



E-BULLETIN #136

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

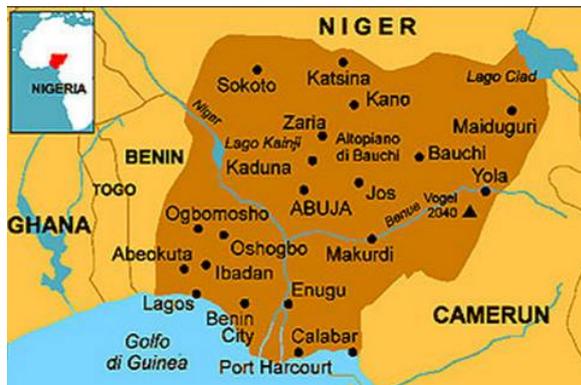
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letter from Nigeria

"Dear friends

To the friends of our mission in Nigeria warm greetings and best wishes. I hope you are well.

Because of the bad reports about ebola in West Africa, and especially through reports on BoKo Haram, many people are concerned and want to know how we are affected here in **Mbaukwu**.



Firstly thank you for the efforts to make contact with us, and your concern for us. Yes, it is bad and affects people across all of Nigeria. BoKo Haram was bad enough but now we have ebola on top of that, so the people are very worried. There have been 4 deaths in **Lagos** and a scare arose when a nurse from there arrived in **Enugu** [100 miles from here].

The situation certainly gives cause for concern but the government has acted quickly and taken measures to get it under control.

The Conference of Bishops has issued a letter stating that communion in the mouth and the greeting of peace are forbidden for the time being. Also that there should be a big emphasis on education and information.

Initially quackery and hoaxes led people astray. Some were told that, to protect themselves, they should wash in salt water and drink saline solutions. Many did this and several overdosed and died through high blood pressure.

BoKo Haram is still causing trouble. It is in contact with Al Quaida and other terrorist organisations. And because presidential elections take place next year their action is a threat to public safety. Hundreds of people are fleeing their villages in the north of the country. We again have assaults and bombings. Undoubtedly there are politicians and influential businessmen from within the Muslim community who support the terrorists with money. And these are connected to Abdou and other terrorist organisations.

The abducted girls have not been found yet and, meanwhile, many men have been kidnapped. Many business people from our area [Igboland] who worked in the north have lost all their possessions and had



to leave everything and come back to build a new existence. Many people are unemployed and poverty is growing. We are not directly affected, but the situation has already affected the future for all of us.

Yesterday we had an interview and written test for candidates who want to join us. There were 150 young people who came from all directions. But, because of financial and organisational reasons, we can accept only 5.



We were able to buy a big generator. Thank you very much. Our retreat house [above] is not yet finished. We continue to need your help and your prayers.”

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01.09.14
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ebola's negative impact

For some time now the story of the ebola virus has been news. The worst part is the constant fear that this dreaded disease, which has killed so many people, has no cure. This goes against a popular Igbo adage: *'the hunger that kills so fast is the one that has no hope'*.

Ebola is a rare and very deadly disease and, as such, spares few of those who contract it. While today its presence is limited to some African countries it might continue to spread if adequate and proper care is not taken. Its origin allegedly is with certain animals like monkeys and bats.

It is named after the Ebola River in northern Zaire (the modern day Republic of Congo), which flows a short distance to the north of Yambuku, a small village where the first affected person lived. The first recorded outbreak was in 1976 in the Republic of Congo, then later in Sudan. Since then it has spread gradually to Liberia and other West African countries, with Nigeria being the latest. One of the arguments justifying the fast pace of this spread is that most African leaders appear to have adopted a reactionary rather than a pro-active approach. This seems to be true in our own Nigerian situation where the government commenced measures to counter it only after it entered the country. If this continues many more are bound to die. No one country or continent can fold its hands and watch, on the premise that it is an African thing and thus must be sorted out by Africans themselves.



What I want to explain here is ebola's ravaging impact on the social-cultural, religious and economic life of African countries where it is currently present and on the African continent in general.

Take Liberia as a case in point. The virus, because it is extremely contagious, is said to have succeeded in shattering its entire health system. As in most countries, it has only a few medical personnel to cope with the high numbers infected. These become over-stretched, with the danger that frustration then sets in. Even worse health professionals become victims themselves, due to a lack of proper facilities to ensure their personal safety. Many who could play a greater role in containment have withdrawn so as to save their own lives. The longer this is allowed to continue, the more people die and our health system remains obsolete. The question then arises as to how long it will really take to re-organize this entire health system?

Speaking with people in affected countries, including Nigeria, one soon becomes aware of the heightened fear, anxiety and desperation amongst people. They start seeing one another as potential carriers and that has untold negative consequences in the overall relationships between one another. Each day people are more and more afraid to relate freely. Restrictions have been put in place and barriers set up to prevent direct contact, especially in public areas.



Due to fear of contagion many African countries have started closing their borders, preventing flights from arriving and leaving. While this precaution may be justified one can only reflect on the economic hardship this will impose on the general populace. And, of course, the whole area of the import and export of material goods is at risk especially where countries depend so much on each other.



We can't forget either the psychological torture this creates. The mere fact that people may be from infected countries places them on a list of potential carriers and thus subject to strict examination before being cleared to enter elsewhere. While such precautionary measures may be justified personal feelings

need to be taken into account.

Lastly, the fear of ebola is gradually breaking the traditional, religious and cultural spirit of helping the helpless, especially the sick. Right now any person who is sick is – consciously or unconsciously – suspected to be an ebola patient and must either be approached with caution if a family member, or not be approached at all if not a family member. There have been cases where some who came to be treated were chased away by nurses from a distance because of fear they might be potential carriers. Then the obvious danger is of the unnecessary death of those suffering from minor sicknesses.

The heightened fear of ebola is really effecting and threatening to destroy the entire fabric of the societal, religious, and communitarian life of the African people. Those social and communitarian activities, which are most often great sources of happiness and hope, are being gradually restricted because of the fear of being infected. We have no other choice than to pray for God's timely intervention in the eradication of this deadly virus from the face of the earth.

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02.09.14
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you commented...

on #135

Thank you for the article on Franz Denis Reinisch sac. His decision took courage and faith. As I read it I thought of all those in places such as Iraq where the IS forces are offering people the choice between converting to Islam or death. We are in a world where people are still being martyred for their faith. I am not likely to be asked to make such life and death choices but I am challenged to reflect on my motivations for my day to day choices and on the infinite mercy of God.

AD 31.08.14

I enjoyed Derry's account of St Vincent's retreat and the poem and was struck by Fr Franz's struggle with his conscience and the awful consequences, whatever way he went

MB 31.08.14

Having just returned from a weekend retreat titled *Navigating the High Seas of Life with God* conducted by Lorraine McCarthy, the Australian UAC Formation Worker it was with joy that I read today of Vincent's words of being "immersed in a sea of divine mercy". That sea takes us to many ports and the knowledge that on the journey we are carried in God's Mercy makes it so much lighter. A quote from the weekend is somewhat similar "Perhaps the destination is nothing more, or less, than the ocean of God's love with its potential to transform us from the partialness of who we are now into the fullness of all creation into which we are being called". (Sorry I don't know the author).

CS 01.09.14