

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE
FIRST SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NSUKKA AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL
CHURCH, NSUKKA ON MONDAY 10TH JUNE, 1996 BY RT. REV. JONAH
CHUKWUEMEKA ILONUBA *M.A. (OXON), Dip. Th. (LOND.) Bishop of Nsukka***

I thank God who has made it possible for all of us to assemble once more in the Synod of this Diocese. I welcome all of you in God's name and pray that all our deliberations be directed and led by the Holy Spirit. This is the Third Session of our First Synod which brings to an end our First Synod, as each Synod lasts for three years.

With the end of each Synod all appointments or officers connected with the Synod stand dissolved and new appointments made or old ones renewed. We thank all those who held offices during the first three years of our life as a diocese and ask that those to be appointed or re-appointed will continue with the same dedication to duty which was exhibited in this first three years.

I want, on behalf of the entire Diocese to thank the Preacher during the Synod Service yesterday, the Ven. Andrew I. Ibe, the Archdeacon of Ogidi Archdeaconry. I believe that his Sermon which was inspiring, academic and instructive was well taken and we have to digest the message and apply it in our daily lives as Christians. We also thank his wife Mrs. Ugochi Ibe, the first lady of Ogidi Archdeaconry who accompanied him in this special assignment. It is our prayer that God will grant them his traveling mercies as they journey back to Ogidi later this afternoon.

THE SYNOD THEME: CALLED TO BE FAITHFUL STEWARDS/SERVANTS IN GOD'S HOUSE. (*Heb. 3:2f*)

The passage of scripture from which our Synod Theme is coined is Heb. 3:2 and it reads "*He (Jesus) was faithful to God, who chose him to do this work, just as Moses was faithful in God's house (RSV)*"

The word "faith" from which faithful comes is a key word both in the Old and the New Testaments. It is the word used to denote the many-sided religious relationship into which the Holy Bible calls men and women: that of trust in God; and the gospel emphasizes that trust in God is through Christ.

One of the characteristics of God is his faithfulness to his covenant relationship between him and the people of Israel. He in turn requires that his people should exhibit similar loyalty in their dealing with him.

In the Old Testament God's faithfulness and his covenant love is a very important theme. Deut. 7:9 "Remember that the Lord your God is the only God and that he is faithful". Abraham, who has faithfully kept his promise to my master. The Lord has led me straight to my master's relative" In Exodus 34:6 God speaking to Moses said – "I, the Lord, am a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered and who shows great love and faithfulness". In the Psalms great emphasis is laid on God's faithfulness – of Psalm 25:10 – "With faithfulness and love he leads all who keep his covenant and obey his commands".

God's faithfulness to the people of Israel enabled the prophets to assure Israel of God's continuing trustworthiness inspite of impending disaster.

It is also expected that people will be found faithful. In the Old Testament while God's loyalty to his people is a gracious act, human loyalty to God is a "dutiful response". This loyalty or faithfulness is not required to sustain God's favour or covenant love; it is simply the only appropriate response open to man. In Psalms 119:30, 111:7-8. It is incumbent on God's people therefore to exhibit a reciprocal faithfulness that reflects the trustworthiness already shown by God.

It is expected therefore that faithfulness will be the hallmark of the Christian's life. We see various leaders both in the Old and New Testaments being approved for their faithfulness to God and in God's Service. A clear example for Old Testament is Moses which is found in the Synod Theme. From the New Testament we have Tychicus Eph. 6:21. "Tychicus, our dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord's work, will give you all the news about me, so that you may know how I am getting on". Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is Christ's faithful worker on our behalf." Onesimus –

Col. 4:9 "With him goes Onesimus that dear and faithful brother, who belongs to your group. Then they will tell you everything that is happening here. And speaking about Timothy, Paul says in 1 Cor. 4:17 "For this purpose I am sending to you Timothy, who is my own dear and faithful son in the Christian life. He will remind you of the principles which I follow in the new life in union with Christ Jesus and when I teach in all the churches everywhere".

In order to be a faithful Steward/Servant of God one ought to be controlled by the Holy Spirit as faithfulness is the fruit of the Holy Spirit Gal. 5:22 – "But the Spirit produces love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control:

The theme of this year's Synod says that Jesus was faithful to God who choose him to do this work, just as Moses was faithful in his work in God's house. Christ's close relationship with God and his determination to do always not his own will but God's will enabled him to remain faithful to God throughout his ministry here on earth.

As followers of Christ who are expected to walk in the steps of Christ, we are to exhibit the same faithfulness to God in all that we do both in our private and public lives.

FAITHFULNESS IN OUR BELIEF IN GOD

The first commandment demands that we should have no other gods. Our trust and confidence should be in the one and only God. The Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Can we as Christians today boldly say that we have no other gods? The whole idea of making Christians take oath of allegiance to Christ stating from the Bishops is a clear manifestation that some Christians have deviated from the original faith. Many today who call themselves Christians go back to pagan practices, thinking that the two can go together. Deut. 8:10-13 says "Don't sacrifice your children in the fires on your alters; and don't let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells or charms, and don't let them consult the spirits of the dead. The Lord your God hates people who do these disgusting things, and that is why he is driving those nations out of the land as you advance, vs 13. Be completely faithful to the Lord."

FAITHFULNESS IN OUR HOMES

Many homes today are on the verge of breaking up because of unfaithfulness either on the part of the husband or on the part of the wife. People no longer take seriously their marriage vows; "Wilt thou have this man/woman to be thy wedded husband/wife, to live together after God's ordinance, in holy estate of matrimony, wilt thou love him, honour and keep him/her, for better for worse for richer for poorer in sickness and in health:

Wilt thou forsake all others keeping thee only unto him, so long as you both shall live". At the end of this questioning we answer, "I Will". Unfortunately it does not take long before one of the partners begin to ignore some of the clauses in this agreement. Heb. 13:4 says, "Marriage is to be honoured by all, and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other". There is no doubt that majority of the youths who are involved in one kind of crime or the other in our society today come from broken homes, where husbands and wives have not remained faithful to their matrimonial vows. Christian families should therefore do all that is humanly possible to preserve the sanctity of marriage and thereby bring up children who will give glory to God.

FAITHFULNESS IN OUR PLACES OF WORK

Our daily work is a central reality of existence; and the Christian doctrine of work sees it as a necessary means of pleasing God by serving human needs. Unfortunately today many people no longer want to please God in their places of work, nor do they serve human needs through their work. People want to be paid for doing no job at all; to pass examinations without working for it hence the expo, which has now been entrenched in our educational system. Honest leadership, honest labour and uprightness in what people do have been neglected to the detriment of our nation. How many people entrusted with positions of authority in our country have carted away the public fund in millions and billions of naira? Read the national dailies and you will be appalled at the number of highly placed officers who loot the nation. No wonder the Newswatch called them “Execu-thieves”.

In the front page of the Daily Champion of Wednesday 28th February, 1996, we have this caption – “Bank Chief jailed 5 years”. In the same paper on page 5 under the title “Reversing the Drift” the Columnist wrote – “With drug trafficking, fraudulent practices and all manners of deceits taking the centre-stage just because some people want to make quick money, we are not telling our children that hard-work pays. When people, who 20 years earlier were in the top bracket of their classes, are finding it difficult to eke out a living while the certified failures of yesterday are making so much money, there is little incentive for academic brilliance any more. We will be run like this ... Those entrusted with the common wealth steal it all, giving no thought to the fortunes of the rest of the society.

To take our nation from the gutter level it presently is, we cannot over-emphasize the importance of leadership (faithful and dedicated leadership) We urgently need forthright leadership in our political, social, economic and religious spheres”.

There is no area in our society today where people are faithful to the trust bestowed on them. The applicant who wants to understudy the master very soon becomes richer than the master through fraudulent means. They put on shoes and clothes which their masters will not dream of. The office clerk cannot attend to your file unless you grease the palm. Files of workers are known to miss in offices. Some police officers and security agents connive with criminals to perpetrate crime. Even ministers of God in some cases misappropriate the church’s fund.

The catalogue is endless. We have reached the stage where no one seem to trust anyone any longer. As Christians we are called upon to show faithfulness where every other person remains unfaithful knowing the reward for that as shown by our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in the parable about the Faithful and the Unfaithful Servant – Matthew 24:45f.

FAITHFULNESS TO THE CHURCH

We are all members of the church which is the body of Christ and which he bought with his own blood: Eph. 5:25 “Christ loved the church and gave his life for it”.

It is distressing to know that many people who go to church in this our age pay lip service to the church. While some attach more importance to their different groups in the church others have other places outside the church where their commitment is more. Some go to ‘Prayer homes’, I do not actually understand whether the church is not a place for prayer. I wonder what goes on in such people’s mind when they are worshipping in the church and prayers are being said. Because their faith is not there they will not receive what is being asked for. Many no longer want to lead or to teach. What the church plans to do is no longer the right thing except what is done in individual groups. This does not make for the healthy growth of the church and does not foster oneness. It rather creates unnecessary divisions and rivalry. In John 17:20 Jesus says “I pray that they may all be one ... May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me”.

Some people attend services only on special occasions within the year and do not take part in any of the activities of the church. Can such people say that they are faithful to the church. Other want the church when they have functions which they need to perform like marriage, baptism, funeral or memorial services. People have to fully identify themselves with the church so that they will actually appreciate the implications of the above functions when performed.

FAITHFULNESS IN GIVING

One major problem in our diocese is the unwillingness to give for the Service of God. Many people in our diocese do not understand the difference between what is given to dumb idols to deceive them and what is given to the Almighty God who himself is the giver of all things. We think that we can cheat God but that is a great mistake. We claim that we are poor but what I have noticed whenever mention is made of any cloth to be bought shows that we are deceiving ourselves. Women who come first to pay for their cloth are those from the rural areas, yet the same people cannot give N10.00 for God's service. The reason for this may not be far-fetched. The secret of the Macedonian church in giving was that they first gave themselves to the Lord; 2 Cor. 8:1-5.

I must however commend those who have shown great sign of improvement since the inauguration of the Diocese. Some churches have taken seriously tithing and free-will donation while others have done nothing. I appeal that those who have done nothing will join others so that our diocese will move forward.

In some cases our workers have shown themselves ineffective in implementing diocesan decisions while some other demoralize people who will like to do something. We have to note that we are all accountable to God in the way we lead his flock.

FAITHFULNESS TO THE DIOCESE

I want to remind us that there are basic condition which must be met before Diocesan Status is granted to any part of the Province wishing to stand as an autonomous diocese. These include a good and strong car for the Bishop's transport. You must have observed that Bishops court and a reasonable amount of money in the bank for a smooth take-off of the diocese. We cannot say that all these conditions were satisfied before we took-off as a Diocese. This means that we took-off on the understanding that we are going to work hard to support the growth of the Diocese. We have both Diocesan, Supra-diocesan/Joint Council and Parish and church must know that their obligation to the Diocese ranks first in all that they do. If the head does not stand then the body will have no base. It has been observed that some churches engage in projects without first clearing their assessments. This is wrong and the reason for creating Parishes is not for them to neglect their Diocesan responsibility but to help in seeing that the Diocese stands.

Diocesan officials and those who attend the synod or any other Diocesan meeting have a duty to rightly educate those they represent about their responsibility to the church both at the local and the diocesan levels.

EVENTS SINCE AFTER THE 1995 SYNOD

1. **Re-location of the Nsukka Archdeaconry Headquarters:** The Nsukka Archdeaconry headquarters was moved to St. John's Onuiyi Nsukka so that the Cathedral Parish will stand on its own. This took effect from January, 1996.
2. **Consecration of Bishops of Benin and Kwara:** Following the retirements of the above two diocesan Bishops, two new Bishops were elected to take their Sees. They are the Rt. Rev. Jeremiah O. Fabuluje for Kwara and the Rt. Rev. Peter I. Owekpe for

Benin. They were consecrated at St. John's Cathedral Ilesha on 25th July, 1995. The Rt. Rev. J. O. Fabuluje has since been enthroned as the Bishop of Kwara Diocese. The Rt. Rev. Peter I. Onekpe has not been enthroned following the problem in the Diocese of Benin. Let us continue to pray for the people of God in that Diocese so that the Holy Spirit will direct them to see the way forward.

3. **Ordination at St. Paul's Cathedral:** On 30th July, 1995, the Revds Samuel Ugwu and Emmanuel C. Agbowo were made Deacons while the Revds. Ephraims Asogwa and Hyginus Ugwu were ordained Priests.
4. **Dedication of a Maternity Home at Agu-Umabor Eha-Alumona:** On 8th August, 1995 a Maternity Home was dedicated at Agu-Umabor and since then the women have taken over looking after the maternity Home.
5. **New Parishes:** Three new Parishes have been inaugurated since last year. They are Alor-Uno Parish inaugurated on 27th August 1995, Ohodo Parish inaugurated on 28th January, 1996 and Ozalla Parish inaugurated on 10th March, 1996. These Parishes are now trying to stand on their feet and we have to continue to pray for them.
6. **New Archdeaconry:** On November 12th , 1995 the Archdeaconry of Ibagwa was inaugurated and the Rev. Canon Ernest E. Odo collated and installed as the first Archdeacon.
7. **Consecration of New Bishops:** Three new Bishops were elected at Sabongidda-Ora on 28th November 1995 for the Diocese of Kabba, Nnewi and Egbu. They are the Very Rev. Solomon Oyelade, Provost Emmanuel Church Cathedral Ado-Ekiti for Kabba Diocese, the Ven. Godwin Okpala, Archdeacon of Newi for Nnewi Diocese and the Rev. Canon Prof. Emmanuel Iheagwam, Lecturer University of Nigeria Nsukka for Egbu Diocese.
They were consecrated at the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Wuse, Abuja on Sunday, 11th February, 1996.
They were enthroned as following:
 - ◆ The Rt. Rev. S. Oyelade, 12th February, 1996
 - ◆ The Rt. Rev. G. Okpala, 14th February, 1996, and
 - ◆ The Rt. Rev. Prof. E. Iheagwam, 15th February, 1996.Please continue to remember them in your prayers.
8. **Collation of Canons:** On Sunday, 3rd March, 1996, three new Canons were collated.
They are:
 - ◆ The Rev. Canon Jonathan N. Eze, Superintendent of Ovoko Parish
 - ◆ The Rev. Canon Lawrence I. Eze of St. Paul's Cathedral, and
 - ◆ The Rev. Canon Dr. Nworah S. Nwigwe of University of Nigeria Nsukka

We congratulate them on their appointment.

9. **Provincial Standing Committee at Akure, March 20th -24th 1996:** At the Provincial Standing Committee in Akure which was preceded by the Episcopal Synod, it was decided that the Province of Nigeria with 52 Dioceses has now become too big. The Standing Committee approved that the Province be split into 3 Provinces with the small letters. 'p'. Already there are three zones in the province, the Supra-Diocesan North, the Supra-Diocesan West and the joint Council in the East. These zones will now stand as

provinces each having an Archbishop of its own. The Church of Nigeria will still remain as one with One Primate. Arrangements will soon be made for the inauguration of the provinces.

The following Communiqué was issued at the Standing Committee:

1. The Committee acknowledges the presence and guidance of Almighty God through His Holy Spirit throughout the deliberations, and expresses immense gratitude to God. It also conveys fraternal greetings to the entire Nation in the name of God.
2. **Political Situation:** The current political situation in the country was carefully considered. While the efforts of the Federal Military Government in putting in place a Transition Programme meant to return the country to democratic governance are commended, it is however tragic for the Government to promulgate Decrees banning comments or criticisms on the transition programme. The Federal Government and the politicians should give credibility to the transition programme by allowing it to work. The provision Standing Committee is of the opinion that June 12, 1993 has proved that Nigeria can conduct a free and fair election. Since Government has now seen that it cannot successfully wish away June 12, it is advisable to set up a Government of National Reconciliation and M. K. O. Abiola should be released to participate in the resolution of the June 12 problem.
3. **Economic Situation:** The committee commended the courage of the presidency for setting up the NATIONAL ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE COMMISSION headed by Professor Sam Aluko, while appreciating the efforts of that Commission in curbing corruption and other economic frauds. However, despite all the God-given blessings in terms of human and material resources, the Nigeria Economy continues to nose-dive with the attendant problems of unemployment, falling value of the NAIRA, galloping inflation, failed banks, closure of industries and the high incidence of armed robberies due to economic hardship. The Committee also felt dismayed by the complete disregard for the sacredness of life by the frequent elimination of citizens by hired assassins. The Government should seek solution to these problems and the people too should heed the appeal to stop hoarding fuel, currency and other products, and to return the money embezzled and kept in foreign banks so that it can be released into the Nigerian Economy.
4. **Education:** The Committee noted with alarm the break-down in our education system. It appeals to ASUU, ASUP, NASU, POSSAN and any other trade unions within our educational system to cease fire in the interest of parents and students. It also appeals to the Governments to fund teaching and research adequately in our institutions, pay salaries of workers, and replace obsolete equipment in various fields.
5. **Human Rights and Justices:** The committee strongly advised Government to desist from its habit of arresting, and detaining citizens who express views and opinions different and from its own. Suspected cases bordering on state security should be tried before the regular courts instead of clamping citizens into detention. The committee frowns at the setting up of special military tribunals which usurp the places and duties of the regular courts. This, in most cases leads to miscarriage of justice. The Government should also restore the powers of the judiciary so as to restore public confidence in our judicial system.

6. **Religious Intolerance:** The committee appeals to Government to take necessary steps to allay the fears and anxieties of Nigerians caused by religious intolerance in various parts of the country. Lives property, and places of worship are constantly destroyed as a result of religious intolerance.
7. **Religious Intolerance:** The Committees urges all pastors to lay emphasis on the pastoral care and counseling of citizens, especially at these difficult times, and every effort should be made to assist in alleviating and solving the problems of citizens.
8. **Expansion of the Church and its Missionary Out-Reach:** In the effort to extend the missionary outreach of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) within and outside Nigeria, the Provincial Standing Committee is pleased to announce the establishment of the CHURCH OF NIGERIA MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

The Committee has also recommended to the General Synod the creation of three Provinces out of existing Province of Nigeria

Ordination: This year's Trinity Ordination will take place god-willing on Sunday, 7th July, 1996 at the Cathedral. The Revds. Samuel Ugwu and Emmanuel Agbowo who are Deacons, will be ordained Priests. We have 13 candidates being trained as non-stipendiary pastors. We hope that they will also be made deacons if they fulfill the necessary conditions. We also hope that George Asadu who is in Okene Theological college will be finishing his course this year and will also be made a Deacon.

Retirements: The Ven. C. N. Ozoko, the Archdeacon of Eha-amufu Archdeaconry will be retiring at the end of this year. We thank God for his many years of service in the Lord's vineyard. It is our prayer that God will give him long years of good health and service as he enjoys his retirement.

Obituary: The retired Bishop of Warri Diocese the Rt. Rev. Dafiewhare died late last year and was buried on 11th of November, 1995.

Our Diocese has been hard hit by the sudden and untimely death of our illustrious sons and clergy. On January 26th 1996 the Rev. Canon E. C. U. Nnamani the Superintendent of Amufie Parish died and was buried on the 8th of February, 1996.

Igwe Jonathan A. C. Ugwu, Igwe of Ibagwa-Aka also died and was buried on 13th March, 1996.

The Archdeacon of Nsukka Archdeaconry the Ven. D. O. Ogbonna died at UNTH on 23rd April, 1996 after spending a week at the hospital. He was buried on Friday 4th of May, 1996.

May their souls rest in perfect peace.

CONFIRMATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

Within the period in review 2380 Candidates were confirmed 664 male, 1716 females; 304 Girls admitted to Girls' Guild, 221 to Women's Guild, while 69 women were admitted to Mothers' Union.

The table is shown below:

Date	Church	Confirmation		Girls' Guild	W.G.	M.U.
		Male	Female			
6/8/95	Aku Parish, St. Thomas	56	185	3	14	4
13/8/95	Opi Parish, St. Mary's	30	91	3	19	4
3/9/95	St. Mark's Obukpa-Ibagwa	38	93	18	9	1
17/9/95	Amufie Parish, St. Luke's	33	169	10	19	2
4/10/95	Ikem Parish, St. Andrew's	14	31	20	5	-
8/10/95	All Saints' Obollo-Afor	21	34	24	11	4
15/10/95	St. Paul's Cathedral	82	138	18	23	18
19/10/95	St. Mark's Ohodo	23	89	4	-	1
22/10/95	Eha-Amufu, St. Philip's	60	222	80	15	7
5/11/95	Mgbuji, St. Matthew's	26	65	19	5	-
19/11/95	Umulokpa, St. Stephen's	29	33	3	14	-
26/11/95	St. James' Orba	29	46	-	7	-
3/12/95	St. Stephen's Enugu-Ezike	22	59	21	4	-
10/12/95	Adani, St. Andrew's	13	41	12	3	1
21/12/95	Ovoko, St. Peter's	41	135	5	20	10
24/12/95	Emmanuel Church, Unadu	29	59	39	23	2
25/12/95	Emmanuel Church, Alor-Uno	43	95	7	7	5
31/3/96	All Saints' Obollo-Afor	16	24	1	11	7
21/4/96	St. Mary's Church Mbu	8	28	5	-	1
28/4/96	St. Thomas' Aku	51	79	16	12	2
	TOTAL	664	1716	304	221	69

CONCLUSION

Our guest preacher the Ven. A. I. Ibe and other Archdeacons here present, the Hon. Chancellor, our learned Registrar, Canons of the Cathedral, the Clergy, respected Igwes and Chiefs, distinguished members of the Synod, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patient listening and I thank those who have through these years of our existence proved themselves faithful to the diocese. I pray that all of us will live up to our responsibilities and peoples expectation of us; so that united in our resolve we shall build up a strong and virile Diocese.

Once more, thank you all and God bless.

The Rt. Rev. J. C. Iionuba,
Bishop of Nsukka