

**THE INFLUENCE OF IGBO CATECHISTS  
ON ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN IGBOLAND (1888 -1931)**

**BY**

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FACULTY OF ARTS  
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA-NIGERIA**

**MARCH, 2019.**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND HUMAN RELATIONS,  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
THEDEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D) IN RELIGION AND HUMAN  
RELATIONS (HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY)  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA**

**MARCH, 2019.**

**CERTIFICATION**

I, Umeike, RichardMary Chigboogu with Registration number 2011077019F, hereby certify that this thesis is original and have been written by me. It is a record of my research and has not been submitted before in part or full for any other diploma or degree of this university or any institution or any previous publications.

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## APPROVAL

We certify that this dissertation carried out under our supervision, has been examined and found to have met the regulations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. We therefore approve the work for the award of Ph.D in Religion and Human Relations (History of Christianity).

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## DEDICATION

To all Catechists whose inestimable sacrifices watered the seed of Igbo Roman Catholicism.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The road to success is almost always under construction; and many are the workmen and workwomen who work on this road, as one treks fatefully the path of one's destiny. To these men and women, no amount of gratitude could ever be deemed adequate. In the aftermath of World War II, when the British Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II addressed the Royal Air Force (RAF) in appreciation for their courageous fight to death, which delivered Britain from the ravaging menace of the German Luftwaff, she said "never before has so many owed so much to so few". I borrow her words and turn it around to say; never in my (academic) life have I owed so much to so many.

My unalloyed gratitude goes first to the omnipotent and omniscient God, for decisively creating bringing me this far. To my ebullient Supervisor, Prof. L.E. Ugwueye, I am deeply indebted for all this assistance. The same note of appreciation goes to the Head of Department of Religion and Human Relations, Prof. O.O.C. Uche, for his support. I also wish to appreciate other lecturers in the Department of Religion and Human Relations, Prof. J.E. Madu, Rev. Fr. (Prof). B.A.C. Obiefuna, Fr. (Prof). A.B.C. Chiegboka, Very Rev. (Prof). P.E. Nmah, Prof. E.O. Ezenweke, Dr. I.L. Umeanolue, Dr. K.L. Nwadiakor, Rev. Fr. (Dr). D. Obielosi, Rev. Fr. (Dr). C.J.B.G. Okpalike, Dr. S.C. Mgbemena and Dr. (Mrs.) A.M. Chukwuma-Offor, for their support and encouragement.

I wish to sincerely thank my friends and other staff of the Department. To my Bishop, Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke, for being so generous with his consent, moral and financial assistance I lack words to fully articulate my appreciation.

Words may not fully articulate my depth of gratitude to His Grace, Archbishop Valerian Okeke, his Auxiliary Bishop, Bishop Denis Isizoh, Fr. Mike Okagbue, Fr. (Barr), Tony Chidozie and to the entire Onitsha Presbyterium for their extraordinary charity and hospitality to me all these years.

In the same vein my heart brims with gratitude to all the past H.O.Ds, the administrative and all the staff of the National Archives, Enugu for their unquantifiable assistance. The same applies to the staff of the Blessed Michael Iwene Tansi Senior Seminary, Onitsha and the staff of the Onitsha Central Library. I will never forget my beloved coursemates, Kanayo, Christian and others with whom I shared many thoughts together; sometimes happy, other times challenging, but altogether memorable moments.

I remember with a great sense of gratitude my very good friends and colleagues, Fr. (Prof). Hyacinth Ichoku, Fr. (Dr). Lorenzo Okwuosa, Greg Eke, Ben Onwudinjo, Fr. (Prof). Mike Ifeagwazi, Fr. (Prof). Hilary Achunike, Fr. (Prof). Bonachristus Umeogu, Fr. (Dr). Emefiena Ezeani, Fr. CallyBen Onumah, Fr. Francis Orah, Fr. Maurice Okeke, Fr. Hyginus Nwandu, Fr. Ben Okolo and so many others who have collectively encouraged me over the course of this endeavour.

To my ecclesiastical family, the Nnewi diocesan Presbyterium, for bravely holding the fort in their various theatres of duty all these while, I say, thank you. To my biological family, the Umeike family, Umumenobi kindred of Uhuama II, Nkwukwor village Unubi, for accepting me for what and whom I am, I remain ever grateful.

Finally, I remain indebted to Ugwu Ngozi Ejima for painstakingly typing this work. The same appreciation goes to my Landlord, Dr S.O. Nnaji for his hospitality. To all the people I interviewed, especially the Catechists and other professionals and individuals and to all others who offered me one academic advice or the other, I remain evermore grateful. To all those friends and acquaintances whose interactions have collectively made me who I am but who I am not able to mention here and now by name, I register my appreciation.

To all these I say; May God Almighty continue to enrich all your endeavours and to enlarge your coasts.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| AG       | <i>Ad Gentes</i> (To the Nations)              |
| CEP      | Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples |
| CT       | Catechesi Tradendae (Catechetical Tradition)   |
| Fr.      | Father   |
| R.C.M.   | Roman Catholic Mission                         |
| S.M.A.   | Society Mission for Africa                     |
| S.I.T.   | Social Influence Theory                        |
| C.S.S.P  | Congregation of the Holy Spirit                |
| M.B.E.   | Member of the British Empire                   |
| C.M.S.   | Church Missionary Society                      |
| C.I.C.   | College of Immaculate Conception               |
| Q.R.C.   | Queen of the Rosary College                    |
| V.A.     | Vicar Apostolic                                |
| K.S.S.   | Knights of St. Silvester                       |
| K.S.M    | Knight of St. Mulumba                          |
| T.T.C.   | Teachers Training College                      |
| N.Y.M.   | Nigeria Youth Movement                         |
| N.C.N.C  | National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns  |
| W.A.S.U. | West African Students Union                    |
| E.S.     | Education Secretary                            |
| C.Y.M.   | Catholic Youth Movement                        |
| K.S.J.I. | Knights of St. John's International            |
| C.C.R.M. | Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement          |
| N.C.A.   | Nnewi Catechists Association                   |



|            |   |
|------------|---|
| L.T.C.     | Licensed Teacher of Catechism               |
| L.G.       | <i>Lumen Gentium</i> (Light of the Nations) |
| U.N.N.     | University of Nigeria Nsukka                |
| A.I.C.C.O. | Alvan Ikokwu College of Education Owerri    |
| U.S.A.     | United State of America                     |
| RM.        | Redemptoris Missio                          |

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## ABSTRACT

The Catholic evangelization endeavours on the lower Niger (Igboland) came in the wake of the post slavery abolition era. The Holy Ghost Fathers, who were the architects of this mission, utilized the school evangelization strategy. It succeeded beyond all expectations. However, the indispensable catalysts of this success story were the army of Igbo Catechists teachers who positively collaborated with them. Expectedly the missionary exploits of these expatriate missionaries, Frs. Lejeune and Shanahan (1888 – 1931) have been thoroughly celebrated unto legendary levels. In contrast the incalculable contributions of Igbo catechists in Onitsha towards this success story have been literally down played. This study pointed out these innumerable contributions of these catechists to Roman Catholicism in Igboland. The study aimed at exposing the incalculable sacrifices and unsung contributions of the Igbo Catechists of Onitsha Roman Catholicism. It examines the efforts of the catechists at nurturing the seed of Catholicism from embryonic proportions to that very high stage of maturity whereby the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland not only produce her indigenous clergy but also had enough to send out to the wider world as missionaries. This Catechists so influenced the Igbo Church by exposing the values of education, religion, and evangelization, socio-economic, political and historical thus impacting variously on the Igbo society. The social influence theory (SIT) of S. Milgram, S.E. Asch and H. Kelman, formed the anchor for this study. The qualitative method was used in the collection of data of the study through primary and secondary sources. The Hermeneutical approach was used to analyze the data collected from Roman Catholic Churches and other concerned parties in Onitsha. It was observed that the Igbo Catechists contributed immeasurably to the development of Roman Catholicism in Igboland from the very nascent period and task of language interpretation. It was revealed that without the collaboration of the Igbo catechists the white expatriates, Missionaries could have accomplished little or nothing. It was equally observed that these influences ranging from the educational, religious, socio-economic, political and historical continue to impact on Igboland even under the contemporary dispensations. The study concludes that adequate acknowledgements and recognition are to be accorded the indispensable role of the Igbo Catechists whose collaborative synergy with the white Missionaries and native priests resulted to the success story of the Catholic evangelization efforts in Igboland. The Igbo catechists of today should be fully appreciated just like their counterparts elsewhere in the ministry in Onitsha. There is need for improvement in this regard for continued greater progress in Catholic evangelization and influence.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The Igbo have a popular saying “*Onye rua ya rie*” meaning “he/she who has worked deserves his/her remuneration’. This is akin to the biblical saying that the labourer deserves his wages. In the Igbo cultural milieu, the dignity of labour is very much emphasized and appreciated. However, this appears not to be the case with the situation of that vast army of Igbo Catechists who positively collaborated with the white missionaries in the various mission field all over Igboland to sow and water the vibrant seed of Igbo Roman Catholicism. Beyond all expectations the third attempt of Roman Catholic evangelization in Africa - this time in West Africa (the Lower Niger- Igboland) which occurred in the late 19th century turned out to be a resounding success. This could be attributed to a positive interplay of many factors of which the availability of the person of the Catechist at the grass roots level formed a vital factor.

According to Obi (1985):

Their mission was highly favoured by providence. Right from inception, their missionary endeavours bore so much fruit from the era of Fr. Joseph Lutz, (who initiated the idea of the Christian village) who laid the initial foundation to Fr. Joseph Mary Riley, Fr. Rene Aime Pawlas, Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune and Fr. Joseph Shanahan, the last two being pioneers of the school evangelization approach. Under these last two the influence of catechists in Igbo Roman Catholicism was amply

consolidated and eminently felt in diverse sectors of the evangelization endeavours in Igboland. (p. 12).

The success story of the Igbo Roman Catholicism would never be fully told if divested of the indispensable influence of the vast army of Catechists, both known and unknown, who collectively fanned the embers of evangelization into a conflagration, in the wake of the superhuman sacrifices and the efforts of the early missionaries, most especially during the Lejeune – Shanahan era (1900–1931). The influence of these Catechists spanned the educational, Religio-theological the socio economic and political ambients. These influences are so deep-rooted that they continue to define the various aspects of Igbo Roman Catholicism even under contemporary dispensation. In some of these areas there were Catechists who, by dint of their unique personalities and prowess, single-handedly influenced the course of the history of Igbo Roman Catholicism for posterity.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed, that while the missionary exploits of the white missionaries have been largely expounded and well known by so many Catholics and non Catholics alike, those of the Catechists who operated and assisted them ‘behind the scene’ at the grass roots, have not been fully told or appreciated. Most of them remain the ‘unsung heroes’ of the success story of Igbo Roman Catholicism. For example, so many people are acquainted with the grand event of 3rd December 1891—the baptism of Igwe Ogbuanyinya Idigo at Aguleri that paved the way for the entrance of many Igbo elites and prominent Igbo sons and daughters into Roman Catholic Church and the role played by Fr. Joseph Lutz in this success story. However very few people are conversant with the very indispensable role of the then

Catechist of Aguleri Catholic Mission, Catechist teacher John Samuel Okolo Okosi in the entire scenario.

Rev. Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune is credited with giving Igbo Roman Catholicism the first Igbo Catholic Catechism. – *Katechism Nke Nzuko Katolik* in 1903, but not so many are aware of the indispensable role played by the Catechist teacher Ephraim Agha, the Chief Catechist of the Holy Trinity Mission, in the translation of this Igbo Catechism from the English version. Equally the school evangelization approach reached its golden era under Bishop Joseph Shanahan. It was a successful endeavour par excellence, yet this success could have in no way been realized without the inestimable contributions of the vast army of Catechist – teachers in the myriads of Catholic Missions across the length and breadth of Igboland.

In view of these facts, it is very pertinent, therefore, to investigate and explore the immeasurable contributions of these Catechists and the ways they influenced Igbo Roman Catholicism, especially under Fr. Leon Lejeune and Fr. Joseph Shanahan (1900 – 1930). This was the period that witnessed a new radical approach to evangelization in Igboland.

Great indeed and unquantifiable have been the contribution of the army of indigenous Roman Catholic Catechists to the evangelization in Igboland. Unfortunately while the efforts of the white missionaries with whom they cooperated so positively have been amply acknowledged and appreciated, those of these Catechists who sacrificed so much, to sow the seed of Catholicism in Igboland have been largely ignored. This is the crux of this study and the specific problem this study intends to address. What are the major contributions of these Catechists to the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland? To what extent have these Catechists been appreciated? What is the best way to acknowledge the innumerable contribution of

these Catechists to the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland? Have these Catechists being adequately remunerated?

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The exploits of the early white missionaries who planted the seed of Roman Catholicism on the Igbo soil is well taught and known in our days. Across the length and breadth of the old Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province, there are so many monuments bearing eloquent testimonies to the missionary exploits of Fr. Joseph Lutz, Fr. Lejeune, Bishop Shanahan and others. Conversely, it is totally very different story for the army of tenaciously devoted Catechist-teachers who assisted them, acting as their ever present hands and feet, voice and presence in the myriads of mission fields. Without these Catechists the missionaries could not have accomplished much. Yet most of these Catechist are neither known or fully appreciated. It is therefore the main aim of this study to investigate the immeasurable contributions of these Catechists and how they influenced Roman Catholicism in Igboland in general and Onitsha in particular, especially between the 1888 – 1931. In carrying out this task, the work pursues the following objectives.

- a. Explore the unsung contributions of these Catechist teachers to Igbo Roman Catholicism.
- b. X-ray their many sacrifices in enhancing the planting and nurturing that tiny seed of the Roman Catholic Church which has grown to the giant Igbo Roman Catholicism today.
- c. To examine their socio-economic and political influence on Igboland in the aftermath of British colonization



- d. To investigate the reality of their influence on contemporary Roman Catholicism, in Igboland and Nigeria.

#### **1.4 Significance of Study**

In ancient Roman Empire, one of worst punishment meted out to offending individuals was to obliterate their names and achievement from every available records. The implication was that they never existed, as every available record or evidence have been wiped off. Conversely this objective could also be achieved by deliberately reducing, ignoring or acknowledging the various accomplishment of people by not recording them thus allowing them to die naturally starting from the memories of the eye witnesses or their contemporaries. Somehow, the catechist-teachers of Igboland, despite their vast accomplishments, were gradually suffering the same fate. Thus it must have to be said that whatever Igbo Roman Catholicism in particular is in Igboland today cannot be solely attributed to the singular efforts and wisdom of the white expatriate missionaries. Recent findings have shown the hundreds of local catechist-teachers who collaborated with the white in the vast mission field of Igboland actually contributed in no small measures. This study therefore is intended to be beneficial to the catechist teachers of yester years and those of today. This benefit extends equally to the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland today by providing them the opportunity to know and appreciate more the rich contributions of the Igbo Catechists in the past in the light of the ministry of the Igbo Catechists today. Then again it is not only geared towards filling the gap in knowledge but ultimately enhancing ecumenism in Christian Igboland. This study intends to achieve this by

- a. properly situating in history the role of the catechist-teachers who worked assiduously with the white missionaries in planting the seed of Roman Catholicism in Igboland and thereby impacting Igboland with so much undying influences.
- b. By lifting the stories of the exploits of the Igbo catechist from mere continued oral narratives to written and documented academic materials, the work is capable of raising the consciousness of the contemporary Catholics and Catechists, who often feel neglected about the pride of place they occupy in the history of the success of Igbo Roman Catholicism showing to the academic world the vast contributions of the Igbo catechists to the history of Igboland through their multi-faceted influence. It is therefore hoped that this work will ultimately be of immense benefit to the Catholic Church in Igboland Nigeria and the World. Equally to the academic community by endeavouring to exhume and reposition the person and the role of the Igbo Roman Catholic Catechists in modern and contemporary history.
- c. Filling that gap in knowledge that seems to appear between religious history and secular history of Igboland and to encourage a working synergy between the various Christian denominations (in Igboland) that would ultimately enhance ecumenism.

Given this situation, the influence of these Catechists in various facets of Igbo Catholicism, educational, religio-theological, socio-economic and political would be examined, while not leaving out their continuing influence under contemporary dispensations. It is hope that this research will aid the Igbo Catholics of today to appreciate the grave sacrifices so many others, have made, to preserve their Catholic faith. It will dispose them and Christians of other denominations towards embracing ecumenism. It will help Igbo Catholic missionaries now working in different parts of the world, to know the

most effective missionary approaches to adopt. Missionaries of other Christian denominations can likewise benefit from it.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

In this research, the time frame of 1900–1931 has been specifically designated because it coincides exactly with the period of the missionary activities of Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune and Fr. Joseph Shanahan, the third and the fourth Prefect Apostolic, respectively. It was a time that witnessed a radical policy shift, from the “Christian village” concept of Fr. Joseph Lutz’s days, to the grass roots approach of school evangelization initiated by Fr. Lejeune and perfected by Fr. (later Bishop) Shanahan and his successors. Having witnessed the Catechist revolt in the early days of his missionary enterprise, Fr. Lejeune undertook the task of reforming and paying more attention to the selection training and posting of Catechists. These Catechists trained and posted to various mission fields during the Lejeune–Shanahan era, became the architects of these influences on Igbo Catholicism.

According to Baur (2005) and Ozigbo (1985) “on April 7, 1889, Pope Leo XIII raised the lower Niger, to an Apostolic Prefecture making Fr. Joseph Lutz the first Prefect Apostolic”. (p. 6). This area covers the area later known as Eastern Nigeria, within which Igboland is situated. The concept of Igbo Catholicism could therefore be said to be synonymous with Onitsha, since during the period in question the entire Igbo mission was encapsulated within Onitsha Prefecture and later within Onitsha Diocese. Other areas within the ambience of Onitsha Prefecture (and Diocese) outside Igboland are not included in this study.

It must be observed that between the years 1900 – 1931, that corresponds to the era of the fourth and fifth Vicar Apostolic Fr. Lejeune and Fr. Shanahan respectively, the Roman Catholic Church extended beyond the confines of Igboland to their neighbours. In April 1920 the prefecture was raised to a vicariate with Fr. Joseph Shanahan, becoming its pioneer Bishop. By this time the vicariate covered an area of 68. 306 square miles.

For the purpose of this study, the work have limited Igbo Roman Catholicism to the areas covered by the present Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province, concentrating primarily on those ecclesiastical areas confined within the ambient of the present Anambra state. This includes Onitsha Archdiocese, Awka and Nnewi dioceses.

## **1.6 Methodology**

In pursuance of the objective of examining meaningfully the influence of Catechists on Igbo Roman Catholicism in Onitsha (1888–1931), the researcher endeavoured to make deductions from various sources. A number of Catechists from the Onitsha Ecclesiastical province were interviewed including some elderly Catholics who personally encountered the white Missionaries.

Priest Directors of Catechists and Catechists from different dioceses and Archdiocese were also consulted. Documented materials from the Onitsha Archdiocesan Archive, Nnewi and Awka Diocesan Archives were consulted. Equally books and journal articles from authors and major players in the history of the old Onitsha Archdiocese were duly consulted and acknowledged.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

The success of every communication is largely determined by the clarity of terms which serves to eliminate to a very large extent, ambiguities inherent in every communication. Variables are often the determinant of meaning attached to terms under various circumstances. Indeed there are always a variety of meanings. This necessitates the inclusion of a subtopic that would be designated-the definition of terms.

According to Onyejekwe (2006), “for this reason, necessity demands the explication of the following terms, and the context of this study – Catholic Catholicism, Catechist, Igboland” (p. 1).

### **Catholic**

The term Catholic, meaning “universal”, was first applied to the Church by St. Ignatius of Antioch around the year 107 A.D. Writing to the Church at Smyrna he said: “Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church” (Smyr. VIII,2). It was later used by many writers referring both to the Church and to individual members of the Church, the most famous being perhaps that of St. Pacianus, a Bishop of Barcelona in the fourth century: Christian is my name; Catholic is my surname. The term as used by the Fathers of the Church means the true Church as distinct from all other religious groups. It is thus used today and applies to the body of the faithful, the creeds, churches, institutions, clergy, and hierarchy who follow the same teachings of Christ as given to the Apostles. (Cf. Marks of the Church: Church).

### **Catholicism**

According to McBrien, (1994) Catholicism is a rich and diverse reality. It is a Christian tradition, a way of life, and a community. It is comprised of faith, theologies, and

doctrines. It is characterized by specific liturgical, ethical, and spiritual orientations and behaviour. At the same time, it is a people, or cluster of people, with a particular history.

### **Catechist**

Etymologically, the word 'Catechist' comes from the Greek background. It basically means to echo, to instruct or to teach by word of mouth. Originally it was a title given to one who instructed those about to receive baptism. According to Brodericks (2005), now it is loosely applied to any instructor versed in Christian doctrines who teaches others especially in missionary schools.

Arinze (2012) and Obiora (2009) describe the Catechist as a combination of an apostle of the Good News, a true believer of the gospel as well as a religious teacher and evangelizing agent rolled into one. The Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (The saving mission). The Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, for instance, describes catechists as specialized workers, direct witnesses, indispensable evangelizers, who represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young Churches. The Code of Canon Law has a canon on catechists involved in strictly missionary activity and describes them as lay members of Christ's faithful who have received proper formation and are outstanding in their living of the Christian life. Under the direction of missionaries, they are to present the gospel teaching and engage in liturgical worship and in works of charity.

The catechist is a lay person specially appointed by the Church, in accordance with local needs, to make Christ known, loved and followed by those who do not yet know him and by the faithful themselves. However for the sake of clarity the notion of the Catechist

that majorly suits into the context of this study is that of Ndiokwere (1995) who emphasizes “the notion of the village Catechist” (p. 117) and that of Okeke (2011) who described the catechist as an ‘auxiliary’, that is, a helper of the priest both in teaching and preaching the word of God.

### **Igboland**

Igboland ‘*Ana Igbo*’ or ‘*Ala Igbo*’, also known as *Southeastern*, is the homeland of the Igbo people otherwise known as ‘*Ndi Igbo*’ (Uchendu, 1965).

Oriji (1964) describes it as being situated in the lowland forest region of Nigeria, parts of Igboland extending into the Niger-Delta, encompassing that area up to that point where the River Niger fans out into the Atlantic Ocean in a vast of creeks and mangrove swamps cacophony extending to the Bight of Bonny. According to Slattery (2016) evidence of people’s settlement in Igboland could be traced back to 4500 BC, especially from the central area which forms the major centre of migration of the Igbo speaking people. Slattery (2016) contends that the northern Igbo kingdom of Nri which rose around the 10<sup>th</sup> century as is credited with the foundation of much of Igboland’s culture, customs and religious politics. It is the oldest existing monarchy in present day Nigeria. In southern Igboland several groups developed, of which the most notable was the Aro Confederacy. Shaw (1977, 82 – 93) appears to lend credence to this long period of settlement from his Igbo-Ukwu excavations. Baikie (1854) observes the cultural division of the Igbo into several sub groupings that include the Anioma, Ngwa, Abiriba, Edda, Ezaa, Ibeku, Ohuhu, Omuma, Ekpeye among others. Despite their emphasis of one’s particular place of origin, once away from home, these particularity, practically dissolve and they see themselves as Igbos. From the linguistic

and cultural perspective, Nwadike (2008) states that prior to the advent of western civilization, the rich corpus of Igbo literature like folktales, myths, legends, anecdotes, songs, poems, riddles and drama were orally transmitted forth one generation to the other. The Igbo language literature and cultures founded one composite indivisible whole. These were no formal instructions on this to children or strangers.

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Yet the Igbo evolved an almost formal education in such areas as home training, and such professions as farming, carving, blacksmithing, medicine, pottery, weaving among others. Here a high sense of meticulousity was maintained as specific instructions were carefully imparted by the requisite authorities or institutions. The pre-modern Igbo even evolved signs, writing just as the Egyptians and Sumerians. This was known as the “*Nsibidi*”. Through the nsibidi signs, informations were conveyed or preserved Nwadike,(2008 1-3).



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of the Catechist, as a person, a role, a profession, duties and expectations and the like, is one that has received varied attention from various quarters, academic, Christian, Catholic and otherwise. This equally, applies to the terms, 'Catholicism' derived from 'Catholic' and 'Igboland'. To fully appreciate what Igbo Roman Catholicism is all about and the influence of Catechists therein, there is need to review the written ideas of scholars and informed personalities and authorities on this vital concept of the Catechist. This is focus of the tripod of conceptual framework; theoretical framework and empirical studies.

#### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

The church which has been variously described as; the worldwide body of Christians, (Mcbrien, 1966), Catholicism (Pius XII) a universal sacrament of salvation (LG 48), the people of God has right from its very inception and over the centuries clearly defined its mission and vision. This mission and vision is aptly summarized in the phrase '*salus animarum suprema lex*' (the salvation of souls is the highest law).

Outside the confines of the priests and religious within the context of the Roman Catholic Church, the next group of persons most adequately suited to carry on the Ministry of teaching or preaching are the Catechists. The Bishops and the priests in the various particular churches and the universal church to fully execute this role of teaching the people as Catechists at the highest levels. However, going down this ladder of the Magisterium, he have the Catechists playing this role.

## 1 Catechumen

A Catechumen has been described as an unbaptized person who is being instructed (Catechesis) in the basics of Catholicism, in preparation for his/her admission into the Church through the process of the sacramental initiation of baptism (McBrien, 1994). In the early Church when a pagan sought to become a Christian, he was usually given the basic instructions and became an “inquirer”. He was permitted to be present only during the first part of the Mass. Thereafter, having been given additional instruction and having become versed in doctrine, he was called a *catechumen*. At this point he/she is allowed to remain at Mass, until the beginning of the prayer of the Faithful. After more instruction, the catechumen was baptized and became “competent” and was received into the “body of the faithful”. In the contemporary parlance, the term Catechumen refers to anyone who desires to become a convert (Broderick, 2005).

As stated by the Council fathers of the Vatican II, “Catechumens should be properly instructed in the mystery of salvation and in the practice of gospel morality. By sacred rites which are to be held at successive intervals, they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and love, which God’s people live” (AG 14).

“Catechumens who, moved by the Holy Spirit, seek with explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church are by that very intention joined to her. With love and solicitude the Mother Church already embraces them as her own” (LG 14).

## 2 Catechesis

While the Catechumen is a person, Catechesis has been described as a 'process'. This is a process of "echoing" the Gospel. Through this 'process' the basic elements of the Christian faith are gradually introduced to young people or adult converts who are known as the Catechumen (Mcbrien, 1994).

This is the oral instruction, which may also be accompanied with written, printed, or visual aids, whereby the faithful are informed of the truths of Christ's teaching and the Church's. In Scripture it is called "the way of the Lord" which means the entire body of Christian doctrine as offered by the Church and her representatives. It was certainly a part of the teaching given to new converts to Christianity and was given by one who already knew or had been instructed. In more recent times this has come to be the pertinent instruction that accompanies the reception of the sacraments, the new liturgy, and the general preparation one is to receive so that each may participate more fully in the everyday worship of the Church (Broderick, 2005).

From the earliest times in the early church, the name *Catechesis* was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God. For JohnPaul II, the whole essence of Catechesis, is "Catechizing in a way that leads a person to study this mystery in all its dimensions, to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, know the love of Christ which surpasses all knowledge (CT 5).

For him also, Catechesis is essentially Christocentric, in that Catechesis also means the intention to transmit not one's own teaching or that of other masters, but only that of Jesus Christ (CT 6).

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* gives the following definition of Catechists as:

The act of handing on the Word of God intended to inform the faith community and candidates for initiation into the Church about the teachings of Christ, transmitted by the Apostles to the Church. It also involves the lifelong effort of forming people into witnesses to Christ and opening their hearts to the spiritual transformation given by the Holy Spirit.

*The magisterium of the Church* (The Teaching Authority of the Church) describes catechesis in the following way:

Catechesis aims at putting 'people...in communion... with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity. (CT 5) In catechesis 'Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God,... is taught – everything else is taught with reference to Him – and it is Christ alone who teaches... Every catechist: "My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me."(CT 6).

### **3 Catechism**

While the Catechumen is the person to be instructed and Catechesis is the process of the instruction Catechism is the subject of the instruction. In other words, what the weapon is to the soldier, what the stethoscope is to the medical doctor, that, Catechism is to the Catechist. It may be oral or written, in question or answer form, but it is always structured to encapsulate the fundamental tenets of the Roman Catholic faith.

Among early Christian writers, this meant both the subject matter and the method of instruction. However, today it is more frequently applied to the text or manual that is a summary of Catholic doctrine presented in question and answer form. The word comes from the Greek word *catechesis*, which means oral instruction. Today the word *catechism* is applied to a wide variety of booklets, texts, question and answer forms, and study notes relating to various aspects of Christian doctrine. John Paul II (1994) clearly states the basic quality of the concept Catechism thus:

A catechism should faithfully and systematically present the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in the Church and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers, Doctors and saints of the Church, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the People of God. It should take into account the doctrinal statements which down the centuries the Holy Spirit has intimated to his Church. It should also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past. (p. 4).

#### **4 The Catechist**

The Catechist has been described as one who catechizes, one who instructs the Catechumens, preparing them for admission into a Christian church. He instructs these catechumens in the principles of religion; which is considered very fundamental prior to their admission into the sacrament of baptism and other sacraments (Websters, 1996).

From the etymological perspective, the word “Catechist” just like catechesis is traced to the Greek word “Catechizein” which means “to resound” forth; to “echo”. In order to

resound forth the requisite knowledge, the teacher must be an authority or be backed by authority. This is what is known in the Catholic Church as the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the church. Based on this authority it is the obligation and inherent right of the Church, independent of any human authority, to preach the Gospel to all peoples, using for this purpose even its own means of social communication; for it is to the Church that Christ the Lord entrusted the deposit of faith, so that by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, it might conscientiously guard the revealed truth, more intimately penetrate it, and faithfully proclaim and expound it.

Thus the Church has the right always and everywhere to proclaim moral principles, even in respect of the social order, and to make judgements about any human matter in so far as this is required by fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls.

In the Catholic Church the catechist is a term applied to anyone engaged in religious formation or education, from the bishop to lay ecclesial ministers and clergy, to volunteers at the local level. Parents are considered the primary catechists for their children. Similarly, the community is seen as playing the same role. In the protestant churches, the Sunday school classes also serve this purpose (Mantemach, 1991). In the same vein, the Council fathers of the Vatican II council on 28 October 1965 declared:

Bishops should be especially concerned about catechetical instruction. Its function is to develop in men a living, explicit and active faith, enlightened by doctrine. It should be very carefully imparted, not only to children and adolescents but also to young people and even to adults. In imparting this instruction the teachers must observe an order and method suited not only to the matter in hand but also to the character, the ability, the age and the life-style of

their audience. This instruction should be based on Holy Scripture, tradition, liturgy, and on the teaching authority and life of the Church.

They should, furthermore, ensure that catechists are adequately prepared for their task, being well-instructed in the doctrine of the Church and possessing both a practical theoretical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of educational method. They should take steps to reestablish or to modernize the adult catechumenate (C.D. 14).

Furthermore the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) on 3rd December 1993 issued a document defining the vocational, formation and promotional orientation of Catechumens in the territories dependent on their jurisdiction within this document, they stated that:

The Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples (CEP) has always had a special concern for Catechists, convinced as it is that these are, under the direction of their Pastors, a factor of prime importance in evangelization. In April 1970 it published some practical directives for catechists, and now, conscious of its responsibility and of radical changes in the missionary world, the CEP would like to call attention to the present situation, the problems that arise, and prospects for the development of this “*praiseworthy army*” of lay apostles. It is encouraged in this project to know that the Church makes use of every opportunity to stress the importance and relevance of the work of catechists as a “*fundamental evangelical service*”.

Discussing the person of the catechist in a missionary church, they would declared that vocation and identity: Every baptized Catholic is personally called by the Holy Spirit to make his or her contribution to the coming of God’s kingdom. Within the lay state there are

various *vocations*, or different spiritual and apostolic roads to be followed by both individuals and groups. Within the general vocation of the laity there are particular ones.

At the origin of the catechist's vocation, therefore, apart from the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, there is a specific call from the Holy Spirit, a "*special charism recognized by the Church*" and made explicit by the Bishop's mandate. It is important for the Catechist candidate to recognize the supernatural and ecclesial significance of this call, so as to be able to respond, like the Son of God or like the prophet.

In actual missionary practice, the catechist's vocation is both *specific*, i.e. for the task of catechizing, and *general*, for collaborating in whatever apostolic services are useful for the building up of the Church.

They would finally uphold the ancient designating of the Catechist as 'an apostle ever relevant' and then in their plenary Assembly of 1970 succinctly describe the Catechist the Catechist is a lay person specially appointing by the church in accordance with local to make Christ known, loved and followed by those who do not yet know Him and by the faithful themselves.

John Paul II (1979) outlines the pre eminence of catechesis in the Church and by implication that of the lay instrument of Catechesis – the Catechist. He observes:

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command – to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded. He thus entrusted them with the mission and power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning the Word of life. He also



entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what He had taught them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments. And He gave them the Spirit to fulfill this mission (C.T.I) (p.3).

Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The Church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task. Above all JohnPaul II this pays a glowing tribute to the Roman Catholic Catechist and describes his person and what he stands for.

Among the laity who become evangelizers, catechists have a place of honor. The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church speaks of them as:

That army of catechists, both men and women, worthy of praise, to whom missionary work among the nations owes so much. Imbued with the apostolic spirit, they make a singular and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church by their strenuous efforts. It is with good reason that the older and established churches, committed to a new evangelization, have increased the numbers of their catechists and intensified catechetical activity. But “the term catechists’ belongs above all to the catechists in mission lands... Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up without them. (AG 73)

On his own part, Benedict XV (2006) describes the Catechist in his post synodal exhortation *Africe Munus* as invaluable pastoral agents in the Church’s evangelization endeavours

considering the services they selflessly render in the area of grass roots preparations of catechumen and watering the seed of fact planted by the church's ordained ministers.

Finally Francis (2013) blended the concept of catechesis as a mission and the catechist who carries it out and what these two concepts implies for the Roman Catholic Church in our time. According to him:

Catechesis is a pillar for education in faith... Even though at times it may be difficult, it is necessary to work hard and make efforts for which you don't always see the results you hoped for, educating in faith is good, it is perhaps the best legacy we can give faith... Catechesis is a vocation: being a catechist, this is the vocation, not working as a catechist. Be careful I have not said to do the work of a catechist, but rather to be one, because it involves all your life. It means guiding towards the encounter, with Jesus with words and life; with your witness... I like to recall the words of Francis of Assisi to his friars: 'Always preach the Gospel, and if necessary use words, so that people may see the Gospel in your lives... we must begin with Christ and this love he gives us. (p. 1)

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This section of the review focuses on the social influence. This ultimately leads to the concept of leadership by example which theory is the major theory to be employed in this study.

### **The Social Influence Theory**

The theory considered most suitable and adopted in this study is the Social Influence Theory (SIT) of Milgram, S. (1980) and Asch, S.E. (1956 and 1966). According to this theory, Social influence is the change in behavior that one person causes in another

intentionally or unintentionally as a result of the way the changed person perceives himself in relationship to the influencer, other people and society in general. There are three areas of social influence which include conformity, compliance and obedience. Compliance is where one does something that one is asked to do by another. Obedience is different from compliance, in that it is obeying an order from someone that one accepts as an authority figure. Kelman (1958) also identifies three varieties of social influence to include “compliance, identification and internalization” (p. 51). Deutsch and Gerard (1955) attribute social influences to psychological necessities as (1) our need to be right – Informational Social Influence and (2) our need to be liked – Normative Social Influence.

According to Aronson, et al (2010), conformity as a type of social influence involves a change in behavior, belief, or thinking to align with those of others or with normative standards. It is the most prevalent and pervasive Social Influence. Conformity may be in appearance or in nature, impacting an individual publicly and privately. Conversion is an aspect of conformity that includes such deep impact of influence that the individual’s original behavior, beliefs or thinking, radically changes to align with or adapt to that of the influencers. Here the individual not only adapts to the behavior, beliefs or thinking of his influencer but also internalizes it and makes it his own.

This theory of social influence is applicable to this study because it explains why the Igbo Roman Catholic Christians whose forefathers were ardent African Traditional Religion practitioners, would so radically be influenced to become the ardent Roman Catholics that they are today. The Catechist – Teachers have certainly led and really conformed and converted them through Social Influence. This consideration alone could aptly explain what

actually transpired. Thus a very vital case is made for the influence of Catechists in Igbo Roman Catholicism.

### **2.3 Empirical Studies**

So many writers and researchers have already researched and written on the person of the Catechist, his role, his contributions and socio-economic conditions. However it is the intention of this research to attempt to fill specific gaps in knowledge by undertaking this enterprise: The influence of Igbo Catechists on Roman Catholicism in Onitsha (1888–1931) form the specific area of influence of these Catechists on Igbo Roman Catholicism. It is thus intended that this research would add to this body of already existing knowledge by providing information on this aspect.

Bazai (2015) wrote extensively on the various aspects of the person, selection, formation mission, apostolate roles and expectations of the Catechist in a two way relationship between the catechist and the community and vice versa. He emphasized the unique role of the catechists in a missionary Church and in apostolic areas that has large geographical spread. While examining the various functions entrusted to the catechists, he makes a distinction between the two main types of catechists; the full-time catechist and the part-time catechist; whose roles are varied depending on places and circumstance. He specifically notes:

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) insists on the value and distinctiveness of the catechist's vocation. Each one, therefore, should try to discover, discern and foster his or her own particular vocation. From these premises it can be seen that catechists in mission territories have their own identity, which characterizes

them in respect to those working in the older Churches, as the Church's magisterium and legislation clearly recognize. In short, the catechist in mission territories is identified by four elements: a call from the Holy Spirit; an ecclesial mission; collaboration with the Bishops apostolic mandate; and a special link with missionary activity *ad gentes*. (p.5)

While Bazai discusses in general terms the varied perspectives of the Catholic Catechist in the universal church and global mission field, he did not consider the role of the Catechists in Igbo Catholicism. To fill this lacuna, this study particularizes on the old Onitsha Archdiocese, delineating the influence of the Catechists from the very nascent era on the ebullient local Church that continues to echo till the present moment.

Ezeobata (2005) observed that throughout the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ it was recorded that he read once, during his memorable visit to Nazareth where he read the Isaiah prophecy "the spirit of the Lord is upon me. The other instance was where he "wrote" twice on the ground with his finger. When the Jews confronted him with the woman caught in adultery. It is very instructive that he read once and wrote twice, thereby underscoring the importance of records.

From the Master Jesus, the disciples would gradually learn the inestimable importance of record keeping. Thus over the years, they endeavoured to put down in writing, all that Jesus did and taught. He observes how it was that they never looked back hence today, the Vatican is credited with being the world's largest curator and custodian of official and archival documents and that is not so surprising since the Vatican remains the world's longest lasting bureaucracy Ezeobata (2005). (p. 21)

Ezeobata (2005) further classifies such church common parish records under the broad categories of Baptismal, Confirmation, Death, Marriage ordination, Tribunal, Mass, Converts, Sick-Call, and Journal. Also the certificates such as Baptismal, confirmation, Ordination, Marriage and others. He goes further to state:

Record keeping is therefore of utmost importance if the acts of people in missionary work are to be attested and presented for use elsewhere and in generations to come. Hence the tradition of the Church has encoded a vast variety of statutory documentations, which would mark ecclesiastical offices at various levels, and as it were serve as the authentic evidence of the existence, ministry and acts of each institution. (p. 21)

It remains pertinent that the grave importance to observe the enormity of record keeping which must be meticulously undertaken, to ensure the smooth running of and viability of the parish and other ecclesiastical institutions. There is no gainsaying the fact that the keeping of these records, falls squarely on the shoulders of the Catechists the immediate and available collaborators of the priests. One can only shudder at the immensity of records that would have been lost to the Church and to posterity were the Catechists not available to collaborate with the white missionaries at the inception and later years of Igbo Roman Catholicism. However the question, remains, how were these Catechists ultimately appreciated for these unquantifiable task accomplished for the (Church) and for humanity? Obiora (2008) contends that as the Church teaches the fact that by virtue of vocation to the sacred priesthood, and the common priesthood, every baptized Catholic is a Catechist. Based on the hierarchical structure of the Church, the Pope who occupied the Seat of Peter is the visible supreme Catechist in the whole universal church. The Local Ordinaries the

Archbishop and the Bishops are the Chief Catechists in their respective Archdioceses and Dioceses, while the Parish Priests are the Chief Catechists at the parochial level of their various jurisdictions.

However to efficiently disseminate the good news in the spirit of collaboration the Catechists come in at this level to assist the priests to effectively fulfill this mission at the grass root level. He goes further to outline such qualities of the Catechist as a man of unquestionable moral rectitude and a model/knowledgeable Christian, fully disposed to the task of evangelization. His duties include, liturgical activities, missionary evangelical, secretarial activities, public relationship, Religion/moral instruction, general ecclesiastical activities and special assistance to the priest. Obiora (2008) traces the origin of the person of the catechist in Igbo Roman Catholicism to “the arrival of the first missionary priests, when they collaborated with them by playing such roles as, interpreters, catechism teachers, Agents of sacraments, school teachers and priest founders” (p. 14).

Nonetheless, he observes certain common mistakes often catechists attributed to then and now:- viz practical atheism, hypocrisy, excessive criticism of priests, character assassination, son of the soil syndrome, anti-Catholic political activities, public scandal laziness, lack of zeal and misappropriation of church funds. While appreciating the efforts of Obiora to lay emphasis on the immediate necessity of remunerating the Catechists even as they carry out their duties, this study lays emphasis on a broader and more ultimate appreciation of these Catechists while considering their influence on Igbo Roman Catholicism.

For Ndiokwere (1994) the ministry of the catechist will ever determine the Catholic missionary institution and hence the future of Christianity in Africa. Despite the

preponderance of teeming number of lay faithful and local clergy in most African local churches, the place and role of the 'village catechist' will remain vital in Africa. There is a strong indication that even the Vatican has recognized this scenario as the Vatican congregation for the Evangelization of peoples and the international secretariat for Pontifical work of St. Peter the Apostle, men accord special recognition to the Catechist as they are now included in the disbursement of financial aids to the 'native clergy in the young churches in Africa.

Ndiokwere contends that in most African churches, the bishops and the priests still rely very heavily on the person of the catechist whom a theologian once described as The Trojan of the African Church. Although margined, poorly trained and still poorly paid, it at all but in fact the catechist has for a century in Africa remained the abiding ministerial reality of the village Church. Ndiokwere pays a glowing tribute to the often neglected 'village Catechist'. For him, despite the successes and failures of the 'African Catechist, despite the challenges of being theoretically phased out in the face of modernization in church ministries.

The African 'village Catechist' remains an indispensable pillar and cornerstone in the African church; just as his role remains even today as vital as ever. From every indication he is virtually a consultant, a sort of Permanent Secretary between the outgoing and the incoming priest. He remains a very vital link between the ancient and the modern, the pioneer white missionaries and the local indigenized clergy. He was practically a living and mobile archive of all crucial parochial informations. His mission home or private home often serves as the 'rest house' of many a visitor to the parish or station, temporal home for seminarians on Apostolic work. The Catechist served as the Care-Taker of all mission



property, physical and otherwise. In the absence of the priest, he serves as the ambassador extraordinary and stands for the Church in the drafting and signing of agreements between the Church, local authorities and communities. Often he stands alone against the entire community in defending the interests of the local church.

Incidentally, some of the younger Christian fathers and mothers presently very active, were prepared for baptism and marriage by this ever relevant apostle of the church – the village Catechist. Even the young parish priest castigating, mocking and threatening to remove him from office may have been baptized when the Catechist was serving under one Irish missionary Rev. Fr. Walsh, Fr. Connolly, Fr. McManus or Holly some 30 to 40 years ago. Yet the Catechist humbly and silently carries on considering his personal plight and humiliations as trifles compared to the overall interest of the church.

Ndiokwere succinctly summarizes there personality of the village catechist in this fashion

He is the father of the Church, of priests, sisters and bishops and he remains when they depart for the town, the seminary, for Europe, for Rome etc. he remains in civil war, famine and in the long break-down of rural communications brought about by the shortage of petrol and of spare parts for car and motor cycle. He remains teaching, baptizing, preaching and re-preaching eloquently enough the sermons he heard years ago from some historic missionary returned to retirement in Dublin, Verona or Mill Hill. (P. 177). Ndiokwere's observation is very much ad rem (rightly (situated) in all its ramifications. This study adds to these contributions by emphasizing more deeply, the historical aspects of these contributions.

Onukwusha (2012) describes the Catechist as someone who has been specifically chosen from within the body of the lay faithful, special prepared through training then assigned to

work fear the Church. It becomes his task to inform the people having been informed. He serves to build up the faint of the people by his apostolate. He is challenged to be well versed in various fields of knowledge ecclesiastical and otherwise. He is not ignorant of current events and even contemporary socio-political events in the society. He must be and remain intellectually alert. He thus becomes an asset not only to the Church in particular but to the larger society in general since according to Francis Bacon knowledge is power.

Ani (2013) contends that the Catechist is such a person who has been called by the Holy Spirit and who responds accordingly to the call. He then undergoes some requisite training prior to being commissioned by the parochial community. He becomes thus empowered to empower others on the realities, mysteries and truths of the Roman Catholic faith.

The nature of his training enables him to acquire a universal appeal. He remains relevant to both the children, adolescents and adults alike as an instructor in various spheres, religious moral and otherwise knowledge wise he should be a step ahead of others in the community so as to remain relevant in his role. He is both a leader in the ecclesial community as well as their mouth piece especially in the absence of the priest. From every indication Ani laid his emphasis on the vocation and training of the Catechist. This study goes beyond this to examine the Igbo Catechists in action and their contributions in the innumerable mission fields in Igboland, where they contributed saliently but silently working in collaboration with the white missionaries.

For Okobo (2012) the Catechist is seen as one whose primary duty is to teach the Christian doctrine and to impart to the Catechumen the mystery of Christ, thereby preparing them for initiation into the sacrament of baptism. For him 'witnessing' to the faith was originally the

fundamental duty of the Catechist but owing to the preponderance of various denominations and frictions, witnessed in the relationship between these different denominations, the Catechist acquired a new role as an apologist. He not only has to witness now but also must labour hard both to protect and the hand over intact, the doctrines already entrusted to him. However this concept of the Catechist alludes generally to the obtainable ideal where the specific tasks of the Catechist has been clearly delineated. This study goes to go beyond this, to that nascent period in Igbo Catholicism, when the Igbo Catechists were everything to the local Catholic communities especially in the absence of the few white missionaries.

Ozigbo (1985) among other things discussed how the excessive necessity of hundreds of Igbo towns who already had Catholic presence land who were persistently demanding the Catholic schools and the teacher Catechist resulted to the establishment of a Teacher Training College at Igbariam in 1913 (12) Though later closed down in 1918, it was reopened anew in 1928 as St. Charles Training College Onitsha in the immediate aftermath of the 1926 British Education Ordinance that nearly ruined the over stretched structure of the Catholic school system.

Ozigbo observed that for Shanahan “the key missionary tool at the period was the village school and the school teacher was primarily a Catechist and evangelist” (p. 10).

Ezeh (2005) appears to fully consolidate this assertion. She published a progress report on the Catholic Mission of the Eastern Nigeria from 1895 – 1945. From her publication it is observed that whereas the member of mission primary schools in Eastern Nigeria was only in 186 with one Catechist Teacher; that number has soared astronomically by 1945. By this time the number of primary schools was 762 with 2765 Catechist Teachers.

There is no gainsaying the fact that this astronomical explosion of the number of primary schools and Catechist Teachers could only be attributed to the very high premium accorded to school evangelization by the white missionaries. Doubtlessly this school evangelization became successful as it was, owing to the factor of the extra ordinary dedication of the Catechist teachers, many of whom were never accorded any meaningful recognition.

Onwubiko (1985) echoes this same theme. Tracing the development of western education in Eastern Nigeria, he pays a very glowing tribute to the Roman Catholic Church as team player in this regard from the era of Fr. Joseph Lutz and his expansion and growth of “bush schools” under Shanahan. He argues and makes a case for the indispensability of the Catechist teachers in the overall success of the enterprise. It is obvious that the Missionary Fathers could not have recorded the achievements outlined above without the aid of the Catholic teacher-catechists. They were the real true soldiers and collaborators with the early missionaries. While the white Fathers paid occasional visits to the outstations, it was the teacher-catechist who did the day-to-day work of keeping the station alive, conducting the Sunday Service, teaching the children the wonderful knowledge of ‘book’, instructing the catechumens and preparing them for Baptism and Holy Communion, baptizing the dying and conducting the burial service. He was everything to the community and was highly respected. These early teachers were devoted and spiritually committed to their work.

Thus far we have tried to examine the inestimable contributions of the Catechist teacher in the missionary enterprise in Igboland right from the nascent period of Catholicism in Igboland and the subsequent ripple effects over the decades. Given the enormity of their contributions, the question naturally arises as to whether these Catechists have been fully

appreciated or remunerated for their persons and their unquantifiable positive influence on Igbo Roman Catholicism just like the white missionaries with whom they so successfully collaborated and whose statues and monuments are scattered all over Igboland? From every indication it appears that contrary to all indications the situation of these catechist teacher is rather a deplorable scenario in contrast to their contributions and the situation of the white missionaries with whom they operated *pari pasu* – that is side by side in the vast mission fields in Igboland.

Enemali (2012) did conduct a study in this regard. He extended his study to include such church workers as catechists, teachers in Catholic schools and workers in mission hospitals. His findings revealed that unlike their counterparts in other climes, like the United States of America, the Catechists here in Igboland and Nigeria are very poorly remunerated and appreciated. Outside the stipulated amount of money paid to them as salaries (stupid) there terms of welfare package. This study will show how the catechist really contributed to the growth of Igbo Catholicism.

Similarly in his own Obiora (2004) presented a report on the deplorable situation of the Catechist. He distinguished between the full-time Catechist whose endeavour and sustenance devolves solely on his parochial engagement. On the other side is the part-time catechist who combines his private enterprise with his parish engagements, earning his remuneration and sustenance from both ends. Often the parochial demands on him takes its toll on his private enterprise and may even lead to its collapse altogether.

He decried the deplorable condition of these catechists and in the sense of equity and fair play contends that salaries are deserved and merited remunerations and should be totally differentiated from rewards. If the thrives and preaches charity then that charity must have to

begin from home by the church authorities in charge bettering the lot of Catechists the immediate next door neighbours and co-workers. He tenders such panacea as frequent review and their inclusion into the beneficiary of the church's charity endeavours.

In the same vein Okolo (2015) conducted an extensive study on the socio-economic conditions of Catechists in Nnewi, He said that there are different cadres of workers in the Church, all working in a hierarchy of collaboration in the Lord's vineyard; the Bishop; the priests, the catechists and others. These are not paid salaries in the strict sense of the word but rather remunerated, in a sense that their basic needs are fairly considered. However he considers there are not equally remunerated accordingly and such there appears a socio-economic gap in the Catechists who happen to be on the lowest rung in this ladder of remuneration appear to bear the brunt of this socio-economic gap. From every indication they are not adequately remunerated both at the full time and part time basis. Thus their socio-economic condition becomes more and more deplorable by the day.

He traces the dwindling fortunes of the Catechist from the nascent period of Igbo Roman Catholicism where the catechists were held in such a high esteem to the post-civil war years when their fortunes began to plummet up to its lowest ebbs in most recent times. He makes a case for a justifiable and equitable remuneration of the catechist given his vital role. He contends that there is danger already looming in the horizon should this anomaly be allowed to higher on. For him, the panacea his in commonly and evenly remunerating the Catechists, from the centre through the Diocesan Directorate of Catechesis and Evangelization. This study would endeavour to examine the vast arrays, influences and contributions of these catechists that made them amply qualified to be so remunerated. This equally applies to the catechists of today.

It is, on this similar vein that Ndiokwere (1994) makes a distinction between the “old catechist” and the “modern catechist” He describes the ‘old catechist’ as the pioneer catechists who effectively collaborated with the white missionaries. These were highly esteemed, occupied the place of honour next to the white missionaries and contributed so much to the nascent Igbo Roman Catholicism. These, together with the chiefs and few others were those who were highly respected Bedecked with honour and prestige they were able to wield much power and influence in their respective communities.

On the contrary the “modern catechists” are those whom Ndiokwere (1994) describes as “emergency Catechist”. Their being catechist was born out of the necessity of filling the yawning gap created by the sudden absence/shortage of Catechists following the enactment Cast Central State Government Public Education Edict of 1970 which legally transferred the running of all schools to the state Government (Obi-Ani 2009). Most of These Catechists were those who could not upgrade to the civil service like others for reasons of age and others.

The necessity that gave birth to these group of Catechists were succinctly described by the Directorate of Catechesis of Nnewi Diocese.

Following the government expulsion of white missionaries (Obi-Ani 2009), the Catechists lost their job of interpretation; then with the public Education Edict there were the subsequent conversion of all Catechist Teachers to civil servants (public school teachers) there arose the sudden dearth of and catechists in most parishes and outstation.

It is against this background that one must have to stipulate that to really fill the gap in knowledge in view, this study is not considering the so called ‘Modern Catechist’ but rather the “Old Catechists” as described by Ndiokwere. In the aftermath of their successful

collaboration with the white missionaries to plant, water and nurture Igbo Roman Catholicism, these “old catechists” aptly who form the subject of our study, fits in to Okeke (2009) description:

Catechists are the first and immediate teachers of the doctrine of faith as well as the organizers of the Christian community... (They) have a lot of challenges facing them in the important service as Catechists in the Catholic Church. Being one with the people they are faced with the evils of the society but being in the Church, they are called to redeem the age by being the salt, the light and the leaven in the community. Catechists will use the resources of the Spirit to combat the evils around them. They are called to be beacons of light in the society. Their life of ardent faith and unfeigned love is for the Catholic communities a source of encouragement in the struggle to live the Christian life. (p. 209)

These we now consider in more elaborate details.

In retrospect, these are the Catechists, who like an invincible but silent army, so much influenced Igbo Roman Catholicism, to make it what it is today. These are the Catechists who we now consider in greater details, aiming to fill the needed gap in knowledge, through the instrumentality of the social influence theory.

## **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

In this literature review the study has approached the review from three aspects of Conceptual framework, Theoretical Framework and Empirical Studies.

Under the conceptual review, the study endeavoured to review such allied concepts as, Catechumen, catechesis, and Catechism to maximally distinguish it from our primary



concept the catechist. Similarly under the theoretical framework, the study variously examined various related theories as Great Man Theory, Trait Theories Behavioural Theories, Contingency Theory Participative Theory, Transformational Theory and Transactional Theories of leadership. From these we have tried to isolate the theory of leadership by example which serves as a stepping stone to our preferred theory – the social influence theory (SIT).

Finally, under Empirical studies the study endeavoured to examine the opinions of various authors and informed personalities as it concerns the study at hand. From every indication, based on the existing literature, most of what has been written about the phenomenal growth and spread of Roman Catholicism in Igboland, devolves majorly around the contributions of the white missionaries. This is a direct opposite to that of their immediate collaborators in the myriads of mission fields - the Igbo Roman Catholic Catechists, whose synergy yielded so much success. Not much has been written about the inestimable sacrifices and contributions of these army of Igbo Roman Catholic Catechists. Their very crucial role appeared to have received very little scholarly attention. This is the gap that this study intends to fill.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CATECHISTS IN THE IGBO ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

#### 3.1 Brief Ethnography of the Igbo People

Any attempt to judiciously examine the historical perspective of the Igbo must have to contend with the fundamental question – who are the Igbo? According to Afigbo (1981) it was the erroneously conceived by the European the people the slave merchants that the people who occupied the hinterland of the Bight of Biafra. These included all the inhabitants of the entire area traversed by the Kwa River among who were the Efik, the Ibibio and other minority groups of the area. The Igbo people also known as the Ibo a (eboe) are the people majorly inhabiting the south eastern part of Nigeria. This people speak the Igbo language, a branch of the Benue – Congo branch of the Niger-Congo family. Isichei and Ozigbo (1988) contend

that the origin of the concept “Igbo” for its exact meaning is not known though the concepts fittingly describes both the people and their language. He attributes it to the Kwa sub family of the Niger- Congo group of language. Nonetheless he sees the language as consisting of a complexity of tones, distinguishing various meanings and grammatical relationships. Generally the Igbo language equally boast of so many variety of mutually intelligible dialects while the population density of Igboland could be soul to be over 2000 persons per square mile.

However, despite this misconception, the fact remainsthat the Igbo can lay claim to being the second largest ethnic group in southern Nigeria. Chukwu, Nnadi, and Obiakor (2016) contend that the Igbo as one of the Nigerian major ethnic groups predominantly occupying the feature Nigeria just as their counterpart the Hausa – Fulani and Yoruba of the

northern and southern Nigeria, respectively. For them the word ‘Igbo’ anglicized by the British to ‘Ibo’ can be diversely applied from the perspective of people, land and language.

1. It can be applied to people the indigenous speakers of the Igbo language, the Igbo people – *NdiIgbo*.
2. It can be applied to the land occupied by this Igbo people (*Ala or Ana Igbo*)
3. Equally it can apply to the language itself – the Igbo language (*Asusu Igbo*) (2012)

The historical perspective of the Igbo could be broadly examined under the following broad heaving

1. The pre-colonial era
2. The colonial era.
3. The post-colonial era

However, for the project at hand the study is mostly concentrating on the pre-colonial era and the colonial era within which the nascent period of consolidation and expansion period of Christianity and Catholicism in Igboland occurred.

### **3.1.1 The Geographical Condition of the Igbo**

Ifemesia (1980) observes that the “Igbo country” extends to an area of over 15, 800 square miles. It is situated north of the delta Swamplands and east of the River Niger as well as including the low arable land west of the Cross River. The Imo River and the Kwa Ibo River cuts it into three unequal parts from the south. Topographically Igboland rises gently from the north unbroken to the Awga-Udi- Nsukka hills running in a north-south direction. The Anambra River – the most important tributary of the Lower Niger bounds it in the north-west while the Cross River in the east and south east.

It is crucial to note that there exists no insurmountable natural barriers like very high mountain or very large expanses of water that would have inhibited mobility and interactions within and without. Rather there is thick rain forest of that south that gradually pales into open woodland and parkland as one move towards the North. Of all thing these geographical and topographical factors has greatly encouraged so much mobility and communications; migrations ad intra (within and migrations and extra (without) throughout Igboland. Given this situation the question arises. What were the state of affairs in this geographical enclave called “Igboland” all these while especially prior to the initial contact with the outside world in terms of global dimensions especially the Europeans whose seafaring to penetrate the Igboland coastal areas enabled as early as the 15th century. This we now examine in greater details.

The history of Igboland in the pre-colonial era could be rightly demarcated into two major epochs. The pre-slave trade epoch and the slave trade epoch.

Ifemesia (1980) is of the opinion that the Igbo fall within the confines of so-called pre-literate peoples of Africa whose history were only committed to writing only as late as the eighteenth century. Prior to this true oral tradition had virtually remained the means of storage and conference. Yet two major areas still affords us such crucial and archeology. Given the fact that the Igbo language is generally ascribed to the Kwa – sub family of the Niger-Congo family of languages, it can be argued that the language could not have not been spoken more recently than 10,000 years ago. This accounts for its great depth and implies that it must have been spoke in or near its present homeland through with gradual evolution over thousands of years, given the fact that it not spoken anywhere else both in Africa and any other part of the world.

Archeology affords us another's platform in the reconstruction of the Igbo history. Prior to the Igbo-Ukwu findings, the western world had consistently denied the existence of any meaningful past and its recording as history for the Igbo pre-slavery and pre-colonial society just as it has done for most past of Africa. It had equally upheld the so called the hermitic Hypothesis survey.

For Anozie (2002), it was not until 1910 that the first archeological discovery was made by some European mining companies at the Jos Plateau. Prominent among these cites was the one at Nok. Leo Frobenius visited the "old Yoruba kingdom between the years 1910 own 1911 and collected many archeological artifacts ranging from clay to bronze. Anozie declared:

Nothing is known about the archeology of Igboland until 1939 when a retired coal miner was digging a pit in his compound in Igbo-Ukwu. He had dug up to 0.305 metre when he came across hundreds of beads and some brome objects including some elaborately decorated hemispherical bowls (p.15).

Excavations belatedly followed this discovery between December 1959 and January 1960, then again in 1964. Professor Thurstand Shaw, a Cambridge Archeologist who organized these excavations named the various sites, Igbo-Isaiah, Igbo-Richard and Igbo-Jonah, respectively.

"These discoveries at Igbo-Ukwu radically transformed the much uniformed conception of the western world about Igboland, especially as the bulk of the findings were radio carbon dated to the ninth century A.D. Moreso these dates designed to these findings goes to confirm the linguistic inferences regarding Igbo antiquity" (Ifemesia 1980:18).

It must be noted that the two epochs under consideration are clearly defined by the prominence of two very powerful Igbo clans that dominated all the others within these two epochs. While the Nri clan dominated the greater part of Igboland during the pre slavery epoch the Aro clan dominated the entire Igboland by duct of their mercantile process and diplomacy during the slavery era. Metuh and Ejizu (1985)

Conform thus:

Oral traditions, missionary records archeological an anthropological reports show that over long periods of Igbo history, large sections of Igboland have been dominated by either of two powerful Igbo clans. These were the priestly Umunri clan, whose influence thrived in the Northern part of the Igbo territory extending to some part west of Niger, and the ubiquitous Aro traders who gained ascendancy in the southern parts trough the influence of their powerful oracle the Ibini Ukpabi. (p. XIV).

It was this first Igbo claw the Umuri that held sway during the pre slave epoch. They were able to wield such politico-ritual influence over the Igbo that tended to galvanize the vast Igbo territory together. The influence of the Umunri is attributed to the belief of the Igbo people that it was to the Umunri, to act as the levites all over Igboland. The Umunri easily recognized by their scarification “Ichi” were thus able to move about all ever Igboland performing various rites, like establishing and abrogating ‘Nso Ani – taboos. Cleansing the land if and where ‘polluted’. They also conferred ‘Ozo’ chieftaincy title and peace between waving Igbo communities (Metuh & Ejizu, 1985).

By virtue of the anthropological researchers conducted by professor Onwuejeogwu, there has be a connection established between the Nri culture and the Igbo Ukwu artifacts that were the products of such highly sophisticated culture. Arguing from this perspective

Prof Afigbo contended that culture which the Igbo-Ukwu bronze represents must have taken at the minimum a millennium and a half to attain. Based on the radio carbon dating, that level of sophistication can be placed at 600 BC. Afigbo (1981) says that towards the end of the 17th century the Umunri culture and influence gradually declined to be replaced by the Aro clan who held sway during the slave trade epoch with the introduction of sugar in the West Indies by 1640 so many slaves were brought from West Africa, from the first recorded sold Igbo slave Catherina Ybou, sent to Sao Tome. Subsequently, that West Africa area became known as the Slave Coast. Between the years 1673 – 1679, the Royal Niger Company purchased about 6,000 slaves from West Africa.

However, the highest point of the centuries – long slave trade was the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Captain Adam who made 10 slavery voyages to Africa between 1786 – 1800 stated that 20,000 slaves were sold annually at Bonny, 16,000 of them Ibo. Over a 20 year period he estimated that 320,000 Ibos had been sold to European slavers at Bonny and 50,000 at old and New Calabar. Sichei has observed that ‘the slave trade robbed Igboland of many of her members in the prime of life and of the children they would have had’.

During this period the Igbo historical landscape was greatly colored by the prominence of Aro Oligarchy. The Aro people exploited their locale at the mouth of the Cross River to their greatest extent. Gradually they positioned themselves as middlemen, dominating the distribution of foreign goods from the Europeans and the coast and the collection and selling of slaves to the Europeans. They were greatly assisted in the overpowers and influence of their oracle the Ibini Ukpabi of Aro Chukwu. Subsequently the Aro penetrated and dominated the length and breadth of Igboland and beyond, establishing Aro settlements in various parts of Igboland. Afigbo (Udo, 1980) confirms thus position:

The Aro Igbo of Arochukwu stands out as a unique group in the history of the eastern forest peoples largely as a result of the mythical powers attributed to the Aro oracle, the long Juju, based at Arochukwu. The Aro came to be respected and feared as the children of the god, Ibini Ukpabi throughout the area that now constituted into the four eastern states of Nigeria. Of this period in question the Igbo historical perspective seems to have been captured by the ex Igbo slave Olaudah Equiano or (Gustavus Vassa) in his book. ‘The interesting narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano’ published in 1789.

We also have markets, at which I have been frequently with my mother. These are sometimes visited by some mahogany – coloured men from the south – west of us: we call them Oye – Eboe, which term signifies red men living at a distance. They generally bring us fire – arms, gunpowder, hats, beads, and dried fish... they always carry slaves through our land, but the strictest account is exacted of their manner of procuring them before they are suffered to pass. (Edwards 1967).

However like the Umunri clan before them, the Aro “strangle hold’ over Igboland and beyond would gradually wither with the abolition of the slave trade and the advent of the colonial era. The death knell on the Aro oligarchy was sounded with the British expedition and the capture of the Ibini Ukpabi oracle by 1902. (Afigbo, 1981). In a rather strange coincidence, the convoking of the Berlin West African conference, coincided with the advent of Catholicism to Igboland. Similarly the effective takeover of the Lower Niger (Oil Rivers protectorate) by the British government by January 1900, coincided with Prefectureship of Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune and subsequently that of Fr. Joseph Shanahan (later Bishop Shanahan). This period equally coincided with the Great Onitsha hinterland patrol that saw to the penetration and pacification of the greater part of the Igbo hinterland.



Both the colonial government and the missionaries somehow followed the trail blazer, by this patrol in the penetration, administration and evangelization of the Igbo hinterland. Subsequently the missionary schools would be able to furnish the British colonial government with their clerical work force. These in bright the sequence of events that coloured the historical perspective of Igboland from the pre-slavery, through the slavery to the post slavery/colonization/evangelization era. Their influences continue to be felt till date.

### **3.2 The Advent of Catholicism to Igboland**

#### **3.2.1 Historical Antecedents**

The advent of Roman Catholicism to Igboland could be attributed to a series of combination of historical accidents which ultimately turned out to be positive. From a global perspective the early part of the 19th centuries saw a new global outlook. There occurred a radical approach in people's perception perhaps enhanced by the industrial revolution and the tireless decades efforts of the abolitionists, ably led by the untiring Sir William Wilberforce. Suddenly Great Britain outlawed centuries old slave trade in 1807, followed by the United State of America in 1808 and other countries of the western world.

With this decisive victory of the abolition of the slave trade after centuries of this bloody transaction by Britain the undisputed industrial and maritime super power of the day, began the long chequered years of enforcing the implementation of this abolition. In this post abolition era, many thousands emancipated slaves yearned to return to their original homeland in West Africa. These were greatly asserted and encouraged by the abolitionists. Consequently these abolitionists inadvertently succeeded not only in founding the ex-slave

settlements of Freetown and Liberia but also enhanced the advent of new missionary societies into West Africa in their wake (Ozigbo, 1988).

In the year 1787, 377 “black poor” ex slaves landed in Freetown, Sierra Leone. These were followed by another 1,200 in 1782. By 1800, they were joined by 500 maroon and by the next fifty years over 40,000 ex slaves have joined them. Subsequently a parcel of land measuring about 52 square kilometers was bought from King Tom, one of the local Teme chief for their settlement (Obi, 1985).

Most of these ex slaves came back to Africa with the new Christian religion they have become acquainted with during sojourn in Europe and America. They wasted no time in identifying and professing it in their new settlements. Among them the CMS was very prominent. They were so that by 1804 they founded the Fourah Bay College for the training of Africans to work as teachers, catechists and clerics. Already through the instrumentality of such Anglican Chaplains as Patrick Frazer N. Gilbert and N. Herme, the Anglican had made elaborate plans for the conversion of the vast areas of the West African interior. Incidentally the first student of this college and the future principal happen to be Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave.

Kit was this Msgr Barron that acquainted the American Catholic Bishops of this situation of things in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Consequently, in the year 1833, the Episcopal Council of Baltimore presented the matter to the propaganda Fide – the sacred congregation for the Evangelization of people (Obi, 1985).

They began a series of events which would ultimately prove providential in the advent of Catholicism to Igboland. By the year 1840, the Supreme Pontiff Pope Gregory XVI had directed the Bishop of Philadelphia and the Bishop of New York to see to the sending of

one priest each to Liberia and to the West Coast. In response to this, too Irish priests Msgr Edward and Rev. Father John Kelly had volunteered for this mission. They were accompanied by another Irish – a Layman Mr. Denis Pinder. On January 31 1842 the trio arrived Cape Palmas in Liberia to begin their mission (Obi, 1985).

That same year the Pope created the Vicariate of the Two Guineas entrusting it to the Holy Ghost Father, then the Vicariate of Central Africa (in 1846) entrusting this to the Verona Fathers. As fate would have it, the same year 1842, Msgr Barron was appointed first the Apostolic prefect of the Upper Guinea then later that year on October 3, 1842, the Bishop of Upper and Lower Guinea. His area of apostolate was the vast expanse of land and water covering the whole of West Africa down to Gabon. Bishop Barron thenceforth began work in earnest, traversing Europe and America, seeking for helpers to assist him in his vast missionary field, forgoing such a collaboration with the Holy Ghost Fathers, who freely and willingly volunteered to assist him. Seven of these landed in Liberia on November 29 1843 at Bishop Barron's invitation. Operating at such high level intensity, Bishop Barron spared neither time, treasure or talent to plant the seed of Roman Catholicism in West Africa. 'Owing to impeded by his failing health' Bishop Barron was forced to retired from active missionary work in January 1845. He was succeeded by a Spiritan, Father Truffet who was consecrated a bishop on January 25, 1847 but sadly dying in his residence at Dakar the same year.

On April 27 1857 the two Guineas were created separate Vicariates. Upper Guinea became the Vicariate Apostolic of Sierra Leone. The Vicariate of Gabon the Lower Guinea Here Bishop Pierre he Bierre oversaw the entirety of the Holy Ghost Missionary activities on the Lower Niger.

At this point in time, Onitsha was yet an insignificant, tiny out station of or quasi-parish still managed from Gabon, and this management greatly hampered by transportation difficulties and absence of proximity. These was not really much Bishop Pierre could do, given this practical unhealthy realities no matter his good intentions. However so much favourable reports have been heard of this particular place on the eastern bank of the Nigerian as a potentially viable ground for future evangelization missionaries from Asaba, Gabon and Lokoja had filed in these favourable reports. Plans were therefore already set in motion to send missionaries to this area on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The eruption of this war interrupted all these plans. It was not until the French sufficiently recovered from the ravaged of this war that old and new evangelization plans could began to be actualized once again (Obi, 1985).

### **3.2.2 Proximate Preparation for the Roman Catholic Mission to Igboland**

By the year 1883 the Holy Ghost Fathers based in Gabon had engaged themselves in a trekking project that covered their vast and various distant out station South West of Africa. It was concluded that it was time to concentrate their evangelization efforts on Eastern Nigeria (Obi, 1985).

It has also been recorded that Rev. Father Chausse and Holley of the society of Africa Missions (SMA) based in Lagos visited the Onitsha Chiefs that same year 1883. There were any missions established. (Obi, 1982) it must be noted that Onitsha was outside the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the SMA which was the Vicariate of Lagos.

On 23rd July, 1885, Father Joseph Lutz, aged 32, was appointed by the superior General, Ambrose Emonet, to lead the missionary expedition to the Lower Niger. The choice

of Joseph Lutz was well advised for several reasons. He had eight years of experience in Africa in the difficult missions of Sierra Leone and Rio Pongas (Ozigbo 1988). Etc.

Fr. Joseph Emile Lutz was not only a veteran missionary of the two Guineas, he had both a working knowledge of the English language and source level of medical knowledge. These would later prove to invaluable assets in his future missionary endeavours in Igboland. The other members of this pioneer missionary team would include father John Horne aged 27, professed and ordained prior to the departure of the team by 29th September 1885. The two other members were lay brother, Hermas Huck aged 20 and John of Gotheau aged 28. Both of than professed in 1885. (Ozigbo, 1988).

Then again on the 10th of August 1885 the Superior General of the Spiritan congregation based in Paris addressed a letter to the Director of the propaganda Fide (Propagation of Faith in Paris) requesting his assistance to the tune of 8000 France to the Spiritans, to enable them to open up a new mission in the northern part of the large Vicariate on the right bank of the Niger and its off haunt the Benue. It was their intention to send two fathers and two Brothers up the Niger to Lokoja (Igbebe) and from there begin their work of evangelization moving down the coastal communities from down the River Niger towards the Atlantic Ocean. However their arrival at Akassa saw them encountering the first shock or obstacle of their mission as one Captain Christian, an official of the Royal Niger Company denied them passage on his boat. Perhaps this wasbased on instruction from higher quarters. This incident is well recorded in journals of Spiritan Fathers of November 20th 1885 which reads:

We arrived Akassa. We went up to the English factory and requested Captain Christian for a passage up the Niger. We were refused this passage on the pre test that

they did not know us and that we had no letter of recommendation from the Director of the company in London Ozigbo (1985).

Undeterred they initiated a plan B that saw them boarding a boat the next day to Brass. At Brass they met a totally different scenario Mr. Charles Townsend an English man and a Protestant by denomination (Ozigbo, 1988) received them with an extraordinary cordiality. They also met a German trader Mr. Scheneke who joined in welcoming them cordially. He not only granted them accommodation in his home but allowed them to celebrate the Holy mass in his house the next morning. He and his forty employees joined in the mass and became the congregation. Incidentally this happened to be the first holy mass celebrated by the Catholic missionaries on Nigerian soil (Obi, 1985). It is on record that Townsend had previously made acquaintance with Bishop Le Base who had been in charge of Gabon Vicariate within which Onitsha had been encapsulated as a distant outstation (Metuh & Ejizu, 1988).

Mr. Charles Townsend's hospitality did not stop there, he offered to take them up the Niger in his own small boat. On the 25th of November 1885 Mr. Townsend, Fr. Joseph Lutz and Fr. Horne began the journey to the Upper Niger at Lokoja and from embark on the mission, to settle and begin work there by September (Obi, 1985) Earlier on Fr. Joseph Lutz had travelled to England to make some preliminary travelling arrangement for the team (Ozigbo 1988).

### **3.2.3 The Arrival and Founding of Roman the Catholic Church in Igboland**

The ground was prepared, the farmers were ready, the seeds were procured. What remained was the planting. And so on that fateful day 19th September 1885, a team of the

pioneer Roman Catholic Missionaries comprising of Fr. Joseph Lutz, Fr. Horne, Brothers Hermas and Jean Gotto left Paris with the specific objective of planting the seed of Roman Catholic faith on Igboland then referred to as the Lower Niger.

According to Metuh and Ejizu (1985) the party travelled through Liverpool England aboard a French ship but later transferred to another ship “Foulah” on October 10th 1885. By Monday October 26 1885 they landed in Sierra Leone where they spent eight days amidst the old acquaintances and friends of Fr. Lutz. He had earlier worked in Sierra Leone as a missionary for over ten years (Obi, 1985). They were well recovered by Rev. Father Blanchet the Apostolic Prefect of Serra Leone.

By Monday 2nd November 1885, they eventually boarded a boat for the Lower Niger. (Metuh and Ejizu (1985) puts the name of the boat as “Lagos.” By November 20th 1885, they finally arrived Akassa. Leaving Brother Hermas and Jean Gotto behind at Brass with their 70 luggages. It was decided that the two brothers should remain at Brass until a suitable site is found coupled with the fact that the boat was too small to accommodate the two brothers and their seventy luggages. Their journey took them first to Atani, then by-passing Abo, Ossomari and other riverine towns they arrived Onitsha. (Ozigbo 1988).

And so it was that on Saturday December 5 1885, after a journey of eighty seven days two month and seventeen days from Paris, Fr. Joseph Lutz, Fr. Horne, accompanied by Mr. Charles Townsend finally arrived Onitsha, disembarking at the Onitsha wharf. Thus they claim the credit of being the first Catholic missionaries to come to Onitsha and to settle in Igboland on the eastern side of the Niger. (Obi,1985). They wasted no time in establishing themselves and actualizing their mission. First thing however a suitable site must be chosen. Meanwhile all through the journey Mr. Townsend had acted as both their guide and

guarantor. They met a warm reception at both Atani and Onitsha (Ozigbo, 1988:44). His last act of kindness was to help them in obtaining an audience with the Obi of Onitsha. According to Metuh and Ejizu (1985).

Townsend offered to take them to see to see the king whom he must have been acquainted with. He indeed took them to see the king of Onitsha, Obi Anazonwu, who received them very well and promised to give them any piece of land of their choice. Some guides were to take them around the town the next day to make their choice. (p.12).

Over the years the question have always arisen. Why the choice of Onitsha? Why not any other place? Why not Igbebe or Lokoja as originally planned? Understandably so much controversies have shrouded this question. Yet the decision to settle at Onitsha had ultimately turned out to be providential.

It appears that Fr. Lutz and his team initially had the objective of going up the Niger, settling at the confluence town of Lokoja and from there operating down the River towards the Atlantic Coast. Both Bishop John Cross Anyogu (the first Igbo priest and Bishop east of the Niger) and Bishop Taylor (the Vicar Apostolic of Asaba) attests to that (Obi, 1985) Lutz himself appears to confirm this when he wrote:

We had the project of establishing a mission at Igbebe at the confluence of the on embarking on the river made us conclude that it is preferable to settle at Onitsha. The locality is the centre of a large population of pagans, where Mohamedanism has not yet penetrated. Communication with Europe is very easy, the climate appears to be healthier than in Igbebe, we have the protection of a king who is very sympathetic to



us and what is not to be neglected, we can procure food stuffs, there is public market every day on the bank of the Niger (Adigwe, 1966) (p.75).

Granted that there were other considerations even when the Lutz had the opportunity of explaining other possible areas for settlement having secured a passage in the National African Company's boat to travel to the upper parts of the Niger. Onitsha was finally chosen above all others. Consequently these following factors could be attributed in making Onitsha the seat of the Roman Catholic evangelization in Igboland by these pioneer missionaries.

1. The Townsend factor
2. The Geographical factor
3. The Mohemedan absence factor
4. The Communication and security factor
5. The Divine providence factor.

Meanwhile prior to that they spent the 6th of December 1885 on the boat where they were visited on the 9th of December by Rev. Fr. Dorman, (a Lyon Fathers S.M.A missionary) and a lay man Mr. Kinaham; who directed them to see Mr. Sarjent the Company's General Manager, with residence at Aboutchi (Obosi). Having attested that were ordinary missionaries with no political interest welcomed them and assured of every available assistance. This assistance came in form of a rest house where the company's official Mr. Cole had to vacate at the orders of Mr. Sarjent to make room for the missionaries (Ozigbo, 1988). Metuh and Ejizu (1985) describes this house as "a four bedroom house with a parlour for which the company had demanded a monthly rent of 30 pound sterling" (p. 15).

Having chosen Onitsha as their missionary base, the issue of a permanent site was next settled. Here a glaring example of cordiality and collaboration befitting Christian

missionaries in a mission land was clearly depicted. As the particular site chosen by Fr. Lutz and his team was already promised to Bishop Ajayi Crowther of the C.M.S. the Obi sought his consent to be able to give it out to the Catholic missionaries. Bishop Crowther was said to have warmly received Catholic missionaries and freely consented with the words “I acquired this piece of land for God’s cause, Take it” (Obi, 1985).

On the 6th of January 1886 the feast of Epiphany, an agreement on the land was signed between Obi of Onitsha and his Council of Chiefs, then the Catholic missionaries on the other side. Part of this agreement reads:

I, Obi, Anazonwu, king, and Chiefs of Onitsha, do of our own free will, grant unto the Roman Catholic missionaries of the Holy Ghost the ground chosen by them in perpetuity free from all tribute and dues (Obi, 1988).

The land in question was clearly demarcated to comprise and – 6 nautical feet, equivalent of 20 hectares. The signatories to the document on both parties included; the king (Obi of Onitsha) Chiefs Ofili, Adjo and Edjugh also Sam Edjugh (Ejoor) the kings interpreter and father Lutz (superior) and Father Horne apostolic missionaries).

On their own part, having been assured of full freedom and right in practicing the Catholic religion on the land, the Catholic missionaries undertook to provide for the children of the community, free education where they would be taught Catholic doctrine alongside such secular subjects as English, Arithmetic, Reading and Writing.

The coast was now clear for Igbo Roman Catholicism to kick off in full swing and kick off, it did though not without initial debilitating problems.

#### **3.2.4 The Earliest Moment of Igbo Roman Catholicism**

Having acquired the land for a permanent site, plans were set in motion to begin the construction of a mission house. However, then a tragedy occurred, that apparently shook the optimism of these pioneer missionaries. By the 29th of December 1885, Fr. Lutz had returned from his long journey to 'Brass where he had gone before Christmas to bring Brothers Hermas and Jean-Gotto as well as their 70 luggages. From the 29th of December 1885 all the four missionaries were now reunited living under the same roof in the Royal Niger Company house provided by Mr. Sarjent. However being their first time to Africa and to West Africa the missionaries, apart from Fr. Lutz were yet to acclimatize to the West African climate. From the 6th of January Fr. Horne had been sick, suffering from drowsiness and inflammation (swelling) of the feet Brothers Hermas and Jean-Gotto on their own were not faring any better. However the case of Brother Jean-Gotto appeared far more worse. It took the medical expertise of Fr. Lutz to realize that he was virtually in *danger of death (periculo mortis)* from an advanced attack of malaria. Hurriedly, he prepared him for the unforeseen. He celebrated the Holy Mass at his bedside and got him to make his perpetual religious commitment. He then administered the viaticum (anointing of the sick in preparation for death) on him. He then left his fate in the hands of divine providence. By Sunday 17th January, there were signs of recovery, followed by a relapse. By 3:30am January 18 1886, Brother Jean Gotto died quietly. He was aged 28 years and had spent only 20 days in the Igboland mission for which he had sacrificed so much.

That same evening Brother Jean Gotto was laid to rest in the presence of some local people who had never previously witnessed the death of a white man. There were several white people who came from Obosi to witness the burial. Incidentally, of all the other white pioneer missionaries team Fr. Joseph Lutz was the only one physically fit enough to

participate in the burial. The others were terribly down. The death of Brother Jean Gotto marked the first time a white Catholic missionary would die and be buried on Igbo soil. But then did he die in vain? Only time would tell whether the reality of Tertullian's statement many centuries before "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity" could effectively apply to the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland.

After the shock of Brother Jean Gotto's death had gradually subsided, the foundations of the first Roman Catholic mission house in Igboland was laid. Excavations were begun by twenty workmen under the supervision of Fr. Joseph Lutz. Despite so many challenges the mission house was eventually completed and by April 7th 1886, the pioneer missionaries moved into the new house, ever grateful to Mr. Sarjent of the Royal Niger Company for harbouring them all these while.

By April 25, 1886 the mission house was officially opened. It measured 19 meters long and 7 meters wide. It was rather an irony of blessing as a very heavy downpour prevented many people from coming to witness the historic occasion. The stage appeared finally set, on a solid foundation for the advancement of the Roman Catholic Church on Igboland. By June 20 1886 during the feast of the Holy Trinity, the Patron Saint of the Mission the Catechumens have already learnt and sang hymns in Latin, English and Igbo language. By August 29 1886 the first solemn Adult Baptism was conducted to be soon followed by another one on October 31st 1886 (Obi, 1985).

As early as June 1888 Fr. Lutz had to invite Fr. Poirier the SMA superior at Lokoja to come down to Onitsha to administer the sacrament of confirmation (Ozigbo 1988). On the 7th of April 1889 under the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII the Lower Niger was formally erected as the Apostolic Prefecture of the Lower Niger, with Onitsha as its headquarters.

With Father Joseph Lutz becoming the first Apostolic Prefect, at the young age of 36 (Obi, 1985). He was subsequently succeeded by other Apostolic Prefects, Joseph Mary Reling, 1896 – 1898, Rene Aime Pawlas 1890 – 1900, Leon Alexander Lejeune 1900 – 1905, Joseph Ignatius Shanahan 1905 – 1920, then Vicar Apostolic Bishop Shanahan 1920 – 31.

The advent of Catholicism to Igboland indeed qualifies to be classified an epic story but this epic story had many peculiar actors and players behind the scene from every indication. Without these actors and players the story of Igbo Roman Catholicism would have been a totally different story. These were the Igbo Agents of the Catholic mission. Who actually were they?

According to Baur (1994) the history of the first fifteen hundred years of Christianity in Africa is confined to the countries north of the Sahara, and the African Horn: North Africa, Egypt Nubia, Ethiopia this area was then collectively known as Roman Africa. During the first six centuries Egypt and West Africa formed one great communion with the other countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea; a commonwealth of nations bound together by the Roman Empire and still more deeply by the Christian faith. These two regions commanded a very leading position in the universal church for quite a long time. Egypt in the Greek speaking eastern part and North Africa in the Latin speaking western part.

This era is often designated as the first phase of Christianity in Africa. It was the era of Saint Athanasius, Saint Cyril, Tertullian, Saint Cyprian, Saint Perpetua, Felicitas, Saint Thecla, African Popes like Victor I, Melchiades and Gelasius I and above all of Saint Augustine, one of the most brilliant lights of the Christian World. Equally there were the founders of Monasticism, St. Paul the Hermit, St. Anthony of Egypt and Pachomius.

The second phase of Christianity in Africa could be said to have begun in the year 1491 with the arrival of Portuguese Missionaries to Zaire and reached its zenith with the consecration by Pope Leo in 1518 of Don Henrique, the son of Don Alfonso I king of Congo as Titular Bishop of Utica. Don Henrique thus became the first native Bishop of Black Africa.

However this second phase of Christianity in Africa, gradually petered out over the decades and the centuries leaving behind little or no trace. Then came the third phase of Africa's systematic evangelization which began in earnest in the nineteenth century.

About the 19th century inception of Christianity in West Africa Baur declares. In the 1880s Catholic missionaries followed the Niger River into the interior. Before then since 1859 Bishop Crowther with his Sierra Leoneans had already begun work. The river Niger constituted the border between the territories of the SMA (Society Mission for Africa) and the Holy Ghost fathers. Though both societies began work along the rivers: the SMA concentrated their work on the west bank expanding from Lokoja to Benin and to northern Nigeria. Conversely, the Holy Ghost Fathers worked on the east bank, covering the area from Onitsha to Calabar and the Bank. For the SMA the Prefecture of Upper Niger was erected, (1884) in land later called the western Nigeria, and for the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Prefecture Lower Niger (1889). The latter would later become the V.A. Southern Nigeria, practically identical with the Eastern Region.

It is against this backdrop that the advent of Christianity to Igboland could be situated. On September 19 1885, a team of missionaries left Paris with a specific objective – to plant the Roman Catholic Faith in South-Eastern Nigeria then referred to as the Lower Niger. The

team was composed of Rev. Fr. Joseph Lutz, Rev. Fr. Horne and Rev. Brothers Hermas and Jean – Gotto. They travelled through England, landing in Sierra Leone on Monday October 26 (1885). On Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1885, they left for the Lower Niger arriving Akassa on November 20<sup>th</sup>. From there, they proceeded to Brass and finally to Onitsha. On Saturday December 5 1885 fathers Lutz and Horne arrived at Onitsha wharf. Thus they became the first Catholic missionary team to come to Onitsha and to settle in Igboland on the eastern side of the Niger. Subsequently they were warmly welcomed by the Obi of Onitsha. Obi Anazonwu who not only granted them a piece of land to settle on, but gladly gave out his two children to be educated by them. Incidentally this and other circumstances encouraged the missionaries to make a major policy shift in their missionary plans. They had originally intended to proceed to Lokoja, settle down there and from there embark on evangelization from the Lower Niger towards the Atlantic. Now however they decided rather to settle at Onitsha and from there to evangelize the vast Igbo hinterland. It was a decision that turned out to be highly providential. Their missionary endeavours bore so much fruit right from the era of Fr. Joseph Lutz, (who initiated the idea of the Christian village) who laid the initial foundation, to Fr. JosephMary Riley, Fr. Rene Aime Paulas, Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune and Fr. Joseph Shanahan, the last two being pioneers of the school – evangelization approach.

### **3.3 The Agents of Expansion of Catholicism in Igboland**

Just as the colonial governments and business firms could hardly have functioned without the aid of clerks, foremen, artisans, telegraphic, interpreters, printers and many other lower or middle cadre workers during the colonial era, so also the work of missionaries would have been well nigh impossible without the help they got from

hundreds of Catechists or teacher–Catechists in various mission stations and towns since the early missionary activities in Nigeria (Nwosu, 1990:26).

This statement by Nwosu summarizes the question of the Igbo agents of the Catholic mission, much more so in the later years. But then there was the very dire challenge of bridging the gap of the absence of these Igbo agents of the Catholic mission in the very nascent moments of Igbo Catholicism. How did Fr. Lutz and his team of pioneers confront this challenge.

It is on record that the first Christian missionaries to set foot on Igboland and to begin evangelization on Eastern Nigeria, were the Presbyterians led by Hope Waddell and others who came with him. In 1846 they sowed the first seed of Christian faith at Calabar. The honour of planting the first seed of Christianity on Igboland belongs to the C.M.S. commanded by Dr. Baikie, the expedition was led by Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Rev. John Taylor (an ex Igbo slave) and others. On July 26th 1857, they set feet on Igbo soil to begin their mission (Metuh & Ejizu, 1985).

According to Nwosu (1982) the Roman Catholic Church were late comers” to the evangelization field of Igboland. By the time Fr. Joseph Lutz and his team arrived Onitsha Wharf on Saturday 5th December 1885, the Protestant Mission of the Anglican Communion had fully and firmly taken root. They had 28 years head on. Already as of the time Fr. Joseph Lutz and his team left Paris on the 19th September 1885, the Anglican Church had fully occupied Onitsha town and the nearby towns of Asaba (1874), Alongo (1877), Aboh (1883), Obosi (1883). They have already made many converts and established Boys and Girls schools.



Unlike their Anglican brothers, Lutz and his team were not privileged to have co-workers already acquainted with the Igbo language like Igbo – ex slaves. Also at the signing of the treaty with Obi Anazonwu at Onitsha on 6th January 1886, Sam Edjaw the king’s interpreter had played a prominent part. No doubt Fr. Lutz and his team already felt the necessity of the availability of Igbo agents of the Catholic mission, since after all the essence of speech is communication.

From every indication, there appeared to be limited options; these Igbo agents of the Catholic mission have to be acquired or trained. Both options implied some heavy demands in terms of finance and time. At this point in time, there were serious financial challenges occasioned by the paucity of funds to sponsor the Lower Niger mission from both the Propaganda Fide and the Holy Ghost Mother House in Paris. Yet contact had to be made on the mission field. The various apostolates of the mission must kick off in earnest: viz

1. Starting orphanages to house the poor people and the ransomed slaves
2. Founding of schools where both the freeborn and ex-slaves could be commonly nurtured in the Catholic faith and western education.
3. Engaging in charitable works like ransoming of slaves, medical apostolate, housing the rejects of the society (Metuh & Ejizu, 1985). Perhaps it was partly to meet up with this necessity of local personnel that Fr. Lutz and his team endeavoured to start off the school apostolate early as possible.

Accordingly, the first Catholic school east of the Niger started off in a one room class, with forty children twenty of whom were poor children ransomed from slavery and certain death. Thus as early as 7th April 1887 a year after the mission house was completed, the journal of the mission states “school as on any other day for the children. Of the staff there were only

three; while Fr. Lutz taught the children English and singing, Fr. Horne taught them Catechism, then Brother Hermas taught them Arithmetic and Writing. It was a rather slow and arduous beginning; yet Fr. Lutz and his team pushed on with dauntless determination. By 1888 Fr Lecuyer's arrival boosted the staff but he left again in 1889. A converted CMS teacher, Henry Venn, had to head the school till the arrival of Brother Doran in 1893. However, divine providence did come to their rescue just as usual. As noted:

“The mission showed lack of foresight in the staff development programme. The sole sources of recruitment was the white missionaries, or reconverted Protestant teachers and Catechists. Luckily for them and for the mission, the crisis which was rocking the CMS was a saving grace. Many of them did join the staff of the Catholic schools. (Metuh & Ejizu,1985)”. It is commendable that in the face of so many challenges, diversity of apostolate and paucity of fund Fr. Lutz and his pioneer team could still collectively achieve this much, in the school apostolate. However the golden era of school evangelization was yet to come during the Prefectship of Fr. Lejeune and Shanahan, spanning a period of 31 years 1900 – 1931 the specific period under contention in this study.

Over time a new concept would evolve, it was the concept of Teacher – Catechists: It was taken for granted that whoever has been appointed as a teacher has equally been appointed to combine it with the work of the catechist. This was confirmed by Mr. Sylvester Izualor from Igbariam who began work as Catechist – Teacher by the year 1937. According to him, in the past whoever was a teacher was also a Catechist. What the Fathers did was to mark a cross (+) beside the name of any teacher they made a Catechist during the deployment of teachers. The actual choice of the Catechist was theirs. They knew the

character and behaviour of every teacher, so once one was chosen, one became a Catechist. (Nwosu,1990).

“Even at that, one’s appointment has no assurance of permanency owing to a prevalence of some factors. This was especially applicable to the untrained Catechists. Their appointment were usually for the duration of a year though it was renewable depending on the circumstances. Michael Akaenyi one of teacher–Catechist stated that your appointment was renewed or terminated depending on whether your name appeared on the notice board (Nwosu 1990)”.

Catechist – teacher Mmadueke from Oraukwu who worked with Fr. Liddane the successor of Fr. Bubendorf at Adazi, for many years recounted how at the conclusion of the Catechist Annual Retreat Fr. Liddane would always shout out his familiar phrase.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, every untrained teacher...“Terminated”. They became so familiar with this saying that they would always respond as a body “Terminated” (Mmadueke 2018).

Gradually the Igbo agents of the Catholic mission from the earliest years would be clearly delineated into three prototypes depending on local factors, his location to Church and school, whether his school was assisted by government grant. These prototypes included:

1. The central Catechist, who usually resided at the parish centre, working personally and closely with the Parish Priest. Aside of the Parish Priest, he was next in rank in terms of power and influence. There were very few of these. One of such was Catechist Solomon Okai from Adazi.

2. The Vernacular teacher – Catechist, who usually stayed in a remote outpost. The school where he taught was neither approved, assisted by the government nor supervised by the government they were usually designated as ‘bush school’.
3. The ‘assisted’ teacher – Catechist, who was usually a staff of an assisted mission school, but also worked as a Catechist in a mission outpost near the central mission. These are usually the most highly qualified Catechist academically speaking.

How Fr. Lejeune and Shanahan were able to navigate these turbulent waters of these nascent years, to arrive at the threshold of the golden era of the school evangelization with an army of Catechist-teachers scattered over myriads of mission fields all over Igboland, indeed qualifies to be classified as an epic story. This is now examined in greater details.

### **3.4 Pioneer Catechists in Igboland and their Outstanding Contribution**

According to Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther as cited by Nwosu (1990):

Until the late 1870s there was only a single Training institution in all the five missions. It belonged to the church missionary society (CMS) and was established at Abeokuta in 1851. The other missions – the Catholic Societe des missions Africaines (SMA), the Methodists, the Prebyterians and the Baptists had none. It was only in 1885 that the Presbyterians established one on the east of the Niger. It was named after the Rev. Hope (p.28).

Although Fr. Lutz and his team of pioneers did pay much attention to education and the training of future educators, the Catechist-teachers, they appear to be heavily constrained by the diversity of a four – pronged apostolate. These pioneers also had to battle and subdue the innumerable challenges always associated with pioneers.

When Fr. Lejeune came on the scene, he appeared have fully appreciated the signs of the time with the effective colonial pacification and administration of the Igbo hinterland subsequent to the Great Onitsha hinterland patrol. Henceforth, an unlimited access has been assured and innumerable number of souls are there for the taking, in a virgin evangelization field. This informed his mission and his apparent “pro government stance” “to plant the Catholic faith everywhere the colonial government has pacified and established its administration. Thus he did not hesitate to assign Fr. Bubendorf as the Catholic Chaplain to the Arochukwu Expedition of 1902; at the British Colonial Government. Accordingly, he formed his strategy based on his own conviction as he stated in 1903 “education is our principal work and our hopes for the future are based on it” (Metuh & Ejizu, 1985:31). Next was the actualization of this strategy. He began adopting a somewhat “pragmatic” approach that seemed radical to in some people in certain quarters. He was convinced that for his education policy to work, a drastic radical approach must be implemented. This implies that the Trainer must first be trained, the formator formed and the Catechist be first Catechized. Thus he began the reorganization of the mission Catechists. He was not impressed with the demeanor of the Catechists, many whom were Protestant converts. These retained their previous prejudices against the Catholic Church. Given the fact that most of them were neither well trained or well educated, he was determined to replace them with better trained, Catechists. These Catechist he was intending to get through his proposed establishment of a High School “*Ecole Superior*’ from where these Catechists would be trained. It was also his intention to drastically reduce the very high cost of remunerating these Catechists, many of whom he saw as enlisting in the service only for pecuniary reasons. He went on to repost many of there to the far away mission stations, where their services were direly needed.

Expectedly this occasioned a some frictions leading to a revolt of the Catechists in some quarters. This would be examined later in greater details. In his 'grand' school apostolate, Fr. Lejeune had to build on the foundation inherited from Fr. Lutz and the other pioneers.

According to Obi (1985), some schools were already existing during the Fr. Lutz era. At the Onitsha Wharf a primary school was already built by 1893. Later in 1987 Fr. Bubendorf established an educational industrial school. However both of these schools had to be dismantled with the arrival to the scene of Fr. Lejeune who initiated the revolution of burnt brick and corrugated roof building. In the course of actualizing his new strategy, Fr. Lejeune initiated the translation of some major instructional books. He effected this by retraining one of the reconverted Protestant Catechists in the person of Ephraim Agha one of the most educated Catechists teachers. Agha accomplished the most famous accomplishment was his translation of the Penny Catechism into Igbo language. Fr. Lejeune preferred this to that of Fr. Ganot hence he requested the mother House to have it printed for use in the Prefecture. The end product was the famous Igbo Catechism/Kateckizim Nke Nzuko, that became so popular all over Igboland.

Already in these early years, literary education had gradually began to take root. Aside of educating the children in the 3 Rs together with singing they were trained to become self-reliant in the future through manual labour. Within two years into Lejeune's Prefectureship by 1902 the Catholic Onitsha School boasted of 300 day pupils and 90 boarders. The same Catechist Teacher Ephraim Agha coordinated with Father Cronenberger in administering the High School with a group of twenty children in attendance. (Obi,1985). Through the instrumentality of the education the Catechist Profession in Igboland witnessed some remarkable growth, despite the myriads of challenges. By 1900 a Catechist station was

opened at Oguta, followed by Obosi and Ndoni by 1901. By 1902 Ogidi, Oba, and Nkpo were all opened (Metuh and Ejizu 1985).

By 1890 Aguleri was made a Catechist station with a resident Catechist posted there. Subsequently it became the second residential station in the entire Lower Niger Prefecture when on 23rd October 1891 Fr. Pawlas arrived to live there as the parish priest with Fr. Reling as his assistant. By the 21st of March 1892 Nsugbe became a Catechist Station with a resident Catechist posted there. By the year 1894, Nsugbe became the third residential station when Fr. Johnmary Cadio arrived to take charge with Fr. Francis Xavier Lichtenberger as his assistant. This was followed up by Ossomari in 1898. Here the entire town for some irreconcilable differences had left the CMS and moved over as a body to the Catholic mission. They sorely needed a Catechist to direct them. It was in the same 1898 that Igbariam was opened as a substation to Aguleri under father Pawlas (Ozigbo, 1988). It must be noted these Catechist stations in all these places were both Church and schools managed by a resident Catechist. The priest usually visited periodically depending on the circumstances. This implied that the Catechist was fully responsible for on the spot management of the Catechist stations (Metuh & Ejjizu, 1985).

From every indication the school apostolate of the Fr. Lejeune's era and the development of the Catechist – Teacher that facilitated this apostolate was already on the great march to glory, when suddenly fate robbed the Catholic Church mission in Igboland the very architect of this apostolate Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune. In the year 1904 father Joseph Shanahan was busy in far away Dekina, endeavouring by all means to plant the seed of the Catholic faith there as directed by his superior Fr. Lejeune, only for the latter to appear suddenly at Dekina one evening without any prior information.

A shocker awaited Fr. Shanahan when Fr. Lejeune broke the heavy news to him; that he had been ordered back to France because he had developed cancer. Handing over everything to Fr. Shanahan, he obediently left for France... never to return or be seen alive again in the Catholic mission field of Igboland. Later that year, he died of cancer at Chevilly on 5th September 1905. It was on the shoulders of Fr. Joseph Shanahan then that divine providence, left the heavy mission of developing as well as perfecting the school evangelization and the development of its facilitators the Catechist Teacher, a mission his predecessor had initiated. To what extent then did he accomplish this task?

According to Metuh and Ejizu (1985) Lejeune was actually the architect of the famous school apostolate, so remarkably developed and perfected by Fr. Shanahan, though people have gradually come to erroneously conceive it as the brain child of Fr. Shanahan. Be that as it may, it appears that divine providence has specifically chosen Fr. Shanahan to nurture and complete to its fruition what his predecessor has begun. And so it was that by the year 1913 the first Teacher's Training college in the Prefecture was founded as St. Anthony's various Teacher's reasons have been tendered as to why the college was founded at that point in time.

By the year 1912 there was so much demand in the hinterland for more schools and hence more and more Catechist-teachers. The fathers who had hitherto undertaken the training of these Catechist Teachers by themselves were certainly overwhelmed by these demands. Equally to be considered was the system of inspection for the (assisted schools" introduced by Lugard in 1912 which was renamed and adopted for Nigeria in 1916 as the Education Code (Nwosu, 1990).



The new evangelization approach the village school method tasked the village Catechists teacher in terms of numericity and quality. As more and more schools were opened in the different villages, the presence and services of the Catechist teachers came to be more than ever needed. With the exit of Fr. Lejeune his successor and the fifth Prefect Apostolic of the Lower Niger to perfect, and utilize this new approach to evangelization Ozigbo (1985) observes:

The Onitsha mission was then 20 years old. It had not only gained valuable pioneering experience but had also had the benefit of Fr. Lejune's insights and initiatives. How Fr. Shanahan successfully and ably exploited and marshaled those assets largely constitute his epic story in Igboland. (p. 10).

It has been noted that between the years 1905 – 1919, village after village from different parts of Igboland besieged the various Catholic mission stations with petitions demanding for schools and teachers. Generally these villages welcomed the missionaries as well as the teachers and the schools they brought along with their religious dimensions. They were ever eager to work in partnership with the missions in catering for the various needs of the teachers whom they cherished as their own (Ozigbo, 1985).

At this point in time St. Anthony's Teachers Training College, headed by Father Thady O'Connor as the first Principal as conceived by Fr. Shanahan for two major roles.

1. To prepare the Catechist – Teachers well enough to pass creditably the Government Teacher's certificate examination known as Teachers Grade Three Examination Success here would place them in pole position to be teachers of the top classes in the mission schools assisted by the Government.

2. Secondly Fr. Shanahan intended the College to serve as a minor seminary where he hoped to train the future indigenous clergy.

Somehow these ideals were not fully realized for obvious reasons. The World War I which erupted in 1914 effectively starved it of the sorely needed personnel from Europe. Thus there were neither the prospects of continuity nor sustainability. It could not also fulfill the other role of being a nurturing ground for the indigenous clergy as a minor seminary. The first two prospective seminarians had to be sent abroad on special arrangement to undertake their studies. Thus St. Anthony Teacher's Training College despite all the wonderful prospects had to be shut down in the year 1918, the same year that the First World War ended.

But then in the rather mysterious ways of divine providence within its short lifespan of 1913 – 1918, barely five years; it had successfully trained and fully prepared such eminent Catechist – Teachers as Patrick Okolo, Paul Anekwe, Wiliam Onuchukwu, Joseph Modebe, John Ejoh, J.O. Matthew, R.R. Olisa, later king of Ossomala J.C. Bosah, J.A. Anazonwu among others (Nwosu, 1990).

These array of Catechist – Teachers would over time become the giant light of Roman Catholicism in Igboland. They served in various capacities, becoming role models to so many. They became the teachers of other teachers, working in so many mission fields all over Igboland and dedicatedly imparting their rare but much needed knowledge. Until ten years later in 1928 when St. Anthony Teachers Training College was reopened as St. Charles College Onitsha, these group of elite successfully lighted up the Roman Catholic mission field in Igboland training hundreds of Catechist – Teacher, who passionately looked up to them as their role models. Outside the white missionaries they could be called “the apostles of Igbo Roman Catholicism; what St. Peter and St. Paul did for the Jewish and Gentile

evangelization these group of rare men, did for the Catholic church in Igboland as prominent Igbo Catechist – teachers. Their influences continue to echo and reecho till date. Then again the development of the equally greatly enhanced by the Fathers through monthly meetings and the annual retreats. Here the pupil – teachers and the Catechist – Trainees gather at the central mission the parish centre from their myriads of mission fields.

The monthly meetings afforded them the opportunity to render accounts of their stewardship to the parish priest. Thereafter they would collect the necessary materials for effective management of the Churches and the schools as well as their monthly salaries. It was usually a weekend affair, but they departed by Saturday evenings to be able to organize the Sunday service for their local congregations by the next day. These meeting also afforded them the opportunity of presenting any pastoral problems encountered in the missions, getting the requisite instructions and learning from the experience of others.

The annual retreat were extensions of the monthly retreat. They were more elaborately organized with specific general time table and lasted for between three and eight days (Nwosu, 1990). At this juncture mention must be duly made of those pioneer Catechist – Teachers who held the fray, working in collaboration with the white missionaries in those nascent years to fan that tiny spark of the Roman Catholic faith Ignited by the white missionaries, into the mighty conflagration of later years and today against all odds.

It remains one of the ironies of history that the pioneer Catechist – teachers who “spent” their human and mental resources, working assiduously in collaboration with the white missionaries to plant and water the seed of Igbo Roman Catholicism, against all odds were never duly documented, or scantily documented in few cases. Sweet memories of their exploit have been buried glory with our aged, dead first and second generations of Roman

Catholic in Igboland. Whatever scanty information that survives appears to be lodged in the deepest recesses of the memories of a few aged and dying remnants of their generations. It behooves on the contemporary historians to sift out these fading memories and document them for posterity especially as it is believed in some quarters that documented facts no matter how imperfect are better than the sharpest memory. Enough of oral traditions in this contemporary era.

It must be recalled that many pioneer Catechist – teachers worked in the various Catechist stations some of which later became residential stations with the arrival of the reverend fathers. Many others also worked in various Catechist stations between the years 1885 – 1900 that spanned the Prefecture of Fr. Joseph Lutz and Fr. Leon Alexander Lejeune. Most of these have very scanty informations, if at all credited to their memory. We may therefore have to designate them as the ‘unknown Catechist – teachers’ in these studies.

Conversely there are a handful of these pioneer Catechists whose exploits still resounds so many decades after their demise. Some of these deserved to be designated “the prominent Catechists of Igbo Roman Catholicism. To avoid repetition and for want of space” a few of these pioneer Catechists are discussed here to represent the many “unknown Catechists” in the nascent period of Igbo Roman Catholicism. While others are discussed later made some prominent Igbo Catechists. These few pioneer catechists discussed here includes:

**Plate 1: Showing Catechist John Samuel Okolo Okosi.**



**Source:** Akosa C. (1987) *Heroes and Heroines on Onitsha*.

Born around 1850 A.D Obi Okosi was about seven years old when Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Rev. John Taylor and other members of their team landed at Onitsha Wharf to establish the Anglican Church on the Lower Niger in 1857. He readily joined them and was among the pioneer pupils of the CMS. On November 23rd November 1862, at the age of twelve over time he suffered some inner conflict and gradually relapsed into the Traditional religious practice. All entreaties and exhortations from both Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther and Rev. John Taylor the most prominent pioneer CMS leaders with whose names he was baptized fell on deaf ears. For the next twenty years he was a dedicated full and true African traditional practitioner. When Fr. Joseph Lutz and his team of Roman Catholic missionaries arrived Igboland; he saw another brand of Christianity he was especially impressed and attracted by their charity apostolate of Fr. Lutz and others; their dedication and sacrifices.

Gradually he made up his mind and fully embraced the Roman Catholic faith by the year 1890. Like St. Augustine of Hippo, he went far beyond being an ordinary converted Roman Catholic Christian; he went further to become a zealous companion of the Catholic missionaries, aided by his previous academic background. He later became a full true Catechist serving at Aguleri and Nsugbe.

By the year 1899, the Onitsha throne became vacant, with the demise of Obi Anazonwu. There ensued a three party contest for this throne with each candidate having supporters with vested interest in certain quarters. It could be recalled that a bloody civil war, preceded the election of Obi Diali with the death of Obi Akazua, his predecessor in 1873. Owing to the charged atmosphere, Mr. Horace Badwell the District Officer had to intervene. Before his presence at Asaba the Onitsha Chiefs conducted an election which saw Samuel Obi Okosi elected the new king of Onitsha on November 8 1900. It was the first time the election of an Onitsha obi would be directed and conducted under a British administration Ozigbo (1988). The election of Obi John Samuel Okolo Okosi and his long period of reign 1900 – 1931 was of the greatest blessing to the Roman Catholic Church. Ajie Ofili Ukpabi describes him as an exceptionally courageous man who single handedly brought an abrupt end to the practice of the killing of twins in Onitsha by virtue of the mandate given to him by the colonial authorities at the head of Customary Court of Onitsha in the year 1908. His record that his successor Obi Okosi II his son was the first twin who was not killed in the history of Onitsha town. His reign coincided exactly with Prefecture of Fr. Lejeune and Fr. (later Bishop) Shanahan. It was a period of consolidation, wherein so much development and great harvest occurred. It was an era that turned out to be an apostolate facilitated by the abundance of Catholic teachers.



**Plate 2: Showing Catechist Joseph Ogbuanyinya Idigo**



Source: Obi C.A. the Catholic Church of Onitsha (1985)

Another of the most notable pioneer Catechist – teacher was Igwe. Joseph Ogbuanyinya Idigo of Aguleri. Isichei (1976) describes him as a famous and well travelled as well as wealthy traditional priest (dibia) born in the early nineteenth century he was noted for his courage and popularity. He was said to have fought a duel with a famous Ifite Ogwari warrior whom he defeated but spared. He took the Ogbuefi title early in life and was thus previously endowed with all the qualities, that will win him the Igweship of Aguleri later in life. He was another Royalty whose conversion to Roman Catholicism at a considerably great socio-economic prize, triggered of a chain of the positive reactions for the young church. (p.89) succinctly described him thus:



He was the zealous Catholic whose exemplary life had brought many to the faith, not only his own people but also many neighbouring chiefs and people. Ever since his conversion he had been the leader of his people of Aguleri when it was time to assemble for Mass, catechetical instructions and other liturgical functions (Obi, 1985:89).

His glorious baptism on December 3rd 1891 opened a new chapter in the evangelization efforts of the white missionaries. It has been noted that with this baptism, their evangelization effort gathered a great momentum. It effectively corrected the wrong impression in the minds of thousands of many elites and traditional practitioners that the Church is not for king and royalties but for the dregs of the society, like slaves, sick abandoned and the like. Thus encouraged, so many came to embrace the new faith. That Aguleri became the second residential station after the Holy Trinity mission at Onitsha should be largely credited to the singular efforts of Igwe Joseph Ogbuanyinya Idigo, who consistently invited the white missionaries to Aguleri as early as 1888. It was this insistence that led to Fr. Lutz the Prefect Apostolic visiting Aguleri on May 27 1890 accompanied by John Samuel Okolo Okosi then aged about 31 years, the future resident Catechist – teacher at Aguleri and Nsugbe and the future Obi of Onitsha.

It has to be noted in favour of Igwe Joseph Idigo that despite all his sacrifices prior to his baptism he went even further. He abandoned the comforts of the palace and went to live with the other Christians (most of them redeemed slaves and other rejects of the society) in the newly constituted Christian village. There he humbly disposed himself, to instruct them as a Catechist. He was greatly further endeared to his people by not hesitating to suffer the

shame of four years imprisonment at Asaba instead of abandoning his people in the aftermath the Royal Niger Company invasion of Aguleri in 1892.

It was rather coincidental that this remarkable personality died the same year that the former Catechist – teacher of Aguleri John Samuel Okolo Okosi was made the Obi of Onitsha, the year 1900.

### **3. Ephraim Agha**

Catechist Ephraim Agha occupies a yet glowing niche in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland. He was a royalty, a prince and heir to the throne of Onitsha. He was originally an Anglican and rose to prominence as a deacon in the Anglican Church. It must be recalled that in the aftermath of the baptism of Igwe Joseph Ogbuanyinya Idigo, a good number of royalties embraced the Roman Catholic faith, abandoning the practice of the African traditional religion. Catechist teacher Agha who hails from Onitsha, just like Obi John Samuel Okolo Okosi was already a Christian of high repute. The question then was why would he abandon the Anglican faith?

Obi (1985) opines that Catechist Agha left the Anglican Church over a series of futile arguments and debates with pastors devolving around the concept of the Eucharist; as contained in chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel 'on the bread of life. He could not find any satisfactory interpretation for its meaning and interpretation. Thereafter he opted for the Roman Catholic Church, where he believed he could get a clearer meaning.

Incidentally his coming into the Catholic Church coincided with the very early years of Fr. Lejeunes Prefecture as well as the enthronement of Obi John Samuel Okolo Okosi. Fr. Lejeune never wasted any time in detecting the great potentials in this "well educated"

young man hence he brought him close and engaged him as a Catechist – teacher apostolate. Despite the ill feelings generated by the Catechist revolt of 1903, Fr. Lejeune still appreciated the qualities of the Catechist-teacher of this ex Anglican deacon, hence he promoted him to the Chief Catechist and teacher of the Holy trinity mission Onitsha. It was under this capacity that he commissioned him in 1903 to translate into the Igbo language the Westminster penny Catechism. Ozigbo (1985). This he creditably completed and with few modifications was published in 1903. It achieved an instant acceptance popularity and hence he sought permission from the Mother House that this Katechism be printed for a common use in the prefecture. Fr. Lejeune preferred his to an earlier translation, done by Fr. Ganot. Subsequently Catechism was printed for official use in the Prefecture.

According to Ozigbo (1988) it was named ‘Katekism nk’ Okwukwe Nzuko Katolik N’asusu Igbo. It was printed in Strasbourg, Alsace in the year 1903. Subsequently it’s use was made mandatory for the entire Prefecture and all the missions thereof. Under Fr. Charles Vogler, it was produced for all the Catechist – teachers in the Prefecture in the Onitsha dialect. Partly the Catechism was aimed to play the apologetic role of answering major CMS criticism of the time. Catechist Ephraim Agha, contributed so much to this translation.

One could rightly say that by the virtue of his role in translating this Catechism into Igbo language, Catechist – teachers Ephraim Agha really paid his dues and subtly lighted up albeit slowly that sparked the nascent Igbo Roma Catholicism into a conflagration that rages on even till today. He practically set the stage for inculturating the crux of the Roman Catholic faith into Igbo language and culture. This singular achievement could be said to have done for the Igbo Roman Catholic Church what the inculturation into Coptic language

has done for the Egyptian Coptic Christian who continue to retain and treasure their Christian faith after so many centuries of persecution from the Arab Muslims.

This Catechism eventually became practically an Igbo Catholic Bible for a very long time for many of the Igbo Roman Catholic Christians. By 1908, owing to its popularity, it was further translated into the Efik language. By the year 1923 an Igbo prayer Hymn Book was published by F. Treich to supplement this Igbo Catechism. In retrospect this Igbo Catechism remained so popular for decades until the 1980s when for greater ecumenical reasons certain modifications were gradually introduced Ozigbo (1988). To thank this Catechist Ephraim Agha and to other eminent catechist teachers. The Igbo Roman Catholic Church remains immeasurably indebted.

### **3.5 The Socio-Economic Condition of Catechists in Igboland**

Right from the very onset, the socio-economic condition of the Catechist had attracted varied degrees of attention from diverse quarters. There had been innumerable contentions on how to reposition or better the lot of the Catechist – teacher socio-economically, particularly the socio-economic conditions of the first generations of the Catechist who toiled in various mission fields all over Igboland between 1888 to 1931 which corresponds to the Prefectureship of Fr. Lejeune and his successor Fr. Shanahan (later bishop Shanahan) This was the golden age of the school evangelization wherein the army of Catechist held sway, laboring in collaboration with the white missionaries albeit behind the scene.

‘Socio-economic’ conditions would have to encompass such concepts as occupation or job meriting remuneration as determined by certain factors. This would also include

wealth or even the residential area of individual. Some people like Goldthorpe (1975) may also include such qualities as power and prestige as part of those factors that determine a person's socio-economic level.

It is a truism that a labourer deserved his wages. If this is true with every other worker it should be even more so for the Catechist – teachers of the first few decades of Roman Catholic in Igboland, considering the amount of human and material resource they expended for the success of Roman Catholicism in Igboland.

As observed by Ozigbo (1988):

The Catechist teacher was the “priest” in his station. It was he and his pupils and converts who fought the denominational skirmishes and campaigned for more converts. They took great interest in their station and substantially financed it. The experienced missionary became more of an administrator and left the work of missionary preaching and instruction to the Catechist – teacher and the school children (p. 278).

These Catechist – teachers were so “dedicated” to their work, standing for the white missionaries and the application of his dictates that they occasionally incurred the wrath of the people. They were not particularly putting, in all these effort because they were paid so handsomely. In fact the socio-economic conditions of this Catechist -teachers left much to be desired. As already noted, one's monthly remuneration practically determined the designation and role of the Catechists – teacher, as the central Catechist – teacher in the government assisted schools and the Bush – school.

## **Categories of the Catechist –Teachers**

### **1. The Central Catechist**

Usually the Catechist – teacher in the Central Station otherwise known as the Central Catechists – teacher is the most highly paid. They were lived in the mission house, working hand in hand with the parish priest. They did not follow the white missionaries, to embark on the weekly bush trek to the myriads of catechist stations. He remained at the centre, coordinating things at the direction of the white missionary. His salary was not only higher than others but he was assured of his accommodation often with his family, and the permanency of his job. Catechist teachers like Ephraim Agha of the Holy Trinity mission and Solomon Okai at Adazi fall under this Category. According to Ozigbo (1985) as of 1901, Catechist Ephraim Agha was the highest paid Catechist – Teacher in Onitsha (and of course the entire prefecture). Central Catechist – Teachers was very few in those days.

**2. The Assisted Teacher –Catechist.** These second Cadre of Catechist – Teacher were the ‘assisted school teacher – Catechist. Usually more qualified than the other two he works on the staff of the government assisted school, while at the same time working in a nearby mission outpost. The remuneration of this cadre of Catechist – Teachers is steady and higher. His job and accommodation more or less assured because the quality is there.

### **3. The Bush School Teacher- Catechist**

This was the third cadre of Catechist – Teacher. He was variously known as the Vernacular Teacher – Catechist or the Bush-School Teacher – Catechist. This cadre accounted for the greatest number of the Catechist – teachers. Their quality is more or less determined by their academic qualification. Usually they never got up to the Standard Six class. The schools where these cadres taught, were neither approved or supervised by the government. They usually did not receive any assistance from the government by way of grants.

The ultimate outcome of this whole scenario is that the welfare package of this cadre of Catechist happened to be very poor. They were neither assured of regular salary nor permanency of appointment (Nwosu 1990). Yet the contributions of these Catechist-teachers to the nascent Igbo Church remain immeasurable. Usually they worked far away from their own home town, hence they have to cater for their own accommodation and feeding in their various remote outposts. Health and mobility assistance were virtually out of question for them. One of such Catechist – Teachers, was Joseph Mmadueke (2018) who worked with Fr. Liddane (the successor of Fr Bubendorf) at Adazi recalled how his monthly salary—15 Shillings minus 3 pence was so inadequate that he concluded plans to retire just after a few years. He stated that whatever payment he received was for the teaching job not for any Catechist job. It was taken for granted that once one has been appointed as a teacher he was automatically appointed a Catechist and must combine those jobs together. Nothing extra was paid. For a time he was trekking from Oraukwu his home town to Adazi for work on a daily basis, until Fr. Liddane created an accommodation for him at the Adazi mission house. An examination of the life of a former bush-school teacher – Catechist. Catechist – Teacher Sylvester Izualor would shed more light on the socio-economic condition of the Catechist – Teacher in Igboland in that nascent period. Born in 1917 at Igbariam, Sylvester worked briefly at Ogoja under Fr. T.J. Roynane. Returning after three months owing to difficult conditions, he got another work at Eziagulu Otu, under Aguleri parish, where he worked assiduously, raising the number of pupils from sixteen to thirty and forming the first local church committee. He carefully picked some pioneer converts for this purpose. All these while Sylvester was simply addressed as ‘teacher’ and never as Catechist. His salary was a mere 12 shillings and six pence. He complained bitterly that his salary was lower than the

other Catechists working at Aguleri centre who received up fifteen shillings. Despite Fr. Obennyer's attempt to correct this imbalance; Sylvester's fortune remained unchanged; rather he was often paid after a long period of bargaining with the elders of the town and the local church authorities. The pupils only paid their tuition after much prodding. Eventually Sylvester had to resign, worked briefly at Emekuku where the salary was okay but other conditions unacceptable.

He later worked at Umuerum and then back to Aguleri, where he was paid one pound and five shillings. According to Nwosu (1990) the case of Sylvester Izualor was typical of many of the so called the Bush-school teacher – Catechist. There was a great diversity between the socio-economic condition of the central Catechist and the Bush-School Teacher Catechist:

Delay in the payment of a teacher's salary often forced the teacher to live on loans. He would borrow money from generous persons in the local community. Here the case of a teacher Dominic Ezegbe may be cited. Dominic was a teacher at Ifite – Ogwaori in Aguleri parish. On one occasion he was owed for eight months. He lived on money borrowed from friends. When finally he got his salary, he was said to have been left with only five shillings after repaying his creditors (Nwosu, 1990:43).

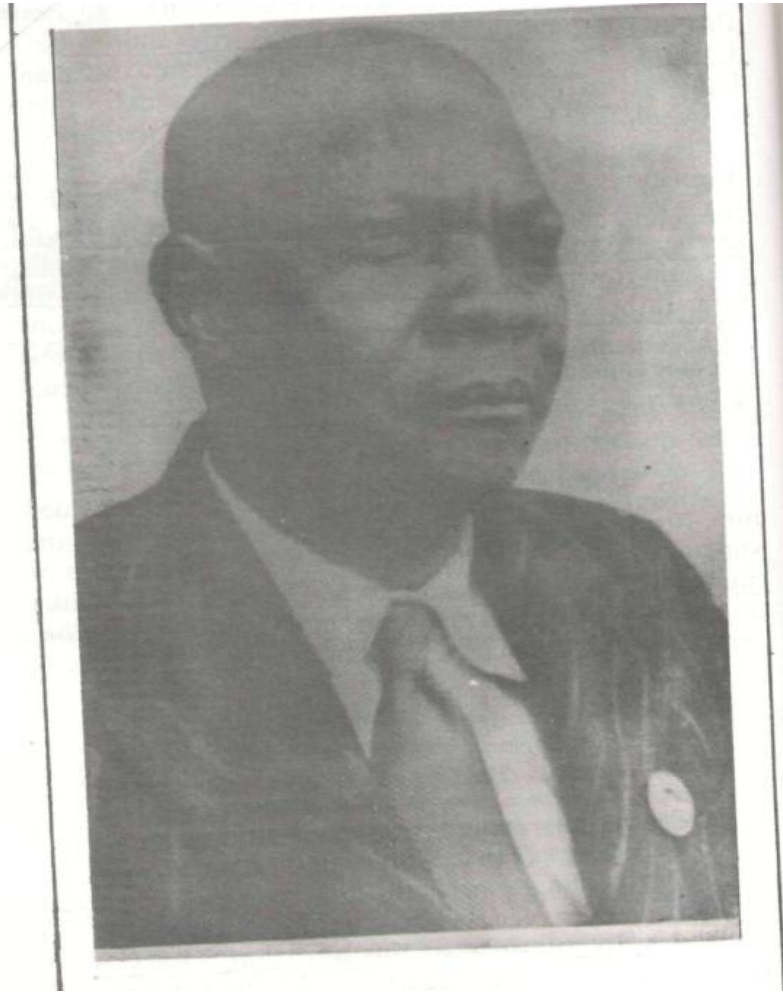
It is pertinent to note here that often, these Catechist were majorly bachelors, and may have a lot of dependants. He yet to had sort out his accommodation feeding, mobility and healthcare issues. In spite of his socio-economic situation the Bush school Teacher – Catechist who formed the bulk of the Catechist – teachers did not hesitate to make his immeasurable contribution to the nascent Igbo Roman Catholicism.



### **3.6 Some Prominent Igbo Catechists**

At this juncture in this study, mention must be made of some prominent Catechist-teachers who watered the soil of Igbo Roman Catholicism with sweat from the wrinkled brows. They held back nothing. Some of these came from the African Traditional Religious background. Providence afforded them the chance of directly encountering the white missionaries or indirectly with those who directly encountered the pioneer white missionaries. What so much distinguished them, was that they heard and were convinced. They believed like Mary and with utmost fidelity, they remained steadfast till the end. They had their challenges and shortcomings. Some of them encountered very stiff opposition from their immediate families and relatives until such a time the light in them shone out for the world to see. The light of faith in many an Igbo man's soul was lighted from theirs, like a candle to another candle. Formally trained or untrained, they remained steadfast to the end. They gave their all, without holding back anything. The light of Igbo Roman Catholicism blazed into a raging conflagration and is still blazing till date due to their collective efforts. A few of these eminent personalities are now briefly discuss.

**Plate 3: Showing Catechist Hon Patrick Herbert Okolo M.B.E. MHR (1896 – 1959)**



Source: C.A. Obi (1985) Eminent Missionaries.

He was a native of Onitsha. He began his career as a pupil teacher and was one of the pioneer students of St. Anthony's Teacher Training College (TTC), Igbariam. He directly interacted with the pioneer missionaries and gained so much knowledge from them. He was privileged to study abroad (London) on scholarship and was so adept in Latin and English that he was nick named "English Made Easy".

He traversed the length and breadth of Igboland in his teaching career as Headmaster of various mission schools. He served as Headmaster both at Holy Trinity and St. Mary's

Onitsha, later appointed Senior Tutor of St. Charles Teachers Training College. A renowned educationist, he wrote some popular books like *Onitsha Ebo Itenani*. He worked as the Secretary of Onitsha Town Native Authority. He was appointed the Education Secretary (E.S.) and Supervisor of Old Onitsha Archdiocese. In 1954, he served as member of the Federal House of Representative for Onitsha. He was a recipient of many honours including Member of the British Empire (M.R.E.), Papal Honour “*pro Ecclesia et Pontifica* (for the Church and for the Pope)” among others. He died on 26th January 1959 (Akosa, 1987).

### **3. Catechist Joseph Modebe**

He was a native of Onitsha of the renowned Modebe family, which had produced so many great personalities, including the first professor from Onitsha town – Professor Anthony Modebe. He interacted directly with the pioneer missionaries and majorly worked, married and settled at Ihiala. He was the Catechist-teacher stationed at the Ihiala mission when the parish centre was moved from Ozubulu to Ihiala in 1927. For this the Ozubulu people have always accused him of being responsible for this relocation. (Nwosu, 1990).

In his home town, Onitsha, he played the crucial role of helping to secure the plot of land along Modebe street, where the Sacred Heart Parish Odoakpu is located till date since its creation in 1952 with Rev. Fr. Stephen Cloonan C.S.S.P. as the pioneer parish priest. This parish would give birth to the largest number of schools in Onitsha. It was the birth place of the Catholic Youth Movement C.Y.M. through Fr. T. O’Riordan and Mr. G. Eze. Later in 1975, it was the birth place of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement C.C.R.M. in Onitsha Archdiocese under the tutelage of Msgr Matthew Obiukwu (Nwosu, 1985).

### **3. Catechist Paul Obinna Anekwe (1904 – 1956)**

Born in 1904 at Ozubulu, he became exceptional early in life so much so that as a ‘small’ pupil teacher he had to stand on a stool to interpret the white father’s homily for the congregation during masses. He was one of the pioneer students of St. Anthony’s Teachers Training College (T.T.C.) Igbariam in 1913. He would go on to impart his knowledge and experiences in different places like Eke (where he interacted beneficially with Igwe Onyeama), Port Harcourt and other places. He was a popular Organist and Band leader at Port Harcourt. He served as the Choir Master during the 1954 Marian Congress as well as the interpreter for Archbishop Heerey. He was reputed to be so generous and impacted so positively on all those who encountered him. He was privileged to have tutored a first Republic Minister, Hon Mbazulike Amaechi. He was an accomplished educationist and a member of the Knight of the Order of St. Mulumba (K.S.M.). He was billed to travel to Overseas, for further studies, on scholarship before his rather untimely death on 24th May 1956. (Obi, 1985).

### **4. Sir, William Nwile Onuchukwu, KSM, KSS, (1895 – 1976)**

Born at Oraifite in 1895, he came in contact with Fr. Duhaze of the Ozubulu mission very early in life. His father, Onuchukwu Ezeorimili had earlier hosted Fr. Duhaze in 1906 enroute Ozubulu for his founding of the Ozubulu mission. Nwile was thus privileged to move with him to Ozubulu from 1907 – 1911. He later served as a Mission boy to Fr. Shanahan. He was one of the pioneers of the Igbariam Teachers Training College (TTC). Subsequently, his teaching career which spanned from 1919 to 1964 would see him traversing such towns as Ihalumona, Imezi Owa, Eke, Emene, Adazi, Nimo, Onitsha and other places.

By 1956, he was the Acting Education Secretary and he received the Papal honor of the order of Knights of St. Sylvester (K.S.S), one of the first person to be so honoured in this clime. He was a renowned sportsman, who left many happy memories wherever he sojourned. He rested in the Lord on Sunday, July 25, 1976 (Obi, 1985).

**Plate 4: Showing: Catechist Solomon Okaih(1903 – 1949)**



**Source:** B.O. Egunilo A Short Life Story of the Late Mr. Solomon Okaih

A native of Adazi, he belonged to that second generation of Catechist-teachers who were opportune to have been trained by one of the Igbariam pioneers. He was not privileged to receive any formal training outside the fact that he became a pupil teacher in 1919 having passed his standard V.

However, he was opportuned to have passed under the tutelage of the Hon Patrick Okolo who specially prepared him for his standard VI examination. In 1924, he successfully passed his standard VI, beginning his teaching profession at Adazi, but now combining it with parish work. Subsequently, perceiving his unique dedication and interest as a Catechist, the parish priest, Fr. Albert Bubendorf, made him a full time Central Catechist of the parish. He stayed at the parish centre, coordinating affairs of the parish which had over 100 out stations and over 60 miles spread. Okai's service has been described as holistic as he served as Catechist and Interpreter to the parish priests and any other European visitors to the mission. He equally served as the Organist, Typist, Accountant, Bursar Adviser to the parish priest, Peace – Maker to contending Catholics, especially husbands and wives (Nwosu 1990). His wife, Madam Veronica Okaih, complimented his efforts, by training and preparing hundreds of young women for Catholic family life. One of his sons eventually became a Rev. Father. Catechist Mmadueke who worked with him at the mission, spoke glowingly about him and recommends that he deserves to be declared a saint (Mmadueke, 2018 personal interview). He died in the year 1949. According to Ebunilo B.O. as confirmed by Col. J. Okaih the son of the Catechist he passed away peacefully at Enugu by 7:30pm July 14<sup>th</sup> 1949.

**Plate 5: Showing Catechist Chief Louis Anagolum Okoye (1906 – 1962)**



**Source:** Nnewi Diocesans Catholic Association (2009).

Born at Ozubulu in 1906, he came into early contact with Fr. Mcnaman as an Altar Knight at 10. He became a pupil teacher on passing his standard VI. His teaching spree which lasted from 1923 to 1956, saw him working in such towns as Oraifite, Oloko, Abam, Umuahia Ewuru, Awo-Idemili, Ihioma, Ihiala (where he was given the LTC title (Licensed Teacher of Catechism by Fr. Whyte). Ukpok, Amiri and finally at Egbema Ozubulu, Here, he spear headed the creation of a new parish in 1956. He appeared yet to have so much to offer but he was suddenly called to the Lord on December 16th 1962, aged 56 (Okoye, 2009).

**Plate 6: Showing Catechist James Obi 1886 - 1968**

**Source:** Nnewi Diocesans Catholic Association (2009).

Born in the year 1886 in Umuohi Okija; he came from the background of African Traditional Religion. Undaunted by stiff opposition from family and relatives, he embraced Christianity early enough in life. He trekked for miles daily with others of his group to attend to be able school and Catechism at Eziora Ozubulu. Baptized in 1914, he resumed schooling at the newly established Umuohi Okija mission station. Then later at Ihiala, he brilliantly excelled and become a pupil teacher after his standard V. His was the first Catholic to be wedded in



Okija on 7th January, 1918. Fr. Bindell assisted at the marriage. Subsequently his teaching career will take him across sixteen different towns. He retired in the year 1934. Shortly after this, he was called to help out at the newly created Amaigbo parish for another three years. He served the church and town in various capacities. He were the first Councilor for Umuohi. He rested in the Lord on 19th June 1962 (NCA 2009).

**Plate 7: Showing Catechist John Obinuba Kamen 1900 – 1977**



**Source:** Nnewi Diocesans Catholic Association (2009).

Born at Ihembosi in the year 1900, he suffered the bereavement of his mother early in life. He was among the group of four boys sent to be educated by the white missionaries at Ozubulu by the Warrant Chief of Ihembosi, Ogbuehi Mmaduagwu in the year 1910. While

the three other boys absconded along the way, John struggled on till he completed his standard VI at the Holy Trinity Mission School Onitsha. 1911 saw him baptized by Fr. Bindel who prayed for him specially and prophesied a future greatness for him. Subsequently his teaching career which spanned for nearly forty years 1919 – 1958 saw him teaching in twenty different schools in different towns, within the former Onitsha, Owerri and Benin Provinces.

On his retirement, he was appointed a Customary Court Judge in 1954. He left behind a story of untainted integrity for the twenty seven years he served his people. He bowed of this life gracefully on April 2nd 1977.

**Plate 8: Showing Catechists Francis Onuaguobi Ifekwem (1907 – 1995)**



**Source:** Nnewi Diocesans Catholic Association (2009).

Born at Utuh in 1907, Francis was already initiated into the Udoh shrine worship from his earliest years. However, there occurred the unexpected death of the chief priest of the shrine. This was followed by the six months traditional burial rites of the erstwhile chief priest. He happened to be the uncle of Francis. Francis was therefore reluctantly convinced by his mother to embrace Christianity. Christianity was then referred to as *UkaOnyeocha* (white man religion). Thus Francis began his journey into Christianity. He gradually developed interest and within a period of three years was prepared for baptism. Following his baptism in 1926 by Fr. Beach, his confirmation followed in 1928 by Bishop Heerey. Subsequently he began the daily trek to *Ugwu-Orie Ozubulu* to attend school. He and others used to start trekking from as early as 5:00am every morning. He completed his studies to Standard VI by 1934. After this, he was personally posted to Utuh by Fr. John Cross Anyogu in 1936 to begin his teaching career. He traversed the eight villages of Utuh, to explain to them the necessity of education. Subsequently, he worked with Fr. Tansi at Umudioka and seven other towns in the Dunukofia zone as a Catechist teacher. His teaching career was cut short by the Nigerian Civil War. He came back home to Utuh, to continue helping out until his death in 1995.

**Plate 9: Showing Catechists Chief (Dr) Gillbert Ekwenugo Okeke**



Lady Lolo Esther Okeke (2019) Igwe Ozuome Compound Odoata Village Ihiala.

**Source:** Lolo Esther Okeke Igwe Ozuomee Compound Odoata Village Ihiala

Born in 1915 at Ihiala, he came from the Aro background. It was with reluctance that his father allowed him to enroll in the school, being his potential heir. Nevertheless, he was said to have completed his eleven year primary school programme under six years; with distinction. Thus he was recruited as a Catechist – teacher by the white missionaries who served a brief teaching stint which saw him teaching at Oguta, Awo-Omama and Port Harcourt. By 1938, he went for further studies at Etukokwu Commercial College Onitsha.

On his graduation he became the Principal of the Nigerian College of Commerce, Port Harcourt. After this he then left for Sapele. There he opened two schools in 1941, Abbot College, Sapele and Abbot Primary School in 1945. In 1955, he replicated these in his hometown Ihiala, founding Abbot Boys Secondary School Ihiala and in 1964 Abbot Girls Secondary School. He was variously the first Chairman of Onitsha Southern District Council, elected member Eastern House of Assembly, serving as the Hon. Minister of Transport, Education and Economic planning. He was instrumental to the founding of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (U.N.N.) and Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri (A.I.C.E.O) and has sat on the Board of several high institutions. In 1965, he was installed the Igwe Ozuomee of Ihiala and by 1971 established the popular Ihiala Starch Manufacturing Industry which afforded employment opportunities to so many. Many developmental projects have been accomplished in Ihiala under his auspices. He is a recipient of so many national and international academic and non-academic awards. His honours include an MBE, Papal Honours/Medale, Honourary President and Mayor of the City of Louisiana, United State of America (U.S.A). He is happily retired. According to his wife Lolo Esther Okeke, he departed this world on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997 at the right age of 82 year. He died a very fulfilled man leaving so much legacy in his trail.

### **11. Catechists (Mr). Timothy Onyeanus (1924 – 1997)**

Born at Adazi in 1924, he is a native of Aguluizigbo Timothy attended school in Aguluzigbo, Ekwulobia, Adazi and Igboukwu to complete his standard VI. He then began work as a Catechist – teacher in 1948 at St. Andrews Adazi under the Teacher Headmaster Adimachukwu. He worked briefly with Fr. Bodly at St. Patrick’s Awka and later at

Umuokpu Awka. In the course of the initiative with Catechist Onyema, he recalled how many Ozo titled men who had to abandon their Ozoship in the aftermath of their conversion. He recounts how in their days every Catechist-teacher lived in the school's Teacher's Quarters. According to him, no teacher lived in the town. They rather visited their home on Fridays and returned before Saturday evening.

He paid glowing tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Okai whom he encountered at Adazi. He vividly remembers how Madam Veronica Okai would prepare the prospective Christian mothers and how their prospective husbands usually brought firewood, water and food for the ladies.

He would subsequently spend the rest of his years as a Catechist-teacher at Our Lady of Fatima Parish Igboukwu, where he worked under many expatriate and indigenous Rev. Fathers until he retired in the year 2000.

He recalled that his basic salary was 15 shillings and that he trekked for 19 years before Mr. Mark Eze bought him a bicycle. One of Timothy's son was ordained a priest, ten years ago, Timothy is now gracefully retired at 94 years. (Onyeamusi, 2018).

**Plate 10: Showing Catechists Sir Joseph C. Mmadueke**



**Source:** Joseph J.C. Madueke (1920) till date. Amada Village Oraukwu.

Presently aged 98, Joseph was born at Oraukwu in 1920. Joseph began life as a prospective business man. However, his new found love for education while at Nsukka saw him starting school at Ibagwa at the old age of 18. For this, he really underwent great difficulties to complete his standard VI. He was greatly assisted by Igwe Abo, who wanted him to help in writing his letters and interpreting same for him.

Subsequently, he was assisted by Fr. Liddane, who employed him as a Catechist – teacher at Adazi. He was oported to have worked with Catechist–teacher Okai for so many

years. Fr. Liddane sent him for further studies at St. Anthony's College Agulu. On completion of his two years teaching course; he was posted as the Central Catechist – Teachers at St. Joseph mission Oraukwu. There he worked assiduously as a Catechist teacher for so many years, planting and nurturing the seed of Catholicism to maturity amongst his towns people. He was very instrumental to nurturing the priestly vocation of the young Albert Obiefuna, the future Bishop of Awka, and Archbishop of Onitsha Archdiocese.

He is a recipient of the Papal knighthood of St. Sylvester (K.S.S) and other honours. In the year 2000, he finally retired from active Catechist work after 55 years of dedicated service (Mmadueke 2018).

These afore mentioned Catechists, their exploits and successes in their various mission fields in Igboland, working in synergy with the expatriate white missionaries in Igboland sums up the vast contributions of the Igbo catechists and their indelible influence in Igbo Roman Catholicism. These are the few representing a vast number of unsung heroes the Igbo catechists who are yet to be fully appreciated for what they mean for Igbo Catholicism.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE INFLUENCE OF CATECHISTS ON IGBO CATHOLICISM

With the advent of Catholicism to Igboland the Catechists played the yeoman's role of being the direct collaborators of the white missionaries, the mediators between them and the local communities and virtually their interpreters. They facilitated the communication between the white missionaries and the people and, in the absence of the white missionaries they were virtually in charge. Consequently, their influence on the diverse aspects of Igbo Catholicism could never be over emphasized. These influences ranged from educational, religious, socio-economic, political and historical influences. These are now examined in greater details.

#### 4.1 The Influence of Catechists on Education in Igboland

Constantly aware of her mandate to teach all nations, the Catholic Church has through her long years of existence, tried to carry out the obligation in varied circumstances. She has therefore been a strong custodian of formal education. For more than two millennia has the Church never shirked or absconded from this mandate the church has always perceived herself as having a divine mission that compels her towards the duty and right of educating the people (Can 794) this divine mission is forever anchored on Christ's parting mandate to the church prior to his ascension where he commanded. "Go therefore and teach all nations (Mtt. 28:19). With the collapse of the Roman Empire the world entered a period known as the dark ages. During this time the church change into this mandate defending it all costs. Gradually, the monasteries became the centres of learning. Kings and royalties sent their wards to be educated in the monasteries.

It was therefore not surprising that at the height of his glory Charlemagne showed himself a great patron of education. He loved sound and literature and other available studies. He established the 'schola palatina' palace schools and attracted to his court famous names as Paul of Pisa the rhetorician. Paul Warnefred the Lombard, Historian Alauin the Latin scholar from Spain, Theodulf the part of Bavaria and so many others Laux (1930) Charlemagne endeavoured to give all his subject opportunity to acquire education Laux 1930 noted.

In order to carry out his plan of giving all his subjects an opportunity to obtain education, Charlemagne established three kinds of schools: the village schools where the parish priest was in charge for the most elementary studies: schools of singing and church music, for clerics. Monastic and Cathedral schools in which the several Liberal Arts – grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, as well as theology were taught (Laux 1930:258). It was this arrangement that eventually developed beyond the confines of the monasteries and Cathedral schools, and gave rise to the universities as we know them today. Between the twelfth and thirteen century, the Cathedral schools developed into universities as we know them today, with the traditional faculties of Arts, Theology, Law and Medicine (Okeke, 2014:27).

According to Schreck (1987) the city of Paris holds the record of being where the first universities were founded. University of Bologna (Law) Oxford (1200) Cambridge (1200) Naples (1224) Salamanca (1220) and then others followed (p. 61) it is on record that these centres were originally known as Studium Generale. Their legal aspect became reinforced by 1200. It was the year that the valid, authority to teach (*ius ubique docendi*) the right to grant thus authority was strictly reserved to the Pope. Thus Vignaux could declare "the Mediaval

University, like the priesthood and the Empire was considered an organ of Christendom (Okeke, 2014).

It is against this backdrop that the influence of Catechists on education in Igboland could be adequately considered. In laying so much emphasis on education, Fr. Lejeune and Fr. Shanahan working in collaboration with their army of Catechist – Teachers were not doing anything so strange. They were towing the line the Catholic Church has towed over the centuries for the Church have always believed in Epictetus dictum “only the educated are free” (Okeke 2014:30).

It has been observed about Father Lejeune the fourth prefect Apostolic and his attitude towards education:

Perceiving the evangelistic potentials of the school in changing colonial circumstances, he made it the Prefecture’s chief instrument for evangelization. His successors Shanahan and Heerey, adopted and perfected that school policy... He opened a “High school” attached to the Holy Trinity School in 1901, with the aim of building up strong Catholic elite (teachers, catechists potential Government clerks and officials) (Ozigbo 1985:9).

It was therefore not surprising that as early as 1903 the Government inspector of schools had rated the Onitsha High School as being superior to the already famous Hope Waddel Institute of Calabar. Accordingly, this attracted to the Onitsha High School, grant from the Government (Ozigbo, 1995). Incidentally, the Onitsha High School was majorly staffed by a handful of Catechist teachers working in collaboration with the white missionaries. What more eloquent testimonies could there be as regard the influence of Catechists on education in Igboland. Yet these were the early years.

As the successor of Lejeune, Father Shanahan, continued to perfect the school system evangelization approach, the influence of these catechist teachers on education in Igboland continued to blossom and be consolidated. It must be noted that the success story of the school evangelization approach was not peculiar to Onitsha and its environs. It was more or less the same all over Igboland. The Emekuku area clearly depicts this success story as it pertained the Owerri sector.

From a very humble beginning in which Fathers Peter Lena, Joseph Kraft, Fr. Feral and Father Paul Aclisle, played their various roles, there arrived Fr. Daniel Walsh in August 1913. Being ably empowered, he was ideally able to replicate the success story of the school evangelization strategy at the Owerri sector from his base of Emekuku.

According to Ozigbo (1985):

The Catholic progress at Emekuku was most spectacular. As elsewhere the Catholic trump card was her school, famed for its teaching of English. Father Walsh was an accomplished diplomat and was able to exploit his good rapport with the warrant chiefs. He trained his pupil – teachers at Emekuku Central School and was there able to meet the demands for teachers (p. 13).

Consequently, over a short period of time the harvest generated by these efforts was giant massive. Though only nine towns could boast of their own school by 1913, within a space of four years by 1914, there were schools in ninety-one towns; and the enrolment of pupils has soared to an all time high of 5,400 pupils. From the Emekuku base there was a rapid mission expansion to Owerri Mbaise Nsu, Umuahia, Aba and Port Harcourt (Ozigbo, 1985).

Incidentally, over time there arose the grave necessity of extending this school system over the basic primary school system where the instructors were the Catechist teachers.

Perhaps no singular incident of this era depicts this grave necessity more, than the one that devolves around the then little boy of fourteen years old – John Cross Nwabunwanne Anyogu (the future first Igbo priest and bishop) on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1912 he had approached his father Mr. Jacob Oradiwe Anyogu with a fateful resolution “my dear Father, as my New Year resolution, I went to serve God all my life. I want to be a priest” (Obi 1985). His excited father never having seen a black priest before, wondered whether a black man can ever be a priest. Yet this news was such a great news to Fr. Joseph Shanahan when it was related to him. At this period in time, there was not a single secondary school or seminary anywhere in Igboland where John Cross Anyogu could further his education. Faced by this challenge, Father Shanahan had to make some special arrangements. Obi (1985) notes:

John was sent in 1913 to St. Mary’s Castlehead, Grande – O-Sands, Lancashire, England. He was accompanied by his brother Luke... In 1919 John graduated from Lancashire Institute and also passed the Dublin Matriculation. The two brothers returned to Nigeria that same year. Luke became headmaster of Holy Trinity School while John was a teacher. (p. 44)

Subsequently, much energy was expended in the starting of a junior seminary which will meet the need of nurturing an indigenous clergy – the highest fruit of inculturation. In the year 1924 St. Paul’s seminary Igbariam of education early enough. With this conviction they endeavoured to go extra ordinary miles the make side that their kits and kins acquired this education which appeared to be the shorted route out of poverty to prominence. Thus we had first generation, second generation and third generation elites who ultimately became the light in their various communities.

There were instances where families kindreds, communities had to sacrifice so much to see to the education of their sons to the highest possible levels even against all odds. These in turn, on achieving their objective, endeavoured to give back by seeing to the education of so many others. Gradually it turned out to be a win situation to the utmost benefit of the entire community.

However, Isichei (1976) observes that the distinction of founding the first formal secondary school in the entire Igboland is claimed solely by the Methodists. In 1923, the Methodists opened the first secondary school in Igboland at Uzuakoli. This they combined with a teachers training college. The church missionary society C.M.S. followed suit by opening the Dennis memorial Grammar school at Onitsha in 1925. The Government College was founded at Umuahia the same year. The Catholics came on the same in 1933 founding the Christ the king college C.K.C. Onitsha (p. 1867). This was followed by the founding of the College of Immaculate Conception C.I.C. at Enugu in 1940 and the Queen of the Rosary College Q.R.C. Enugu (opened for girls) in 1942 and St. Patrick's College Asaba in 1944 (Ozigbo, 1985).

The proximate remote and remote consequences of all these giant missionary stride in Igboland was the preponderance of an educated elite all over Igboland within a short space of time. Most of these began to appreciate the crucial indispensability.

Silently but invisibly ever present at the back of all these success story of education were the catechist teachers actively working behind the scenes in the myriads of mission schools all over Igboland. Often, they had the responsibility of convincing the parents of the utmost importance of sending their wards to school; often they bore the brunt of whatever mishaps that arose; often they sacrificed their comforts and took in some of the pupils whose

parents could not afford their meager school fees. Above all they were the mouth piece of the white missionaries whose presence and process served to prove to the various communities, the undiminishing importance of the education brought by the white missionaries. From every indication the success story of the school – evangelization introduced and nurtured by father Lejeune, perfected and fully implemented by Bishop Shanahan and Archbishop Heerey could not have succeeded to the extent it did in Igboland, outside of the enduring influence of the Roman Catholic Catechists teachers who indispensably collaborated with the white missionaries.

#### **4.2 The Influence of Catechists on Religion and Evangelization in Igboland**

In pursuance of his novel policy of taking the gospel to the people in their hinterland habitations as a novel approach from the Christian village apostolate; the indispensability of the Catechist teachers as regards their influence in religion and evangelization in Igboland came to the fore.

Metuh and Ejizu (1985) had observed:

Without the teacher/catechists Fr. Shanahan's plans to evangelize Eastern Nigeria through schools would have remained a wonderful dream, a rocket destined for the moon that never left the launching pad (p. 44).

In another development, father Joseph Shanahan who fully implemented and perfected father Lejeune's school evangelization strategy, had this to say concerning the Catechist – teachers of Igboland.

In advancing the cause of Christ in Nigeria, the missionaries depended more on the Catechist – teacher than on any other human agent.... Those teachers (Catechist –

teachers) in the old days were wonderful fellows. They are the real apostles of the people. There would be no such in the country today if they had not done their work so well (Ozigbo, 1988:187).

These statements and many others clearly underscore the influence and the lofty position occupied by the Catechist – teachers on religion and evangelization in Igboland. In this respect, their influence devolves on such areas as being dedicated collaborators with the white missionaries, grass roots evangelization, instructing the people and getting them ready for the reception of the various sacraments, provision of instruction material for the parish and for school conducting the Uka Catechist’ in the absence of the priests preparing the station for the priest’s periodic visits, acting as interpreters during homilies and other discussions; documenting important mission events and being responsible for certain mission documents.

Over and above all these, there are some rare breeds catechists – teachers who by dint of their peculiar personalities did influence the outcome of the history of those communities. Because of their very presences, the history of those communities were virtually re-written. What they helped to accomplish in their particular sphere of influence did overflow and influence Roman Catholicism in Igboland to a very large extent. Falling within this group were such catechists teacher as;

- Catechist – teacher Ephraim Agha of the Holy Trinity mission
- Catechist – teacher Patrick Heabert Okolo of Onitsha and Adazi
- Catechist – teacher Joseph Modebe of Ihiala and Onitsha
- Catechist – teacher Solomon Okai of Adazi
- Catechist – teacher Anthony Uchendu of Nnewi and Umudioka.



What these Catechist – teachers along with the army of other catechist teachers collectively contributed to Igbo Roman Catholicism can never be adequately quantified. Some of these we now examine more elaborately.

In the first place they were the dedicated immediate collaborators of the white missionaries especially at that grass root level. They not only served as interpreters to enhance communication between the white missionaries and the people, they played the role of the priest, where such was not easily available. According to Catechist – Teacher Joseph Mmadueke, who served at Oraukwu, “the Holy Mass was celebrated once in five weeks. It was rotational. As the Catechist – teacher resident at Oraukwu, he organized the young men who would go to Adazi to collect Fr. Liddane’s belongings, Camp bed, cooking stove, pot, Tilly lamp and others. Fr. Liddane usually set up his camp bed in the open school block often staying for days. Whenever he was ready to depart, the Catechist – teacher will arrange for the group to carry his belongings back to Adazi.

Mmadueke’s case was not peculiar, it was the norm for all the priests at the centre usually left for the ‘Bush trekk’ on Tuesdays for the various missions scattered all over vast parish. They would administer the sacraments on the people, celebrate mass for them interact with them for several days before returning to the parish centre by Sunday afternoon after the Sunday masses. They usually rested on Mondays to depart again on Tuesday (Mmadueke, 2018) doubtlessly all these would not have been possible in the absence of the catechist teacher who held fort for the priest.

It was the Catechist teacher who prepared people for the reception of baptism and the other sacraments, he exhorted them to prepare and go for confession and brought the visiting priests for the sacrament of anointing of the sick where the situation demanded. With the

publication of the *Katekism nk' Okwukwe Nzuko Katolik n'asusu Igbo*, the Catechist teacher found a veritable tool of instruction for the people. Gradually these efforts would start to bear fruit. As already indicated this katechism translation accomplished by Catechist – teacher Ephraim Agha of the Holy Trinity mission indeed became a great milestone in Igbo Roman Catholicism. Catechist – teachers, like Solomon Okai added so many colours to the quality of their various missions. Being adept in music he was both an Organist and a Choirmaster apart from so many other accomplishments. The same could be said of Catechist – teacher Paul Anaekwe. In his younger years he was still a very small boy when he passed his standard six. The priest had to engage his services at mass to interpret the homily for the congregation. Being yet a small boy he used to stand up on a stool so that people could see him and hear him as he interpreted the homily. Transferred to Port Harcourt in 1937, he became the Band Master of the famous Port Harcourt Band, and served as the Parish Organist on many solemnities, thereby adding of much colour to the liturgy (Obi, 1985).

On another note one can consider the case of the Catechist – teacher Joseph Modebe. Coming from a prominent Onitsha family, he was one of the pioneers at the Igbariam Teacher's Training College in 1913, alongside Patrick Okolo, Nduaguba and others. When necessity demanded the creation of a new parish out of the Holy Trinity mission, it was this same Joseph Modebe who greatly assisted in procuring the land where the Sacred Heart Parish is located till date. Consequently, in 1951 St. John's school was built followed in 1952 by the creation of the Sacred Heart Parish with Fr. Stephen Cloonan as the pioneer parish priest.

Subsequently Catechist – Teacher Modebe spent most of his life at Ihiala where he served. He equally married from there. By this time Ihiala was under Ozubulu parish that had

already begun in 1907. By 1927 the Rev fathers decided to move the parish headquarter to another central place. This happened to be Ihiala. The Ozubulu people till date are convinced that it was Catechist – teacher Modebe who influenced the fathers to take that decision. One of them lead argued that Mr. Modebe was a full-time Catechist and therefore he could wield so much influence... I am sure if Modebe wasn't at Ihiala, the idea wouldn't have come up to the fathers. (Nwosu 1990:55).

Be that as it may, the latter developments witnessed by the Church at Ihiala, from the Holy Ghost Juniorate to the gigantic St. Martin of Tours Church as well as the many harvest of indigenous clerics from Ihiala, appears to have justified this move. Another case in point is that of Anthony Uchendu a native of Umudioka who worked as the Catechist – teacher at Nnewi. It is commonly believed that he single handedly masterminded the siting of the Dunukofia parish centre at Umudioka. His efforts in this regard is hereby summarized

He constantly drew the attention of the Nnewi Fathers on Umudioka as ideally situated, central and in on the main Onitsha – Enugu road. He also informed the Umudioka people of the creation of a new parish from Nnewi Mission... and urged them to invite the Rev. Fathers to choose Umudioka as their residence (Nwosu, 1990:55).

In the year 1940 Umudioka was made the new parish centre. The rest is now history. When one now considers what this singular decision has done for the Igbo church, the fact that preminent clerics like Francis Cardinal Arinze, late Bishop Godfrey Okoye Bishop Okafor, Late Archbishop Albert Obiefuna, the incumbent Archbishop of Onitsha Archdiocese Most Rev. Valerian Okeke who is an Umudioka indigene and so many others were all products of

the Dunnkofia zone, then one would begin to appreciate the efforts of Catechist – teacher Anthony Uchendu, in particular and the many other catechist teachers as a whole.

No doubt it was the proximity of these Catechists – teachers to the Roman Catholics at the grass root level that did so much to engender local vocation to the priesthood and the religious life. For example Catechist – teacher Madueke (2018) recalls how he and a friend Gabriel Okori (a staunch Catholic) became very instrumental to Albert Obiefuna leaving for the seminary. His mother had remained adamant that he was not going anywhere, hence he and his friend, planned Albert's departure. While he distracted Albert's mother by his discussion, Gabriel was able to smuggle Albert's box through the window then to his house. It was there that Albert came later to collect his box and depart for the seminary. Who could have ever imagined that he would later become the Bishop of Awka and the Archbishop of Onitsha Archdiocese in years to come.

In retrospect if today the Catholic Church in Igboland is witnessing a vocation boom, then a greater part of the credit should go to the many hundreds of Catechist – teachers known and unknown, who sowed the seed of indigenous vocation by their sacrifices and efforts. If today we tend to wonder why in Anambra state alone we have much vocation to the priesthood and religious life with Onitsha Archdiocese boasting of over 500 priests, Nnewi diocese 333 and Awka diocese around 600 priests, then we should take time to appreciate the Catechist – teachers of yester years for we are simply reaping the fruits of their influence on Religion and evangelization in Igboland.

### **4.3 The Socio-Economic Influence of Catechists in Igboland**

It was Fr. Lejeune's policy and argument "education is our principal work and our hope for the future are based on it. Metuh and Ejizu (1985) stated that Fr. Lejeune was convinced that:

A good school system would produce a strong Catholic elite who would be employed not only in the mission schools and stations but also in Government and commercial posts, and then enhance the influence of the Church. If the Church does not maintain a reputable school system, it would lose all these influential people (p:32).

Incidentally the arrival of Roman Catholicism to Igboland in 1885, coincided with the Berlin West African Conference wherein the area known as the Lower Niger effectively became part of the vast British empire. Afigbo (1981) confirms this:

In British imperial law and by the accepted international conventions of the period, Igboland became part of the British Empire when on 5 June 1885 the London Gazette ponderously announced to those who were equipped to hear it that Her Britannic majesty had taken the so-called 'Niger Districts' under her 'gracious protection'. Igboland lay more or less at the centre of the Niger District. (p. 284).

It would take another fifteen years for the British Government to take effective control of these Niger Districts. During this time the Royal Niger Company by virtue of the charter they got from the British government would administer the territory on their behalf. Many years later at the turn of the century the British government would endeavour to take effective control of this territory, revoking the charter of the Royal Niger Company and moving in from the periphery to the hinterland. It was the policy of Sir Claude Macdonald and his

successor Sir Raph Moor, to tackle the problem of overthrowing the independence of the indigenous states gradually from the periphery' (Afigbo, 1981).

This period of establishing effective control fall exactly within the Prefectureship of Fr. Lejeune and Fr. Shanahan, during which period many innovations and radical changes in the socio-economic pattern of the Igbo people occasioned by these innovations was witnessed.

According to Ozigbo (1985) the gradual conquest of Igboland witnessed so many reorganization and innovations in the administrative system. For the first time Igboland witnessed such innovations in administration like District Commissioners, and Residents. There was the introduction of Garrisons, police posts, British model courts and legal system. Equally introduced was the native courts and the warrant chiefs system. All these were targeted towards achieving a coordinated and effective administration, where law and order would be fully implemented. Arguably these new innovations demanded new adaptations, new attitudes and new responses. Gradually there arose a great demand for workers of varying degrees of expertise. These were needed to satisfy the growing demand for working in the many vacancies occasioned by these innovations. This state of affairs necessitated a mutual synergy between the new colonial government and the white missionaries Fr. Lejeune, and Fr. Shanahan by their emphasis on education were convinced that education had the capacity of providing the needed staff to their parastatals. Ozigbo observes:

The government was most eager to cooperate with expatriate missionaries in its bid to consolidate the British colonial peace: It sought to do this through the provision of literacy, numeracy and European industrial and commercial skills through the methodical application of new ordinances... the introduction of roads and motor

vehicle, new currencies and mercantile habits revolutionized the economic and transportation system of Igboland (p.9).

It must therefore be said that these new found synergy between the British Government and the church greatly determined the momentum and color of the Catholic missionary enterprise since the inception of the 20th century.

The immediate out-come of this synergy between the government and the white missionaries was a gradual emergence of a new generation of elites. Initially most of these new elites were teachers. However as the new trend of urbanization began, other groups of elite like railway workers, post, and telegraph employees emerged. One of such was Christopher Nwoke Okafor of Enugu-Ukwu. He was the first person to read up to standard VI in his entire village. He later worked as a Postmaster at Enugu and Port Harcourt. Another typical example was Chukwuemeka Azikiwe of Onitsha, who strived to acquire education against all odds. Working briefly as a teacher, he later became a clerk in the Northern Nigeria Brigade working at Lokoja, Zungeru, Kaduna and Calabar respectively.

Added to this was the fact academic that many of the alumni of the training colleges were able to surpass their initial encumbrances to go far beyond their original objectives of becoming accomplished more uncommon feats. Some of these pupils and students eventually went on to become professionals like medical doctors, lawyers politicians and accomplished administrators Isichei (1971). It was this situation that would gradually give rise to the new trend of urban migration otherwise known as urbanization.

Armed with the requisite education that would afford them greater opportunities in the cities; these group of elites would migrate to the cities and urban, centres in droves. Village life for them would become inadequate and unfulfilling. Fast developing urban

centres like Enugu, Port Harcourt and other places were very attractive in those days. These centres equally attracted non-professionals from different rural communities Isichei (1971) observes:

As time went on, immigrants flooded into Port Harcourt mainly from Owerri and Bende divisions, with a number from Onitsha and Orlu divisions. Many of them lived crowded into the slum area of Diobu Mile Two. They came to Port Harcourt to make money, but their affections remained in the towns of origin (p. 202).

It was this affection for their communities of origin and the search for a sense of belonging to the unfamiliar terrains of urban life that gave rise to the formation of town associations otherwise known as unions. Like their counterparts in nineteenth century England during the industrial revolution era:

The Igbo who left their villages for the first time responded in exactly the same way. They too formed associations, bound by strict rules, meeting regularly and providing a network of benefits and obligations. The main difference was that in Igboland these societies were organized according to a man's town of origin, and had as one of their main purposes the provision of amenities for it (Isichei, 1971:217).

Thus as early as 1905, a Young Men's Association was already formed at Onitsha. At Enugu an Owerri Union was already formed by 1917. This became the trend in the 1930s and early forties. Usually the union had some clearly laid down objectives.

- Providing companionship and social security for their villagers in the urban areas preserving the unity and culture of their home town village
- Raising money to provide amenities for their hometown
- Initiating and executing occasional General mass return to their hometowns.



Given this situation, it was not surprising that gradually but imperceptibly the wealth of the urban centres began to trickle down into the various rural communities of Igboland bringing in so much development. Over time the mud houses in the villages would gradually give way to corrugated iron buildings, bungalows and upstairs. Social amenities like electricity better postal system, schools primary and secondary, beautiful churches, pipe born water and tarred roads would follow. There would arise a kind of healthy competition between individuals from the same village or even different communities as to who could be said to be faring better after many years of sojourn in the urban centres. The concept of ‘aku lue uno’ would thus become a reality, all over Igboland. Some examples would hereby suffice. The Nkwerre Aborigenes Union formed in 1939 would successfully complete the construction of St. Augustine’s College Nkwerre and St. Catherine’s College, their women counterpart formed in 1943 would construct a postal Agency and water scheme (Isichei, 1971).

At Unubi, the Ogbunekwo Age grade many members of whom resided in different urban centres especially at Aba would initiate the collection of money up to the tune of forty pounds for the development of education in Unubi town (Ibe, 2011). They would also practically liberate the town from centuries of retrogressive bondage by being very instrumental in abrogating the centuries old Nsọ Okukọ taboo that had effectively blacked out all lights of development from the community for so many centuries and decades (Ibe, 2012).

In the final analysis none of these socio-economic accomplishments throughout Igboland could have been possible in the absence of the enlightenment engendered by education, the major tool of the white missionaries. Equally the actualization of this

education white missionaries dream of opening up the vista of the Igbo man through education would have remained in the realm of the imagination, mere wishful thinking in the absence of the army of Catechist – teachers who facilitated the actualization of this education dream. Thus this effective collaboration between the white missionaries and the innumerable Catechist – teachers did actually light up Igboland in a new socio-economic coloration.

#### **4.4 The Political Influence of Catechists in Igboland**

By the year 1934, Hon Nnamdi Benjamin Azikiwe after many years of sojourn abroad had obtained two Masters Degrees and most credits for a Doctorate, but he deliberately chose to abandon it and the attendant prestige and comforts, to return to Africa (Isichei, 1971). His town's people would organize a reception for him; at the old magistrate court Onitsha. They needed a reasonably educated man to chair the occasion. None else was deemed more suitable than the popular but mysterious American white man who had stayed so long at Onitsha and acclimatized so much that he had practically become an Onitsha man. The Onitsha people had adopted him and given him the name Odeziaku, though his real name was Dr. J. M. Stuart – Young. He was said to have opened the occasion by introducing Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe in this fashion.

He who knows not and knows not that he knows not is a fool, teach him. He who knows and knows not that he knows, is asleep, wake him. He who knows and knows that he knows is both a wise man and a leader, follow him (Akosa, 1987:63).

Subsequently, in the light of the above, Azikiwe would be addressing Mbonu Ojike whom he would mentor just like he mentored president Kwameh Nkrumah of Ghana “There is no achievement, which is possible to human beings which is not possible to the African”.

(Isichei, 1976:189). It really takes a light to light another light. It is against this backdrop that the ultimate political influence of the Catechist – teachers of those early days could be examined and appreciated. Directly and indirectly they prepared the ground and silently planted the seed of the future political consciousness in the first generations of Igbo elite through their influence on education. Isichei (1976) has observed:

“Many of the first generation elites were primary – school teachers. They were more than school masters, they were leaders and models for the communities in which they lived”.

The first bringers of “civilization” to the town (p. 194).

But then as already observed, many of these and their wards would later transcend this stage of ordinary or basic primary education and go on to acquire the quality of education that will make them professionals. Some of the elites who suffered so much at the hands of their parents in their bid to acquire the paltry education. Subsequently they usually went out of their way to make sure that their own children or wards acquire any level of education they desire, unencumbered. A typical example was Chief Onyeama, the warrant Chief of Eke in Udi town. He had the foresight of sending many of his children to mission schools and some to study abroad. One of his sons turned out to be the first known Igbo doctor. Another of his son, would be one of the few Nigerians to serve at the International Court at Hague (isichei 1976).

Subsequently, other Igbo families would follow the example of the Azikiwe and Onyeama families to send their children abroad to acquire University education. Eminent personalities like Professor Anthony Modebe the first Onitsha professor and many others like them all began their educational life at the feet of these Catechist–teachers to then proceeded abroad for further studies. Justice Fred Angaegbunan who remained the private solicitor of

Hon Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe until he became a Federal High Court Judge in 1973 was a beneficiary of both the Holy Trinity Primary School and the Christ the King College Onitsha (Akosa 1987).

From a wider perspective it could be said that the efforts of these Catechist- teachers, more or less evenly distributed ensured the presence of a growing literate and semi-literate public all over Igboland. Most of those who had perceived the advantage inherent in education, would ensure that their own wards acquire it, even for mere pecuniary purposes. Parents were willing to let their children live with the Catechist – teachers to afford them the opportunity of obtaining education. Kindreds, communities and individuals would willingly levy themselves to send many an illustrious son to school to faraway places and even abroad. The case of the Umuofia scholarship scheme which afforded one of their sons Michael Obi Okonkwo the opportunity to study in London, in Chinua Achebe's classical novel (1960). 'No longer at Ease' is a typical illustration. Over time people began to perceive that they could have a political voice if only they possess some level of education or the other. Thus much more resources was devoted to acquire this knowledge and the political power associated with it. An eloquent example of this was the Ohafia incident. At Ohafia, a Native Court Clerk named Vincent was exceptionally very wicked to the people. The people wanted to retaliate violently but he quickly approached a colonial soldier Major Cobham who sent policemen to arrest the people. Subsequently the people inspite of what they had suffered from Mr. Vincent already, were also fined, by the government. One of their towns man who was exposed enough to know the political power available to an educated man stepped in to advise them:

“My people wanted a way out of such persecution and my advice to them was to open a school, educate their children and these knowing what the clerk knew, could better challenge him and his successors (Isichei, 1976:151)”.

The people of Enugu – Ukwu were said to have suffered much persecution from the Warrant Chief until they were rescued by a Catholic missionary. One of them having subsequently discovered the political power inherent in education would declare “if those Warrant chiefs had their way, they would have destroyed all of us. They found out that because we went to school we learnt to oppose them. Such was the power of grass root education, facilitated by the army of Catechist – teachers to ignite the spark of political power that it remotely (though accidentally) led to the eruption of Aba women riot of 1929. It could be recalled that Nwanyeruwa of Oloko Bende Division an ordinary woman of the locality who championed the riot was processing palm oil in her compound. A school teacher who had been delegated by the local Warrant Chief to the cross check the local population return, had accosted her in his compound. The Warrant Chief had in turn been mandated by the young British Officer. Regarding such confrontation inside her compound as demeaning Nwanyeruwa had reported immediately to a group of church women holding their meeting in the neighbourhood. An instant protest erupted. The British Officer was forced to handover the Warrant Chief’s cap of office to them. Both the school master and the Warrant Chief were imprisoned. The women did not stop there. Perceiving the power of a conscious collectivity, the Oloko women sent delegates to neighbouring towns armed with symbolic palm branches. The women of these other towns, also reacted with the same spontaneity sending money donation to Oloko which Nwanyeruwa used to finance more delegations to other towns. The Aba women riot had begun. Before long, it would spread to Opobo,

Owerrinta, Owerre and Aba leaving a trail of destruction in its trail. Troops will be drafted to fire at the women leaving casualties.

In the end the official report would state; number of dead women 55, 50 women wounded Isichei (1976). But the damage was done. This incident would shatter the confidence and the British colonial might and the so called Pax Britanica (British peace) it espoused. The Igbo political consciousness was born.

Subsequently, by 1934 when Nnamdi Azikiwe would begin his publication of West African Pilot, (Lagos) Nigerian Spokesman (Onitsha) Eastern Nigerian Guardian (Port Harcourt) Southern Defender (Ibadan) Sentinel (Enugu) Akosa (1987) that would fan this political consciousness into a conflagration, there were on ground a considerable literate Igbo people that could read, understand and appreciate their content. The political stage in eastern Nigerian and beyond was gradually sitting.

By 1934 the Nigerian Youth Movement N. Y. M. was born, followed later by the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns N.C.N.C. The long march to independence has begun. When eventually independence was achieved by October 1st 1960, there were already many ably qualified Igbo sons and daughters to cater for the lot of the Igbo man in the Nigerian polity. One of such who worked closely with Hon Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was Hon Mbazulike Amekechi, a pioneer first Republic Nigerian Minister. He had been privileged to have been taught by one of the preeminent Catechist – teachers of Igboland, late, Catechist – teacher Paul Anekwe, one of Pioneer students of St. Anthony's Teachers Training College Igbariam, alongside, Patrick Okolo, William Onuchukwu, Charles Nduaguba and others.

Mbazulike Ameechi's case is by no means, an isolation. There were so many others like him who became politically relevant to Igboland and Nigerian having had the opportunity of being directly or indirectly nurtured into future prominence by some of these dedicated Catechist – teachers of yesteryears. One may consider the case of the Nwodo family of Ukehe, Igbo Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State. When one recalls the contribution of their family in the founding of the University of Nigeria Nsukka and the prominent political figures that have emerged from that family and what impact these have created in the life of the Igbo man and Nigeria, then one can really appreciate the place of the 'ancient' Catechist – teachers in shaping the political landscape of Igboland. Writing about the late Odumegwu Ojukwu, and his brief stint in the civil service, Forsyth (1982) observed:

From Udi Emeka went for a spell to Umuahia and then to Aba. The two spells completed his education in the understanding of those he now regarded as 'his' people, the Igbos of Nigeria. He might have stayed in the Civil Service for a career, and had he done so, the history of Nigeria would beyond doubt have been different. (p. 24).

Yet Emeka would not have risen to this height and his later political and historical prominence, if his father Sir Louis-Philippe Ojukwu had not from Emeka's infancy "decided that his son at least should have what he had not had – a first class education". (Forsyth 1982) Sir Louis-Philippe Ojukwu did work his talk. By 1944 aged ten years Emeka was the youngest to attend the prestigious king's College Lagos. At thirteen years he was sent abroad to study at Epsom College Surrey, England. By 1952 he was at Lincoln College Oxford where he studied Law for one year then against the express wishes of his father, switched over to Modern History. Between the years 1952 and 1955, the wave of anti-colonialism and

independence was sweeping through the vast British Empire. The WASU West African students Union of the College, attracted the attention of many an African students, one of them Emeka. Combined perhaps with added historical insights he underwent a gradual transformation, realizing his Afrikaness and Igboness very duly for the first time. At twenty two years, he bagged his masters of Arts Degree. Back to Nigeria, he practically had the world at his feet, at the time he joined the Civil Service. Against all expectations, he would enlist in the Nigerian Army as a mere private to escape the 'over bearing' influence of his father. Even so he also he excelled in the Nigerian Army being at 29 years the first Nigerian and African, to pass the Joint Services Staff Course at Latimer College England. By January 1963, he became the first Nigerian Quarter Master General of the Nigerian Army Forsyth (1982). The rest is history.

It must be said that Sir Louis-Philippe Ojukwu's decision to provide first class education for his son Emeka arose from what his own father, a clan chief, at Nnewi had experienced so many years ago. As a clan chief, he had witnessed the arrival of the white missionaries with their education apostolate to Nnewi. Considering Louis too fragile for farm work he had opted to send him to the white missionaries to acquire the white man's basic education. He had gone on to complete his standard II and class one in the secondary school, before opting out to blaze his own trail. It was this educational background that sharpened his astuteness and business acumen. These would later catapult him to the very prominent position' of one of Nigerian's and Africa's remarkable multi-millionaires at the end of the Second World War (Forsyth, 1982).



It can only be left to the imagination what the political history of Igboland could have been, had these Catechist teachers not impacted the life of Sir Louis-Philippe Ojukwu early in his life, through the school evangelization strategy.

#### **4.5 The Influence of Catechists in the Documentation of the History of the Catholic Church in Igboland**

History has been variously described as “biography of great men” (Thomas Carlyle) “unending dialogue between the present and the past” (E.H. Caur) “the memories of societies” (Prof. Renier) among many other definitions. The basic constant of all these definitions and descriptions is that history itself is a narrative of event that occurred in the past but has continued to shape the destiny of humanity up till the present moment (Rao, 1984).

**Derived from the** Greek noun ‘historia’ which simply means ‘research’ or ‘enquiry’. Incidentally, it is to a Greek man, Herodotus commonly referred to as ‘the father of History’, that humanity owes the great debt of much of what we know today, about the ancient world through his book ‘The Graeco–Persian Wars’. To so many other historians of different epochs and climes, the world of today and posterity would ever remain indebted for endeavouring, inspite of varied shades of limitations to conserve the memory of those precious events of the past millennia and centuries into the consciousness of the contemporary man. When one reads a book like the Holy Bible he/she is forced to appreciate the fact that over and above the spiritual and religious content of the Bible the Jews have over the millennia and centuries taken great pains to cherish and document their historical heritage from generation to generation. Is it a wonder then that almost over half of the literate

world today knows more or less the history of the Jews, just as countless millions of people answer Jewish names all traced back to the Bible.

Similarly, Equiano's *Travel* authored by the ex-Igbo slave Olaudah Equiano—titled “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano” or Gustavus Vassa, the African, written by himself, published in 1789; was able to tell the entire world the story of the Igbo man, prior to the abolition of the slave trade and the coming of the colonial Government and the white missionaries to Igboland. It anticipated Elizabeth Isichei's *History of the Igbo people* and many of such other books by eminent Igbo Historians like Dike, Afigbo, Ifemesia, Ijoma, Ofomata, Ozigbo by almost two centuries.

For the black Americans Alex Haley's “*Roots*” published in 1976 after twelve years of strenuous research, that saw him traversing different continents and sifting through thousands of volumes, in hundreds of libraries in different parts of the world tells the story of the black Americans individually and collectively. Incidentally its publication coincided with the bicentenary celebrations of the United States of America independence. The book told the story of the black man on American soil, liberated by the enactment of the Slavery Emancipation Act of President Abraham Lincoln of 1st January 1863, after over three and half centuries of slavery. The book also told Igbo slaves story in its chapter 61, where Kunta was conversing with a Ghanaian slave ...Den what dey calls de ‘Slave Coast’ is where dey gits de Yorubas an’ dahomaans, an’ roun’ de tip of de Niger dey gits de Ibo. Kunta said that he had heard the Ibo were a gentle people. The Ghanaian nodded. “Is heard of thirty Ibos joined hands an’ walked into a river, all singin’, an’ drowned together. Dat was in Lou’siana.”

It is from this perspective that one cannot but appreciate the very crucial role these Catechist-teachers have played as the custodians of the history of the Igbo Church of their different localities and missions, and their recorded Igbo history. Being at the crossroad of oral history and documented history, the dying embers of traditional religious practice and arrival of Christianity, they were far more disposed and enabled to preserve this precious memories and history for the Igbo posterity. In so many situations where no other person appears to remember the past events that occurred in the mission or village, many years ago, this aged Catechist – teacher often turns out to be the last resort. Ndiokwere opines in this regard “in some cases, he remains the station or parish “archive”, (though a mobile one) and can relate all problems the parish or station has had right from the early missionary days to the present Ndiokwerre (1994).

He is ever available and disposed for one consultation or the other. He serves as a link between ancient and the modern, seamlessly connecting the outgoing parish priest and the incoming one. He could thus be dubbed the “permanent Secretary” of the parish or mission. Unfortunately he is not appreciated as such in most cases.

Howbeit, the Catechist – teacher despite his age and physical mental challenges remains ever historically influential in Igbo Roman Catholicism. Whatever his shortcomings, he still deserves a very high degree of appreciation as a pillar and cornerstone of the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland (Ndiokwerre, 1994). Clearly then this applies to the Catechist – teacher for that is what he is; a bridge between the pre evangelized Igbo traditional society and the evangelized Igboland of today.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CHALLENGES OF THE CATECHISTS IN IGBOLAND

#### 5.1 Cultural Challenges

Despite all arguments to the contrary, it must be credited to the white missionaries that they endeavoured to promote the Igbo culture, especially from the perspective of language. Despite the counter argument from some quarters; the white missionaries successfully put the Igbo language on the world stage by the successful publication of the first English–Ibo–French Dictionary done by Father Ganot; also the Igbo Catechism translated by father Vogler–*Katechisma nke Okwukwu Nzuko Catholic*. The same could be said of the one commissioned by Fr. Lejeune and executed by Catechist – teacher Ephraim Agha. In very sensitive areas like the sacrament of penance that demanded the maintenance of the Confessional Seal, a list of the mortal sins and venial sins were drawn. This list was later incorporated into the Igbo Catechism (Obi,1985).

According to Bishop JohnCross Anyogu, the pioneer missionaries were greatly disposed to master the Igbo language, yet none of them achieved such a mastery of it that he could preach independently on his own. The ever present Catechist-teachers were always there, to serve as interpreters the indispensable link between the white missionaries and the local people. Obi (1985). This however does not in any way becloud their great disposition to Igbo language and culture as they understood it.

Conversely, this scenario appears not to be applicable to the situation of the Catechist-teachers who, serving in a local mission outpost at times, in his own village had to battle with a host of cultural challenges in fulfilling his role as a Catechist–teacher. A typical incident in Achebe(1964) illustrated this more clearly:

Mr. Good country told the converts of Umuaro about the early Christians of the Niger Delta, who fought the bad customs of their people, destroyed shrines and killed the sacred iguana. He told them of Joshua Hart, his kinsman, who suffered martyrdom in Bonny... it we are Christians, we must be ready to die for the faith... you must be ready to kill the python as the people of the rivers killed the iguana.. If you are afraid to kill it, do not count yourself a Christian (P. 47).

This quotation from Achebe somehow depicts what cultural challenges the Catechist–teachers often had to confront. In the process of carrying out his duties in his mission outpost which might be his hometown or other places, he often had to encounter frictions, arising from the cultural situation. How he handles such challenges depends on his level of exposure, quality of faith and knowledge of diplomacy. Many of such situations existed but a few of these that some sort of crisis of loyalty shall be hereby highlighted.

The Catechist – teachers occasionally finds himself at the cross roads. Being the man on the spot he was seen by all and sundry as the eye and mouth of the white missionary. He often bore the brunt of the disillusionment of the people, against the white missionaries. Thus the Catechist – teacher being human may often see himself going through a crisis of loyalty, whether to stand with his people or with his master, or employer the white missionaries. He is often perceived as a stranger by his own people if he sides with the priest and the Church as he is obligated to do; especially if his mission outpost happens to be his own village. This ill filling may be extended to other members of his family. Conversely he is seen as a traitor or failure were he to make the mistake of siding with the people against the church.

Victim of mistrust and suspicion, the Catechist – teachers often tall victim of mistrust and suspicion both by the people and members of the church committee. Where this happens

to be the case, there occurs an erosion of trust between these people and the Catechist – teacher, thus robbing the mission of the needed trust that would have enhanced the progress of the mission. A veteran Catechist - teachers x-rays it this way:

Sometimes the church committee would regard the Catechist as the priest's informant, and this would breed ill-feeling, whenever they felt their secrets were revealed to the father. Therefore the Church committee confided or did not confide on the Catechist depending on the degree of understanding and trust existing between them (Nwosu, 1990:53).

Then again these Catechist–teachers often find themselves of being victims of suspicious and rumours of the Christian in various missions. At times the people see the Catechist – teachers as being responsible for any decision taken by the fathers especially where this decision appears not to favour their mission particularly. It does not matter whether the decision was for the overall greater good of the Church or whether the father in charge took the decision entirely on his own prerogative. Thus the Ozubulu people till date still accuse Catechist teacher Joseph Modebe for being singularly responsible for the relocation of the parish centre from Ozubulu to Ihiala in 1927. Also Catechist – teacher Anthony Uchendu was accused of being singularly responsible for situating the Parish centre of Dunukofia parish at Umudioka, notwithstanding the blessings of this decision in latter years.

Occasionally this degenerated into violence. The case of Catechist – teacher Charles Onyia clearly depicted this situation in the 1901. A mission school had been built at Oguta by Fr. Lejeune. However the formal opening of this school was postponed by Fr. Lejeune for some reasons. Metuh and Ejizu (1985) attributes this reason to be the Aroh expedition of which Fr. Lejeune was well aware, having assigned Fr. Bubendof as the Catholic chaplain

for the expedition. Yet the irate people of Oguta heaped all the blames for postponing the schools formal opening on the hapless Catechist teacher Mr. Charles Onyia. Subsequently they burnt down his house. His treasured belongings as well as his treasured books and other materials were all lost in the inferno.

Inability of fulfilling socio-cultural responsibility often confronted the catechist teachers. Despite his challenges the Catechist/teacher had yet to battle with the reality of fulfilling some basic socio-cultural obligations. As a result of his poor remuneration, the Catechist – teacher is confronted by his inability to fulfill such socio-cultural responsibilities expected of any full grown and normal man in Igboland. These include marriage, caring for relatives one's especially parents, brothers sister and in-laws. The inability of any full grown man to accomplish these obligations in Igboland, makes that man a subject of ridicules. The matter becomes even more aggravated when that person happens to be the eldest son or an only son. Such were the humiliations suffered by the Catechist – teacher who had to embark in many years of meticulous savings to be able to fulfill even some of these socio-cultural responsibilities.

Over and above all this the Catechist–teachers owing to his perceived shortcomings, not minding the quality of training received, may occasionally give in to some level of arrogance especially on some doctrinal issues or in his interpreters role. For this he is readily subjected to various degrees of ridicule. He is accused of not being humble enough to admit his limitations and tries to cover up his interpretative inability by simply maintaining that the priest had only repeated what he said previously Ekechi's statement summarizes this:

Most of them, half educated and in many cases utterly misguided, contributed significantly to the open disrespect for, and disregard of, the society's time –

honoured customs and practices. From the village Church pulpit they thundered and decried social institutions, they counseled under pain of excommunication against participation in many community organizations and activities. In their view, such participation was heathenish (Ekechi, 1972:160).

Considered from another perspective, the role of a Catechist – Teacher could be said to have debarred some of the eminent Catechist – teachers certain socio-cultural status they could have aspired to, were it not for the encumbrances of their profession. For example some of the Catechist – teachers by virtue of their accomplishments could have taken some traditional titles despite being preeminently qualified. Yet they had to forgo such opportunities. A typical case is that of the well known Catechist – teachers Patrick Herbert Okolo of Onitsha. At the height of his glory, no Onitsha man could have of accomplishing half of what he was able to accomplish, at the town, national and international level. He was one of the few Nigerians to be bestowed the prestigious MBE honour – Member of The British Empire. Yet he could not take the Ozo title and join the Agbalanze society which was the ultimate dream of many an accomplished Onitsha man.

## **5.2 Economic Challenges**

Delay in the payment of a teacher's salary often forced the teacher to live on loans. He would borrow money from some generous persons in the local community:

This happens to be the case when he is owed for a long time or where his salaries had to become the subject of occasional negotiation by the local community. It was therefore not surprising that if and when he was eventually paid his salaries, he would be left with little or nothing, have virtually spent all his salary servicing his old debts.



The typical case of Demonic Ezeibe the catechist teacher at Ifite Ogwari had already been cited (Nwosu 1990).

The above situation somehow summarizes the economic challenges of the Catechist – teacher of the nascent period of Igbo Roman Catholicism. Often his monthly remuneration was slow and irregular. What he got as salary was often arrived at after some rigorous bargaining with the local community. The fact that his monthly earning was a public knowledge did not help matters. This happened to be the case because the responsibility of paying the Catechist – teacher salaries, devolved on the local communities. However in some exceptional cases the priest tried to intervene. Fr. Liddare of Adazi mission was one of such priests. He usually got the money to pay these Catechists only at the unpleasant alternative of deducting it from the salaries of Catechist- teachers in the central mission. Sadly this made him so unpopular among his teacher (Nwosu, 1990).

In considering the economic challenges that confronted the Catechist – teachers in this study, the emphasis is not on the central Catechist – teacher at the parish centre who was permanently stationed at the centre, working directly with the priests. His salary or remuneration was more or less assured. His accommodation and feeding was equally assured as he stayed in the Catechist quarters in the parish centre. He often had the opportunity of receiving gifts from grateful parishioners as well as farmland to cultivate and volunteers who helped him to cultivate it. This could equally be said of a Catechist – teachers who worked in a government assisted school. His salary coming from the government was more or less assured, his accommodation was equally assured. He had the privilege of stability and continuity, owing to his academic superiority. He had the privilege of having his own

farmland and of the availability of more than enough pupils ever willing to assist in cultivating farm for obvious reasons.

These two cadres of Catechist – teachers are thus enabled to save to the extent of acquiring enough wealth to facilitate other fundamental achievements, beyond the average. Some of these would gradually transform themselves and their families into prominence over the decades.

However the sad case scenario happens to be that of the Bush school Catechist – teacher. Here we lay much emphasis in this study because they form the bulk of the army of Catechist – teachers all over the Igboland mission territory. His economic challenges seems so fundamentally pathetic. To begin, with his designation as a ‘Bush school’ Catechist – teacher is already derogatory in itself. Same applied to his location often in a remote outpost far away from the towns and civilization. Most often he handled the entire school pupils alone or was assisted by another like him. His pupils never got up to standard six, the pupils only manage to hang on, due to lack of otherwise or of feasible alternatives, until they got to standard III, to set out to search for better schools. He was neither assured of any permanency or beneficial continuity in his employment, Akaenyi described such:

At the end of the year such a teacher was considered to have completed his work and may not be redeployed for another ...if your name appeared on the notice board... then you are redeployed. Otherwise you consider your appointment terminated (Nwosu, 1990:27).

Naturally the conglomeration of all these factors added to the factor of being untrained is poor remuneration of fifteen shillings or less and noting more as their monthly remuneration Madueke (2018) owning his personal house, taking care of dependants like wife and

children, parents, brothers and sisters, in-law, fulfilling the various, kindred and town financial obligations often turned out to be mere wishful thinking for some of these cadre of catechist -teachers. Another question would be; why take up such a job in the face of all the attendant economic challenges? From every indication most of those who undertook the job of Bush school Catechist – teachers did so not so much out of religious sentiment than economic necessity. Thus they were obliged to accept any subsequent outcome with stoic docility. Perhaps too this may have accounted for most of the Catechist - teachers never taking any traditional titles, like their other age mates. The question of healthcare provision or mobility was entirely not even considered. Often too the lean appearance of these Catechist – teachers and their over tasked’ clothings evoked much pity and told their story. One can easily agree that it would take an angel, faced with all these necessities, to still retain his moral integrity and creditably carry out such demanding responsibilities. Yet it must be credited to these economically challenged Catechist – teachers that aside of a very negligible minority most of these Catechist teachers creditably comported themselves and left pleasant memories in their wake. Ironically but sadly these poor remuneration were agreed, on after long hours of negotiation and argument between the local church committee and the teacher Catechist. His monthly salary which was always public knowledge was not often paid as of when due, rather – at the whims and caprices of those in charge. Ozigbo would refer to such as starvation salary peanuts that are called salary only in name. Consequently, the Bush school Catechist- teachers often relied on loans and the benevolence of people to survive benevolence.

The question then arises; how and when does such a Catechist–teachers climb out of this economic quagmire and successfully execute other fundamental socio-economic necessities that faces any mature adult male in Igboland like, marriage, raising a family?

### **5.3 Educational Challenges**

In the year 1905, on taking over the mantle of leadership from Fr Lejeune his predecessor Fr. Joseph Shanahan more than ever convinced of the importance of education in his evangelization programme. He had already predicted that “it is through the school that we will win over the whole country” (Metuh & Ejizu 1985:49).

But then he was immediately confronted with the problem of dire unavailability of the necessary personnel, the Catechist teachers. This was clearly reflected in his statement:

The Catechists, pagan converts of yesterday, are formed on the spot. The instruction they receive and teach are only the great truths of our religion; prayers, some hymns with a little reading, writing and arithmetic. Better the truth even though rudimentary than heresy which is being introduced everywhere. With more missionaries and trained Catechists, they will be improved later. It is better the work be commenced (Ozigbo, 1989:185).

It has to be credited to him that despite this colossal challenge, he resolutely pushed on with the school apostolate strategy, (Metuh & Ejizu 1985) clearly expressed this:

The prefect was aware of this and made adequate provisions early during the planning stage for the training of the teacher/Catechist Back in 1906 when his plans for evangelization through schools came off the drawing board, he had put two priests and two brothers “whole time” on the work of training the future teachers (p. 45).

Until the year 1913 when the St. Anthony's College Igbariam was formally opened specifically for this purpose the bulk of Catechist – teachers who operated in – between these years, could be said to have had no formal education strictly speaking. St. Anthony College would go on to produce its first fruit of that very rare core of earliest preeminent Catechist–teachers which included Patrick Okolo, Charles Nduaguba, Willie Onuchuwku, Paul Anekwe and several others. Sadly the college was closed down again in 1918 just as the World War I was coming to a close, owing ostensibly to contemporary exigencies occasioned by the war. It would be another ten years of informal training of Catechists – teachers until 1928 when the Teachers Training college will be reopened again as St. Charles Teachers Training College Onitsha.

In the interim it was these pioneer products of St. Anthony's, Igbariam that held the fort, training other Catechist – teachers who in turn trained others. In effect they became the “teachers of teachers”. No effort was spared in inculcating into the ‘informally trained teacher’ what knowledge they had formally obtained directly from the white missionaries at Igbariam. One of these Igbariam pioneers who worked at the Adazi mission recalled how this was done

Teachers who did not pass standard six were assembled in Adazi towards the time for standard six examination they were kept for about two weeks and were given intensive teaching by some so experienced and learned to teach them... it was a kind of crash programme. Some passed some failed (Nwosu, 1990). On their own part the fathers complemented the efforts of these teachers of teachers by augmenting their own contributions towards realizing the sole objective – updating both the number and the quality of Catechist – teacher. As earlier explained this was done through two major avenues – the

monthly Retreats and the Annual Retreats. While the latter lasted through Friday to Saturday afternoon, the matter lasted to between three and eight days. There were specially scheduled time table and programmes. Such moments afforded all the parties involved opportunities for positive interaction, ongoing training and rendering of accounts, as well as the collection of the monthly remuneration. Expectedly there were variations, from one central station to the other. However there existed a directive, given at the end of the provincial chapter and Ecclesiastical Assembly supervised by Bishop Shanahan in August 1924 (Nwosu, 1990).

Nevertheless, considered from another perspective, even the combination of all these efforts may not have been fully effective. It has also been observed that during the 1906 – 1919 period, the demand for teachers became so pressing that the practice of recruiting boys who have completed five or six years of schooling was in vogue. They were known as pupil teachers. It became necessary to leave these pupil teachers under the tutelage of the more experienced central school Catechist-teacher for a period of one or two years, before sending them out to man mission stations and schools of their own.

Granted that many of these pupils – teacher may have been considered exceptional, what about the rest? Father Jordan's observation appears to throw more light on this issue:

Perhaps the word “trained” is a little euphemistic, as they really got nothing more than special daily tuition in Religion and English from a Father or Brother, combined with a few demonstration lessons per week in the art of inculcating the 3Rs (Ozigbo, 1988:185).

Nevertheless it must be said of these Catechist – teachers that despite these shortcomings they exhibited such a level of amazing zeal and disposition to carry on, imparting what amount and quality of knowledge they could, to their ever willing pupils in the myriads of

mission schools, Roman Catholic Igboland harvested abundantly from these efforts combined with that of the formally trained Catechist – teachers who obediently traversed the length and breadth of Igboland ever disposed to diffuse their rare knowledge and experiences to whatever community that had of the fortune of having them in their midst.

This was the situation before huge axe of the British Government Education Code of 1926 apparently dealt a grave wound to this mighty edifice of the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland. The Education ordinance No 15 of 1926 became effective on May 27 1926; followed by the Education Regulations No. 8 of 1927 which was initiated on September 1st 1927. Both of these were a fall out of the Phelps Stokes report. Part of the stipulations of this code included:

- That no schools were to be opened without the governor's permission and that the Governor reserves the right to close down any such school after due warning.
- Proprietors should become managers of their schools with governments approval
- The capacity or authority to teach, only applies to teachers who are enrolled in the teachers register. Effective from January 1st 1929, teachers who have not passed standard VI can no longer teach classes above standard III.
- Sketches of any prospective school building with details of size and ventilations must be submitted to the Education Secretary for approval.

The Education spelt doom for the hitherto happy tale of the success of (Ozigbo, 1988) Catholic missionary school apostolate strategy. It was indeed a very gloomy moment. Over 596 Roman Catholic Schools were forced to close down by 1927, with thousands of Catechist– teachers losing their jobs. Many more schools appeared set to be closed down (Ozigbo, 1988). The shock was so overwhelming to contemplate for quite a while.

Yet, just like the legendary phoenix, the Roman Catholic school apostolate in Igboland, gradually but surely resurrected from its apparent dust of death. The remnants of the Catechist – teachers were galvanized and inspired Rev. Fr. Jordan was appointed a fulltime Education Secretary liasing fulltime between the Church and the Government. Several renovative measures were painstakingly undertaken. By the 1928, St. Anthony’s Teachers Training College Igbariam was reopened now as St. Charles Teacher’s Training College Onitsha. This time around, a thorough, planned formal and intensive training of Teachers was resumed. Not long after this, the Catechist–Teachers gradually reappeared, once more on the stage with the one singular difference of a higher quality.

In summary then, one can state that right from inception, the Catechist – teacher of Roman Catholic Igboland had to battle with many diverse aspects of Educational Challenges. He was humiliated, bruised by these educational challenges, but ultimately came out better and stronger to the advantage of Igbo Roman Catholicism in particular and Igboland in general.

#### **5.4 Challenges of Catechists in Igboland**

It must be noted that from the very beginning the catechist teacher had to contend with the challenge of westernism in his line of duty, working in collaboration with the white missionaries. Already the educational challenges of the Catechist has reasonably inconvenienced him in communication, translation and interpretation for the local community and congregation. Yet again, the catechists had to battle with the prospect of communicating certain western ideas and concept to his Igbo congregation. Concepts like the "Trinity", Omnipotence, Almighty God, "Divinity", among many others, which were entirely



western concepts had to be translated and communicated to the local congregation at their level of understanding. It was entirely the onus (task) of the catechist to undertake this task despite his limitations.

Surprisingly, inspite of these challenges, it appears that it is more in this areathan any other that the Igbo Catechist amply proved his mettle. Gradually, new words like '*Chukwu ji ike nile*' - God Almighty, '*Ato na otu di Ngozi*'. (The Blessed Trinity, Divinity) crept into the Igbo theological and liturgical lexican. Encouraged by Fr. Lejuene, one of the catechists, Ephraim Agha, the Chief Catechist at the Holy Trinity Mission, came out with the masterpiece - the Igbo translation of the Roman Catholic Catechism –(*Katikizim nk' Okwukwe Nzuko Katolik n' Asusu Igbo*). This singular accomplishment did give a great fillip to grass roots evangelization in Igboland. His classical translation and explanation of the concept of the "Blessed Trinity" in Igbo language (Onitsha dialect) "*fa ncha razu nra anya na mma. Ka nke si di ka Ibe ya Siri di, maka na fa ito bu ofu Chukwu na ibe ya afu.*

Meaning, all of them are equal in beauty. Each is equal and beautiful as the other since three of them are the same and one God.

Uptill the present moment the pioneer effort of the Igbo Catechists in combating the challenges of Westernism and gifting Igboland with such vast arrays of liturgical lexicon, remains a mystery yearning to be fully appreciated.

### **5.5 The Other Side of Catechist-Teachers**

Expectedly, an objective assessment of the catechist-teachers would reveal some negative aspects of their personalities. It cannot be objectively stated that they were all living saints. Certain short comings were observed among a reasonable number of their members

though, some of them towered above all others and shine like a million stars. The question then arises, how could this be?

It must be restated here, that owing to the contemporary dispensations, the catechist-teachers had to confront some inevitable debilitating conditions. Their times and circumstances inadvertently exposed them to such challenges as educational, socio-economic, cultural challenges among many others. Often some of them depicted some glaring shortcomings. Thus Ekechi would describe most of them as being half-educated and often misguided and being disrespectful of the age-old Igbo cultural heritage as well as being high handed. (Nwosu 1990). Ozigbo (1988) appears to concur with that when he quotes Fr. Jordan describing their academic quality, “perhaps the word training” is a little euphemistic, as they really got nothing more than a special daily tuition in religion and English from a Father or Brother with a few demonstration lessons per week on the art of inculcating the 3Rs (p.185).

Commenting on their spiritual quality Shanahan was quoted to have stated that:

A catechist who is not under the watch of a priest is useless. He often does great harm that one is forced to abandon the town where he, the catechist was sent to make God known... The catechists pagan converts of yesterday are formed on the spot. The instructions they receive are only the great truths of our religion, prayers, some hymns with a little reading, writing and arithmetic (p.163).

Perhaps no other incident appears more to depict the negative aspects of the catechist-teachers than the Catechist Revolt of 1903. It was an event that occurred at the Holy Trinity Mission but reverberated up to the Spiritan’s Mother House in Paris. Fr. Leon Alexander Lejune had just initiated his paradigm shift; a radically new policy that laid emphasis on

taking the gospel to the people in the hinterland, demanding some reciprocations from the beneficiaries of the missions charity apostolate among others. He concluded that the large concentration of Catechist-teachers at the Holy Trinity Mission where there were equally several, fathers and Brother was a wasteful approach. He therefore, reposted some of them to those areas in the hinterland where their services were sorely needed. At least 19 of them rose in revolt inciting the Christians. There were demonstrations and the carrying of placards against Fr. Lejeune's person and policies. They wrote a letter of protest containing up to seventy signatures and sent to the Spiritans Mother House in Paris, giving reasons why Fr. Lejeune should be immediately removed. They influenced the writing of private letter to Paris against Fr. Lejeune; part of which read;

Since one year and a half, the Christians are dropping their faith through the bad example of Mr. Lejeune who has no patience or courage... we hope he will be sent away, he is not a "Father" but a man who never has mercy even unto his dog and who always thinks he is right in everything he does (Obi 1985: 93).

Subsequently, so much bad will were stirred up in the mind of the lay faithful Christians against father Lejeune. When the dust of this protest eventually settled, many of these catechist-teachers were expelled. Four of them abandoned the Catholic faith; the mission boarding house for the girl's was closed, while Fr. Lejeune learnt his hard lessons that will greatly influence his future policies in the recruitment and the formation of the catechist-teachers.

However despite these apparent negativities surrounding the person of the Catechist-Teachers; it must be remembered that not all of them joined in this protest in fact many of them sided with Fr. Lejeune and unflinchingly supported him, just like many of the lay

faithful. In the end even most of them who protested, repented and came back apologetic. Equally it must be given to the Catechist-Teachers that despite these mistakes, the fact remains that they are human beings and could be prone to occasional imperfections owing to misconceptions and challenges despite their goodwill.

However, the major protagonist and the ultimate implementation of the school evangelization strategy that was solely facilitated by these Catechist-teacher, Fr. Shanahan appears to have really understood this situation, when he summarized it with these statement “I have not spoken of imperfections, misfits. You know that they exist and will always exist. But the proportions, is indeed slight compared with the real success achieved (Nwosu 1990 – 55, 56).

In retrospect, it must be said that it is to the credit of these catechist-teachers that ultimately they were able to arise above these debilitating challenges and positively impact on the diverse aspects of Roman Catholicism in Igboland, leaving happy memories in their various theatres of duty.

### **5.6 The Influence of the Catholic Church on Catechists in Igboland**

It is a known law of physics that action and reaction are equal and opposite, just as McGinis has stated that there is no nobler occupation in this world than to assist another human being – to help someone succeed (Mason 2004). In the same way the Catechist – teachers of yesteryears had influenced Roman Catholicism in Igboland, in the same measure has the Igbo Roman Catholicism influenced these Catechist – teachers and by extension their immediate families and communities. These influences which are often two sided, apart from a few isolated cases, could be said to be symbiotic and mutually beneficial. These influences

cut across, educational, socio-economic, political, and spiritual. These we now examine accordingly.

The influence of the Catholic Church on these Catechist especially the central Catechist and the ‘assisted’ Catechist – teachers could be said to be quite spectacular. In the first place most of those Catechists who worked directly with the white missionaries were encountering the white men for the first time. In their bid to recruit and bring up to standard those immediate collaborators in the mission, these Catechist teachers were given the best of opportunities to be educated and be vastly exposed. Some of them like the preeminent pioneer students of St. Anthony Teachers Training College Igbariam, were opportuned to receive the best of education the white could offer. Most of them received this education on a free basis (*gratis*). By acquiring this education, these people were once and for all set apart on the part to prominence and a fulfilled life. Most of them would go on to enhance their quality of life, educating themselves further and educating many others Nwosu described the familiar pattern of their transfer all over the vast Igboland mission territory.

RCM (Roman Catholic Mission) school Ihalumona – January to April 1919; St. Imezi-Owa – May to September 1919 to September 1921; St. Patrick’s Emene – October 1921 to December 1922...(Nwosu 1990:p30).

Through this pattern of movement these elites traversed the length and breadth of Igboland serving as merchants of education, knowledge and light. Each community that hosted them counted themselves blessed because of what they had and offered.

Some of them, like Patrick Okolo, were sent on scholarship even in 1949 for further studies. He would later be appointed the Education Secretary by Archbishop Heerey and will thus become the supervisor of all Catholic Primary Schools in the Old Onitsha Archdiocese.

Many national and international honours will be accorded him, including an MBE member of the British Empire by King George VI of Britain. He would be awarded a Pontifical Medal by Pope Pius XII in 1950 and will end up as a member of the Nigerian Federal Parliament Obi (1985). It is possible that such an international figure could have lived and died quietly, unknown outside his own town or village, if not for the Catholic Church that afforded him all these ocean of educational and other opportunities. This was not an isolated case, there were many of such.

From the socio-economic respectivesalso, so much socio-economic influence were placed at the beck and call of these catechist-teachers by the Roman Catholic Church whom they diligently served. Having been placed on a high pedestal by educational advantage our deluge of socio-economic benefits usually follow along. The Catechist – teacher finds himself earning some reasonable remunerations, aside of many gifts, both from the white missionaries and the local people. His farms are readily cultivated by able and willing volunteers. Gradually he acquires wealth and rises socio- economically in the perception of the society. He is often reasonably mobile. He has the opportunity of travelling wide on many missions, knowing more places and peoples. His position opens so many doors of opportunities for him and those around him. The white missionaries may assist in offering his children and wards scholarship for study at home or even abroad. He is thus ably endowed and is able to endow others. The often church decorates them with title.

Above all this, his, family was gradually transformed into an elitist family. Such Catechist – teachers were able to single handily influence the history of their towns and villages among and others. Till date they continue to enjoy the glory of posterity for that. Such Catechist teachers as Joseph Modebe of Onitsha and Ihiala, and Anthony Uchendu of

Nnewi and Umudioka readily come to mind here. It was families such as these that gave Igboland the first and second generation of elites.

Then again over and above the socio-economic influence, comes the political influence engendered by the educational and socio-economic influence. The association of these Catechist–teachers with the Church clearly put them on a favoured pedestal politically. It not only marks them out for possible political positions, but also makes the civil authorities to believe in them since they are backed by the Church. Thus from the humble beginning as a Catechist–teacher Patrick Okolo could rise to the post of Secretary Onitsha Town Native Authority, Education Secretary of the vast Old Onitsha Archdiocese and a member Nigerian Federal Parliament.

Equally when Onitsha town was in the throes of imminent crisis, following the death of Obi Anazonwu in 1899, the District Commissioner at Asaba Mr. Horace Badwell had to intervene to avert a bloody war between those contesting claims of succession rights among Umuezechima clan and others.

From every indication, Mr. Badwell was said to have favoured the candidature of Samuel Okolo Okosi the Catechist – teacher of Aguleri mission Ozigbo (1988). This favour arose from the fact that of all the three candidates Samuel Okosi was the most highly educated. There were also indications that he was backed by the Church His choice as the Obi of Onitsha the same year that witnessed the inception of Fr. Lejeune’s Prefecture, appears to have inaugurated a classical case of beneficial political symbiosis between the Catholic Church and the new Obi of Onitsha. There is no way the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Igboland today could have been what it is today if this relationship had not been previously fostered.

From the spiritual perspective, the influence of the Catholic Church on the Catechist teacher appears to have been tremendously felt than in other areas. What was that, that could have moved the erstwhile well travelled and powerful *Dibia, Ogbuanyinya Idigo* of *Aguleri*; to abandon his over sixty idols, settle his six wives and wed one, then emphatically convert to Catholicism with his baptism on December 3rd 1891? Nothing but the grace of God. His reply to Fr. Lutz when he explained to him prior to his baptism, that God forbids the keeping of idol, says it all: “very well, you can remove these and burn all of them when you please” Obi (1985:46).

It was this same type of spiritual influence that appeared to pervade the demeanors of most of the Catechist–teachers of those days. A member of the Adazi mission centre, who closely interacted with Catechist – teacher Solomon Okai in the early thirties had this to say of him. “Mr. Okaih was very religious. He devoted much time to prayer and church work. You would find him in the church praying as early as 4.00am, that is, hours before the church bell was rung”.

Another person remarked about him:

“Solomon prayed so hard on his knees that they became as black as coal. Whenever he left the (parish) office, one would find him next in the church (Nwosu, 1988:38)”.

Solomon was widely acknowledged to be so honest that he virtually became the banker of many people; keeping their money and account so accurate that not a single incident ever occurred to tarnish or diminish his legend. In fact one of the Catechist – teachers interviewed, Mmadueke of Oraukwu Frankly told me. “Solomon deserves to be officially declared a saint”. Madueke (20180).



Of course one of his sons eventually became a Rev. Father, just as hundreds of women were privileged to have been trained and be prepared for marriage by his dedicated wife Madam Veronica Okaih.

Perhaps it was this spiritual influence of the Catholic church on the Catechist-teachers that so disposed them to accomplish so much with utmost fidelity and docility even in the face of very meager remunerations and uncertainties/challenges. The case of the Bush school Catechist – teachers could be said to be exceptionally remarkable. Most of these were convinced of the spiritual benefits of their profession. For most of them their undying conviction was to work with the utmost dedication rewards would come later or hereafter.

### **5.6.1 The Numerical Strength of the Catechist-Teachers during Lejeune-Shanahan**

#### **Era**

Regarding the number of Catechist-teachers that worked in the Igboland mission during the period of time under consideration, Ozibo (1988) states that by the close of the year 1919, St. Mary's Station in Land town Onitsha had about 40 outstations, Aguleri had 19 outstations while Ozubulu had nearly 80 outstations Nwosu (1990) speaking about Adazi equally notes:

At the height of its growth, Adazi parish comprised about 107 stations made up of many towns and villages. They included all the towns in Awka Division, one town (Oraukwu) in Onitsha Division, about twenty-one in Orlu Division and Eighteen in Okigwe Division. Adazi town became one of the largest Catholic Missions in the Vicariate of Southern Nigeria (p.62).

One must appreciate the fact that all of these outstations scattered within the length and health of Igboland were manned by a corresponding number of Catechist-teachers, who were the eyes and ears of the white missionaries and the man on the sport. They were equally in-

charge of the mission schools; often assisted by other Catechist-teachers and pupil-teachers. Thus the total member of the Catechist-teachers within the period in question 1900 – 1930 could be stated to be thirty three (33) by 1905 at the end of Fr. Lejeune's prefectureship and the inception of that of Shanahan's. By the year of 1930 when Shanahan was handing over to Bishop Heerey, the number of catechist-teachers had risen to one thousand, five hundred and thirty- five (1535) Ezeh (2005). Ejizu and Metuh (1985) puts the number of schools and Churches as 355 by 1918. By 1921, the numerical strength of Catholics in Igboland stood at 25,000 and the Schools/Churches at 721.

However, by the year 1932 when Bishop Shanahan stepped down from office, the number of Catholics has soared to 110, 049, just as the number of schools and churches had soared to 1,386.

### **5.6.2Challenges and Prospects**

As with every human endeavour, the principle of dynamism is ever operative. Nothing is ever static, as things keep on evolving. Such too has become the case of the person of the Roman Catholic Catechist – teachers of the Igboland.

With the advent of Christianity to Igboland in 1885 under Fr. Lutz and the pioneers, they became the immediate collaborators in the Igboland missionary enterprise, providentially arriving on the scene. Fr. Lejeune's initiation of the school evangelization policy created the grave need of the Catechist–teachers to this new strategy.

Gradually there emerged the new concept of the central Catechist–teachers, the assisted school Catechist–teachers and the Bush –School Catechist–teachers. Collectively

they appear to have delivered, lighting up the entire Igboland with the fragrance of education and the Roman Catholic faith, despite the challenges of the Education Ordinance of 1926.

But then change is ever constant. After over 130 years, Igboland has ceased to be a mission land. The white missionaries have departed. Igboland now sends out hundreds of its own missionaries to different parts of the globe. Most of the Catechist – teacher who so effectively collaborated with the white missionaries are late. However their work continues to speak for them. Some of the second generation Catechist–teacher are still there, most of them retired and aging. The history of Igboland is replete with the exploits of the white missionaries – our fathers in faith, monuments abound in their memory. What of these pioneers and eminent Catechist – teacher and their first and second generation counterpart. Have these been adequately appreciated, how many of them do we still remember? Were their sacrifices in vain?

Many challenges, questions, prospects seem to be clamouring for attention. Is the concept of the Catechist – teachers still relevant today? Is the concept of Catechist and teacher finally separated with the Education edit of 1970? If so, how relevant is the Catechist – today? Is there need for a continuity between the old concept and the new concept of Catechist? Are the educational, socio-economic, cultural and other challenges of the Catechist – teachers of old still applicable to the Catechist of today in this post – missionary era of Roman Catholicism in Igboland? These and other issues the study endeavoured to find out, majorly from the contemporary Catechists themselves. For Nwankwo (2018), the Catechists of today should be encouraged to emulate the disposition of the Catechist-teachers of years. The mission has the onus of encouraging the Catechists of today by more meaningful remuneration. Catechist Nwagbo (2018) suggests that the life of some of the

remarkable ones among them be examined and courses for their beatification initiated. Catechist Ibeabuchi (2018) contends that most of them have been adequately rewarded as they had witnessed the unimaginable progress of children in their lifetime, like Catechist Obiano of Aguleri whose son is now the Executive Governor of Anambra State.

Catechist Umealor (2018) suggests that though some of these Catechists – teachers may have died, they could be posthumously appreciated through taking care of those they left behind. Those of them who are alive could be rewarded with things like housing scheme and pension. Catechist Aguzie (2018), of Ogwuikpele recalls the plight of some of these surviving Catechist – teachers in his area. Joseph Ogbonia, whose house has been washed off by flood, Joseph Ifekanze presently suffering from stroke, Boniface Ezeogwu, equally suffering from stroke. He suggests the setting up of a panel, to retrace the story of these Catechist teachers with concrete plans for assisting the surviving ones and their families.

Catechist Ezeanwuna (2018) insists that those Catechists – teachers have had their rewards through the places of honour and enviable positions their children occupy in the church as priests and religious and also in the government. Catechists of today should imitate them in docility and dedication and not expecting so much more. Catechist Nzowu (2018) is convinced that only God can adequately reward them but that their dependants could still be assisted in different ways. Catechist Ezeahurukwe (2018) sees ‘Evangelization’ as the area where they have helped out most and presently they should be always commended in prayers and Masses. Catechist Nnabuenyi (2018) sees the area of “education” as their greatest contribution to Igbo Roman Catholicism and contends that they have not been adequately appreciated. Catechist Ejiabor (2018) insists that heavenly reward is paramount. Given this situation the contemporary Catechists should not insist so much, on earthly reward but

should humbly accept whatever he is given to avoid earthly distractions. Catechist Mbamalu (2018) admits that not much has been done for these Catechists, since they were not opportuned to receive these appreciation themselves, same could now be accorded to their descendants. Catechist Nwadiobi (2018) sees the Catechists of today as successors of the old generation they still have so much to offer, though the level of appreciation depends on the priest in charge. Catechist Ojanyi (2018) insists that even today Catechists are sadly treated as irrelevant to the Church and society. The deceased Catechist-teachers of yesteryears could be given posthumous honours by the Church.

Catechist Agbo (2018) argues that since the Catechists – teachers was practically all things to all men in the absence of the white missionaries since so much depended on them, they deserve to be rewarded, far more than they appear to have been rewarded already.

Catechist Ezekwe (2018) contends that these Catechists – teachers did their work willingly. Most of them were very contented with the much that came their way but they still need be appreciated, in whatever ways deemed necessary under contemporary dispensation. Catechist Nwosu (2018) believes on the contrary that Catechist-teachers of the olden days were better appreciated both by the mission and by the school. He argued that they had more purchasing powers compared to the Catechists of today. Catechists Obiora (2018) argues in support of this, though 18,000 naira is the agreed minimum salary for Catechists at Nnewi only very few parishes can afford to pay. Many parishes pay as low as N 3,500 and even at that, some Catechists are owed for months and years. He suggests that the Church can help by enlisting the help of rich and influential individuals in the society.

Catechist Ginikanwa (2018) suggests that since things have changed so radically since the days of the Catechist teachers, there is a great need for readjustment, to encourage the

modern day Catechists. Certain things like scholarship scheme for their children in the mission school, health package and Housing Allowance should be considered. Catechists should be encouraged to learn other skills through which they can supplement their monthly remunerations.

From every indication, if and when these contentious issues are adequately addressed, the Catechist profession would have been ennobled once again and Roman Catholicism would have taken one giant step towards appreciating that army of able and willing (often mostly unknown) Catechist–teachers that lighted up the Igbo world with a lot of positive influences.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Summary**

It was the post slavery era, and the implementation of the abolitionist policies was in vogue. The area encompassing Igboland was affected by two external influences the arrival of the British colonial masters, who claimed Igboland as part of their sphere of influence at the Berlin West African conference in 1885, effectively occupying it from 1900. The other external influence was the advent of Christianity the CMS Church Missionary Society in 1857 and the Roman Catholic Church on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1885. Henceforth Igboland would never remain the same.

With the British effective occupation, the Igbo hinterland was opened up. Many innovations in administration, socio-economic, political and cultural sphere came in vogue. The Prefectureship of Fr. Lejeune coincided exactly with the moment of the colonial penetration into the Igbo hinterland. With the new policy of evangelization through the village school strategy Fr. Lejeune and the white missionaries followed in the wake of the

colonial master in penetrating the hinterland. Education offered by the missionaries turned out to be the master's key to opening the heart of the Igbo man to the light of the Gospel message.

There arose a grave necessity of the immediate Igbo collaborators of these white missionaries. These collaborators were direly needed to facilitate the village school evangelization strategy. Initially hampered by lack of personnel, the problem of this lack of personnel was gradually solved by a combination of providence and human efforts. There appeared on the scene, some eminent pioneer personnels. These were the Catechist–teachers. The formally trained ones assisted greatly in training the other informal trained ones. Gradually the school evangelization spread like wildfire. Almost every Igbo village far and near had their own mission school. The length and breadth of Igboland was gradually “lighted” up with the light of education and Christianity, leading to so many attendant, educational, socio-economic, political and other benefits.

Thus the school strategy initiated by Fr. Lejeune and perfected by Fr. Shanahan (later Bishop Shanahan) despite the temporary setback of the Education ordinance of 1926 could be termed a tremendous success. It is from this perspective that Social Influence Theory which explains how leaders can effectively influence and transform their followers or those who look up to them as role models, clearly applies to the study. The Catechist–teachers who facilitated the tremendous transformation of Igboland within a few decades of the advent of Roman Catholicism could only have achieved that through their influence. The pioneer Catechist–teachers who directly learnt from the white missionaries were highly influenced by their formal training at Igbariam and the long years of close interaction with the pioneer white missionaries. These influences will spread on, when over the years the pioneer

Catechist – teachers will play the role of teachers of teachers. Many will look up to them as their role models. It will be as a candle lighting another candle (as on Holy Saturday Night in the Catholic Liturgy).

Before long Igboland was gradually transformed. The Igbo Catechists have indeed played this vital role in influencing Igbo Roman Catholicism. However they remain unsung heroes. This study therefore undertook the task of practically typing to give these unsungheroes these Catechist-teachers of Igboland, a place in history. Their multi-faceted influence in education, religion and evangelization, socio-economic political and the conservation of the history of Igboland were variously examined. Conversely the many challenges they had to contend while impacting these influences were examined. These ranged from the cultural, economic, and educational challenges. On the other hand the influence of Catholic Church on the Catechist-teachers were discussed while the profiles of some prominent typical catechist-teachers representing the summary and the conclusion with recommending areas suggesting for further research teamed the final pages of the study.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Today the success story of the Roman Catholic Church is largely attributed to the singular efforts of the expatriate white missionaries. So many legends and monuments depict and perpetuate their exploits, while little or nothing is remembered about their collaborators in success. This study tries to raise this issue and endeavours to remind the present and posterity how these ‘unsung heroes’ working behind the scene with the white missionaries were able to change the face of Roman Catholicism in Igboland and by implication Igboland



with their undying influences in education, religion and evangelization, socio-economic and above all with their political and historical influence in Igboland.

Being human they had that own challenges and shortcomings; the church equally influenced them in various ways just like they had influenced the church. The study asks the question on the challenges and prospects, if there are ways these forgotten Catechist – teachers who sacrificed so much could be adequately appreciated under the contemporary dispensation. It questions if their influences have any connectivity with the present day Catechists.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

There is often the tendency in man to appreciate more that which is strange and arouses his curiosity than that which he fully knows. But it is safer to be a slave of facts than to be a slave of fiction or imagination. If the people of Serbia could exhume the body of their son Gavrillo Princip who fired the vital shots that sparked off World War I and give him a heroes' burial after the war, then what really stops us from appreciating our own? What really stops the contemporary Roman Catholic in Igboland from remembering and honouring these unsung heroes who laboured and sacrificed so much for the Igbo Roman Catholic Church... the forgotten Catechist – teachers, the unsung heroes of Igbo Roman Catholicism. It is on these basics of initiating efforts to finally fulfill this long overdue task awaiting the Igbo Church that I make the following recommendations. For the enhancement of this sense of continuity, these recommendations while bearing in mind the Catechist – teachers of yesteryears will also include their successors, the present day Roman Catholic Catechists.

Firstly, they should be given a place in history. This implies making very conscious efforts to record the names of all these Catechist-teachers including the places of their mission and permanently committing them to records. This implies retracting their memories from mere oral history to permanent documentation. This will make them to have place in history. Generation to come will have the opportunity of reading and knowing about them and their exploits from the different Church records.

Secondly, it would be worthwhile for every Archdiocese or diocese in Igboland, to dedicate a special day for the catechists just like it has done for priests and religions. This could also be done at provincial, or national levels. On such days masses should be celebrated for all the deceased Catechists. Thereafter, those aged remnants that are still alive, should be visited by way of solidarity visit. Similarly collections could be conducted on that day, toward setting up a Catechist welfare fund. Catechist of today should also be celebrated that day.

Equally just like we have Patrick Okolo Memorial School Onitsha, such could be replicated for other eminent Catechists-teachers in their own immediate localities or parishes where they had labored. Halls or even blocks, offices could be named in their memories. Endowments or scholarship schemes could be started off in their memories. If the remains of Bishop Shanahan who died in Kenya, could be exhumed and conveyed back to Igboland, then reburied at the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, Onitsha because he was the renowned apostle of Igboland, could not a little of such be done for at least some of these catechist-teachers who laboured behind the scenes.

A reasonable and comprehensive welfare package could be initiated for the Catechists. This would involve healthcare package, housing allowance, scholarship to the

Catechist children in mission schools (as many parishes are already doing). From this fund the surviving Catechist – teachers could be taken care of, even periodically. The Christian mothers can be encouraged to make provisions for Catechist (even if occasionally) as they most do for priests every saturday. The parish council can be asked to assist in defraying the cost of the catechist accommodation or helping to erect Catechist quarters as done in some dioceses.

Then again the different dioceses could create avenues to make the Catechist profession more attractive and dignifying, by affording the Catechists opportunities to further their studies as Onitsha Archdiocese is doing through its school of evangelization and Nnewi diocese through St. Paul school of Theology. This will surely supplement the monthly on-going formation activities and the yearly annual Retreats. Equally since every Diocese is allotted some slots for, Pilgrimage to the Holy land, would it be out of place if every year the Catechists themselves are allowed on their own to vote one or two members who would form part of the pilgrimage team from their own diocese.

Over and above all these, comes the issue of socio-economic security. It is a hard fact the purchasing power of the average Nigerian worker has been drastically reduced owing to the depreciation of the naira currency. This has negatively affected all the church workers of which the Catechist is a vital member. The researcher was shocked in the course of my interviews when an elderly catechist told me that his basic salary has remained at N11:500 for years. In another diocese the minimum salary for Catechist is N18,000.00 but unfortunately many parishes can neither afford or are willing to pay the amount. Some Catechists take home as least as N3,500. Some are owed up to months or years. Given this

situation what future has the Catechist profession, if and when all these elderly Catechists pass on?

A radical approach is thereby called for, on both sides. Every diocese or parish can establish some projects through which it can be supplementing the monthly remuneration of her Catechists. The Catechists on their own can start off cooperative ventures through which they can help themselves. Also more emphasis could be laid on the Catechist profession as a part time job. Each Catechist can then be encouraged to get on auxiliary job, through which earnings he can reasonably assist himself and his dependants.

Finally, Church members should be encouraged to be more generous and charitable to the Catechist. A typical example is Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish Amichi in Nnewi diocese. There in the course of the parishioners arranging for cars to be presented as ordination gifts to their two newly ordained sons, the generosity of the parishioners were so much that three vehicle where gotten eventually. After the formal presentation of the cars to the two newly ordained priests the third remaining car was generously given to the parish Catechist by the parish priest for his many years of services in the parish. What a practical way to preach the gospel? Any good done for any Catechist today is by extension a favour to the Catechist teachers of old. We conclude with the very words of Francis Cardinal Arinze, one of the preeminent Roman contemporary Roman Catholic Prefects and unarguably the most prominent cleric to have emerged from Igboland till date.

The Catechist help the people to know what we believe, to know how we worship and to know how we live as followers of Christ. The Catechists are not to be ignored, they are very important, the root, encourage them to understand more and more of their calling. Help

the people to take them seriously and to give them something at the end of the month more than a bottle of Holy water.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Further Studies**

This study is by no means exhaustive. So much still need to be researched, given the time frame and the vastness of the area involved. To this end, similar studies in specific areas are suggested. These following may serve as possible guidelines.

- A study of the Role of the Catechists in Contemporary Igbo Roman Catholicism
- Catechists as the Collaborators with the Fathers of our faith. The missionary years 1865 – 1967.
- The Catechists of Today a Study in Self Reliance and Sustainability
- The Advent of Christianity to Igboland an Ecumenical perspective.
- Towards a New – Spirit of Ecumenism the Role of the home Catechist.
- Catechists – Apostles Ever Relevant Fiction or Reality.

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**INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>NAMES OF INTERVIEWED PEOPLES</b>             | <b>PLACE</b>                                    | <b>DATE</b>                      | <b>AGE</b> |
|------------|---|---|----------------------------------|------------|
| 1          | Nwankwo, John C.<br>Profession Catechist        | St. Peter's Catholic Church Awkugu              | 4 <sup>th</sup> September, 2017  | 70 years   |
| 2          | Nnabuenyi Emmanuel<br>Professor – Catechist     | St. Dominic's Catholic Church Uke               | 12 <sup>th</sup> September, 2017 | 71 years   |
| 3          | Nwagboh Raphael Ifeanyi<br>Profession Catechist | St. Patrick's Catholic Church New Heaven Okpoko | 8th September 2017.              | 73 years   |
| 4          | Iloka Ibeabuchi Cyril                           | St. Domunde Catholic Church Uke                 | 8th September 2017.              | 78 years   |
| 5          | Mbamalu I. Hyacinth                             | St. Vincent Catholic Church Ogbunike            | 8th September 2017.              | 71 years   |
| 6          | Umealor Peter E.                                | Holy Trinity Parish Igbariam                    | 6th September 2017               | 77 years   |
| 7          | Aguzie Chigoziem Simon                          | Kristi –Bu– Chukwu Catholic Church, Ogwuikpele  | 5th September 2017.              | 46 years   |
| 8          | Ezeagwuna Fredrick N.                           | Holy Cross Parish Nkpor                         | 6th September 2017.              | 65 years   |
| 9          | Nzowu Mike                                      | Chukwu Buize Catholic Church Ossomala           | 6th September 2017.              | 52 years   |
| 10         | Ezeahurukwe Luke                                | St. John & Paul Parish                          | 10th September 2017.             | 69years    |
| 11         | Ejiabor Godfrey                                 | All Saints Catholic Church Nkpor Age            | 5th September 2017               | 70 years   |
| 12         | Nwadiobi Michael                                | St. Martin's Catholic Church Abatete            | 6th September 2017.              | 75 years   |
| 13         | Ojani Rita A.                                   | Sacred Heart Parish Nteje                       | 11th September 2017.             | 46 years   |

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| 14 | Agbo Peter  | Our Lady of Assumption Catholic Church, Nkpor Agu                        | 5th September 2017.                    | 53 years |
| 15 | Ejekeke Elias   | St. Jude's Parish Fegge Onitsha  | 13th September 2017.                   | 69 years |
| 16 | Donatus Obiora Nwosu<br>Designation – President<br>Nnewi Diocesan Catechist<br>Association NDCAN.   | St. James Parish Otolo<br>Nnewi  | 3rd May 2018.                          | 63 ears  |
| 17 | Ginikanwa Kingsley<br>Designation–Vice President<br>National, Catechists<br>Association of Nigeria<br>NACAN, Secretary Laity<br>council Onitsha.        | St. Mary's Catholic<br>Church in Land Town<br>Onitsha.                   | 5th June 2018.                         | 46 years |
| 18 | Bernard Onyeanusi   | Retired, Interviewed at<br>his compound, in<br>Aguluzigbo town           | 2nd June 2018                          | 94 years |
| 19 | Mmadueke Joseph   | Retired, Interviewed at<br>his compound, Amada<br>Village Oraukwu        | 1st June 2018.                         | 98 years |
| 20 | Fr. Jude Mgbobukwa  | St. Michaels Parish<br>Fegge Onitsha                                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup><br>September<br>, 2016 | 55 years |
| 21 | Francis Cardinal Arinze<br>Prefect Emeritus, Sacred<br>Congregation Divine<br>Worship and Discipline of<br>the Sacrament, Vatican City,<br>Rome, Italy. | St. Patrick's Catholic<br>Church Unubi,<br>Catholic Diocese of<br>Nnewi. | 4th<br>January<br>2019                 | 86 years |
| 22 | Lolo Esther Okeke wife of<br>Chief G.U. Okeke Igwe<br>Ozuome Ihiala.  | Igwe Ozuome<br>Compound Odoata<br>village Ihiala.                        | 13 <sup>th</sup><br>February<br>2019   | 75 years |
| 23 | Col. J. Okaih Retired Col. of<br>the Nigeria Army First Son<br>of the Catechists Okaih.   | Catechist Solomon<br>Okaih Compound<br>Adazi Nnukwu.                     | 17 <sup>th</sup><br>January<br>2019    | 76 years |
| 24 | Ajie Ofili Ukpabi Palace<br>Worker Retired Civil Servant  | The Palace of the Obi<br>of Onitsha Awka<br>Road, Onitsha.               | 23 <sup>rd</sup><br>January<br>2019    | 81 years |