Australia. Priests of the Archdiocese serve in Roman curia, the central organ of governance of the universal Church, namely Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Roman Rota, Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Pontifical Urban University.

It was observed in the course of this research that Holy Trinity Cathedral, Onitsha was elevated to the status of Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity in May 2008, by Pope Benedict XVI. Onitsha Archdiocese as at the period of study covers areas that are today known as Onitsha Archdiocese erected 1950, Awka 1977, and Nnewi 200 dioceses. The choice of the zone hinges on the fact that the people share common cultural, historical and socio-political circumstances and as such is easily studied as a unit. Onitsha Archdiocese is the head of other dioceses and archdioceses in Igboland.

In 1984, Archbishop Francis A. Arinze was called to the Vatican City to serve at the central administrative organ of the universal Church. Monsignor Stephen Nweke Ezeanya now became the substantive Archbishop of Onitsha from 1985 to 1995. Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel

N. Otteh assisted him as the Auxiliary Bishop. Bishop Emmanuel N. Otteh later became the Bishop of Issele-Uku Diocese. Due to failing health of Archbishop Stephen N. Ezeanya, the Holy See transferred Bishop Albert K. Obiefuna from Awka Diocese to Onitsha as the co-adjutor Archbishop in 1994. On February 2, 1995, upon the retirement of Archbishop Stephen N. Ezeanya, Archbishop Albert K. Obiefuna became the Archbishop of Onitsha till September, 1st 2003 when he retired. On February 9, 2002, Very Rev Father Valerian Maduka Okeke was consecrated the co-adjutor Archbishop of Onitsha. With the retirement of Archbishop Albert Obiefuna in 2003, Archbishop Valerian Maduka Okeke took over the leadership of the Church in Onitsha Archdiocese as the local ordinary with Bishop Denis Chidi Isizoh who was consecrated on the May 1, 2015, as his auxiliary.

3.3.3 Strategies for the Expansion

These pioneer missionaries used many methods to win converts. That includes redemption of slaves, care of the sick and destitute, distribution of charitable items and establishment of schools. Their liturgy, with its richly decorated altars and ornate vestments, appealed to the people who by nature loved signs and actions. In 1889 the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny were invited to take over the education and the care of women and children.

In carrying out their work of evangelization in a vast territory such as the one they met, the Catholic Missionaries had to decide which method to use to enable them achieve their aims. Among their strategies were Christian village approach, a school system, medical apostolate, home visitation, catechetical instructions, and arms giving.

3.4 Catholic Men in Onitsha Archdiocese

In Onitsha Archdiocese one sees some men wearing uniforms conspicuously inscribed with the image of St. Joseph the worker and carpenter either with his son Jesus learning the trade of carpentry or with the image of Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God or with both images, showing the holy family, the ideal family for every christian home are known as Catholic Men Organisation (CMO).

3.4.1 The Origin of Catholic Men Organisation (CMO)

According to Egbusi (2002), the today's Catholic Men Organisation in the Onitsha Archdiocese is the brain child of the then Archbishop of Onitsha Archbishop Francis Arinze. This organisation was formed during the opening address of Archbishop Francis Arinze at the Onitsha Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, inaugurating a new era and evangelisation on 24th July 1982 stated that zoning system should be obligatory method of evangelisation. He then announced that Catholic Men Organisation should commence in all the parishes of Onitsha Archdiocese before January 1983. The four compulsory statutory (bodies) organization to which all lay faithful must belong to, in order to make them come under the second limb of Cann.. 207 that are members of the laity were inadvertently born.

Udegboka (2002) avers that the formation of the Catholic Men Organization is in keeping with Cann. 300 which enjoins all the associations that call themselves Catholic to be so designated by the local ordinary that is the bishop. Thus as from 4th January, 1983, the Catholic Men Organization was officially created in Onitsha Archdiocese. The four statutory bodies are Catholic Men Organisation, Catholic Women Organisation, Catholic Youth Organisation Nigeria (Catholic Boys Organisation and Catholic Girls Organisation).

3.4.2 The Aims for Founding Catholic Men Organisation

The great aims of the Catholic Men Organisation (CMO) are to;

- i. Achieve salvation of the family as a unit in keeping with the biblical mustard seed for all the overall evangelization,
- ii. The sanctification and salvation of all.
- iii. The caring of the spiritual life of their individual families and as a group.
- iv. Raising money for the Church's projects.

This is only realizable when men as head of their families become active members of the Catholic Men Organisation. To achieve the above aims, the organisation has set goals that will eventually meet the need of the universal Church in inculcating facts, hope and charity to all mankind which shall be progressively realized through the sacraments.

3.5 Catholic Youth Organisation in Onitsha Archdiocese (CYON)

The youth are the basic wires of any society and the future of the Church. It will be considered suicidal, therefore, for the Church not to give serious attention to the pastoral development of this integral part of her fold. Eze (2005) states that today's Catholic Youth Organisation of Nigeria was started by Archbishop Charles Heerey of blessed memory as the Young Christian Society (YCS). She went further to state that "the young Christian society was a movement that brought together young men and women of different social categories, students, petty traders, skilled workers, apprentices and unemployed" (p. 180). This society founded by Archbishop Heerey is for the young people to have opportunities of making useful contribution to the growth of the Church and the good of the society. He fanned the movement to life according to Eze (2005) by organizing retreats and seminars for its members.

The youth then because of the opportunity given to them, became the life wire of activities in various parties. Young people were quick to take active part in the daily life of the Church. With spontaneous songs and dances, they add flavour and extra vigour to ceremonies like wedding, ordinations, harvest/bazaars and so on, in connection with youth organization. She went further to state that Archbishop Charles Heerey helped us to start the Young Christian Society and to stand on our own without being affiliated to any Church organization. In order to keep the flag flying, pastoral development for sustenance is very necessary. Egbusi (2002) opines that “it is pertinent to note that what was on the ground in the Onitsha Archdiocese prior to January 4th 1983 were the Young Christian Society and Catholic Women Organisation.

3.6 Catholic Women in Onitsha Archdiocese

In attempt to make the lay faithful better Catholics, Archbishop Charles Heerey, the Catholic Archbishop of Onitsha believing in the saying that when you train a woman you have trained a nation plunged into action by founding an organisation known today as Catholic Women Organisation. According to Nwosu (1985), this organisation was founded in the sixties to unite all Catholic women and women societies into one organisation. He went further to state that the first step was taken in 1962, when Archbishop Charles Heerey sent Mrs V.V.I Okoye for special leadership training course in the United States of America. On her return in 1963, she with the help of other leaders and the support of the founder went round the Archdiocese instructing women on leadership techniques.

According to Nwaogbogu (1996), the Catholic Women Organisation was founded by Archbishop Charles Heerey for personal holiness of members and works of mercy. She went further to state that the Catholic Women Organisation members are to be distinguished as bearers, a mirror of true Christian living at home, of workplace and in the society. Analysing the emergence and origin of Catholic Women Union in Igboland, Ozigbo (cited in Adigwe and Okoye (1980) wrote that;

The Catholic Women Organisation (C.W.O), whose roots go back to the Christian Mothers Association of our days and the women's wing of the Eastern Nigerian Catholic Council (E.N.C.C), of the late 1950s came into being in 1964. It aimed at co-ordinating all activities of Catholic Women. It runs seminars, workshops, and retreats to conscientise women about their rights and role in the community, to raise their moral and spiritual fibre and to encourage them to cultivate the habit of industry in order to be self-reliant.... As a result, the C.W.O. is now the best organized, as a single body, through Nigeria at all levels- stations, parishes, zones, diocesan, provincial, and national. (p.44).

They should be worthy of emulation and a beacon of hope and pride to other women.

3.7 Women in Igboland

Women in Igboland form the greater percentage of the Church's population and are active contributors to the church's spiritual, moral and material progress. They demonstrate their influence and presence in the life and mission of the Church. These women's influence is seen in their group as Catholic Women Organisation, Mary league Girls Association and Women Religious. Okoli (2000) opines that in the priestly office of the Church, women are

presently sharing in the liturgical life of the Church as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, lectors and as altar servers.

Women as extra ordinary ministers of the Sacrament of the Eucharist are presently restricted only to Women Religious. Notwith standing, Okoli (2005) observes that there was some reluctance in the acceptance of women into this role in the Church in Igboland because of the belief that it is only reserved to priests. Thus, in some areas many people including women were not keen on receiving the Holy Communion from their fellow women. The concrete role performed by women in the traditional African context, to a great extent, is determined by inter-related factors that range from sociological, economical and environmental point of view. Sociologically reference is made to such factors as educational attainment, social status of men and women and their various roles in the household. Okorji (1983) avers that;

Education which is related to employment and income affect women's contribution to decision making, provision of labour and contribution to acquisition of household property and other welfare need. Illiterate wives of educated employed men contribute less to household decision-making and household income, but more labour relative to educated wives of educated/employed men. Since greater proportion of educated men and women are found in the urban areas, in absolute terms, the contributions of urban women tend to be higher than those of rural women. (p. 130).

Acholonu (1993) opines that “ a rich woman, an educated woman and enlightened woman who is outspoken, hardworking and fearless can hardly expect to be looked down upon by

any member of the society or of her own immediate family”(p.44). On the contrary the families, communities look up to her, accords her recognition through traditional honours and titles. Economically, reference is made to occupation and income earned by both the men and women. It is clear that women in the urban areas contribute highly to the household income unlike women in the rural areas. Traditionally, whatever woman/women own is /are strictly under the control of the men.

Buttressing this point, Okorji (1983) remarked that;

However, in most rural household, men are generally richer than their women, the situation arising from the fact that men traditionally control household resources including women’s labour among other reasons. On the other hand, the contribution of urban women in household affair increases with rise in income status of the women relative to the men. Urban women’s contribution to household labour requirements tends to decrease with their rising income while that of rural women has no significant change with income. (p. 144).

In affirmation, to this Acholonu (1993) states that in every Nigerian / Igbo society, there is division of labour in agricultural production and economic activities of the entire family. She also avers that the traditional women are known for their ability to combine several roles and to function in various capacities within their society. The society depends much upon their strength and resilience as the matrix of life in its varied dimensions for it places on them the deep valleys that must take onto themselves the burden of supporting the rest of society while seeming to diminish in status in patrilineal societies. Accordingly,

women's lives call for constant sacrifice. But at the same time, they are the bedrock of the family.

Acholonu (1993) opines that motherhood and childbearing are central to the life of African/Igbo people. It is not an overstatement that motherhood is the anchor, the matrix, and the foundation on which all rests in the African/Nigerian society and especially in Igboland. In line with this, Makinde (1998) affirms that women in traditional societies are often limited in conceptual typologies to the eyelike role of daughters, wives, and mothers. Makinde, did not end here, he went further to state that tradition and culture attributes women's role to be that of daughter, wife and mother; it is more than that, for her other roles like nation builder, her role in social and cultural development, economic and industrial development and political development; all consist in her vital and noble role of being a daughter, wife and a mother as God's endowment. According to him, the attributes that are contributory factors of women in development all that it takes to make her a real help mate.

Kemdirim (1998) creates the awareness of the role of women in the traditional society as healers. According to him, the activities of women in traditional society are well attested to. Igbo women play significant roles in the health development of men and women. They are truly mothers of the society. In Igbo land, and elsewhere in Nigeria, like the Efik, Kalabari and Tivlands, women are traditional healers. They are also orthopedists. Women in traditional society are respected because of the enormous work they are doing, but not without difficulties. Indeed women's conscious contributions to decision-making, planning and production was grossly belittled by culture and religion, gender discrimination and

illiteracy/ignorance have contributed to endanger women's fuller participation in health care both in tradition and contemporary society.

In Igboland, women are traditionally seen and regarded as weaker than the men, less useful to the family and even less valuable to the community. Her primary and paramount role through which she could gain status, recognition and respect was being a dutiful wife and mother. She further contributes to the welfare of her family through farming and small scale trading on camowood, condiments and foodstuff. In the administration of the family, the village or clan, women are seldom consulted. Rarely are women included in decision-making on vital issues of the society. Although today women venture into politics, most Igbo women have no political rights except as permitted by their husbands. On the traditional level, women have little say in the governance of the clan. Their governmental powers are more on those issues that concern the women folk.

However, Acholonu (1993) sees this as a dangerous misrepresentation of the true state of affairs that negates the diversity and variety of issues surrounding her position and experience in the different cultures in which she finds herself. It is noteworthy to state that in traditional African/Nigerian society, women do not feel any need to imitate men in order to express their personality. It is believed that individuals in the family complement one another for the up-building of the entire family. K. L Nwadiakor (personal communication June 18, 2015) says that from the beginning of the Church, women have been traditionally involved in witnessing to the love of Christ through care of the sick, teaching and social work among the poor. Adigwe (1983) remarks that, women have performed tremendous roles in the Church in so many ways and as a result, scholars are of the opinion and are

advocating for full participation of women in the ministerial priesthood of the Church. In support of this view, Mbuya-Beya (1998) states that;

the women of Africa have passed from a passive consideration of the unfair way they have long considered in their culture and in their churches, to a firm determination to become leaders in the struggle towards a true liberation of the African people. (p. 13).

According to Ramodibe (1988), the Church is one of the most oppressive structures in the society today especially when it pertains to women. He said that women are oppressed in Church and went further to show how the Church manifests her oppressive action on women. Thus, irrespective of the fact that women form the majority of the people in the Church, men take decisions on the Church except in very few occasions. Women are seen as minors and inferior to men. Men only are given most prominent positions of leadership, with power of control. In a true democratic system, it is the majority that leads, makes policies and takes decisions. In the Church however, the contrary is the case, since it is not a democratic institution rather it is hierarchical in structure. Ramodibe (1988) however, is not advocating for a democratized Church where power will be in the hands of the majority. Rather he is of the opinion that women should be allowed more participatory role in the leadership and decision-making bodies in the church as the family of God, which they are members.

Stressing more on this denial of leadership role to the majority in the church, Schuster-Fiorenza (cited by Buhring 1993) opines that, although women form majority of the members of the Church, only the male still officially represent the Church. Despite the fact that the Church is addressed as a mother; it is personified and governed by only men. Thus,

any time the Church is spoken of the image is always the Pope in Rome, Bishop, Cardinals, Monsignors, Priests, Deacons and Altar Boys and all these are men. No mention of women in spite of some heroic deeds done by these women.

Francis (2013) acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make in the society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they possess. He stresses that for example, of the special concern which women show to others, which finds a particular, even if not exclusive, expression in motherhood. He also acknowledges that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families and groups and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church because according to him;

the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society; the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures. (p.72).

There are demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected based on the pastoral conviction that men and women are equal in dignity. Today, according to Francis (2013), as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being

constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey. In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God's word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story, but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers to the people his salvation and his friendship.

This message has to be shared humbly as a testimony on the part of one who is always willing to learn, in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp. At times the message can be presented directly, at times by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation. If it seems prudent and if the circumstances are right, this fraternal and missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed. In this way they will have an experience of being listened to and understood; they will know that their particular situation has been placed before God, and that God's word really speaks to their lives.

3.7.1 Heroic Deed of Women in Onitsha Archdiocese

After the fall of man God saw it fit to redeem the world through a woman Our Blessed Mother Mary, the greatest woman of all times. By her disarming humility and unparalleled obedience, she became a means through which God created a better world. V.V.I. Okoye (personal communication July 27, 2015) says that women are still seen as the heart of the

Church especially through their collective work as Catholic Women Organization (CWO). Catholic Young Women Organization (YCWO) which are the strongest organs of the Church. That the parish is progressing or falling today depends on these groups especially the Catholic Women Organization. Some are Catechists and some are extraordinary ministers. They are also very active in the teaching ministry of the Church, by involving themselves in the mission of the Church. In the family the women act as the first educators of their children. They inculcate in them the family values. Mby-Beya (1998) among other things states that;

the Church is a family. I am not an outsider or a slave girl, I will no longer walk on tip toe that is the good news that the African Synod has brought to us: everyone of us must feel at home in the Church... and women should not be deprived of their rights and of the respect that is their due.(p.13).

Omike (nd) avers that the work of the local Church has substantially been lightened by the apostolate services of the Women. Such services include the following; helping to beautify the physical environment of the Churches. Direct financial contributions and fund raising functions for the needs of the Church and society (Social Centres, Hall, Domestic Science Centres). Building of Health Clinic, seminary Food apostolate, sponsorship of Seminarians, organising aid to the Destitute and helping the youths and advocating Youths Training Programme. Again, spiritual formation programmes e.g. Retreats; Catechism Education for the young ones, helping the Clergy in some areas of needs e.g. Food, Money. Motivating community development schemes; example Maternity Homes, Health Centres, Schools, Rural Industries, Massive Cultivation of Scarce food crops and thus helping to stabilize the economy. Fund raising at Masses which comes up on first Sundays and making representation to Governments over retrogressive and un-Christian measures. Example

Government Take-over of Schools and regulations about child birth - abortion rules and methods.

The above seem to be special areas of activity for the Christian Women Organization and looking through the items with un-biased mind; one cannot but accept the idea that the women in Onitsha Archdiocese has scored percentages of success in building both Church and society.

This squares up with Acholonu's (1995) view of the Igbo woman as possessing the characteristic of rising to heroic levels or intervening in difficult situations and issues when men prove incapable of succeeding. Uzukwu (1996) also points out that Igbo women exercise power in a corporate manner. No wonder Njoku states that;

I have the experience of women groups as powerful institutions both in the Church and in the wider society. In the context of the Church of my locality, there exist women's groups, called Catholic Women Organisation (CWO). Some of their activities include keeping the Church premises clean, especially in preparation for the Sunday liturgy, contributing food for the maintenance of priests and other mission workers. In some instances, they are involved in the building of Churches or civic halls, hospitals, generating money for the parish's projects. (p.129).

The easiness with which women come together to discuss issues and take vital decisions; their rigidity and discipline in the enforcement of decisions, their sense of commitment and devotion in implementing programmes, their promptitude to rise to occasions of emergency in the Church and society is a mark peculiar only to the women folk. Describing the painstaking efforts of these women, Odueze (nd) states that these women during their

meeting sit on a fragile low school children's desk in a crowded room, some sit on the bare floor in an uncomfortable atmosphere, and they will be there for hours without being in haste, talking, singing, dancing and at the same time taking far-reaching decisions on vital issues of investments, embarking on projects of capital intensive for the success of a parish Church project. A meeting that started at 9 a.m. could end at around 5 p.m. without any official adjournment or break. Random levies were given, and were quickly collected for disbursement. The Women work relentlessly to ensure the growth of the Church and the society and flavoured with feminine touch, they have been able to manifest the real meaning of woman as shown on the acronym.

- W - Working towards Fruitful Goals
- O. - Organizational Aptitude
- M. - Movement to Spiritual Heights
- A. - Answerable to God
- N. - Nurturing the Home and the Church

According to Nwosu (1985), these women have made remarkable achievements in recent years. These include weekly supply of food items in the diocesan junior and senior secondary schools and sending of gifts items to the priests working in the diocese and their mothers, the running of pre-marriage and manage courses and adult education classes for women and girls. In socio-economic sphere, the Catholic Women Organisation has embarked on a number of self-help projects such as the distribution of livestock to some poorer members.

V.V.I. Okoye (personal communication 18th April, 2016), says that in addition to the already mentioned remarkable works, the C.W.O. also established bread and garri-making

plants in places like Ozubulu and Agulu in Onitsha Archdiocese especially after the Nigeria/Biafran civil war. They also built a modern leadership training centre and women hostel (Bethany house) in Onitsha which was officially opened on 9th June, 1984. Commenting further, she also said that in pursuit of civil rights for all, especially for young women, the C.W.O. joined women societies in other parts of Nigeria to successfully oppose the attempt to legalise abortion in Nigeria in 1981.

3.8 Challenges of Catholic Women in Onitsha Archdiocese

The major challenge facing women in Onitsha Archdiocese is Culture and religious practices. This is drawn from the notion and the concept of women in Igboland. Chiegboka (1997) avers that in the families, married women have the duties of domestic service, and are required to be at home, in the farms to help increase the economic power of her husband. She does the other essential duties of procreation and rearing of children. Jordan (1979) opines that a girl's life therefore was not accidentally but essentially preparation for marriage. It was her one great object in life. If she failed in that, she was considered to have nullified her existence. A woman's glory was to have children, and marriage brought about children.

It then becomes clear that the traditional vocation of a woman is to be a wife and a mother. Nmah (2003) supporting this idea states that the position of women in Igboland dependence- oriented, hence a common address to women as *oriaku*, the consumer of wealth. He went further to state that none involvement of women in the discussions and decisions that concerns them is a challenge to Catholic Women in Igboland/Onitsha Archdiocese. Nmah (2003) maintains that women are not to blame if they go against the

laid down rules in the world since those rules were put in place by men without the permission or consent of the women.

Another factor that forms a challenge to Catholic Women is male child preference. One of the most considered factors to this socio- economic deprivation of women is the male child preference. In this situation, if a woman fails to deliver a baby boy; she is regarded as fruitless in the family and in extreme cases she is chased away. The disparities between Igbo women and their male counterparts in terms of political, social, educational, economic spiritual/pasotral involvements cannot be divorced from some problems which hinders parity between the two groups. These problems, according to Adamu (1999) are illiteracy, stereotype, religion, domineering and discriminating attitude of males. These problems are discussed as follows;

i. **Illiteracy:** In Igboland, cultures usually accord preference to male children as they are regarded as the heirs or pillars of the family. On the contrary, female children are usually less privileged and consequently, not given adequate opportunity to acquire education and formal training. Adamu (1999) notes that the girl-child is valued not for who she is, her true potentials or achievements, but for her services, submissiveness and at best good looks. He further states that in any Igbo community, it is believed that the place of the girl-child is in the kitchen or at home. The author stresses also that women in Igboland are socialized into accepting the traditional roles of bearing and rearing children and of maintaining the welfare of the family. Thus, in most parts in Igboland, especially in the rural settings, the education of the girl-child is to keep the home. This issue has over the years held down the Igbo women from attaining their full and true potentials in spite of their attempts to break even.

ii. Stereotype: Right from the cradle and throughout the period of socialization, females are usually trained to from believe that there are different role for males and females as well as the superiority of males over females. Rhinehart and Kols (1988) opine that adults discourage competition between females and males the groups are thus exposed to different roles. The females are encouraged to be obedient, caring, kind and appreciative while males are rewarded for display of aggression, decisiveness and detachment.

iii Religion: The leadership of religion in Igboland has different views as regards the position of women in worldly affairs. Some leaders of cultural religion and their adherents strongly believe that women should only be seen and not heard. Rhinehart and Kols (1988) state that “the differences in beliefs adversely affect the way women are treated and the opportunities provided to them” (p. 153).

iv. Domineering and Discriminatory Attitudes of Males: The Igbo men have the control of political, economic as well as social spheres of life. Okafor (1997) observes that ‘many provisions on inheritance and domestic violence have been described as more favourable to the male gender than the female. Consequently, women experience series of violence in the hands of men. Some of these are manifested in the form of wife battering, assaults, acid attack, sexual harassment, including rape, girl-child abuse, ritual murder and unfavourable widowhood practices.

Boateng (2009) states that ‘violence against women and gender inequality are strongly intertwined; however, violence is often seen as legitimate, considering that women are seen

as inferior in numerous societies' (p.156). It is therefore, necessary to fight against these and empower women. However, with requisite emancipation of women, this violence against women will be arrested. It is in a bid to arrest this, that brought the Immaculate Heart Sisters into striving to beef up the status of the women and the entire people of God in particular, in Onitsha Archdiocese through education, medical, social works, and other works in keeping with the charism and spirit of the congregation as a way of enhancing their pastoral development.

The founder of Immaculate Heart Sisters saw empowerment as an engine of development; as a result, he founded a group of native women to raise the status of other women because he strongly believe that when a woman is trained, a nation has been trained as well. This is as a result of natural endowment on women. It is pertinent to state that in spite of the aforesaid ill-treatment meted on women they willingly and effectively have contributed to both the development and progress of the people in the society in which they live. From historical evidence, it suffices to state that the will and the desire to initiate and sustain the execution of developmental project are innate in women. Consequently, their contributions to the progress of the people should not be undermined. It is this culture that gave birth to Women Religious.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN ONITSHA ARCHDIOCESE 1967-2015

4.1 The Advent of Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese

The dawn of Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese can be traced to 1889 with the arrival of Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny- the French missinaries who could not survive were called back to their mother house in 1919 as a result of parents not allowing their girl children to go to school. This emanet from the fact that women are meant to be at home and man their families, this idea was supported by Jordan (1979) and Chiegboka (1997). These women have to be educated in order to have the required influence on their children. Based on this, Anochie (1994) acknowledge the efforts of bishop Shanahan who saw the need for the education of women as a veritable tool for evangelisation. It then became obvious that Igbo women were to be educated for the progress of the Church and society.

It was observed in the course of this research that, men never trains women by themselves; this work of training of girl child can only be done by women themselves. For this reason bishop Shanahan founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Holy Rosary on February 25, 1924 at Drumulae, Ireland and were broght to Onitsha in 1928 to take up from where the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Clunny stopped. With their arrival he initiated the uplift of the Igbo women who traditionally had a very low status. At Onitsha they built the first primary school called Immaculata School. These holy women were doing their best but the harvest was plenty and the labourers are few. Thus, seeing the low status of women in Nigeria especially in Igboland, Arcbishop Charles Heerey who succeeded Bishop Shanahan was deeply moved by the copmpassion of Christ to allieviate the very low status

of Igbo women. As a result of this, he founded a native Congregation of the Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Christ at Ihiala in October 7, 1937 as stated in the constitutions of the Immaculate Heart Sisters (1993) (p.1). M. N. Iheanocho (personal communication, March 25th, 2016) says that later, some other Religious Congregations like Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy was founded by Bishop Nwedo in 1961, according to T. C. Nnalue, (personal communication, April 30th 2015, Daughters of Divine Love by Bishop Okoye though started by Rev. Fr. Francis Ojiakor at Ukpor but later taken over by late Bishop Godfrey Mary Paul Okoye in 1969. These Women Religious Congregations were founded to carry on the Christ's mission in the Church under specific charisms and spirit. The group of Women Religious that existed/exists within the period under review are listed thus;

Immaculate Heart Sisters

Focolare Movement (Women)

St. Scholastica Benedictine Abbey

Holy Family Sisters of the Needy Congregation.

Daughters of St. Joseph Congregation.

Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa Sisters)

Little Sisters of Jesus Congregation

Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena

Miles Jesu (Women)

Clarissan Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (CMBS)

4.2 The Call and Formation of Women Religious

A call from God can be addressed to anyone, anywhere, at anytime in life. It is a moment of singular and significant importance. Such a call is a personal summons from God Himself. Its purpose is to accomplish the divine will. The explanation of the divine choice is Love. No merit, no excellence can earn a call from God. The Lord set his love upon anybody and chooses anyone (Deutronomy. 7:7). Accordingly, the person called becomes involved in an assignment directed by God Himself. Just as God awaited Mary's acceptance when Gabriel told her she would conceive and bear a son, so too, does He await response of every person He calls. Among the most impressive passages of the Old Testament are those scenes, which depict a personal call from God. There was the call of Abraham to leave Haran and go to the land of Canaan. Abraham and his family left Ur and settled in Haran, but Yahweh had other plans for him. He said "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you" (cf. Genesis. 12:1).

God called Moses while he was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro (Exdous. 3:10). Isaiah was called while he was praying in the temple. He heard the voice of Yahweh saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? (Isaiah 6:8). Christ himself in the New Testament chose the first disciples of the Church. He called them without any thought of their talents or status in life. He initiated them progressively into the secret of his mission and the mystery of his person. What prompted Jesus to choose the twelve, one may rightly ask? He wanted to accomplish His mission by having with him those he wished; and He went up into the hills, prayed and called to Himself those whom He desired, and they came to Him (cf. Mark. 3:13).

The call of a Woman Religious is God's choice in Jesus Christ and the answer is found only in the mystery of God's choice. Jesus demanded total detachment from His First disciples. This meant the renunciation of riches and security, even the surrender of their respective families. And yet, the demand is still greater. Having renounced possessions and worldly attachments, the disciples were told that they must follow the Master even to the cross: "if any man or woman would come after me, let him or her deny him or herself and take up his daily cross and follow me" (Matthew. 16:24).

John Paul II (1988) shares his reflections on the call to the consecrated life. He begins by centering on the gospels account of Jesus' dialogue with the rich young man. He asks the Christfaithful to reflect on this encounter very carefully because the dialogue that ensued during that brief meeting presents the interior structure and pattern of a call to a distinct kind of discipleship – namely, a call to follow Christ along the path of the evangelical counsels. That is selling all you have giving them to the poor and come and follow me if you desire to be perfect.

It is this life of perfection that informs the interior response of a young woman who wished to follow Christ closely all her life though not full understood at the initial time. It is information that can only be gradually understood. One of the central characteristics of formation, which we wished to promote, is wholeness, not just concentrating for instance on spiritual and professional formation to the neglect of human, cultural, theological and pastoral formation. Growth takes time and should not be rushed. Since formation must have a communal dimension, the community is the chief place of formation. Here the young woman is introduced to the hardships and joys of community life. In the community each

person shares her gifts with the others, and they become the gifts of all, in this way any tendency to jealousy is overcome. From the very beginning of initial formation, which comprises of postulancy, and novitiate that ends with first profession of vows, community life must make clear the essentially missionary dimension of consecration. Good practical experiences should be provided in which candidates test their skills in the apostolate as well as their spirit of initiative and their ability to adapt and persevere in difficult times.

According to Anochie (1994) the aim and purpose of initial formation is to help the candidate to develop a critical judgment inspired by the gospel of the positive and negative values of their own culture and of the culture in which they will eventually work. Formation cannot be improvised. Programmes and structures have to be carefully thought out and prepared which will guide each young person from entrance to final professional and provide also for ongoing formation till death. On-going formation is an essential requirement of religious consecration, by which consecrated persons show a readiness to let themselves be formed every day of their lives, leaving the confined place set apart specifically for formation. At no age has a person completely achieved maturity. Formation must respect the stages through which each person passes and provide for what is appropriate at each stage according to a sound psychology of human and spiritual growth.

Formation of Women Religious in the Church in Igbo land today should be geared towards achieving the principal purpose of initiation into Religious life at the various stages, that is, to immerse the Woman Religious in the experience of God and to help her perfect it gradually in her life. It should therefore be a formation to meet the present pastoral needs of the Church so as to create awareness of the nature and characteristics of religious life in

itself and in relation to the mission of the Church. This involves knowledge of the evangelical counsels in the context of religious life, Church and society, community life as experience and witness of communion in a world of hatred, division and greed. Formation therefore helps candidates achieve mature presence on the part of the consecrated person, capable of renewed human relationship within and outside communities in the Nigeria context. Institutes of consecrated life should see formation as an important project to be carefully handled, supervised, evaluated and updated from time to time according to the signs of the time. The Holy Spirit should be allowed to play its role of primary formator in the formation houses. The Church in Nigeria needs the obedience and generosity of suitable formators in this area so as to help those in formation respond effectively and efficiently to their call, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

4.2.1 Responding to the Holy Spirit

In virtue of one's vocation, the religious have given themselves wholly to the service of the mission of the church exercised in different forms through the centuries. The council praises and encourages religious men and women, brothers and sisters for the generous services they render to humanity (Lumen Gentium no. 46, Perfectae Caritatis no. 10). Perfectae Caritatis (1965) draws attention to those institutes which have been entrusted with the active apostolate as a part of the *raison d'être* by converging all the powers inherent in religious consecration toward activity on behalf of one's neighbour. These institutes are the point of arrival of a long process matured under the action of the holy spirit and the leadership of the Church, always open to "the signs of the times" and the needs of humanity. In the early times of the Church, the followers of Christ in consecrated life contributed a lot to the spreading of the Gospel especially by their prayer and penance.

The call to religious life and the call to the apostolate, as conveying forces, fused in the same person and therefore became one reality. And this is the significance of the apostolate considered as the specific and of the religious institute, which the religious is responding to through the help of the Holy Spirit. The appearance and approval of religious congregations with apostolic aims are for the Church and souls not only an enrichment of forces, but they also express under the theological and spiritual aspect a new understanding and incarnation of the evangelical life.

4.3 Identity of the Women Religious in the Catholic Church in Onitsha Archdiocese

The identity of the Women Religious is one of those things that no one can really give official concrete definition. It can at most be described from a given perspective. It is something lived and experienced. What Jesus said and did is inseparable from who and what he is. His identity was revealed by a heavenly voice at His baptism and transfiguration as “Beloved Son”, and Peter answering Jesus’ question, “Who do people say that I am?” (Matthew 16), responded by giving Jesus’ identity as the Christ, the Messiah, Son of the Living God. Jesus’ baptism linked His mission and identity and both are inseparable. By the virtue of their baptism, the Women Religious like any other Christ faithful participate in the mission of Jesus. His mission was to bring justice and salvation to humanity (Luke. 4:18-19). The Women Religious with Jesus are children of God and share in His mission of bringing justice and salvation to people. By the fact of evangelical counsel that they profess and in accordance with their charism and spirituality of their congregation, they uniquely share in the mission of Jesus in a more intimate way as His spouse. With deep sense of commitment to the love of and fidelity to their spouse Jesus, they bear evangelical witness to Christ in the world.

The identity of the Women Religious is not in what they do but what they are. That is to say that their identity is in what they represent- the Christ who is chaste, poor and obedient. It is this christocentrism of the life of Women Religious that characterises their identity. They are first to Be before they do. Meaning by that, that their work does not define them but their being rather gives meaning to what they do. In buttressing this point, John Paul II (1996) states that Women Religious help the Church to reveal ever more deeply her nature as the sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race. This means that Women Religious by their profession of evangelical counsels were consecrated to God through Christ.

A Woman Religious, therefore, defines, justifies and expresses herself in terms of her communion with her congregation and evangelical counsels lived to enliven the world through prayer and meaningful works of charity, justice and peace, promotion of human dignity and freedom. The Women Religious make eschatological life possible here on earth through the vows they profess. A Woman Religious is a sign of God's holiness on earth, for the evangelical counsels professed by the Women Religious have given a unique contribution in bringing to the world a striking witness and example of that holiness (Lumen Gentium no. 9ff). The Second Vatican Council states that religious life is an expression of the life of Christ in the Church, in a concrete and existential way; it reproduces and makes Christ present in his holiness. As Lumen Gentium, (1964) states, "the bonds by which the Women Religious pledge themselves to the practice of the counsels, show forth, the unbreakable bond of union that exists between Christ and his

bride the Church. The more stable and firm these bonds are, then the more perfect will the Christian's religious consecration be" (Lumen Gentium no. 44).

Again, the state of a woman religious constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding re-enactment in the church of the form of life, which the Son of God made his own when He came into the world. A Woman Religious, in her state of life, tries to manifest in a very special way the transcendence of the kingdom of God and its requirements over all earthly things and the highest kind of bonds within it, bringing home all men and women the immeasurable greatness of the power of Christ in His sovereignty and the infinite might of the Holy Spirit which works so marvelously in the Church.

The strength to live authentically as a Woman Religious depends on her community life. The strength and unity of community life is the bedrock of her religious witnessing to the Church, which is in communion of life in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When a Woman Religious portrays that in her community, everything is shared, and people of different character, talents, and experiences can come together to share, and to discuss issues and problems, arriving at harmonious conclusions, a strong witness is given to the power of the Trinitarian life to overcome all human differences to the extent a woman religious of different congregation can visit another and be accepted as full member of both the immediate and extended family in the Church irrespective of the congregation she comes from. Since we are all members of one family-church who is our mother and God our father, Women religious are the products of the society whose guiding spirit is dictated by materialistic principles and question of the work of a person is considered from the achievements made for the society, irrespective of the manner and sources of what is

attained must have imbibed a considerable amount of the spirit of her times and its standards. As the case may be the repercussions are shown on the crisis of self-identity of the religious. But the proper identity of women religious has little to do with materialism. In the present society, because of the wind of materialism, some women religious have lost their focus on Jesus Christ. What happened to Peter when he lost his gaze on his master Jesus is now the case in some women religious especially, the young ones as narrated by N.J. Ogoegbu (personal communication January 24, 2015) who says that “they have started sinking into the world; she went further to say that some have resorted to competing with the women in the world, in fashion and in all its ramifications. In most cases there is no decency and modesty that characterized the older women religious as it were. What is obtainable now is fashion of different kinds.

Therefore, it is a challenge to every religious institute to up-date its formation programme and sees the urgent and sincere need of inculcating in the mind of the young woman, right from the initial formative stage that spirit of trust and love. No woman religious embraces the consecrated life with the spirit of double standard kind of living. Every one presumably came first and foremost in order that she may be holy and to be helped on how to see God. As already stated earlier, these are the same products of the Igbo culture whose natural endowment are nursing, nurturing, nourishing, caring, healing, protecting and giving life. These women came into religious life with the mind of perfecting these natural gifts in Christ.

The religious life is supposed to protect, promote the natural gifts in the young women. All these things happen some times because of the institutes' negligence in providing the

Women Religious their basic needs. There is need for them to go back to Canon 670 where the church states emphatically that it is the duty of the institute to provide for her members with their basic needs in the light of their spirit and constitutions. Some religious institute's constitutions need to be revisited and re-defined in line with the men's ecclesia as stated in the Code of Canon Law (607 and 670).

As it was observed, lack of provision for the needs of the members by the institute forces some women religions to go against their way of life and this affects their intimate union with God. But with love, trust and faith in Christ, the woman religious is reassured of her been accepted and she would by herself define her person in Christ by opening up to intimating herself in prayer with Jesus Christ her spouse whose fruition is expected to be seen in her relationship with other members of Christ's faithful, and in her apostolate. This will clear the confusion and the vagueness in not understanding the noble role of women religious in the church off the people's mind.

4.4 The Women Religious and the Mission of the Catholic Church in Onitsha Archdiocese

In the Church which is understood as the family of God, Women Religious have the particular role not only of indicating to all, the call to holiness, but also of witnessing to fraternal love in community. Therefore, the mission of the Women Religious implies a total gift of self to God in the service of the Church and humanity. The Igbo Church has continued to be the custodian of social justice in a society bedeviled by social malaise, economic degradation and political instability. In Igboland towns and villages, many people are suffering because of poor governance and economic melt down. There are those whose

lives are empty, who are searching vainly for meaning. Many live without hope, so many poor people have become destitute. Some are suffering from the weight of political instability. The Church is not primarily an organisation; she is a people, not just people in the abstract sense, but people touched by the spirit, people who actually believe in what Jesus Christ stands for. Jesus stands for the love and concern of God, for every person and this call for intensive care.

The Church has through the so many Women Religious Congregations in Onitsha Archdiocese especially the Immaculate Heart Sisters attended to the many social, economical, and postoral problems of the people of God. M.J Anynsi (personal communication, March 12th, 2016) says that basically Women Religious have a threefold experience in their mission namely;

- i. Their life is basically that of witnessing. Women Religious are touched and transformed as individuals. This life of personal experience.
- ii. They share group experience through the various and different congregations like Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM), Holy Rosary Sisters (HRS), Daughters of Divine Love (DDL), Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (DMMM), Little Sisters of the poor, Missionary Sisters of Charity, to mention but a few.
- iii. To be a Woman Religious is an apostolic experience, one who is a Woman Religious is the one sent to preach Christ. By the very fact of being a true religious, she radiates Christ in the world around her, touching and affecting people in many ways.

The Church is charged by the task of spreading the gospel and she must spread it either by word or by the life of witnessing. Today the Church in Igboland is blessed with so many congregations of Women Religious sharing different charism and spirituality, which guide their own specific apostolate. The various apostolates relate to areas of enhancing the spiritual and social and economic well being of the people thus, the pastoral development. Many Congregations of Women Religious focus on education, care of the poor, health (hospital). Archbishop Charles Heerey founded the Immaculate Heart Sisters in 1937 at the background of a culture that have relegated women to third- class human beings. The sisters working in the Spirit of humility and moved by compassion for the down trodden and the wretched of the earth embarked on raising the dignity of women. Their influence could be seen on the following areas;

- i. Establishing schools for kindergarten children, primary, secondary and tertiary stages; example Immaculate Heart Day Care Nkpor, Immaculate Heart Nursery and Primary School Nnewi, Cor Marie Girls Secondary School and School of Medical Laboratory Nkpor.
- ii. Taking care of the unmarried mothers so as to avoid abortion, catechizing them in order to help them appreciate the mercy and love of God (Mother of Christ Compassionate Home Nkpor).
- iii. To help in their spiritual up-liftment and educate them on the dignity of womanhood so as to avoid further occurrence of further pregnancy without husband.
- iv. Taking care of the elderly and the disabled in Cheshire homes
- v. Building homes and helping to revamp widows. They have such houses at Nsukka.

- vi. They also work in leper colonies taking care of the leprous patients
- vii. They embark on pastoral and other social works; such as preaching the word of God and feeding those who have no food, on certain occasions like the feast of Immaculate Heart and on their foundation day October 7th.

To be able to achieve all these, Immaculate Heart Sisters as Women Religious avail themselves of some kind of spiritual exercises to enable them have the required humility to perform these functions. It is as a result of this that made the researcher to employ the functionalist, interactionist and human relationist theories. This is because Women Religious cannot function in isolation, in their attempt to carry out their work effectively there must interaction with the people God and that will lead to building a relationship. It is in the cause of this encounter that each gets to understand themselves better thereby designing the best pastoral approaches to use in averting whatever challenge the life might pose. Indeed, so many religious congregations engage on this and similar apostolate. The Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy try to show mercy through taking care of the sick. Daughters of Charity take care of the poor. Sisters of St. Louis work to transform the world through education.

The Women Religious are called to lay ecclesial apostolate in response to the needs of local Church in Igboland. This must be distinguished from the many other lay apostolates that flourish in the Church for the up building of the family-church, and the transformation of the world. Within the context of the common call to service which was given to all the baptized, the role of Women Religious also refers to professionally trained who are in positions of service and leadership in the Church. The Women Religious serve in such

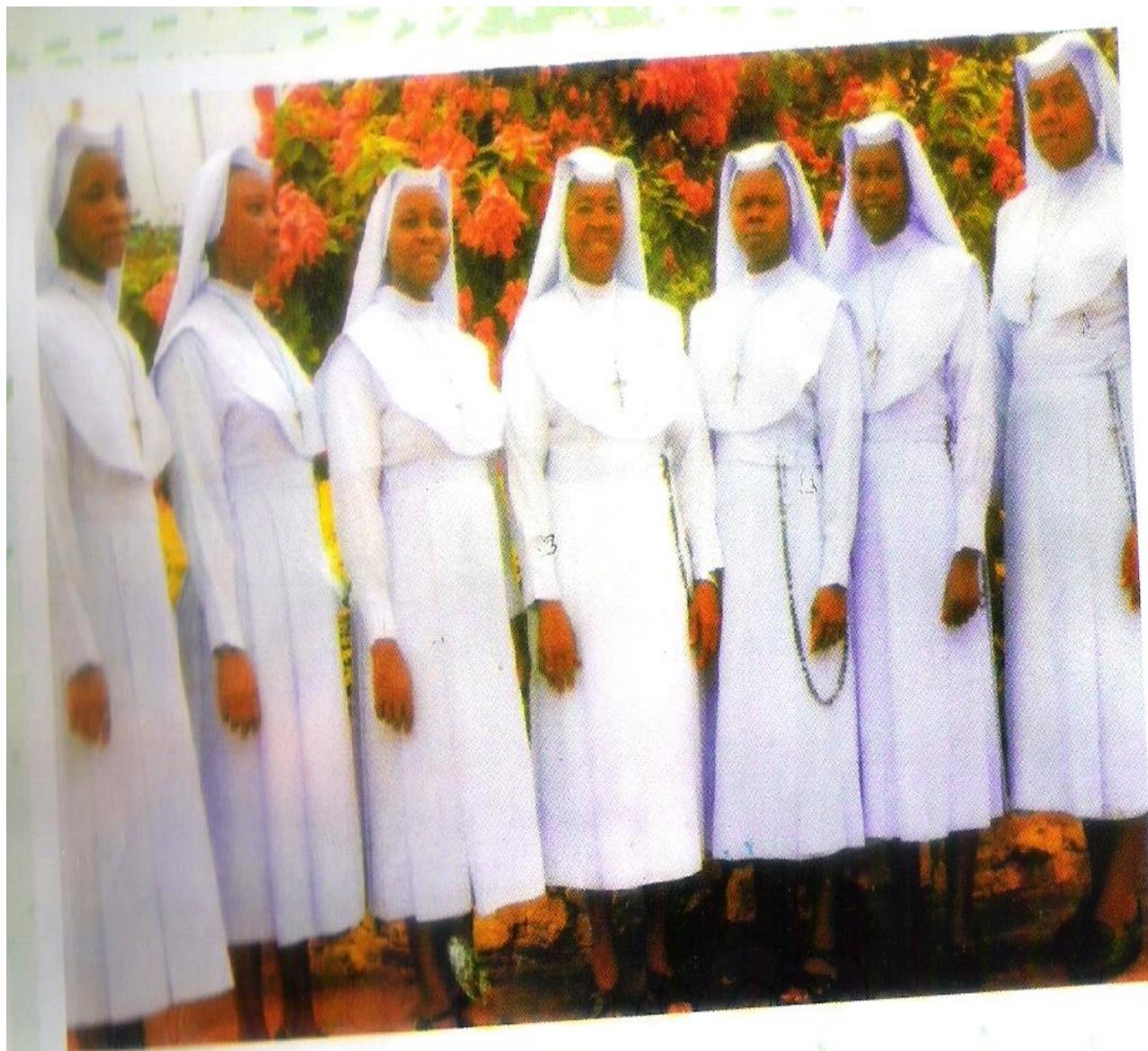
capacities as pastoral associates, directors of religious education, Catechist, Director of the Rite Christian Initiation of Adults' programme, youth apostolate, adult apostolate, chaplains to hospitals, schools, prisons, services corps and parish/school pastoral counselors. Some of them are educationist, social workers, medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists.

They take the gospel of Christ to all works of life. Some of them work in government Institutions. In this way, Women Religious' mission reveals that of Jesus who freely and generously reveals the father to the world. (John. 15:15). In all these, the Women Religious make Christ present in a real and concrete way, as effective sign in inspiring the faithful to fulfilling their Christian duties. The vows constitute for the Women religious a pathway for dwelling deeply within the life and love of Christ uniting them with Christ in a love that is unfathomable and irrevocable. They have therefore a missionary character. The vows constitute a lens through which the Women Religious view their presence and activity and the accessibility of God's love to all people and through their particular way of life. Their fidelity to the call is both as an example and encouragement.

Since the proclamation of Christ is the permanent priority of mission of the Church according to John Paul II (1988), Women Religious are called to enter into the process of inculturation and inter-religious dialogue. They approach cultures and religion other than their own with the attitude of Jesus, who emptied himself and took the form of a servant. All the elements of religious life call for inculturation: the charism itself, the way of formation, prayer and liturgy, the principles and values of the spiritual life, structures of government, forms of apostolate and style of life. The consecrated life itself since it is the

bearer of gospel values must be inculturated in order to preserve its prophetic impact. For the way of thinking and acting of those who follow Christ more closely provides a true and proper point of reference for culture; it serves to point out all that is unworthy of human nature and to give witness to the best of human values- the values of Christ. Religious life thus is seen as a special gift at the heart of the Church because of its expression of unbounded generosity and love not only for Christ himself but also for the least of this brothers and sisters. For the Church and society need people capable of devoting themselves totally to God and humanity for the love of God.

Figure: 1



This shows the picture of some of the members of Immaculate Heart Sisters

Nwodo's survey 2015 at Nnewi

4.5 The Foundation of the Immaculate Heart Sisters

A call from God can be addressed to anyone, anywhere, at anytime in life. It is a moment of singular and significant importance. Such a call is a personal summon from God Himself. Its purpose is to accomplish the divine will. The explanation of the divine choice is Love. No merit, no excellence can earn a call from God. The Lord set his love upon you and chose you (Deutronomy 7:7). According to Ohaegbulem (2012) Immaculate Heart Sisters as a Religious institute was founded by His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Charles Heerey C.S Sp. of revered memory, when he was the Vicar Apostolic of Ontisha- Owerri. As missionary priest and bishop, he witnessed the havoc of the lack of health and medical services combined with oppressive effects of ignorance, inflicted on his flock especially the underprivileged in the 1930s and women and children were the greatest victims.

The part of Archbishop Charles Heerey's loving and compassionate response to the situation was to found an indigenious Women Religious institute for a better promotion of the Christian education of women and children, of works of charity and mercy among the poor and their own people. She went further to state that this institute was born out of the prayerful reflections of this great Herald of Christ was the first religious institute of women in Igboland. According to Ohaegbulem(2012), Religious life as the total consecration of oneself to Christ which *De facto*, excludes marriage, was one of the greatest challenges Christianity offered to the Igbo people.

It was therefore an uphill task for Archbishop Heerey to get across the message of founding a Congregation of Women Religious among the Igbos of 1930s. As God would have it, an opportunity for Archbishop Heerey to actualize his dream of founding a Woman Religious

institute presented itself when two young ladies: Maria Anyogu (late Mother Mary Bernadette Anyogu) and Clara Oranu (Mother Mary Magdalene Oranu) both trained teachers and Onitsha indigenes, with courage and determination, indicated their desires to give themselves up to follow Christ.

According to the Constitution of Immaculate Heart Sisters (1993), exactly on October 7, 1937, the mustard seed was planted at Ihiala with these two young women. Following an inspiration during his pilgrimage to Lourdes, he named the new foundation Congregation of Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary. In the course of history this religious institute came to be known as the Religious Institute of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mother of Christ.

The two candidates started their religious formation at Ihiala under the direction of Sister Mary Rose Maquire, one of the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary then working in the Vicariate. For seven good years, this mustard seed grew in very humble circumstances. Between 1940 and 1943, six more girls had joined them. Their lives revolved around prayer and participation in the Holy Eucharist sessions with formators, visits to and care of lepers in leper settlements, visits to and work of compassion in the hospitals, maternity homes, dispensaries, catechesis in schools and home visitations in the vicinity. They also alternated their work experiences with in - service training as teachers, nurses and midwives under the care of the Holy Rosary Sisters. Their humble and charity-filled lifestyle attracted other girls and became challenges to many. The picture below shows the foundation house of the Immaculate Heart Sisters.

Figure 2



*The House (marked+) where the Congregation was born Ihiala,
April 26, 1937.*

This is the house where the Immaculate Heart Sisters started in 1937 at Ihiala.

Source: Immaculate of Heart of Mary Sisters' archives

This picture shows the two foundation members of Immaculate Heart Sisters and their mistress.

Figure 3



*The first two aspirants of the Congregation
and
Rev. Sister M. Rose, H.R.S.—the first Novice Mistress.*

The two foundation members of the Immaculate Heart Sisters; miss Maria Anyogu and Clara Oranu.with their formator; Rev Sister Mary Rose Macquire during their formative days at Ihiala. Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archives.

Ohaegbulem (2012) states that as the number of candidates slowly but steadily increased, Archbishop Heerey started to look for a more suitable place for the Novitiate. Late Rev. Fr. Michael Forley, C. S. Sp, the then Parish Priest of Saint Michael's Parish, Urualla, made relentless efforts in helping to secure and prepare the place at Urualla for the sisters. She went further to state that on 6th January 1944, the feast of the Epiphany of our Lord, the first two pioneers were received into the Novitiate in a festive Eucharistic celebration in the Holy trinity cathedral, now the Basilica of the Most holy trinity, Onitsha. In the evening of that same day, the 12 members of the new foundation made up of: 2 novices, 4 postulants, 2 aspirants and their formators moved to Urualla to settle in the new home. They met the warm reception and hospitality of Urualla people and their local chief. Urualla has now become the mother house of this new institute. Like the beginnings of anything worthwhile, there were problems and challenging situations, especially in accommodation and daily living, but members of the new foundation went through them with fortitude and optimism, just a little like the early missionaries who brought the faith.

At this time, according to Eze (2005), occasional unpleasant experiences began to occur as a result to bitter opposition from some parents and relatives who were hostile to the idea of their daughter embracing this strange way of life where marriage was ruled out. Some of the candidates were often carried away from the convent by force and subjected to corporal punishment, verbal and psychological intimidation. However, some of these girls often found their way back to the convent at the least opportunity.

Archbishop Heerey was anxious that the gospel of Christ be preached in season and out of season, so he held on tenaciously to the message he came to disseminate in Igbo land by

founding both the indigenous Men and Women Religious to continue the work. He wanted to build on a solid foundation and, true to himself, nothing but the best was good enough for God. He made sure that the formation of the indigenous sisters was taken up seriously. According to Ohaegbuenam (1987), Archbishop Charles Heerey thus expressed his hopes and desire for the young foundation in a letter to the formators thus;

Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary must be the fairest, among the daughters of men. They must be the elect of the Igbo race. I think you have begun with good material for this religious life. Your two aspirants are known intimately to me. They both spontaneously gave me their life history. We must make them a real native sisterhood.(p.1).

Eze (2005) states that on January 6, 1946, after their two years novitiate formation, the two pioneer novices made their first religious profession presided over by the founder. As stated in the Constitution of the Immaculate Heart Sisters (1993), Archbishop Heerey had clearly set down his apostolic aims for new religious family in his Decree of Election dated October 7, 1937, it is established for;

- i. The greater glory of God
- ii. The greater sanctification of all its members
- iii. The special care of the sick including maternity cases in hospitals of the vicariate, the care of children in orphanages, the training of women for marriage and the other sacraments and education of children in schools and any other work of charity in keeping with the constitutions. (p.169).

With the first religious profession of the pioneers, more assignments were made to various apostolates where one was suited in schools, in the nearby towns and within convent

grounds, work at leprosy settlements, home visitations and catechism classes. These apostolic activities were carried out with and in the spirit they imbibed during these years of formation.

Every Immaculate Heart Sister fully aware of the spirit which the founder Archbishop Heerey impressed upon the religious institute from the beginning of the foundation strives, relying solely on the grace of God, to cultivate and live out this spirit in her life. This spirit which humility is the soul, the dominant inner attitude which vivifies and informs our whole institute, imprinting thereon a very distinct character, a special style of life which each sister translates into a particular way of looking at things, of judging and evaluating, the manner of living the common life, the vows, the apostolate and the manner of reaching out to fellow men and women.

The founder of this noble congregation clearly saw the need of making the sisters realize their nothingness and total dependence on God. As pride is rooted in every child of Adam, he insisted on this virtue humility as the congregation's spirit, making it clear to the sisters that it is only by a long and painful process that they can attain humility. He also instill in them a charism with which the congregation is to be known for, that is compassion. The Archbishop Charles Heerey's love for Christ spurred him into being drawn by His compassion and he bequeathed this compassion of Christ into his spiritual daughters- the Immaculate Heart Sisters and he urged them to carry on in the same vain. That is radiating the compassion of Christ to all men. The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters, continue to strive to keep this attitude alive in them, their communities, places of work, and always seeking to imitate that sympathetic personal concern for people, characteristic of the

immaculate Heart of Mother Mary who opens that Heart to all. The sisters' Marian spirituality is also part of their patrimony and the spirit of the Congregation is humility which is one of the prominent factors of this spirituality. *Ad Jesum Per Mariam* (To Jesus through Mary) is the sisters' MOTTO, given to them by their Father Founder. Archbishop Charles Heerey wrote as stated in their Constitutions (1993) thus;

You are the special children of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and her Maternal Heart will lead you all safely to Jesus when you put your complete confidence in her. Teach your novices then, mother, to have an intense devotion to Mary, to try to copy her in humility above all things. (p. 172).

This intense devotion to Mary has always meant for each Immaculate Heart Sister as stated in their Constitutions (1993):

- i. Her pursuing a life of permanent disposition in dependence of Mary all her life
- ii. Her seeing Mary as the path to Jesus.
- iii. Her being challenged to be a replica of Mary, modeling her life upon the qualities of Mary's Immaculate and Apostolic Heart, especially her spotless purity, availability, and quality of her prayers, humility, and compassion.
- iv. Adding the name 'Mary' or any of its derivations, to her profession name.
- v. Pondering on and living out the meaning of this Marian hymn of the institute (p.57).

Eze (2005) states that with the sisters' intense devotion to Mother Mary, their growth and expansion was rapid. She went further to state that with the creation of Owerri Diocese in 1948, the Novitiate and the Mother House/Generalate at Urulla fell under the jurisdiction of the new Bishop of Owerri- Most Rev. Dr. J.B Whelan, C.S.Sp. thus the Sisters lost the

direct governance of their Archbishop Charles Heerey their founder which happened barely two year after the first profession of the pioneer members.

Again, in the following years, Archbishop Heerey manifested a heroic detachment while maintaining cordial and filial relationship with his spiritual daughters. With the increase of professed sisters, the two Bishops requested for communities in their respective diocese. According Ohaegbulem (2012), the first of these foundations was made at Nnewi in Onitsha Archdiocese with three professed sisters, the two pioneers inclusive and a postulant to open the new convent on 16th January, 1950. The two pioneers taught in the school, while the other professed sisters, Sr. Mary Emmanuel, attended to lepers in their settlement. Eze (2005) states in 1953 and 1954, Archbishop Heerey solicited financial aid and sent some professed sisters and two postulants overseas to train as teachers and nurse. At the end of their training overseas, the sisters returned with better professional qualification. Thus for more effective apostolate, expansion of work was sped up with their assistance. She went further to state that in September 1956, the Generate was moved to Enugu still in the Onitsha Archdiocese. The move helped the young institute to once more enjoy the much needed guidance and advice of its founder. In 1962, Enugu diocese was created and the young institute again came outside the jurisdiction of its founder.

The year 1957 was a turning point in the history of the Religious Institute of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Precisely on 23rd August, 1957, after 20 years of existence, the native sisters, after their first General Chapter, assumed full administrative responsibility of their institute, with the elections of Rev. Mother Mary Bernadette Anyogu, the first indigenous Superior General and her Council.

The year also marked the beginning of a notable increase in vocations. 1957 witnessed the first profession of two sets of sisters: one set (22) in February and another (17) on 9 December, by the grace of God, celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the service in the Church in 1987, the same year the Institute got into the limelight. Demands for sisters began to come from many Bishops in and outside Nigeria. This re-echoed the missionary vision of their founder in his letter to Sister Rose Macquire (1937), “They are also to be missionaries...” (p.1). It is worthy of note that this great missionary Archbishop Heerey had very early envisaged missionary work as an essential part of the life of the indigenous sisters founded.

In 1963, still a diocesan institute according M.J. Uzoigwe, (personal communication, September,8th 2015), the Immaculate Heart Sisters crossed the Niger and made foundations outside the confines of Igboland. In the Lagos Archdiocese and Warri, the sisters served in the education of youth in schools and the care of the sick in the hospitals. The sisters’ missionary presence in 1964 was in Maiduguri and Shuwa in the Northern part of Nigeria where they came into contact with Moslem and their families. The year 1966 signaled the beginning of the missionary thrust outside Nigeria at the invitation of Bishop Thomas Brosnahan, C.S.Sp of Sierra Leone. Archbishop Charles Heerey, the founder visited the sisters’ communities in this mission before he went to his eternal reward on 7th February 1967. The first community in Onitsha urban was also opened in 1966 at Odoakpu, close to the metropolitan seat of the founder, Archbishop Charles Heerey.

According to M.L.M Ezenkwele (personal communication, November, 2015), says that in 1966 Nigeria underwent a serious and social unrest which broke into a civil war in

July 1967 and Immaculate Heart sisters were faced with new challenges and problems of refugees. They had to move along with these refugees from place to place. The situation offered them opportunities of serving the people in refugee camps, sickbays and feeding centres for families and kwashiorkor-affected children. Caritas International Organization and the Red Cross supplied the sisters with the needed drugs, food and wears for the refugees. Places like Umuze and Inyishi in 1968 and 1969 respectively, offered some shelter to some sisters to serve the needs of the surging crowds of refugees. A few also served as chaplains to military camps, some others at the risk of their lives found their way into some war zones to care for wounded soldiers, supplying food for them.

She went further to say that in August 1969, amidst the charged atmosphere of the raging civil war, the 3rd General chapter of our institute was held, at which Mother Mary Joseph Uzoigwe was elected Superior General to succeed Mother Mary Bernadette Anyogu. This civil war ended in January 1970. It then fell on the young shoulders of this dynamic, foresighted and courageous woman to lead the institute out of the ravages of civil war and through the difficult period of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Immediately the war ended, the Nigerian Government ordered the repatriation of all expatriate missionaries serving in Igboland. As a result, mission institutions under their care fell prey to looting and occupation by aliens. The chaotic situation of the region and the severe shortage of manpower that the sudden departure of the missionaries created for the Catholic church in Eastern Nigeria, starked, the Immaculate Heart Sisters on the face. At this time in history, being the only viable indigenous Women Religious in the territory, Bishop J.B. Whelan before he left Owerri and Archbishop Francis Arinze of Onitsha, separately sent distressed letter that made Mother Mary Joseph Uzoigwe and her sisters to abound all and come to

their rescue as narrated by Mother Mary Joseph Uzoigwe (personal communication, November 28,2015). According to her, this was to salvage the Catholic institutions from the hands of aliens. Quick to action, the Superior General dispatched the sisters in twos to the various affected convents and institutions, which included Holy Rosary Hospital Emekuku, St. Joseph's Hospital Adazi, Girls Secondary school Ozubulu, Holy Rosary Maternity Waterside Onitsha, St. Charles Borromeo Hospital Onitsha, Bishop Shanaha Hospital Nsukka, Joint Hospital at Awgu, Amaigbo, Mbanjo and the convents attached to them. By the singular grace of God, these sisters took the challenge with courage and determination. The situation in which they and their workers found themselves was very difficult and dangerous indeed that even a time bomb even exploded killing a worker while they were clearing the debris on the premises of an abandoned hospital.

After the death of the father founder died in 1967, the sisters after the civil war according to M.J Uzoigwe (personal communication, November 28th, 2015),unanimously elected Archbishop Francis Arinze, now His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Arinze, patron of the religious Institute. Co-incidentally, he was also the immediate Successor of the Founder as the Archbishop of Onitsha. He has sustained his paternal care of the Institute, supporting, encouraging, advising, and sharing in their joys and sorrows. His annual visits and talks to the Sisters on some current Church affairs is always appreciated and anticipated.

As stated in the Institute's Constitutions (1993), in December 1973, the institute received the papal recognition as a Religious Institute of Pontifical Right. This new status gave greater impetus to the life and work of this institute which has made consistent efforts to

reach out to as many dioceses as have invited her for apostolic services at home and overseas.

4.5.1 The Administrative Structure of Immaculate Heart Sisters

In every organisation there are people that are at the helm of affairs for the smooth and effective running of the Institute. Immaculate Heart Sisters as an Institute is not left out. It has its own administrative organisational structure as outlined in their website (2016) thus;

Members of the Present Central Administration as at 2016

Mother Mary Claude Oguh, IHM – Superior General

Sr. Mary Agnita Maduka, IHM- Vicar General and 1st Councillor

Sr. Mary Jerome Obiorah – 2nd Councillor

Sr. Maria Philipeen Osei-Wusu – 3rd Councillor

Sr. Maria Sapientiae Ameke – 4th Councillor

Sr. Mary Lucella Ukaegbu – Secretary General

Sr. Mary Lawrencia Obikwelu – Bursar General

Members of the present Regional Administration as at 2016

Sr. Mary Anthoninus Ezeobiagwu - Archbishop Charles Heerey (Central) Region, Nigeria

Sr. Mary Joan Iwenofu - Madonna (Southern) Region, Nigeria

Sr. Mary Domitilla Ilione - Mother of Christ (Eastern) Region, Nigeria

Sr. Mary Anselm Nwachukwu - Mater Christi (Western) Region, Nigeria

Sr. Mary Irene Ann Anyalebechi - Therese of the Child Jesus (European) Region

Sr. Mary Theonilla Chukwu - Our Lady of Guadalupe (North American) Region

Sr. Mary Donatus Kilolo - Queen of Peace (Kenya) Region

Sr. Mary Denis Adu-Birago - Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Ghana) Region

The Superior General also known as Rev. Mother General is the number one in the administrative ranking of the congregation together with her council made up of counselor 1 who is the Vicar General, followed by counsellor 2,3, 4, the Secretary General and Bursar General of the Institute.

The Regional Superior/Zonal representatives and her council comprising of the same number as the Generalate. The Local Superior and her council comprising of same number of members as in regional. All these various groups of administrators see to the day to day running of the Congregational affairs according to the level each found themselves. The regional, zonal and local give reports and take order from the Generalate. While the Superior consults with her council in the running of of the Institute's affairs.

Presently according to Ohaegbulem (2012), the religious institute of the Immaculate Heart Sisters is structured into eight Regions in thirteen Nations. The Founders' injunction: "They are to be Missionary", has been taken seriously toady. Immaculate Heart Sisters are serving the people of God in some diocese in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tchad, Kenya, Ghana, Ireland, England, Germany, Italy, Canada, United States of America, Scotland and Cameroon. Oputa (1987) states that the foundation of the "native sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary came as an urgent need to uplift the status of our women, girls and educate our children and to help the society at large in all spheres of life."(p.16).

4.5.2 The vision and mission of Immaculate Heart Sisters

The vision and mission Statement of Immaculate Heart Sisters was clearly written out after their 10th general chapter of 2011. In clear and concise words, it conveys the direction of the congregation in fidelity to its essence. This vision and mission statement forms a tool for them in carrying the task of total transformation of Our Community and world in Christ. The vision and mission statements communicate both the purpose and values of the congregation. The value of the Congregation is compassion, humility, simplicity, commitment, respect, justice, loyalty, unity, and generosity, which are derived in Christ and outlined for them by their founder.

The vision statement of Immaculate Heart Sisters is a statement of purpose of the Congregation in particular historical circumstances. It outlines a way of living out concretely its reason of existence. According to Oguh (2011) ,the vision statement is stated thus : “Authentic prophetic witnesses to the compassion and humility of Jesus and Mary in our life of consecration” (p.4).

The mission statement guides the actions of the congregation, spell its overall goal, provide a path and guide decision the making always in fidelity to the vision of the congregation. It is like a blueprint for what the Congregation desires to do in living out its charism in the society and the world at large. Thus; the mission statement: To be united in building authentic community life through compassionate and humble service to our neighbour in imitation of Mary our Mother”(p,4). This statement clearly defines the congregation’s self-understanding and the purpose of its being in the world and the concrete way to live out its foundational charism. The charism of the Congregation is “compassion”while the Spirit is

“Humility”. Immaculate Heart Sisters are to carry out their functions in Compassion of Jesus Christ through the Humility of Mother Mary. That is why their motto: “All to Jesus through Mary (Ad Jesum per Mariam) in the integrated ministry of the transformation of persons and societies through various pastoral developments. This pastoral development could be felt in their different apostolates such as education, medical, social, pastoral and catechetical works with special option for under-privileged, women and children as can be seen in what Oputa (1987) calls *Magna Carta*-the blue print of the Immaculate Heart Sisters.

4.6 Immaculate Heart Sisters in Onitsha Archdiocese 1967 – 2015

According to Eke (1985), Immaculate Heart Sisters’ Congregation is a child of the inspiration which the founder, Archbishop Charles Heerey had, when he went on pilgrimage to Lourdes in the early 1930s, as he was praying at Lourdes. These native sisters are known as the daughters of the Archdiocese for they were really founded to carry the mission of Christ in Onitsha Archdiocese and beyond. Archbishop Charles Heerey who saw the need to bring Christ’s love to others, thus founded Immaculate Heart Sisters to continue the mission of Christ entrusted the Church, conquering the great danger in the world, that is, individualist desolation and anguish that surrounds the people of God especially within Onitsha Archdiocese. In line with this, Francis (2013) invites all to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, finding new avenues and new paths of creativity, without enclosing Jesus in our dull categories. These women religious through their various apostolate in the schools, the hospitals, pastoral, social and many others in keeping with their founder magna carta were able to be signs of hope, bringing about a revolution of tenderness. It is necessary to seek refuge from the spirituality of well-being detached from

responsibility for our brothers and sisters and to vanquish the spiritual worldliness that consists of seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and well-being for these sisters believe that Christ is in everybody therefore, there is need to boost the socio-economic condition of the people. In order to achieve this, there is need for them to be compassionate, feeling for the people's condition and attending to them in humility. One can now understand why Pope Francis (2013) speaks of the many who feel superior to others. He highlights the need to promote the growth of the responsibility of the laity. He adds that there is a need for still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church, in particular in the various settings where important decisions are made. Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected cannot be lightly evaded. One can now understand why Immaculate Heart Sisters could not fold their hands when the white missionaries were sent away in taking care the Church's properties. Commenting on this,

M.B Njoku (personal communication, December 28, 2015) said that when the white missionaries were sent away, the Immaculate Heart Sisters swung into action in order to secure the properties of the Church within the Onitsha Archdiocese and beyond. She went further to say that immediately after the war, the Missionary Sisters were deported/expelled by the Nigerian Military Government-all the Church Hospitals Managed by the missionary Sisters were left vacant. Everything Medical seemed to be paralyzed but with assistance of the Immaculate Heart Sisters those Institutions were reconstructed and revived. The Immaculate Heart Sisters full of courage, daring and self –sacrificing tackled and offered medical/ spiritual assistance to hundreds of hepatitis patients even though shortage of Medical Doctors and Nurses were acute. It was this situation that led to the congregation engaging in socio-economic activities so as to enhance the pastoral development of the

people in Onitsha Archdiocese to meet the vision and the why of the foundation. That is uplifting the status of women and caring for the under-privileged children through education, pastoral works, medical, skill acquisition to enable them be self-reliant and other jobs in keeping with the spirit and charism of the congregation. Immaculate Heart Sisters placed themselves at the side of the poor and have undertaken their promotion of their wellbeing as their mission. As stated in their constitution and in some of the letters of their founder to their superiors:

In our social ministry, we compassionately exercise our spiritual and corporal work of mercy towards the less privileged in accordance with the social activities of the church. We minimize inequality in the social not by giving alms alone but by encouraging personal and community development project for self-reliance. (p. 34).

They are the voice of the voiceless in the socio-economic issues and pastoral developments. Promotion of justice is the concern of their whole life and a dimension of all their apostolic endeavours. That is why they embark on empowering the poor through education. Similarly, solidarity with men and women who live a life of hardship and who are victims of oppression characterized their life. The congregation has in many ways like clothing, sheltering and feeding a lot of families in Onitsha Archdiocese in a very humble manner.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS IN ONITSHA
ARCHDIOCESE 1967-2015

5.1 Women Religious and Pastoral Development

This chapter discussed the pastoral development of Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese. In doing this, the contributions of the Immaculate Heart Sisters towards the Pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese of Onitsha Archdiocese discussed. These contributions towards the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese were made through Prayers, Social Work, School Apostolate, Medical Apostolate, Right of Women and Rehabilitation.

Jesus Himself used the idea of a caring shepherd looking after a flock, to describe his relationship with his disciples and faithful followers (Luke 12:32). Taylor (1983), avers that, the work of a shepherd is “guiding, feeding, and protecting” (p.7). This implies that integral development of the people of God calls for urgent attention. The importance and urgency of appropriate involvement of Women Religious in integral human promotion and development can never be over emphasised. The Church, in her mission to contemporary society, needs to study carefully the emerging phenomena that characterise our times. These indicate the areas of choice [for evangelization and human promotion.

According to Pironio (1978), the teaching of the *Magisterium*, in fact increasingly clarifies the profound links between the Gospel requirements of the Church’s mission and the widespread commitment to the advancement of people and the creation of a worthy society.

Pastoral development for the Church means avenues of bringing the good news into all strata of humanity. To accomplish this mission, the Church must search out the signs of the time and interpret them in the light of the Gospel, thus the need for pastoral development. The continuous conversion of heart and spiritual freedom which the Lord's counsels inspire and promote make Women Religious present to their contemporaries in such a way as to remind everyone that the buildings of the secular city must be founded on the Lord and have Him as its goal.

Since the profession of the counsels binds Women Religious to the Church in a special way, it is they who are exhorted more insistently and trustingly to renew themselves wisely in openness to human needs problems and searching. Over and above the social and political dramas, the Church is conscious of her special mission to give a decisive answer to the profound questions of the human heart. No wonder Pironio (1980) state that the pastoral teaching of John Paul II has in the mean-time clarifies and defines the presence and involvement of the Church in the world, giving additional matter for reflection and inspiration. It highlights the present attention given both to human problems and to the irreplaceable encounter with Christ and with His Gospel. The researcher by this is encouraged, therefore, to clarify the direction of a path of evangelization and human promotion which, by a new and special title of consecration to God and to His purpose in human history, pertains to Women Religious in the Church.

The researcher observes that Women Religious often find themselves in a position to experience at close range the events that affect the people whom they serve. The prophetic nature of religious life according to Paul VI requires that religious embody the Church in

her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes. They are often to be found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and for their very lives. This sincere desire to serve the gospel and work for integral human promotion demands that communion be at the core of every concern and that it be built up with patience and perseverance, seeking the truth in charity. That is why the researcher employs the theories of human relation, functionalism and interactionism to enable the sisters not just encountering the people and for this to be effective, the Women Religious must immerse themselves in deep prayer. Indeed, the contemplative dimension inherent in every form of religious life is strong in them. The contemplative dimension, then, shows that religious life in all its forms not only does not alienate religious from other human beings and make them useless for human society but, on the contrary, permits them to be present to their brothers and sisters in a deeper way in the charity of Christ.

Development is all round. It could be spiritual, social, educational, structural, economical or even political. The underline factor here is the improvement of and the development of condition of the poor in the society and the entire people of God. John Paul II (1979), puts forwards in his own vision of what it means to be human, in the place of Christ in this and of the mission of the Church as “it is a vision of integral humanism in which the spiritual is not opposed to material, in which social justice is of major importance and in which mercy is essential-but is not to be seen as a substitute for justice” (p.40). For him, respect for human rights is the test for whether a society is truly just. Archbishop Charles Heerey who was moved and touched by the situation of the poor he found in Onitsha Archdiocese and Igboland/ Nigeria in general founded Immaculate Heart Sisters to continue that vision for option for the poor. The Church has always been concerned for those who live in poverty.

Thus, one of the fundamental roles the Church has been charitable activities such as setting up schools, hospitals treatment centres and the like. The exercise of charity is an exercise of God's love in practice. The progressive development of people is an object of deep interest and concern to the Church. She is interested in the social welfare services that can be instrument of national policy and should have as their goal the maximisation of the social functioning of the poor, sick and unemployed. The Immaculate Heart Sisters understand that fact that the Church cannot lose sight of the fact that she must also continue Christ's mission of bringing relief and succour to the suffering and those who are troubled in mind, body and spirit, through preaching, teaching and healing.

Immaculate Heart Sisters challenge and criticize in a very radical way the current model of development -seeing it as a cause of injustice, poverty, destruction of traditional cultures and ecological disaster. In general, people at the bottom of society are being impoverished by the way in which our world is structured. This impoverishment is both material and spiritual. The poor are deprived of adequate food, and housing; they are not allowed to participate in decision-making that affects them; they are despised because of their language, accent, gender, poverty, they are deprived of education. The presence of Immaculate Heart Sisters in Onitsha Archdiocese brought a lot of pastoral activities which enhanced the economic and other benefits to the people. Since the emergence of these Women Religious, there have been improvements in the pastoral development of the people of God in Onitsha in many ways.

Pastoral care is the ministry of care and counseling provided by pastors, chaplains and other religious leaders to members of their Church or Congregation, or to anyone within

institutional settings, with a focus on healing, reconciling, guiding and sustaining. This can range anywhere from home visitation to formal counseling provided by pastors who are licensed to offer counseling services. On the other hand, pastoral practice refers to how an idea is applied or used when giving spiritual guidance. Pastoral care can also be the practice of looking after the personal and social well-being of children or students under the care of a teacher or rabbi. It can encompass a wide variety of issues including health, social and moral education, behaviour management and emotional support. Immaculate Heart Sisters never neglected the spiritual aspect of the people of God in Onitsha Archdiocese that is the why of the sisters' involvement in activities that showcased their pastoral works in Onitsha Archdiocese.

The Sisters were going on home visit to assist the people in over-coming their personal and communal challenges in life and that yielded a lot of fruits for many were converted to Christianity even to religious life. In affirmation, Francis (2013) opines that in a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people's lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. In our world he stresses, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ's closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches people to remove their sandals before the sacred ground of the order (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. Spiritual accompaniment is expected to lead people closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom. Some people think

they are free if they can avoid God; they fail to see that they remain existentially orphaned, helpless, and homeless. They cease being pilgrims and become drifters, flitting around themselves and never getting anywhere.

Based on this, Francis (2013) states, that today more than ever the society needs men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock. One needs to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps one to find the right gesture and word which shows that one is more than simply a bystander. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can one enter on the paths of true growth and awakens a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in people's lives. Thomas Aquinas (cited by Francis, 2013) states that anyone can have grace and charity, and yet falter in the exercise of the virtues because of persistent "contrary inclinations" (p.133). By implication there is need for patience in this kind of exercise. Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begin and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization. Paul's relationship with Timothy and Titus provides an example of this accompaniment and formation which takes place in the midst of apostolic activity. Entrusting them with the mission of remaining in each city to "put in order what remains to be done" (Tit 1:5; 1 Tim 1:3-5), Paul also gives them rules for their personal lives and their pastoral activity. This is clearly distinct from every kind of intrusive accompaniment or isolated self-realization. Missionary disciples accompany

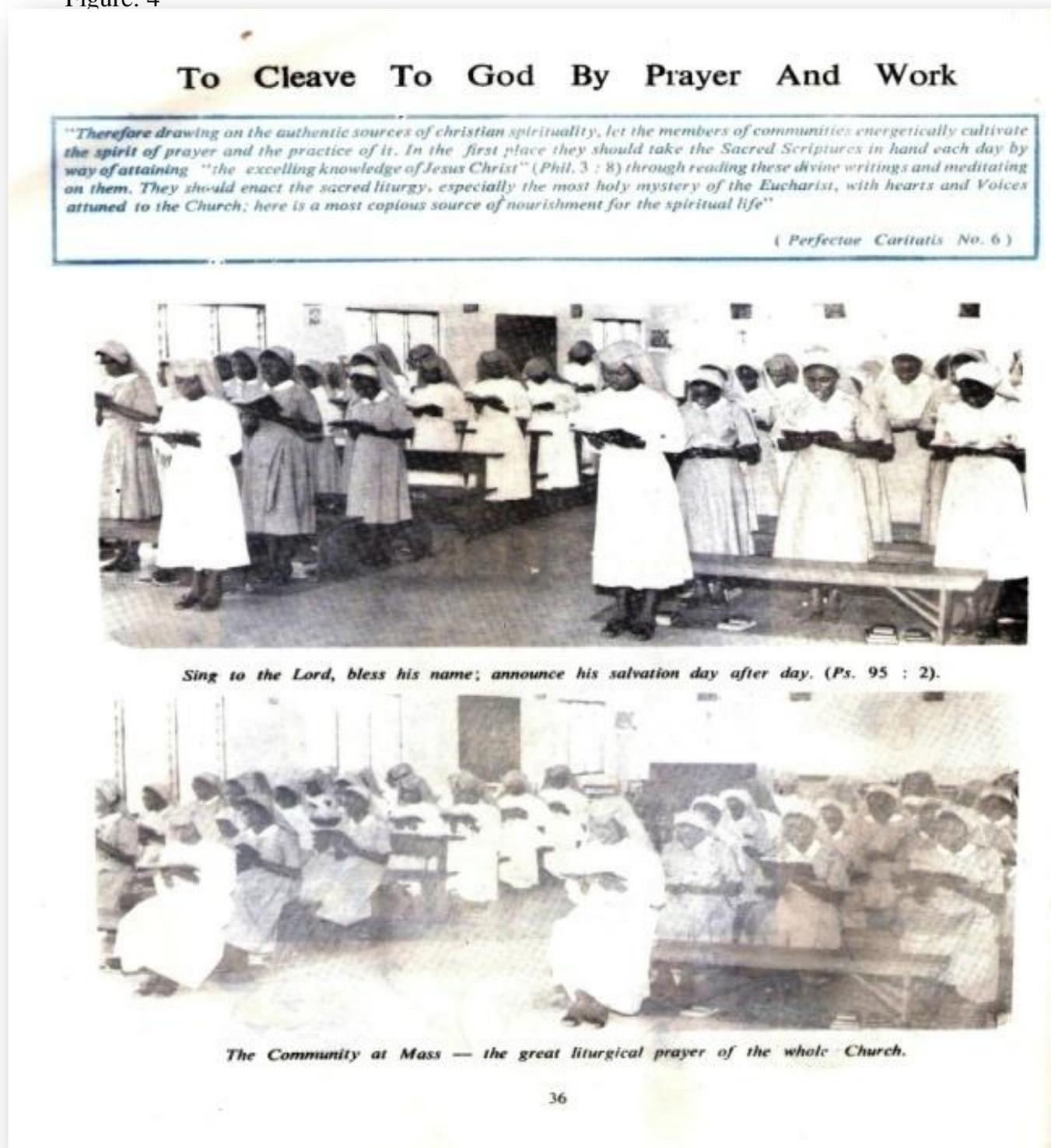
missionary disciples. Francis (2013), in order to buttress the need for the spiritual development of the people of God opines that the;

Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal; there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey. (p.134).

Again, religious life is a vocation given not only for the sanctification of person or persons chosen and called but more importantly for the good of the community of the people of God, the Church and society. According to John Paul II (1978), "even more important than the various works which you carry out, is the life you live: in other words what you are. You are consecrated person striving to follow Christ with great intensity of love" (p.20).

Immaculate Heart Sisters as a Eucharistic community draws strength in their encounter with God and thus transfers it in their relationships with people around them and in their interactions with the people of God in their various apostolates. The pastoral developments of the Immaculate Heart Sisters came in the following order; hence the pictures below.

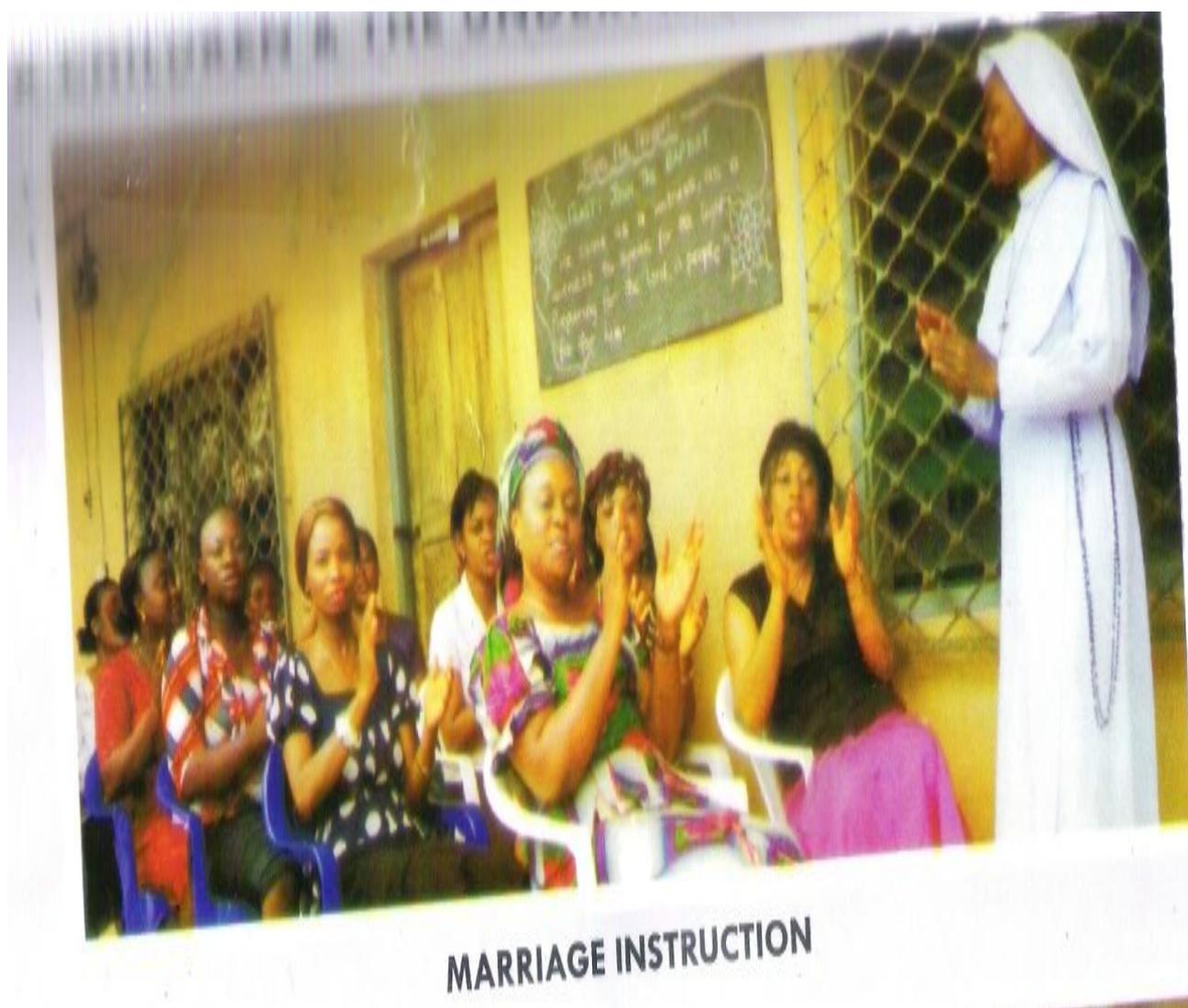
Figure: 4



These show the pictures of the Sisters at prayer together with the Postulants and Novices at Ihiala. Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archives

The vocation to religious life, as we understand it, does not consist primarily in services such as teaching, nursing, catechising and so on. It is firstly by being in union with God which is made manifest in the day to day interactions with those people the Women Religious meet and work for and with.

Figure: 5



Shows some of the ways by which Immaculate Heart sisters carry out their pastoral works at Nkpor. Source: Nwodo survey 2015

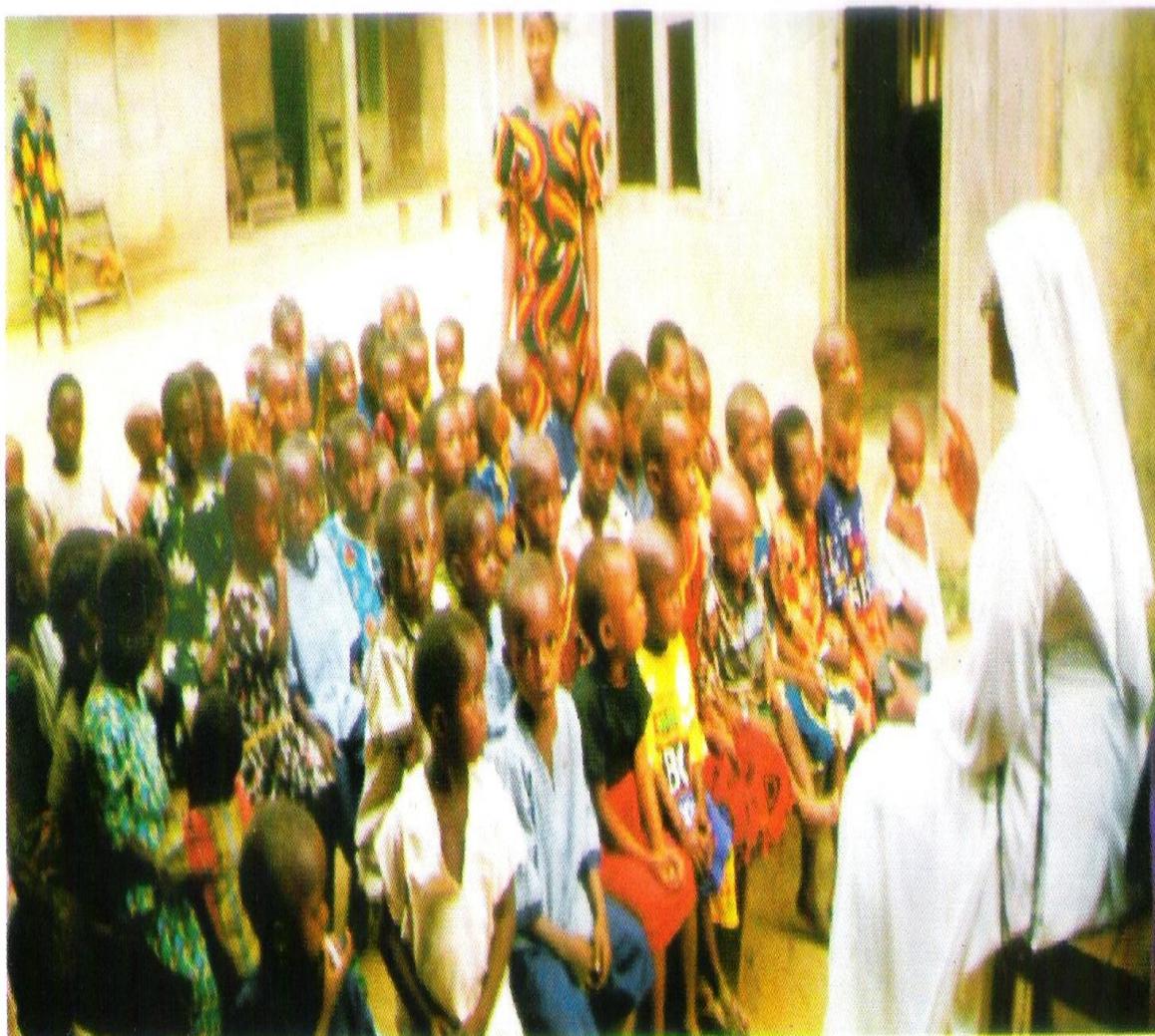
Figure: 5.i



FAMILY-LIGHT OF THE NATION FOUNDATION

This shows holiday activity organised for the pupils and students by the Congregational NGO Family-Light of the Nation Foundation at Cor Marie Secondary School Nkpor August, 2015. Source: Nwodo's survey, 2015.

Figure: 5.ii



A SISTER TEACHING CATECHISM

This picture shows the Immaculate Heart Sister teaching catechism at St. Michael's parish Fegge Onitsha, 2015.

5.2 Pastoral Contributions of Immaculate Heart Sisters towards the Pastoral Development of Onitsha Archdiocese from 1967 – 2015

The various activities and works which, through a diversity of charisms, characterised the mission of Women Religious are one of the most important means by which the Church carries out its mission of evangelization and human promotion in the world. Open to the signs of the times, Women Religious will be able to seek and implement a new manner of presence which is in keeping with their founder's creativity and the original purposes of their own institutes. In this context, a certain course of action in renewal emerges. The activities and social works which were always part of the mission of Women Religious bear witness to their constant commitment to integral human promotion. Schools, hospitals, charity centers and initiatives on behalf of the poor and for the cultural and spiritual improvement of people not only retain their relevance but, are often discovered to be privileged means of pastoral development which leads to the authentic human promotion.

In the pastoral care of so many and such urgent activities for human and social promotion, Women Religious translate into a convincing sign the gift of a life totally available to God, to the Church and to others. Again, the spirit, who constantly inspires new forms and institutions of consecrated life in answer to the needs of the times, also animates the already existing ones with a renewed capacity for involvement in keeping with changing ecclesial and social conditions. In the Church's openness to ministries and in a continuous and orderly communal growth, religious are able to discover new forms of active participation, involving the Christian community increasingly in their initiatives and works. In this way, the Women Religious have the opportunity to show what their own particular charism

brings to the promotion of ministries which correspond to the apostolic and social purposes of their own institutes. The participation of the people of God in the activities and works of Women Religious assumes new proportions with the development of the ecclesial dimension of co-responsibility in a common mission. With adequate preparation, this participation could be extended even to works hitherto entrusted exclusively to religious. Present social conditions, on the other hand, require new forms of solidarity and involvement. Changes taking place in some areas in the civil sphere are beginning to develop responsibility on all levels of society through structures and means of participation. Thus, everyone is called to take an active role in solving problems relating to the building of the social order. Side by side with the response of the people the Women Religious are witnessing to, the witness and experience of Women Religious themselves make important contribution in this field towards solutions which are in line with the criteria of the gospel and the pastoral directives of the magisterium.

The pastoral concern of the Church for the working world is shown in numerous pronouncements which the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (cited by Pironio, 1980) sums up, placing Women Religious within the context of the new economic and social conditions.

Face with such a vast sector of humanity, which insistently challenges the mission of the whole Christian community, Women Religious experience a greater need for solidarity and participation. They feel that their choice of evangelical poverty already impose on them the duty of recognizing the authentic values contained in the common law of work. The Magisterium of the bishops described precisely, in the case of priest, the reasons, objectives and conditions which should guide the more committed choices of involvement in the working world. Obviously, these directives apply to priest-religious also. But, given the

specific nature of religious life and its special bonds with the Church's mission, they are applicable analogously to other men and women religious as well.

In addition, the characteristics proper to the vocation and mission of religious suggest some criteria which could determine and direct their possible involvement in the working world such as:

- i. Dynamic fidelity to the purposes for which the spirit brought their institutes into existence in the church.
- ii. The desire to witness to gospel values which restore dignity to work and show its true purpose.
- iii. A commitment to strengthen the religious dimensions which characterize their profession and demonstrate the attractiveness of the kingdom of God to which they have committed themselves radically.
- iv. Fraternal sharing which the daily communal experience in religious life supports and nourishes and which manifests the newness of Christ's love in establishing solidarity among peoples.

Specific criteria in choice and behaviour are needed, also in the actual ways of participating. As a matter of fact, there are two possible forms of involvement in the working world, both of which have characteristics that deserve distinct consideration. The taking on of a secular profession carried out in the same social and economic conditions as civilians (in schools, hospitals). In some countries this is imposed by changed political circumstances, as in the case of nationalization when the state takes control of the services. Sometimes it is legislative reform or the internal needs of the religious institute which prompt religious to take on a position equivalent to that of lay people so as to continue their own apostolic activities.

The search for new forms of involvement has also been responsible for participation in the ordinary social structures. In all cases, concern for the general nature of religious life and for the specific goals of one's own Institute requires that these new situations be faithful to community requirements and the commitment to obedience and religious poverty. The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus Christ. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In his Apostolic Exhortation, Francis (2013) encourages the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come.

The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever people's interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.

Christians, everywhere, were invited to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least openness to letting him encounter them. According to Paul VI (1975) no one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever one

take a step towards Jesus, one realizes that He is already there, waiting for him with open arms.

Benedict (2005) states that “Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. In this regard, several sayings of Saint Paul will not surprise people; the love of Christ urges us on (2 Cor 5:14); “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16), these were some kind motivating words that helped the sisters in carrying out their works in joy for the sake of putting smiles on the faces of these poor ones. This is because their apostolate sprang from the mandate given the Church by Christ through their founder.

Francis (2013) opines that:

the Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others.(p.7).

The life of a Woman Religious is a life of emptying of self for the good of others, therefore, when the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfillment. The Women Religious are being called to recover and deepen their enthusiasm in their efforts to add values to the lives of those under their service. Women Religious believe that the heart of its message will always be the same; that is the God who revealed his immense love in the crucified and

risen Christ. God constantly renews his faithful ones, whatever their age, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint (Is 40:31). Francis (2013) avers that an authentic faith which is never comfortable or completely personal always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. All Christians are called to show concern for the building of a better world.

Again, Women Religious have shown, generally, that they are conscious of the fact that their involvement in human promotion is a service of the gospel to humanity, not a preferential choice of ideologies or political parties. Politics can be understood in the wider and more general sense as the dynamic organisation of the whole life of society. In this respect, it constitutes a duty of responsible and active human participation for all citizens. Looked at in this way, the role of Women Religious in activities and works is profoundly meaningful in its encouragement of and commitment to those cultural and social changes which contribute to human promotion. But if politics means direct involvement with a political party, then certain reservations must be made in view of the vocation and mission of religious in general in the Church and in society, so as to arrive at correct criteria governing a possible involvement. Pironio (1978) states thus:

- i. Religious aware of the worthwhile contribution that their gospel witness and the variety of their apostolic initiatives make, should not be deluded into thinking that they will have greater influence on the development of persons and peoples by substituting a political involvement in the strict sense for their own specific tasks.
- ii. To establish the kingdom of God within the very structures of the world, insofar as this constitutes evangelical promotion in human history, is certainly a theme of great

interest for the whole Christian community and, therefore, for religious also; but not in the sense that they allow themselves to become involved directly in politics.

He went further to say that through their scholastic institutes, the communications media, and multiple religious and educational projects, they can actively contribute especially to the formation of the young, thus making them architects of human and social development. The repercussions of this apostolate will not fail to be felt in the political sphere also. This is not through a strategy of conquest but through that service to human society which is the mission mandated by Christ to the whole ecclesial community (Lk. 22:25-27). It is from this point of view that the efforts of Women Religious to cooperate in the advancement of women are to be encouraged, so that women may succeed in being involved in those areas of public and ecclesial lives which best correspond with their particular nature and the qualities that are proper to them. In this way, Women Religious will be credible gospel experts, and as such will be effective in healing and building up society, even when they stand apart from certain political options, being seen not as women who take sides, but as agents of peace and fraternal solidarity.

Their faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of their concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members. Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that the sisters be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid. The scripture makes Women Religious to see how God the Father wants to hear the cry of the poor: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I

have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them... so I will send you..." (Exodus 3:7-8, 10). The Women Religious also see Christ's concern for the needy thus: "When the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer" (Judges 3:15). The researcher observes that, this is the situation Archbishop Charles Heerey found among the Igbo people especially the women and children that led to the founding of the Immaculate Heart Sister.

Based on this, Francis (2013) opines that "the Church, guided by the Gospel of mercy and by love for mankind, hears the cry for justice and intends to respond to it with all her might" (p.153). This means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which people encounter. For this reason, Immaculate Heart Sisters founded for up-liftment of womanhood and under privileged children went into action of engaging in pastoral activities that will enhance the spiritual lives of the people.

In order to salvage the poor condition of women and children, Immaculate Heart Sisters launched into what could be called the option of protection-empowerment framework. This option of protection-empowerment is derived from sustainable human development approach for eradication of extreme poverty. This implies that security of individuals is better guaranteed when poverty is prevented from severe threats such as extreme poverty. The focus is that eradication of extreme poverty essentially lays foundation for human security. Human security ensures the safety of individuals and communities against a wider range of threats orchestrated by extreme poverty such as deadly infectious diseases, women

rights, violations, violent conflict, community crisis, famine and many others so that when talk to the people about God they will be willing and ready to listen.

Based on this, Nweke (2012) also states that;

the strategy for eradication of extreme poverty reduction considers as a major line of attack to empower through strengthening of the household of the vulnerable to overcome threats to human security. It adds that eradication of extreme poverty efforts must reflect a design that improves human capacity through attainment of self-reliance as well as have access to basic needs of life. The efforts targeted at reducing poverty must remain people-centered with corresponding basic needs of life, such as functional education, basic health, sanitation and relevant amenities. (Pp.24-25).

Immaculate Heart Sisters that was founded for the upliftment of womanhood and under privileged children saw the need to up lift women socio-economically to enable them stand for their pastoral needs argues that women who enjoys a good percentage in population of the Igbo disproportionately suffer from hunger, disease, environmental degradation and general impoverishment. As a result of this, poverty has remained stubbornly feminized, and women also suffer violence in various forms.

In line with this, Nwokoye (2012) avers that this condition of women has “accounted for why women are retarded economically” (p.147). It therefore, becomes imperative to empower women economically so that they can contribute meaningfully to development efforts. Just as a mother caters for the total well-being of her family so does a woman religious struggles for the overall good of God’s family- the Church. In order to give her

spiritual children a divine unending life. Like Jesus Christ whose magna carta is to do the will of Him who sent Him by carrying out his blue print as outlines in the book of (Isaiah 61:1-3), Immaculate Heart Sisters were founded for a specific purpose of caring for women, children and the poor of the society which actually fits in into the mantra of Jesus Christ.

On account of this, the Immaculate Heart Sisters being the first indigenous Congregation is carrying on their apostolate in different ways in order for them to partake in the salvific mission of Christ. According to Muorah (2014) the culmination of the salvific mission of Christ on earth is the Ascension. After the resurrection, Christ was with the disciples for some time strengthening and teaching them. His post-resurrection appearances served mainly to comfort, to encourage, engendering hope and peace, to restore joy and to help the disciples' transition to a new way of being in relationship with Him. He empowered them to rise above their brokenness and bond with the power of His presence.

His physical presence is no longer necessary. It would be absurd and a distraction to maintain His corporal presence. The power that the disciples have to take action proclaiming that He is risen from the dead derives from such bonding. Hence, his post resurrection appearances were with glorified body, a body no longer limited by space and time. With the glorified body (cf. Phil 3:20) He ascended into heaven, in the presence of the apostles, after commissioning them. The experience was awe-inspiring for the apostles. Both the post resurrection appearances and the ascension gave the disciples opportunity of special moments with the risen Jesus to encounter anew the joy of the gospel and herald the joy to all nations. We have to recall that Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit: "Stay in the city then, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This power

from on high will lead them to complete truth (John 16:13) and remind them of all that Jesus said and did, teach them what to say and speak through them (Matthew 10:19-20). Just before the Ascension, Jesus re-emphasized the promised Spirit and the need to wait in Jerusalem for its outpouring (Acts 1:4). He said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). From the scene of the Ascension, the apostles and the disciples gathered in Jerusalem and kept prayer vigils waiting for the outpouring of the promised Spirit. In same vein, Immaculate Heart Sisters believe that cut off from the master their efforts will be brought to not, therefore as Eucharistic community, these women religious prayers, their union with God in prayer is made manifest in their various apostolates in order to enhance the pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese and the society at large.

5.2.1 Pastoral Care Visitation

Traditionally visitation is very much appreciated in Igboland as the missionary mandale of Christ and it forms an integral part of the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiscese by the immaculate Heart Sisters "I was sick and you visited me" (Matthew. 25:36) and of course everyone engaged in pastoral care activity knows the importance of and impression that religious's visit makes in the lives of the sick as she acquaints herself with their character, aptitudes, aspirations, depth of their spiritual life, zeal, ideals, state of health, financial situation, their families and everything which concerns them. Eneh (2008) wrote that in places where there is a cordial relationship between the women Religious (immaculate Heart Sisters) and the health care workers, doctors, nurses, volunteer workers etc, the sister's presence can facilitate the process of administering medication to

those who find it difficult to take their drugs, ‘I will call Sister’, ‘look at sister coming’. Such words help to convince the patient to take his/her medicine since; the Sister’s personal relationship is rationally apprehensive.

5.2.2 Women Religious- the Extra Ordinary Minister of the Eucharist

The administration of the sacraments is the heart of the pastoral care, which bring about pastoral development in Onitsha Arch and through which the pastoral work is realized in its fullness. The immaculate Heart Sisters through the administration of the sacraments to the people of God, including the sick and the elderly fosters their pastoral development. In bringing communion to them, Eneh (2008) states that “the minister of communion represents Christ and manifests faith and charity on behalf of the whole community towards those who cannot be present at the Eucharist”(p. 2004). John Paul 11 (cited by Eneh, 2008) went further to state that the reception of communion for the sick and the elderly is not only a privilege but also a sign of support and concern shown by the Christian community for its members who are ill. Thus the administration of the sacraments is a unique channel through which the immaculate Heart Sisters distinguish themselves from the rest of the health care givers. The sacraments are the powerhouse of the church. They (sacraments) are powers that come forth from the body of Christ, which is ever-giving and life-giving. This administration of the sacraments by the immaculate Heart Sisters to the people of God, including the sick and elderly, according to Biju-Duval cited in Eneh (2008), situates them as people before a personal God, and the fundamental grace which they to them is not fusalional experience of the divine, but a real and distinct person, namely: Jesus Christ. Therefore, any pastoral understanding of human being must give full consideration to the

problem of instinctive human drives as there are expressed in daily experience, as well as cultural opportunities and deprivations in the satisfaction of these drives.

5.2. 3 Social work

Several researchers have identified the social benefits that women religious bring to the society including: providing help to the poor, and vulnerable communities, improving marriage relationships, feeding, promoting charitable contributions and volunteering and increasing moral community obligations. The pictures below showcased some of the Sisters' social works.

Figure 6.



Shows the Motherless babies under the care of Immaculate Heart Sisters at Mother of Christ Compassionate home Oguta Road, Onitsha. Source: Nwodo's survey, 2015

Mother of Christ Compassionate Home was opened as safe haven for unwanted babies and motherless babies to have nurture. The Immaculate Heart Sisters whose charism is compassion attempt to imitate the love, sympathy and concern of Christ in serving the under-privileged in our society, such as orphans, single parents, unwanted babies, and

prisoners and other marginalized persons. By so doing, increased and improved the quality of life of these segments of the population and contributed to the socio-economic development of Onitsha Archdiocese and the society at large. The Immaculate Heart Sisters through their social services, helped individuals, families, group and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being. They helped people to develop skills and the ability to recognize and use their God given talents. They engaged in agricultural programmes, small-scale industries for self-reliant and creation of job opportunities for the unemployed of our society. They distributed foods and clothing, every Sundays, to poor, physically challenged and destitutes. The picture below is one of those occasions Immaculate Heart Sisters identifies with the less privileged of the society.



Shows the care of widows by Immaculate Heart Sister during one of their encounters at Onitsha. Nwodo's survey, 2015.

Figure 8.



This shows a picture of one the children enjoying the scholarship scheme of the Immaculate Heart Sisters at Awka town in Awka diocese. (Source: Nwodo survey, 2015). They also give scholarship to poor children in the society in order to enable them acquire education.

Cooke (cited by Udemba 2014) sums up the vocation of the Immaculate Heart Sisters as “personal holiness of life and generosity that gives itself in the salvation and succor of the poor, the suffering and the disadvantaged” (P.34).

5.2.4 School Apostolate

The role of education as an agent or instrument of social change and social development is widely recognized today. Social change may take place – when humans need change. When the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet the existing human needs and when new materials suggest better ways of meeting human needs. Education can initiate social changes by bringing about a change in outlook and attitude of man. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationships and thereby it may cause social change.

Earlier educational institutions and teachers used to show a specific way of life to the students and education was more a means of social control than an instrument of social change. Modern educational institutions do not place much emphasis upon transmitting a way of life to the students. The traditional education was meant for an unchanging static society not marked by any change. But today education aims at imparting knowledge. Education was associated with religion.

It has become secular today. It is an independent institution now. Education has been chiefly instrumental in preparing the way for the development of science and technology. Education has brought about phenomenal changes in every aspect of men's life. Brown (2013) remarks that education is a process which brings about changes in the behaviour of

society. It is a process which enables every individual to effectively participate in the activities of society and to make positive contribution to the progress of society. The distribution of education both in terms of quality and quantity is highly uneven in most societies. Inequality in opportunities for education is found not only with reference to individuals and social classes but also in terms of regions and territorial regions such as urban and rural areas.

The importance of education to societal development cannot be over emphasized. It would not be an exaggeration to say that without education most societies would stagnate and die. In this light, Meyer (1977) avers that “education is central in the public biography of individual, greatly affecting their life chances. It is also a central element in the table of organization of society, constructing competences and helping creating professions and professionals”(p.104). Education helps individual to be equipped with the knowledge and skill that will aid them in defining and pursuing personal life’s goals. Education enables people to participate constructively to the society, playing their part to improve their conditions and the condition of the society. While many may view education in a very individualistic way, it is important to look at it societal relevance. The more educated individual there are in the society, the more developed that society becomes.

Mistra (2012) opines that education form the basis of all activities in life as a means of pastoral and all round development. Hence education must be encouraged to foster the growth and social development as a result; Immaculate Heart Sisters have contributed greatly in the expansion of educational facilities in Onitsha Archdiocese, right from day care, nursery, primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary institutes to enhance pastoral life

of the people of God in the Archdiocese. The sisters have put in place schools where different students of varying classes and walks of life come together to learn and be trained to be literate and become professionals. Also the sisters add religious causes to the program of school to enable students to be formed academically and in character. This is seen in one of the reports found in the sisters' archives thus;

Figure 9.

Having now got two professed members who are also qualified teachers, the new Congregation intensified its apostolate in the schools. The first primary school for girls was established in the town. It is interesting to note that among the first pupils of the school, were seven girls who latter joined the Congregation. Christian doctrine classes were always held for christian men, women, boys and girls on Sunday evenings before Benediction. Choir practices were taken with school children. Home to Home visitation was also undertaken regularly as it was one of the chief means of contact with the people. Thus the people were prepared for the Sacraments helped to live their christian lives and solve problems arising from practices which were alien to christian principles.

Other means of contact with the people was the sisters' work in the maternity homes where the women and their children are cared for.

This shows the progress reports of the pastoral activities of the Immaculate Heart Sisters especially in Onitsha Archdiocese.

Figure 10.



This shows a picture of one of the Immaculate Heart Sisters on her way to go school at Nnewi in the present Nnewi diocese.

Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters Archives.

Figure 11.



This shows an Immaculate Heart Sister teaching the children in one of the bush schools at Ihiala. Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters Archives.

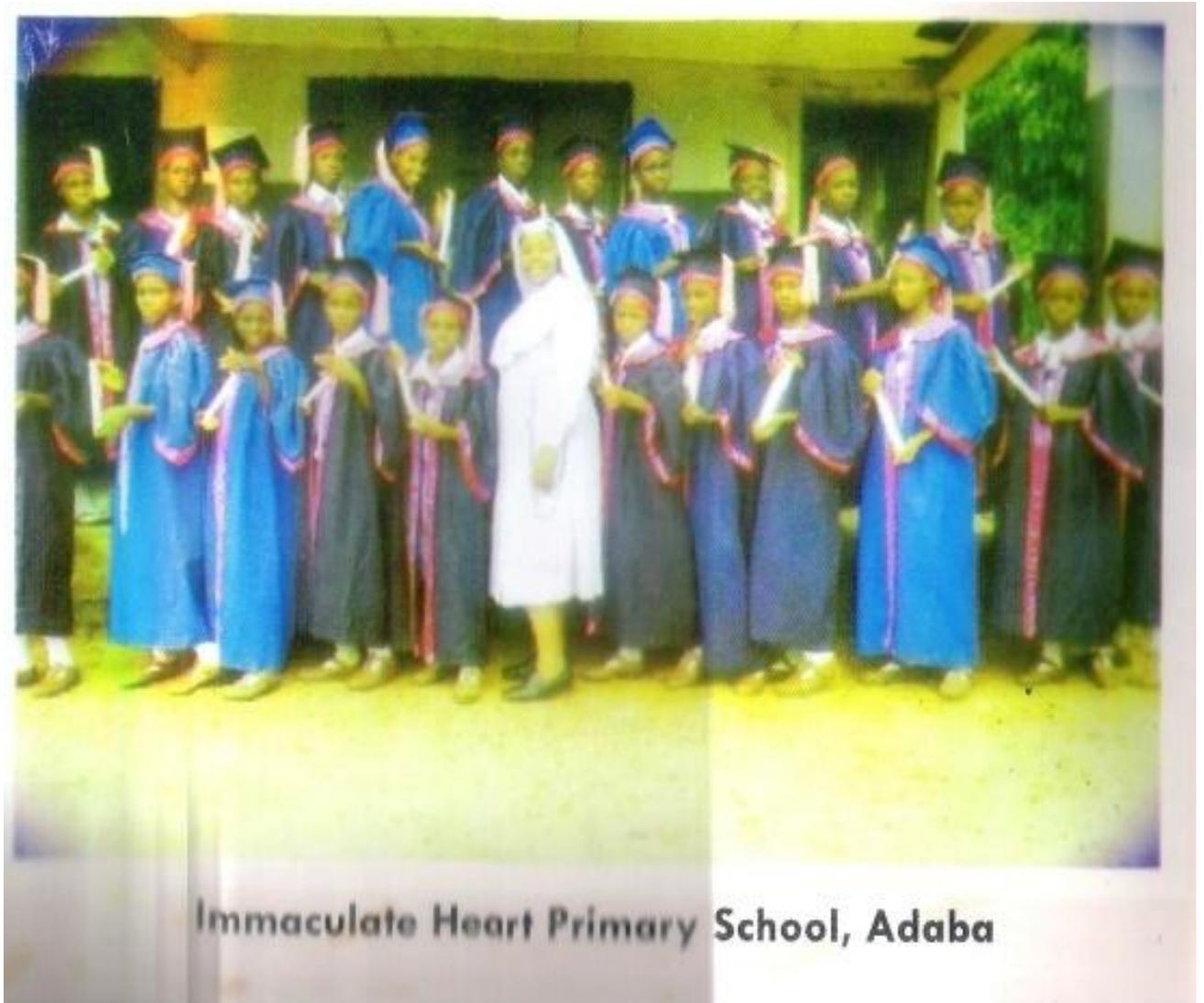
Figure. 12

**Immaculate Heart Day Care**

This shows Immaculate Heart Day Care at Oguta Road Onitsha.

Source; Nwodo survey, 2015

Figure 13.ii



Immaculate Heart Primary School, Adaba

Source: Nwodo's survey, 2015

Figure. 13 iii



Immaculata Model Secondary School, Nnewi

Source: Nwodo's survey, 2015

Figure 13.iii



Cor Mariae Girls Secondary School, Nkpor

Figure 13.iv



This picture shows some of the medical laboratory students and their sister lecturers in the laboratory classroom at Nkpor. Source: Nwodo's survey, 2015

Since these pupils and students have undergone training both in faith and academic, through the Immaculate Heart Sisters establishments they became persons of high moral character and standard in their daily dealings in the society.

5.2. 5. The Rights of Women

The fundamental rights that humans have by the fact of being human, and that are neither created nor can be abrogated by any government. Supported by several international conventions and treaties (such as the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human rights in 1948), these include cultural, economic, and political rights, such as right to life, liberty, education and equality before law, and right of association, belief, free speech, information, religion, movement, and nationality. Promulgation of these rights is not binding on any country, but they serve as a standard of concern for people and form the basis of many modern national constitutions. Archbishop Charles Heerey advocates for the right of women in Igboland/Onitsha by challenging cultural and social mores and creating awareness among women of their social and legal rights. According to S. A. Obidile (personal communication, May 26th, 2016) says that in addition to founding a native congregation, he formed another group of lay women called Catholic Women Organization with V.V.I Okoye in 1964. These groups of women labour tirelessly to shed light on core issues that assault the dignity of women in order that people who are buried in cultural heritage that is not in favour of women will see and come to an understanding of what it is at stake when disordered cultural traditions and customary practices continue to shape manners of social relations. They took pains to instruct the women in every virtue and used Blessed Virgin Mary who is the model of Christian motherhood as example. They helped them to value the dignity of womanhood.

The Immaculate Heart Sisters struggle with renewal and re-envisioning of their founding charism, which is connected with the integral advancement of women, young girls and children. Women are educated for their own self-growth and not simply for the education of offspring. This singular approach spurs Archbishop Charles Heerey to raise from the Igbo women the foundation members of his congregation: the native Sisters of the Most Pure Heart of Mary as they formally called. The pupils trained by these sisters included women who later became prominent leaders in civil society as well as mothers of many religious and priests, including church prelates. These women were founded to be the fairest among men who will through their way of life bring positive change. They believe that durable changes can come when men and women work together thereby inspiring one another to see that women are no less an image of God. Therefore, they organize seminars, conferences and workshops for women and girl children, in order to:

- i. Make them self-reliant and imbibe serving culture;
- ii. Encourage greater participation of women in politics with keen mind;
- iii. Eliminate harmful cultural practices that cripple the mind of the woman, abuse her dignity and threaten her integrity.

Immaculate Heart Sisters through education inculcates in those women to have the positive image of themselves and thus deliver them from the imprisonment of some kinds of obiscious practices such as women as to equal to men in these of creation. It was this issue of upliftment of the status of women in Igboland especailly in Onitsha Archdiocese that as already stated in this the foundation of the Immaculate Heart Sisters and to be their voice. Based on this, the Sisters occasionally through on-going formation up-date themselves notwith standing of their professional and techincal education.

Figure:14



This shows one of the occasions the Immaculate Heart Sisters gather to update themselves. Source: Nwodo survey, 2015

There is widespread discrimination against the girl-child, destruction of unborn child, violence against and abuse of women and girls in the family and a general lack of respect for life. The empowerment and advancement of women including the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief contribute to moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men individually or in community with others. These guarantee them the possibility of realizing their full potentials in society and shaping their

lives in accordance with their own aspirations. Women's rights are human right. Consequently, women should have unhindered access to resources, full participation in the affairs of the family and society at large. Owoyemi (2009) states that:

Eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice require the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and full equal participation of women as agent of change in sustainable development (p.46).

Women have right to economic independence which includes employment; they have right to acquire education in order to enable them to qualify for employment. The founder of this Immaculate Heart Sisters' Congregation, Archbishop Charles Heerey who was touched by the discriminatory attitudes of men over women in Igbo land wished to develop educational system that produces professionally oriented women who will be able to make their contributions to a modern and fast-developing Nigeria. As a result of this, B. C Eke (personal communication, March 30th, 2015) says that Archbishop Charles Heerey formed Catholic Women Organization under the leadership of Chief Mrs. V.V.I Okoye in 1964. She went further to say Charles Heerey saw education as one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and the self-confidence necessary to participate in development process. Therefore Archbishop Charles Heerey established the convent school system for girls and young women. By this establishment, he rescued girls and young women from the role the dominant culture imposed, to be only wife and mothers who can only be seen and not be heard and to have no identity of her own, but to derive her being from man and exist only for him, to serve his personal and domestic needs cooking, cleaning, washing and bear and rear his children. African traditional religion regards

women as the worthless class of people whose places are found in the kitchen, and those who cannot fight for their rights. In the past even in the present the position and dignity of women have suffered exploitation, humiliation, intimidation and degradation because of the domineering ignorance and prejudice. Chiegboka (2001) opines that:

Women are still in many places treated as non-persons, inferior, second class citizen, and weaker gender. Her voice is not necessary in decision making bodies. She is still considered to be very virtually impure because of divine endowed nature of menstruation (p.11-12).

Through education, Immaculate Heart Sisters empower themselves and then empowered women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in development processes in their societies. According Ohaegbulem (2012), this group of women religious' academic philosophy is based on five pillars as stipulated in one of the letters of the founder:

- i. Spiritual and moral values: Providing the education which enables the human person to be sincere, honest, truthful, respectful, and conscientious
- ii. Entrepreneurial Spirit: Empowering the student to be master of his/her future through experiential learning by doing.
- iii. Scientific and technical know-how, which enables the students to acquire new techniques and skills in order to meet up with modern technology.
- iv. Social and environmental awareness and responsibility: providing the education that enables the students to be accountable to their communities.
- v. Integrated education for life: The education which involves knowledge, prayer, and work and transcends the mere acquisition of professional skills.(p.67).

With these five characteristics, Immaculate Heart Sisters work with full dedication to prepare women and men who will transform their societies and pave the way for a more just and peaceful world. Immaculate Heart Sisters ensure that those who go through their schools do not turn out to be all rounded citizen but also are persons who will have as their core mission the need to assist others who may not have been as fortunate as themselves in the community. D.C.Isuzo (personal communication, May7th 2015) in his observation says that, the students in Immaculate Heart Sisters' schools acquire not just academic knowledge but also a holistic and integrated formation that prepares them to face the challenges of life. The quality of graduates from Immaculate Heart Sisters' schools is indicative of genuine commitment and dedication to hard work. It is also a reflection of their zeal for the promotion of academic and moral excellence in young girls who do not only work to earn income but who work also towards the development of the society where insecurity and anxiety seem to silence the inner voice of the people to stand for the truth and accountability, the graduates of Immacualte Heart Sisters' schools rise to the challenges.

5.2.6 Medical Apostolate

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Also health is an asset with intrinsic value that, being healthy is a source of well being and has an instrumental value that contributes to economic growth and development. The determinants factors that make people healthy goes beyond the usually -considered factors such as access to and use of health care services. The role of medical services in pastoral development is to gain access to comprehensive, quality healthcare services in order to help in increasing the quality of a healthy life for everyone for a healthy living which enhances development in all its ramifications and to appreciate

God. Jesus Christ, when on earth shown great sympathy towards the sick, the poor and the suffering, A. C. Mbonu (personal communication, February 12th, 2016) says that Archbishop Charles Heerey moved by this compassion of Jesus Christ had in mind as one of his aims in founding the Immaculate Heart Sisters to take care of the sick in different capacities.

This led to the opening of many clinics even bush and mobil clinics, maternity homes, leprosa, dispensaries and hospitals to assist the people of God who are sick in Onitsha Archdiocese and beyond. It was this charism of the sister's bequeated to them by their founder – the compassion of Jesus according Uzoigwe (nd) that made these sisters to delve into caring for the people of God during the Nigeria/Biafra civil war without reservations of thinking of self. Uzoigwe (nd) states thus that:

The Immaculate Heart Sisters moved along with reguees from place to place. They set up sickbays to care for the sick, clinics to treat minor ailments satisfactorily. They set up feeding centres for families and kwashiorkor clinics for affected children. The Caritatis International Organization like the Red Cross supplied the sisters with needed food, drugs and essential wears and many other essenital commodities to relieve surfering and save life.(p.7).

Figure 15



This shows the picture of the sister doctor instructing the mothers and their children in one of the IHM sisters' hospitals. Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archives.

Figure 16. i



Figure 16.ii



This shows the IHM Mother of Christ specialist hospital Nkpor

Source: Nwodo's survey 2015

Figure 16.iii



This picture shows the sister doctor administering medical care to one of the patients in the hospital. Source: Nwodo survey, 2015

5.2.7 Rehabilitation Apostolate

According P. C. Moloko (personal communication, August, 23rd 2015) rehabilitation is a process of restoration, therapy, recuperation, convalescence, recovery, help, analysis, psychotherapy, remedy, psychoanalysis, physiotherapy of an individual or persons whose are under deverstated condition. C. C. Mourah (personal communication March 27th, 2015) says that there are four primary levels of human functioning, which in ascending order are physical, emotional, cognitive or rational, and spiritual. Between the cognitive and the spiritual levels there is a sub-level of cognitive emotional. It puts a human face to the reasoning. The human needs and development correspond to these levels of functioning. Also, healthy change targets these levels of functioning. Similarly, wellness or having totality of wellbeing necessarily addresses these levels of needs or functioning. Genuine human rehabilitation to the poor, the needy, the aged, the vulnerable in any capacity should therefore appraise these levels of needs/functioning to restore totality of wellbeing and empowering the one in need to maximize one's potentials and live one's the best quality of life.

These levels are interconnected and one has to transit smoothly from the lower to the higher levels of functioning. Healthy functioning at these levels is like driving a car equipped with a manual five speed gear. As the car accelerates, a good driver does proper clutch engagement and timely transits from higher/heavier gear and same is like when frog, leaping from one stage to another creates dysfunctionality. Exclusion and inequality that pervade the economic and social life and the structures maintaining them are the fixation undermining healthy functioning at these levels. Francis (2013) made a strong point on this issue in *Evangelium Gaudium*. In his view concerning situation of the people of God,

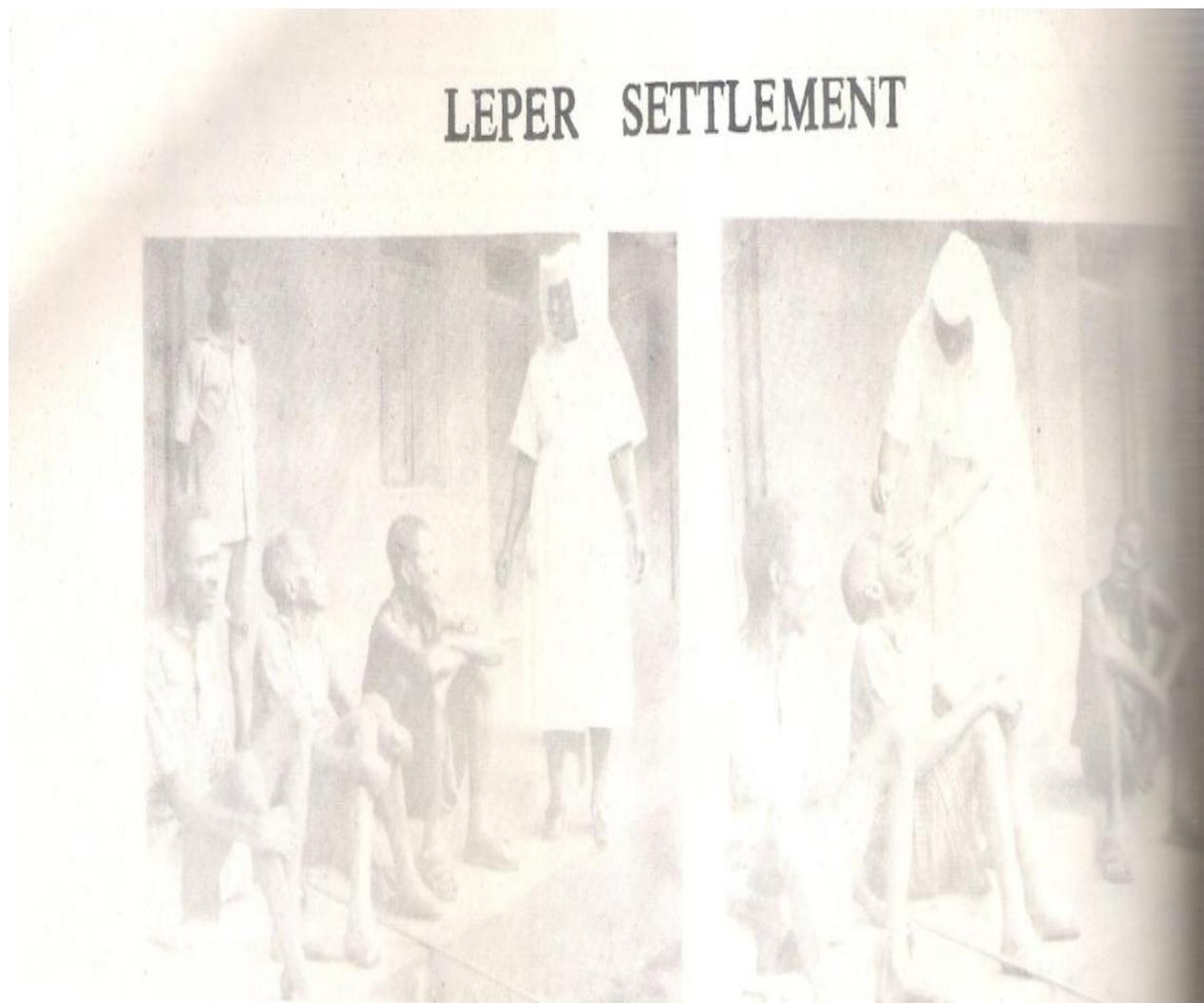
he opines that there is fine tune the pastoral activities in the local churches as a way of helping the faithful in seeing the need for socio-economic development and this will aid the efforts in saying no to what he calls economy of exclusion. He stresses that today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.

Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. People have created a “throw away” culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the present society; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the “exploited” but the outcast, the “leftovers”. In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system.

Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting, to sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, people end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as

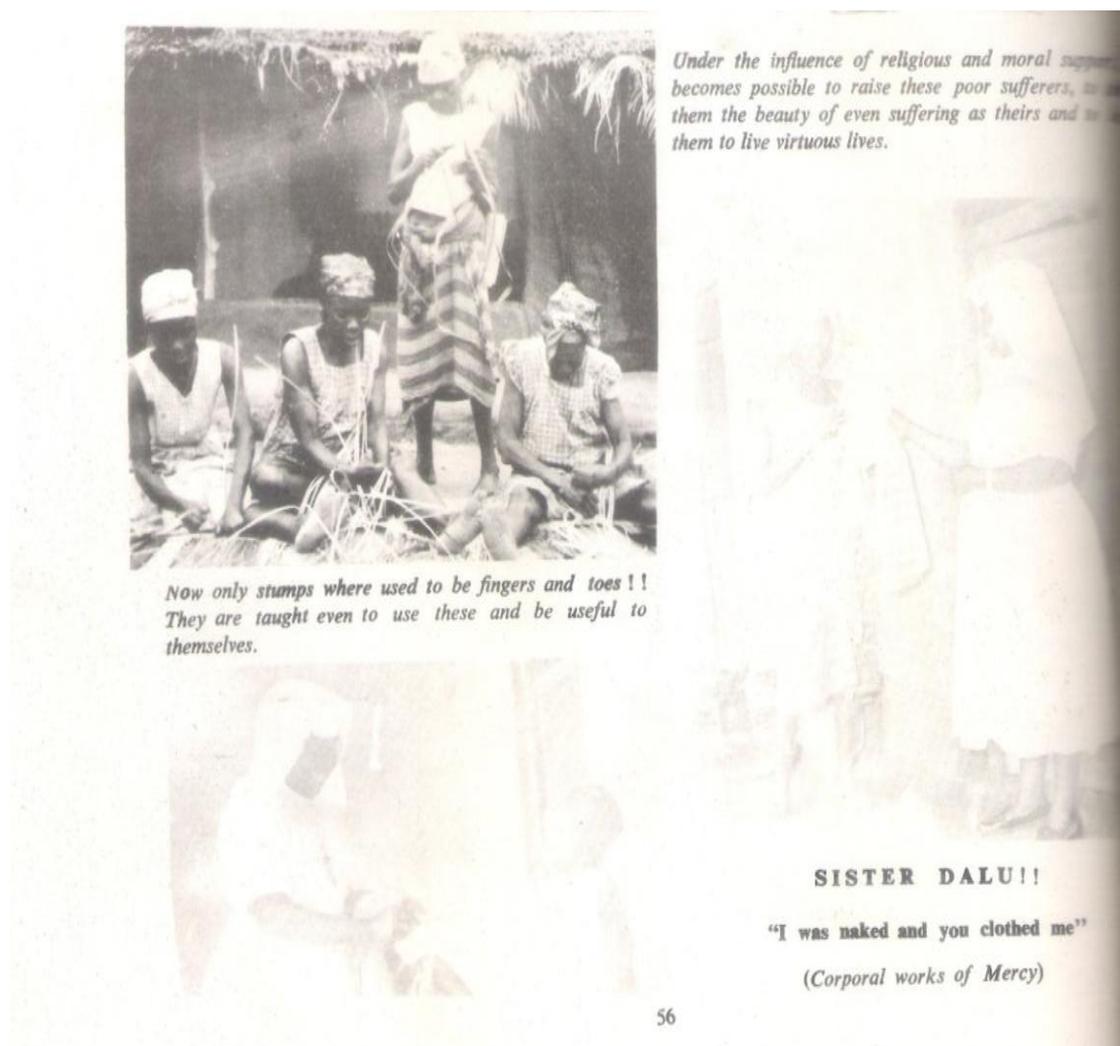
though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. It is against this background that Immaculate Heart Sisters delved into putting smiles on the faces of those who found themselves in a certain unfortunate situation as shown in the figures below.

Figure 17.



This shows the picture of some of the leprosy patients being helped by Immaculate Heart Sisters. Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archive

Figure. 17.i



This is still the leper settlement where they are being helped to recover and join with the community somehow.(workshop centre). Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archives

M.J. Anochie (personal communication, June 25th, 2015) says that the founder of Immaculate Heart Sisters established leper colonies in Nnewi, Okija and Amichi in affiliation to the one at Abakiliki. L.M Ezenkwele (personal communication, July 15th 2015) accounts that the congregation was founded to help bring back to life those who are depressed in any way and that was why the sisters established Heerey Centre for Human Development in 2010 at Onitsha Archdiocese. Another means of carrying out this apostolate is through prisons work. M.B. Ezeokoli (personal communication, June 29th, 2015) shares that Immaculate Heart Sisters in order to help in rehabilitating the relised prisoners and also facilitate the relise of some of them, went into prisons apostolate. According to her many prisoners who were released through the assistance of Immaculate Heart Sisters have been helped to settle. Beyond social benefits that have pastoral blending, the Immaculate Heart Sisters provide economic benefits that have social value which enhances the people's pastoral lives such as:

5.3 Skill Acquisition

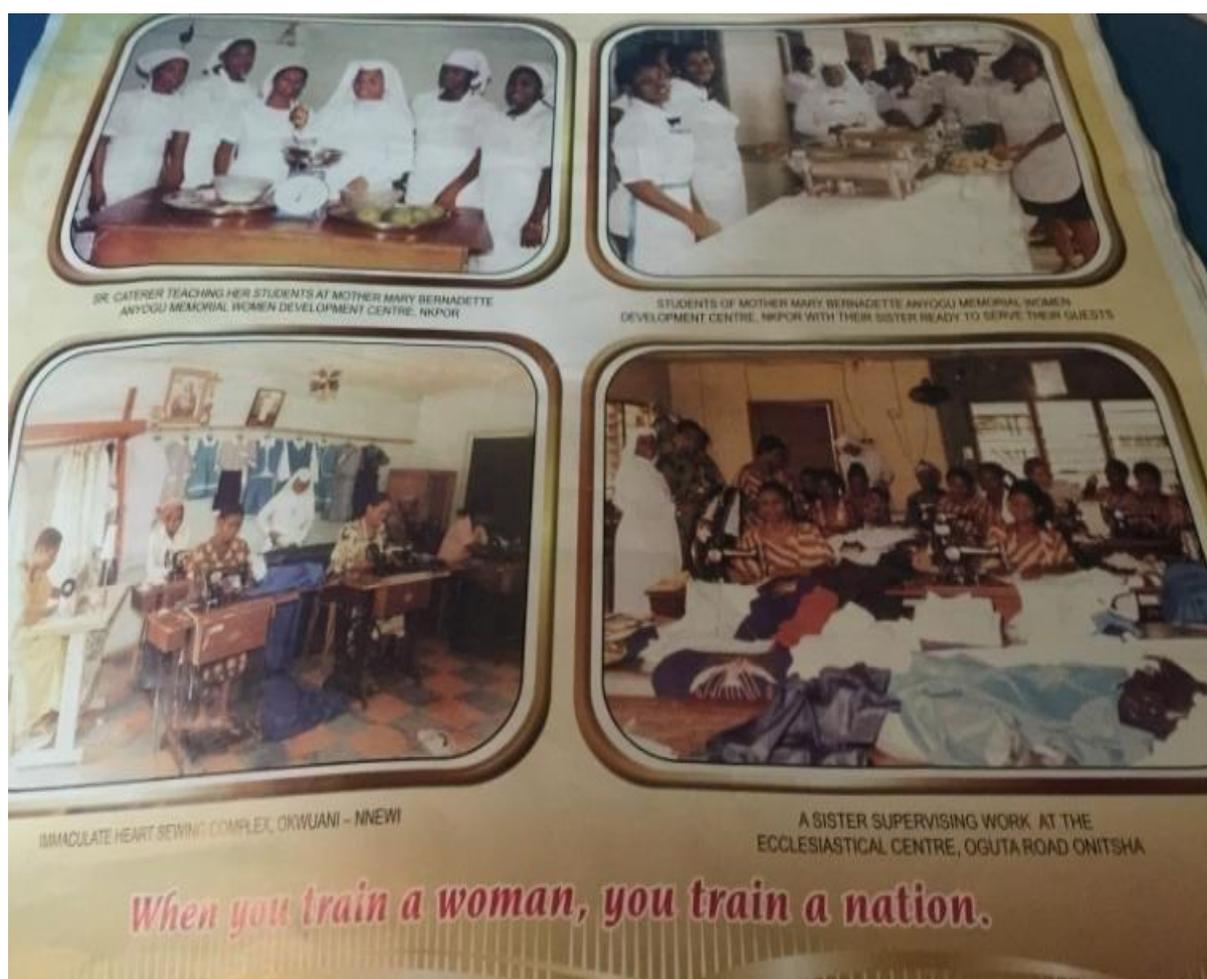
According to Encarta Dictionary (2009), a skill is seen as ability to do something well usually through experience. Skill acquisition on the other hand involves the development of new skill, practice or way of doing things usually gained through training or experience.

Williams (1976) opines that;

For a country to be economically self-reliant, they must necessarily diversify her economy as well as encourage the youth to embrace self-employment through appropriate favourable policy, environment and self-felicitate skills acquisition and self-employment (p.5).

Skills development has been man's means of material transformation and socio-economic development that enhances his pastoral life. Harbinson (1973) avers that "a country which is unable to develop the skill and knowledge of its people and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop anything else" (p.78).

Figure. 18



This picture shows the different skills acquisition centres for the Immaculate Heart Sister.

Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archives

Towards the effective and comprehensive pastoral development of the Christ faithful by the Immaculate Heart Sisters the following institutions are established:

- i. Cor Maria Vocational Institute, formally at Nkpor but now at Onitsha with the name
Mother Benedette Memorial Vocational Centre Onitsha
- ii. Cor Maria Vocational Institute Port Harcourt Road Aba

Figure: 19



This shows the workers learning skill on how to make cloths.

Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters achieve

In order to boost the skills of Onitsha Archdiocesan youths and tackle the high level of youth unemployment, which challenges their pastoral lives and has led the youth to engage in all kinds of nefarious acts such as kidnapping, terrorism, armed robbery, prostitution and other violent crimes in the state, skill acquisitions institutes were established by Immaculate Heart Sisters. These Vocational Institute established by Immaculate Heart

Sisters aimed at developing out only practical skills but also attitudes and habits that make the recipients to become creative, innovation and resourceful person.

Figure 19.



This shows the skill of baking. Source: Immaculate Heart Sisters' archives

These established Vocational Institutes, which is predicated upon the teaching of skills and also demanding the professional or experts use of hands, have enabled them empower many individuals to be self-reliance and are able to cater for themselves as well as their families and also pay tax to the government, which is used in developing other sectors and the society at large. It is clear that skill acquisition is the pivot of any national development. Thus it is not an exaggeration to state that skill acquisition constitutes the arteries that supply life sustaining blood through the systems of a country's economy and improves the standard of living.

5.3.1 Employment

Economic growth is a fundamental requirement for the development of a country and for economy to grow, stable environments, efficient institutions, functioning markets and access to sustainable financial services are all required and until that is done poverty will continue to be on increase. In order to eradicate unemployment and poverty in Onitsha Archdiocese, Immaculate Heart Sisters have contributed to the economic development in the employment of both skilled workers in their schools, hospitals, orphanages and many other ventures. They employed both skilled and unskilled workers. Skilled workers are sent for skill acquisition training / in –service training. In accordance with these, M.J. N Anochie (personal communication, July 30, 2015) who was the mother General of this noble congregation for twenty-four years says that IHM Sisters

through their own. Institutions have given employment to about two thousand people. She went further to say that the congregation has financially assisted many by helping them to begin small business, bought Okada for some, offered scholarship through their scholarship scheme. She also said that houses were built for about ten people who had no money to help themselves and some physical money were given to some to complete the already started houses.

Figure 19.i



Figure. 19.ii



Figure iii



This picture shows the sisters and some of the bakery workers in the bakery factory.

The sisters' pastoral development became apt after the war, the care of the sick whether it be the sickness of mind which is ignorance or the sickness of the body which is disease, has been become the number apostolate of the Immaculate Heart Sister's role in the Church as witness to the charity of Christ.

Immaculate Heart Sisters also engage in Government Institutions where they help in boosting the pastoral development within the confines of Onitsha Archdiocese. Such institutions are;

- i. University teaching hospital Nnewi
- ii. Azikiwe University Awka
- iii. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam, Anambra State.
- iv. Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board, head quarter, Awka.

Seven secondary schools namely:

- i. Queen of Rosary College Onitsha
- ii. Maria Regina Nnewi
- iii. St. Kizito Umudioka
- iv. Agulu Girls High School
- v. Lorreto Special Science School Adazi
- vi. Community Secondary School Ukwulu
- vii. St. John of God Girls Secondary School Awka.

The Immaculate Heart Sisters also teach in three primary schools within Anambra State and they are listed as follows:

- i. Holy Trinity primary school Onitsha
- ii. Orjiako Memorial Adazi
- iii. Community Primary School Ogbunka

The Immaculate Heart Sisters also serve the Church establishments in the three dioceses that make up Onitsha Archdiocese (Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi) in different capacities in order to contribute to the pastoral development of these dioceses.

5.4 The Challenges Facing the Women Religious in Pastoral Development in

Onitsha Archdiocese 1967-2015

The major challenges facing women religious in the changing context of the Church's mission today can be met by the evangelical counsels lived in a prophetic manner as opines by Francis (2013). The prophetic task of the consecrated life is brought into play by three major challenges addressed to the church herself. They are the same challenges as ever, posed in new ways and perhaps more radically, by contemporary society. These challenges relate directly to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, impelling, the church and women religious in particular to clarify and testify to the profound anthropological significance of the counsels.

The decision to follow the counsels, far from involving an impoverishment of truly human values leads instead to their transformation. The evangelical counsels should not be considered as a denial of the values inherent in sexuality, in the legitimate desire to possess material goods or to make decisions for oneself. Insofar as these inclinations are based on nature, they are good in themselves. Human beings however, weakened as they are by original sin, run the risk of acting on them in a way, which transgresses the moral norm. The profession of chastity, poverty, and obedience is a warning not to underestimate the wound of original sin, and while affirming the value of created goods, it relativises, them

by pointing to God as the absolute good. Thus, while those who follow the evangelical counsels seek holiness for themselves, they propose, so to speak, a spiritual therapy for humanity because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God. Other challenges facing the women religious could be the legitimate need to be familiar with the world and society today. And in order to respond to the challenges they present, the women religious can be led to surrender to passing fashion with a consequent lessening of spiritual favour and discouragement.

Again, the fact of having a deeper spiritual formation as the case may be could lead a woman religious to feeling somehow superior to other members of the Christ's faithful thereby losing sight and focus of what her mission in the church as the family of God is. The urgent need for appropriate and necessary training can turn into a frantic quest for efficiency, as if apostolic service depended primarily on human means rather than on God. The praiseworthy desire to become close to the men and women of our day, believers and unbelievers, rich and poor, can lead to taking on a worldly style of life or the promotion of human values without any reference to God and his kingdom.

5.4.1 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. As part of human activity Cultural heritage produces tangible representations of the value systems, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles. As an essential part of culture as a whole, cultural heritage, contains these visible and tangible

traces from antiquity to the recent past. Up till this day, lots of people still question the validity and significance of religious life. Anochie (1994) states that;

they cannot understand vocation to the religious life as these consecrated women unlike priests' possess no service exclusively theirs. Many do not realize the utility of women religious to the Church as such regard their lives as a waste and foreign to their culture. (p.3).

It is observed that this problem is even more acute among the Igbo because of the ideas and understanding that the religious life run directly contrary to their fundamental beliefs and convictions. Among the Igbo, it is well known and expected that the girl child will finally leave her family of birth to marry and so is trained right from infancy to fulfill this expectation adequately which every mother looks forward to. It then becomes clear that the traditional vocation of a woman in Igboland is to be a wife and a mother. This poses a major challenge to the wonderful works these women religious are doing because of cultural heritage. Uche (2009) notes "that a culture remains everything acquired by a human being that is not physically inherited but remains a social property passed on through generation to generation" (p.156). It is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs and artifacts of groups of people. Haralambos, Holborn and Heald (2008) opine that culture in a broader sense, determines how members of the same society think and feel. It directs people's action and defines their outlook on life. By implication, culture is an accepted way of behaving for members of a particular society. Nwodo (2013) avers that "culture is a bequeathed way of life as accepted by the society and not just learned"(p.34). It is because of these beliefs that inform the researcher to see cultural heritage as a factor

that contributes to questioning of life and works of the Women Religious in the Church and the society.

M.J. Anochie (personal communication, July 4th, 2015) says that men chauvinism poses serious challenge for the women religious not being able to develop as they will like to. In her words, she states that the issue of women supposes not to own a land is a factor that really challenged women religious in carrying out their work effectively. This led to their inability to establish as had wanted. Typical example according her is Abakaliki diocese where the Women Religious are not allowed to sign the document of the land purchased by them instead the bishop or priest does the signing.

Again, ignorance on the part of the native stands against the developmental process of women religious in some of the areas where they are. This is as a result of adequate knowledge and understanding of what and who the women religious represent. According to M.D. Oditia (personal communication, June 7th, 2015), the Nkpor youth were fighting the Sisters over the land procured when many of them were not born because of ignorance. The development is in their town and none of the structures put up will go with any of the sisters. Those places are been developed for their own purposes.

Francis (2013) noted that one of the challenges that Women Religious faces is Spiritual Worldliness. He avers that it hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and personal well-being. It is what the Lord reprimanded the Pharisees for: "How can you believe, who receive glory

from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (Jn 5:44). It is a subtle way of seeking one's "own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Phil 2:21). It takes on many forms, depending on the kinds of persons and groups into which it seeps. Since it is based on carefully cultivated appearances, it is not always linked to outward sin; from without, everything appears as it should be. But if it were to seep into the Church, it would be infinitely more disastrous than any other worldliness which is simply moral. One can now understand why Archbishop Charles Heerey warned his spiritual daughters in his letter of 5th October 1937 according to Ohaegbulem (2012), in the following words;

the spouse of Christ must not only have the greatest love for Jesus, she must have the greatest share in Jesus' love for all creatures. Fidelity to your spouse demands unremitting watchfulness in all your relations with others but also a guard against self-centeredness and hardening of heart which is another form of an interior return to the world. (p.7).

In line with this, Francis (2013) opines that this worldliness can be fuelled in two deeply interrelated ways. One is the attraction of Gnosticism, a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings. The other is the self-absorbed Promethean neo-plagiarism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past. This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centeredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God.

5. 4.2 Intra- Conflict

Warring among Women Religious themselves poses a challenge in their socio-economic development. This kind of wars is caused by envy and jealousy. Spiritual worldliness leads some sisters to war with their fellow sisters who stand in the way of their quest for power, prestige, pleasure and economic security. Some are even no longer content to live as part of the greater congregational community but stoke a spirit of exclusivity, creating an “inner circle”. Instead of belonging to the religious family in all its rich variety, they belong to this or that group which thinks itself different or special. Francis (2013) rightly observes that the world is being torn apart by wars and violence, and wounded by a widespread individualism which divides human beings, setting them against one another as they pursue their own well-being. The women religious of our time must guard against the temptation of jealousy and remain a gift to each other.

5.4.3 Nigerian situation

Oladele (nd) opines that Nigerian situation also poses challenge to the pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese. Since Onitsha is a part in Igboland and remains an indispensable town in Nigeria. He went further to state that thus;

Nigeria is still plagued by political instability, tension and conflict caused by ethnic or religious bigotry, manipulation of census figures, corruption, abuse of office, subversion of rule of law, crime and violence private and state-sponsored such as politically -motivated murders. (p.3).

It was observed that one of the major challenges to pastoral development of the Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese is the country’s dependency on political economy.

Unfortunately despite the hope and great expectation after the attainment of independence in 1960, hopelessness met the people. On 15th January 1966, the military struck, truncated the nascent democracy and ruled the country from then till 1979. Under the military rule, a civil war that led to death of many of the country's illustrious men, women and children and pains many families still suffer till date was fought for almost three years. Notwithstanding the emergence of the military dictatorship, political instability was still evident in the body polity as the military could not do anything to improve the country's poor socio-economic situation and that affected the pastoral livies of the people. In addition, issues such as ethnic or religious, census, income distribution, power allocation and so on were also sources of tension and serious violence. With the political instability, pastoral development was slow, and real growth could not be achieved despite honest efforts of the Women Religious.

5.4.4 Lack of Adquate Finance

Financial constraint is another factor that stands on the way to pastoral development of Women Religious. It was observed in course of this research that the Western world used to assist the developing countries through *Propanda Fidei* and other charitable organisations but since after the withdrawal of some of them, the local Church Lack adequate funds to carry out their projects not to think of supporting Women Religious.

Finally, a legitimate pride in one's nation and culture could lead to divisive forms of nationalism or tribalism or to accepting customs that need to be challenged and purified by the gospel. It is in the midst of all these that people today boldly ask, what the role of Women Religious is for they can no longer understand them.

5.5 Solutions to the Challenges Facing the Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese 1967-2015

There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. There are number of many lay persons, although still not enough, who have deep-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society.

There is need for constant seminar and conferences in order to educate the public about Women Religious for haven been drawn from among the lay people as stated by the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland (2011), as consecrated persons. The Women Religious are also to strive to live a life worthy of their vocation to avoid misconception by people. The lives of these Women Religious are not a waste of manpower, man-hour and resources as some had thought. It has been rightly said that to educate a man is to educate an individual but to educate a woman is to educate a whole family or a nation. There is need for good spirited Nigeria as to partner with them to enable them continue their good works they have started. The experience of the contributions of Women Religious today

show that to give a wife to a man is to give a mother to a family with few children, but to give Women Religious to the Church and society is to give a mother to thousands of families with thousands of children. Therefore, possible solutions or a way forward to overcoming the challenges facing the Women Religious in carrying out the mandate of the vocation according to the Institutes charism and spirit, is ultimate union with God in prayer and good works.

Again, it is important to create more awareness as regards what the women religious are and what role they play in the Church and society, for instance through seminars and workshops. This is an appropriate approach to educate the people about the duties and the position of Women Religious. Such seminars/workshops would encourage the faithful to assist the Women Religious in their job.

Formation of Women Religious should be geared towards “wholeness”, instead of a one dimensional emphasis, for instance be it spiritual or professional training. Thus formation must take into account the human cultural, theological and pastoral well being of the individual. Growth takes time and should not be rushed. Again, since formation must have a communal dimension, we recommend that communities should be the chief places of formation; for it is there that the young woman is introduced to the hardships and joys of religious life. Proper inculturation will go a long way in correcting the biased concept about the Women Religious.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The basic values of the family as a social institution could be seen as a community of persons. Husband and wife, parents and children, and relatives are the components of this community. The first task of the family is to develop into a real community of persons, where each person is accepted, loved, cared for, and cherished, for without these virtues, the family cannot be a community of persons and, in the same way, cannot live, grow and perfect itself as a coherent group of persons.

Building a community of persons makes demands on all the family members. In the school, each family member learns to care for the other, which enhances mutual service and every day, special care for the young, the sick and the aged. This helps to create a sense of sharing of goods, joys and sorrows. The family-school obviously requires of each member a generous spirit of sacrifice. Yet it is not the kind of sacrifice that always weighs one down. It is the type that brings happiness and a sense of fulfillment. It is only in this kind of environment that pastoral development can thrive. Women Religious who by the virtue of the life has form a family of the kind that all human beings look forward to the family of God in the world to come as preached by Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ began his ministry by making reference to Isaiah 61 where it is written thus “the spirit has consecrated me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, to give sight back to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to declare a year of favour”(verses 1-3). Taking up the Lord’s mission as his own, Archbishop Charles Heerey

mandated his spiritual daughters -the Immaculate Heart Sisters to proclaim the Gospel to every man and woman, committing themselves to their integral salvation with special attention to women and less privileged children, the elderly, the sick, unemployed and those who are treated as the least. Based on this, Erupakkat (cited by Udemba 2014), states that

Women Religious are roots and antennae that are sure references to those who grope in darkness, doubt, fear, anxiety and loneliness and thus become of hope and generators of new life and vitality for the kingdom. (p.51).

The Immaculate Heart Sisters, equipped with solid formation at all levels theological, spiritual, educational, pastoral, and professional have been able to contribute with their feminine qualities more effectively and meaningfully to the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese and society at large and thus ushering in a new age and new humanity. In response to an appeal to consecrated persons by John Paul II (1995) states;

But it is above all to you, consecrated women and men, that at the end of this Exhortation I appeal with trust: live to the full your dedication to God, so that this world may never be without a ray of divine beauty to lighten the path of human existence. Christians, called in the cares and concerns of this world but also called to holiness need to discover in you purified hearts which in faith "see" God, people docile to the working of the Holy Spirit who resolutely presses on in fidelity to the charism of their call and mission (p.93)

Having seen the pastoral contributions of the Immaculate Heart Sisters to the development of Onitsha Archdiocese, therefore, women are encouraged to contribute willingly to the societal development despite all odds.

6.2 Conclusion

The question of the role and place of Women Religious in the mission of the Church especially in Onitsha Archdiocese/Nigeria has remained the central issue discussed in this work. It was observed in the research that the Church's mission of evangelization has been a joint project, which demands and requires a wholistic attention from both the men and women. History is replete with heroic deeds of women, thus confirming the fact that women have fared well in renewing the face of the earth. Women Religious have therefore in their witness of lives of their total self-giving, affected the lives of so many people in the Church and society with particular reference to Onitsha Archdiocese. The different apostolates of the Immaculate Heart Sisters exemplified have been so didactic as it is very revealing. The findings of this work have put to rest the wanton skepticism that has accompanied the identity of women religious and their work in the society. Such questions like "what do sisters do"? or "what identity should sisters' possess"? Have thus been duly answered in the Canon Law of 1983 Code which states that;

life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to God, who is supremely loved. By a new and special title they are dedicated to seek the perfection of charity in the service of God's Kingdom, for the honour of God, the building up of the Church and the salvation of the world. they are a splendid sign in the Church, as they foretell the heavenly glory. (nos. 207 and 573).

This work is a critical exposition of the identity and role of Women Religious in the Church towards the pastoral developmen in Onitsha Archdiocese. The misconception of Women Religious and their works have been brought to a halt by the exposition of this study. This study has tried in establishing that Women religious should not be seen merely

as women who wear habits to look sanctimonious but women whose work touches the lives of the people in the society in so many ways. In addition to their witness of life, they educate, care for the less privileged, the sick, the handicapped, the elderly, the abandoned, to mention but a few.

Immaculate Heart Sisters have shown that the task of the consecrated life is to work in every part of the world in order to consolidate and expand the kingdom of Christ, bringing the proclamation of the Gospel even to the most far-off regions for these Women Religious were made missionaries from the day of their foundation. Immaculate Heart Sisters make the greatest possible contributions to the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ through their lives and resources which is made possible because of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience they took in imitation of Christ who is rich yet made Himself poor to enrich the poor, equal to God yet humbled himself and is like us in everything except sin. This total dedication of the Women Religious affords them singular focus on things of God and humanity and this answers the question of “does the Consecrated life still have meaning”? Despite the understandable difficulties which some of them meet, they are fully aware that just as faith is strengthened when it is given to others so the mission strengthen the consecrated life, gives it new enthusiasm and new motivation and elicits faithfulness. They bear witness to the Gospel values living in contact with those who do not know Christ, the poor, the sick, children, women, orphan, the uneducated, the unemployed, the prisoners, mentally and physically challenged, thus making a specific contribution to the mission. It should be emphasized that the presence of Immaculate Heart Sisters in Onitsha Archdiocese has really brought development to the land through its educational, pastoral, charitable, cultural activities and through their contemplative life. They respond fully and

actively to the call of Paul VI (1971) to women religious for perfect dedication to duties stated thus:

Dear religious, according to the different ways in which the call of God makes demand upon your spiritual families, you must give your full attention to the needs of men, their problems and their searching; you must give witness in their midst through prayer and actions, to the Good news of love, justice and peace. The aspiration of men to a more fraternal life among individuals and nature require above all a change in ways of life, in mentality and in hearts. Such a mission which is common to all people of God belongs to you in a special way (p.53).

Following the charism of their foundation which is compassion and their spirit humility, Immaculate Heart Sisters have excelled beyond reasonable doubt in the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese and beyond. Therefore, their contributions in the society should be appreciated as sustainers of living societies. Thus, the consecrated life deeply rooted in the examples and teachings of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to the society through the Holy Spirit. By the profession of the evangelical counsels the charismatic features of Jesus- the chaste, poor and obedient one are made constantly visible in the midst of the world and the eyes of the faithful are directed towards the mystery of the kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in Heaven. This research also has showcased the cause of ambiguity and the vagueness that surrounds lack of clear understanding of what Women Religious stand for and their activities.

In conclusion, all Women Religious primarily through prayer and penance as stated in Canon 673 advance their apostolate as a witness of their consecrated life. They employed in full mention their feminine qualities which aided their pastoral acumen in these functions. Immaculate Heart Sisters therefore have made remarkable contributions to the pastoral

development of Onitsha Archdiocese, but needed to be more pragmatic to the present challenges and employ all avenues in developing the present society pastorally in line with information communication technology appliances devoid of the influence of materialism in the world today. The findings of this work have in no measure proved that indigenous missionaries have really contributed so much in sustaining and continuing the faith deposit. This is in line with Kalu (1986)'s thought on African historiography.

6.3 Recommendations

This research work has x-rayed and brought to lime light the numerous ways by which Immaculate Heart Sisters have contributed in the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese; hence the following recommendations;

The Church and society should look with gratitude and admiration upon women religious- who by caring for the sick, children, women, prisoner, unemployed, orphans, and their contemplative life contribute in a significant way to the pastoral development with particular reference to Onitsha Archdiocese.

Women religious should be seen as mothers and sustainers of living society. The contributions of women religious to the society and church should be appreciated and valued. Women should be encouraged to overlook some of the harmful practices against them and contribute the much they can to the society.

Cultural prejudice and traditions that have a strong influence on the way society in general and communities in particular treat women should be looked into so that women gain respect due to them as Gods children. More women should be empowered economically

and other wise and girl- child education should be encouraged in our society. Consecrated life should be seen as a gift from God the Father to the world and more girls should be encouraged to embrace the life.

Pastoral care visitation by the Immaculate Heart Sisters which is almost near extinction should be revived and sustained as a way forward.

6.4 Contribution to knowledge

The contributions of women religious and pastoral development in Onitsha Archdiocese 1967-2015: A case of Immaculate Heart Sisters in the field of knowledge can never be over emphasized. It is like asking what the importance of engine in a car is. The contributions of these Women Religious (Immaculate Heart Sisters) to the pastoral development include the following:

This research has helped to clear the ambiguity and vagueness that surrounds the concept of Women Religious, their functions and place in the Church. It has succeeded in bringing to limelight the contributions of Immaculate Heart Sisters in the pastoral development of Onitsha Archdiocese.

It has also opened the readers' eyes in knowing that each group of Women Religious were founded on principle of both spiritual and development of both the Church and the society. It has encouraged women and Women Religious to striving harder in alleviating the pains of the poor around them. It has challenged the Women Religious to be true to their nature as mothers.

- vi. This research work will serve as a consulting literature to others who would like research in the related areas.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This research is not exhaustive, further reseaches can as well be conducted on areas like; The role of Women Religious in the Church as family of God on mission in Igboland,the Women Religious and the challenges of contemporary society. The contributions of women to the societal development: Religio-cultural barriers to evangelization in Igboland.The dignity and role of consecrated women in the Church and society. Consecrated life as a gift from God the Father through the Holy Spirit to the society.The Woman Religious: A sign of the world to come

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APPENDIX I
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN RELATIONS
FACULTY OF ACTS
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA
PMB 5025, AWKA,
ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

3rd March, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter is intended to introduce my supervisee, **Nwodo, Judith N**, PhD research student with Registration Number 2013097010F for the Department of Religion and Human relations, Faculty of Acts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. His research topic is **WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND PASTORAL DEVELOPMENTS IN ONITSHA ARCHDIOCESE 1967-2015: A STUDY OF IMMACULATE HEART SISTERS.**

The research is purely an academic exercise and your anonymity is guaranteed.

We solicit your sincere co-operation.

Remain blessed.

Dr. Uche, O.O.C

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APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your understanding of Women Religious?
2. Do you reside in Onitsha Archdiocese?
3. If yes, which part of Onitsha Catholic Archdiocese are you residing?
4. Could you please tell a little about the history of Onitsha Catholic Archdiocese.
5. Do you understand their operations in Onitsha Archdiocese?
6. If yes, what are their activities in Onitsha Archdiocese?
7. Catholic Women are imperatives in the development of the Archdiocese. Do you agree?
8. What are the heroic deeds of women in Onitsha Catholic Archdiocese?
9. Are there observable challenges of Catholic Women in Onitsha Archdiocese?
10. What is Women Religious?
11. What are the ideals and principles for the establishment of Women Religious?
12. Do Women Religious have an identity? If yes, Shade a little light on the identity of Women Religious
13. How have Women Religious contributed to the mission of the Catholic Church in Onitsha Archdiocese?
14. Have you heard about Immaculate Heart Sisters?
15. How are the vision and mission of Immaculate Heart Sisters related to Women Religious?
16. What are the contributions of Immaculate Heart Sisters towards the development of Onitsha Archdiocese between 1967-2015?
17. Are there challenges facing the Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese (1967-2015)
18. What measures have you put in place to solve the challenges?
19. Why were they not effective in solving the challenges before the Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese (1967-2015)?
20. What improved measures do you proffer or suggest in solving the challenges affecting the Women Religious in Onitsha Archdiocese?

APPENDIX III

LIST OF THOSE INTERVIEWED

| S/N | Names | Age | Place | Date | Remark |
|-----|-----------------------------------|----------|--------------|------------|--------|
| 1 | Dr. Uche, O.O.C | 50 years | Awka | 21/10/2014 | |
| 2 | N. Okafor (Rev Sr) | 40 years | U.S.A | 16/1/2015 | |
| 3 | C.C. Muorah (Rev Fr) | 51 years | U.S.A | 23/11/2014 | |
| 4 | L.K. Nwadiolor (Dr) | 35 years | Awka | 18/6/2015 | |
| 5 | Francis Cardinal Arinze | 81 years | Vatican city | 20/11/2014 | |
| 6 | V.V.I. Okoye | 79 years | Onitsha | 27/6/2015 | |
| 7 | N.J. Ogoegbu | 83 years | Awka | 24/1/2015 | |
| 8 | M.S. Ohaegbulem (Rev. Sr.) | 75 years | Onitsha | 25/3/2015 | |
| 9 | H.O. Adigwe (Msgr) | 76 years | Nnewi | 10/2/2014 | |
| 10 | M.B. Njoku (Rev. Sr.) | 81 years | Nkpor | 20/1/2015 | |
| 11 | M.B. Njoku (Rev. Sr.) | 81 years | Nkpor | 20/1/2015 | |
| 12 | M.J. Anyansi (Rev. Sr.) | 79 years | Onitsha | 10/2/2015 | |
| 13 | M.M.J. Uzoigwe ((Rev. Mother) | 78 years | Onitsha | 21/5/2015 | |
| 14 | M.M. J. Ann Anochie (Rev. Mother) | 75 years | Nkpor | 5/3/2015 | |
| 15 | M.M.M. Ezenkwele (Rev. Mother) | 83 years | Nkpor | 7/4/2015 | |
| 16 | M.M.D. Odita (Rev. Mother) | 70 years | Onitsha | 24/1/2015 | |
| 17 | D.C. Isizoh (Bishop) | 58 years | Onitsha | 7/5/2015 | |
| 18 | M.J.N. Anochie (Rev. Mother) | 75 years | Nkpor | 25/6/2015 | |
| 19 | M.O. Nwodo (High Chief) | 50 years | Awka | 15/7/2015 | |
| 20 | M.B. Ezeokoli (Rev. Sr) | 65 years | Onitsha | 29/6/2015 | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----------|---------|-----------|---------------------|--|
| 21 | M. J. Uzoigwe | 74years | Nnewi | 23/9/2015 | | |
| 22 | Ezeokafor P.E | 65 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 23 | Jude I. Onuchukwu | 66 years | Nnewi | } | | |
| 24 | Odukwe J.I | 68 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 25 | Ezeonu J.P. | 71 years | Nnewi | } | 20 - 23 July, 2015 | |
| 26 | Chukwuemeka I.T | 55 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 27 | P.C. Onukwe | 60 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 28 | J.C. Inukwe | 67 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 29 | T.I. Ezenakpu | 69 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 30 | P.I. Ijezie | 70 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 31 | J.C Otikpo | 77 years | Nnewi | | | |
| 32 | E. C. Molokwu | 60 years | Onitsha | | | |
| 33 | Rev. Sr. Mary Odo | 69 years | Awka | } | 14 to 18 July, 2015 | |
| 34 | Ms. Josephine Isioma Emeka | 55 years | Awka | | | |
| 35 | Sr. M. Rgina Onyeka | 50 years | Awka | } | | |
| 36 | Engr. Gabriel Okafor | 58 years | Awka | | | |
| 37 | Fr. Valentine Ezeh C. S. Sp | 60 years | Awka | | | |
| 38 | Peter Ezema | 68 years | Awka | | | |
| 39 | Rev. Brother Pantalón Okafor | 49 years | Awka | } | 20 to 23 July, 2015 | |
| 40 | Sir. C.C Mbakigwe | 67 years | Awka | | | |
| 41 | Rev. Sr. Paul Mary Nwosu | 48years | Awka | } | 25 to 28 July, 2015 | |
| 42 | Mrs. Tochukwu Henrietta Enidom | 50 years | Onitsha | | | |
| 43 | Mrs. Maria N. H. Okoye | 58 years | Awka | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----------|------------------------------|---|--|
| 44 | Lady Lillian O. Eji-Akwuba (JP) | 43 years | Awka | | |
| 45 | Barr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Obioma O. | 55 years | Awka | | |
| 46 | Bar. Raphael Nnamdi Anagor | 45 years | Awka | | |
| 47 | Mrs. Ifeoma Ezenyilimba | 50 years | | } | |
| 48 | Mrs. Michel C. Onugbolu | 48 years | | | |
| 49 | Molokwu P. D | 50 years | | | |
| 50 | A.. C. Asoanya | 55 years | June 20 th , 2016 | | |
| 51 | Nwaliji Joseph | 50 years | | | |
| 52 | Isiofia Patricia | 49 years | | | |
| 53 | Eneda Cliffe | 50 years | | | |
| 54 | Nwoye Grace | 47 years | | | |
| 55 | Nnalue Theresa | 50 years | | | |
| 56 | Izukama Joy | 55 years | | | |
| 57 | Ijezie Augustine | 51 years | | | |
| 58 | Onwuachuku Ngozi | 49 years | | | |
| 59 | Ebokasi Gladys | 65 years | Nnewi | | |
| 60 | Anoyika Alex | 48 years | | | |
| 61 | Anyaokra Christiana | 60 years | | | |
| 62 | Nwosu Ijeoma | 50 years | | } | |
| 63 | Onwudiofu Raymond | 63 years | Onitsha | | |
| 64 | Okoye Rose | 55 years | | | |
| 65 | Eke Bridget | 59 years | Awka | | |
| 66 | Aghadi Meg | 48 years | | | |

N/B

Those interviewed pleaded anonymity