

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

item 332

formation in Owerri, Nigeria

Our house of formation here in Nigeria – St Vincent Pallotti House – at present has 12 occupants: the Rector, Fr Geoffrey C Onukwuli sac and 2 deacons, Cristian Ossy Odionye sac and Vincent Onyebuchi sac, both due to be ordained this coming August. Three further finally professed students – Uzor Anthony Chukwuebuka sac, Umeoguego Josephat Ugochukwu sac, Ezenwa Marcel Chijioko sac – are due for ordination this December. Several others are at different levels of formation – Orji Michael Obinna in second year theology, Tsoungui JeanPier and Onana Anselme Noah (from Cameroun) in first year theology.

In addition three students, Ifeji Paul Maduka, Elui Chukwuma Jude and Okeke John Maduabuchi, all in their final year of philosophy, live with us but study at a different location – the Seat of Wisdom Seminary, Owerri.



Various activities keep us alive and growing – prayer in common, sport, manual work, etc. We also help out in the parish. I help the local priest in the celebration of two Masses on Sundays, one in the parish another in an out-station. The deacons assist in the proclamation of the Gospel and distribution of Holy Communion and wherever the parish priest might need them. Weekday Masses are celebrated in community.

We also engage ourselves in on-going formation every Saturday for at least one hour. It is here that the life of our founder St Vincent Pallotti is discussed and how we, like 'little Pallottis' of our time, should deal with one another to bring his life alive and active in 2015. We also use this forum to discuss church documents and encyclicals as the case may be.

Daily recreation means listening together to the news and chatting before evening studies. Our main opportunity comes every Saturday when different games are played. We share in a major cultural night every second Saturday of the month. A monthly meeting happens every first Friday.

We are planning to soon expand these activities, perhaps assist in organizing the parish choir and in the teaching of catechism. We do not want to jump too quickly as these proposals require deeper discussion with the priest in charge. He is happy with our presence, as is the local Archbishop who ordained the first Nigerian Pallottine, Fr John Ndidi sac.

On occasions we also join with other religious especially in matters concerning religious life.

On Saturday evening we usually reflect in small groups where the gospel of the Sunday is read and shared (*Lectio Divina*) after which Vespers are prayed in the same groups. Because body and soul should be coordinated we have monthly recollection every fourth weekend and each student is required to meet their spiritual director at least monthly.



Due to the very congested nature of our rented house, we have had to start looking for better and more spacious accommodation. Hopefully this will improve our quality of life. This and other financial problems provide a challenge for us, but gradually things are improving!

May God help us locate a house, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

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item 333

born in a family – called to be a family

Family is meant to be a community of life and love, in which individual members are enabled to build their identity, always related to the Giver of life. One feels firmly rooted in the extended family which still recognizes grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. That which used to be a real value some decades back, unfortunately nowadays is turned into a “fiction movie material”.



Family becomes more relevant than ever

Belonging to a family has always been a treasure to any integrated human being, an innermost desire of any human being. Anyone who ignores his backgrounds can only spoil his present destroying his “so called” future. It is commonly expressed and even taken as reality – to a certain extent – the past already determines the future. Better prevent than cure. A Rwandan proverb says “Stealing with a

baby in your back, you teach it how to build it’s future life”. Models play an important role in everyone’s life. The best we can ever have is one who brought us into life. As parents are gifts from God, the same children are God-given angels. The existence of both is always interdependent, though human sciences and advanced technologies attempt to prove the opposite that one can exist perfectly without the other. Without willing any interference, I feel uttering that such is the remote control of human self destruction scenario. It is nowadays, more than ever that all the family structures are needed to help a “social-disfigured man” become human. At the beginning, “...male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.”(Gn1, 27-28) Who has ever scrutinized God’s wisdom in a way to set a new and best way to bring offspring into life? The Church in her teachings refers to the Gospel, and intends to lead its children to the fulfillment of the divine law. In his wisdom, God called man to be his cooperator into life giving. Having read the signs of time, the Church fulfills her prophetic mission. That is why the Pope John Paul II says in Familiaris Consortio:

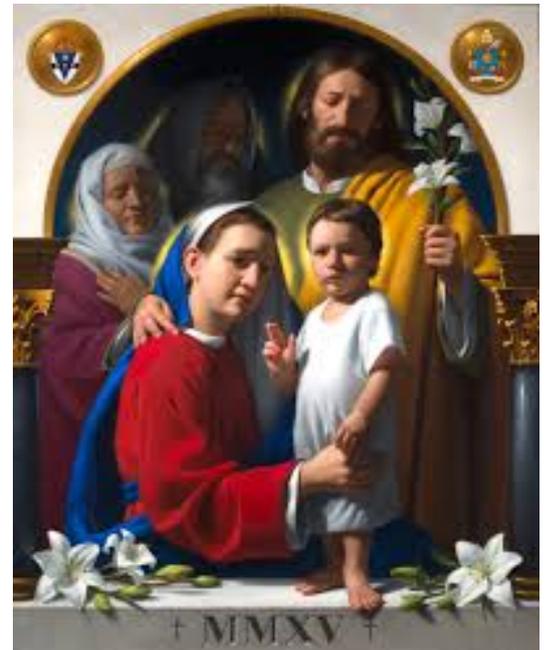
“Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.”(FC n°14)

Family life: an impossible challenge?

In nowadays life style, the family is easily substituted with innumerable individualistic tendencies. Efforts are made, to wipe away any souvenir of ancient and fundamental communitarian values, beginning with life itself. Some are disgusted of living, exhausted and discouraged at the same time, finding themselves unable to auto realize. Of course day after days, life becomes tough. We make it to be the way it is. We pushed ourselves to the wall. The result of all is an increasing anxiety. What an individual goes through has impacts on his fellow. It may not be surprising to live situations which are reported buy world-wide Medias, such as massacres within the family, terrorism, etc. Individualistic thoughts like - if I can't reach what I long for, neither should you reach your goal; if I can't make it, therefore I even don't deserve to live; if I don't live, neither you should - are easily heard. In any way the rally goes on, safe who can! What a life! No more rest, no time for oneself. No vacancy in “life-chains”, I mean day after day life, we keep on moving. You earn, but don't spend. Living equals existing! The fruit of your sweat, you bring in. You owe your being and your name to it, as well as your rank in the society. To some, mutual love is a success hinder. At the end you wonder, who has time for a fellow? In fact who is a fellow? As in the Good Samaritan parable (Lk 10:29-37), Jesus teaches that it is everyone, even the unexpected one, and indeed he is. He is anyone who is ready to stretch a hand to raise you from the depth of earthly darkness without looking at color, race, age or wealth. That one is a brother, a sister and a mother. That is a family. The one willed by our risen Lord, during his public ministry. Life lays into our hands. In fact, some political and socio-economic efforts are made, but still so much is left to be done.

Nazareth, fountain of salvation

The Holy Family of Nazareth remains as model to every Christian family. Without knowing sufficiently about Jesus' “hidden life” and the entire Christ-event, one may see that nothing good comes from Nazareth. I see the opposite! Only from there, we learn to become brothers and sisters, whose one Father is in Heaven. From Him we learn good manners that shine forth through the entire life of Jesus Christ. Himself taught us unity and love, which are main pillars of any household. None should be indifferent or careless in front of his fellow sufferings. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go. Brothers are killing each other, as we hear in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, etc., hunger and extreme poverty are laying down our brothers and sisters in Africa, India, etc., human rights are manipulated unjustly, as we all heard or read- Genocides like in Rwanda or even the one going on against Christians as Pope Francis said on Sunday 12 april 2015 (Oss. Rom. Anno CLV n. 84 (46.922) of lunedì-martedì 13-14 aprile 2015, p. 1) etc. Who shall advocate for our wellbeing? We always wonder, what is the next event to ruin the family? Why does a man have to destroy himself from within? Created by God, the giver of life, shall we live without Him?



God has always been Father of mercies. Only that keeps us in life. He willed a family for our good, and still will save us in the same family. Our participation is needed, first to save and secure the family, with God's graces. That conceived children get delivered, grow up loved and cherished. That marriage and its ends become respected. That what links us grow stronger than the seed of divisions and individual interests. That Christian life flows in our nerves more than our blood.

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you commented...

on #173 Reading the articles on Prison Ministry reminded me of my times when, as mentioned by Fr Peter Toohey, I went to the prison of a Sunday morning to share the celebration of The Mass and a morning tea and chat afterwards with the prisoners. It was through this experience that I realised so many of the prisoners experienced a significant mental illness and that while closing down our "institutions" to assist people with a mental illness we had simply created another.

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