

**“MY LOVE TO ALL OF
YOU IN CHRIST JESUS”**

(I Cor. 16:21)

**“MY LOVE TO ALL OF YOU IN
CHRIST JESUS” (I Cor. 16:21)**

A Selection of Messages

of

MOST REV. PAULINUS C. EZEOKAFOR

Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Awka

Compiled and Arranged

by

MICHAEL MUONWE (REV. FR.)

(Bishop’s Secretary)

Copyright © 2017 by Michael Muonwe

ISBN:

All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be recorded, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author.



Published and Printed by
Fab Anieh Nig. Ltd,
Fab Anieh House,
Opposite COFI Premium Lounge,
Okpuno, Awka - Nigeria.
Tel:+234 8035619395,
fabprezz82@gmail.com

Sponsored by
Sir Emmanuel Nwakanma KSS
CEO N.N. Fems Industries Limited

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Preamble	xi
PART II	
MESSAGES TO PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND SEMINARIANS	
CHAPTER ONE	
Messages at Priest' New-Year Gatherings	1
<i>"Et Verbum Caro Factum Est, Et Habitavit in Nobis"</i> (And the Word Was Made Flesh, and Dwelt among Us)	1
Those Who Instruct Others in Righteousness Shall Shine like the Stars (Dan 12:3)	15
"Tell No One about This until the Son of Man Has Risen From the Dead" (Mtt 17:9)	31
"Whoever Wishes to Be Great among You Must Be Your Servant" (Mtt 20:26): Power in Pastoral Ministry	42
"We Have Found the Messiah" (Jn 1:41): Witnessing To the Mercy of God beyond the Jubilee Year of Mercy	58
CHAPTER TWO	
Messages at Priests' Second Annual Plenary Meetings/Locations	75
The Family: Shoring up the Foundations	75
Priestly Solidarity: Key to Effective Pastoral Ministry	89

“Whoever Hears You Hears Me” (Lk 10:16)	103
Synod as a Spiritual Journey: The Role of Priests	120
CHAPTER THREE	
Messages at Seminars for the Clergy	131
“If I do not Wash You, You have No Part in Me” (Jn 13:8)	131
“Men of Galilee, Why Do You Stand Looking into The Sky?” (Acts 1:11)	135
“I am a Man of Unclean Lips and live among People of Unclean Lips” (Is. 6:8)	140
Effective Evangelization Requires Evangelized Evangelizers	145
“Cut off from Me, You Can Do Nothing” (Jn 15:5): The Place of Christ in the Church’s Liturgy	149
CHAPTER FOUR	
Messages to Priests, Religious, and Seminarians At Other Gatherings	153
“Go and Make Disciples of all the Nations” (Mtt 28:19)	153
Education for Peace: A <i>Sine Qua Non</i> in Contemporary Seminary Formation	167
Consecrated Life: A Path to Holiness	178
PART II	
MESSAGES TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD	
CHAPTER FIVE	
Messages to the Civil Authorities	185
God Called Us with Holy Calling (2Tim 1:9)	185

Large-Heartedness at the Heart of True Discipleship	192
Seeing Reality from the Point of View of God	201
Is Faith as Blind as Justice?	209
CHAPTER SIX	
Messages to the Laity Council and the Youth	219
Co-Responsibility of Lay Leaders and Chaplains for Effective Apostolate	219
Faith as the Bedrock for Building a Formidable Laity	227
God's Mercy is for Everyone	230
Facing the Future with Hope	235
Behold I am with You Always to the End of the Age" (Mtt 28:20)	241
Be Still and Know that I Am the Lord (Ps 46:10)	244
"Behold I Am the Handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:28)	248
Peace and Human Development: A Reflection on the Seventh Beatitude - Blessed are the Peacemakers For They are the Children of God (Mtt 5:9)	252
CHAPTER SEVEN	
Christmas and Easter Messages	269
The Power of Love	269
Christmas as a Celebration of God's Mercy to Humanity	272
Celebrating "The Light to Enlighten the Gentiles" (Lk 2:32; cf. Is 9:2)	278

“Consider Yourselves Dead to Sin and Alive to God In Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11)	282
CHAPTER EIGHT	
Gospel and Communications	285
Communicating Love at a Time of Economic Hardship	285
Communicating the Good News to the Poor (cf. Lk 4:18): Bridging the Social Breach	288
Conclusion	291

PREFACE

BISHOP AS SHEPHERD AND TEACHER OF THE FLOCK

The Second Vatican Council was clear in affirming that the bishops, as successors of the Apostles, are pre-eminently shepherds of the flock of God, “teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship and ministers for governing.”¹ Through his teaching and governance, the bishop guides the faithful to follow the right path that will lead them to salvation. By leading the people in sacred worship, especially the Eucharist, he sanctifies them and brings them closer to the heart of Jesus, thus preparing them for heaven. This is a delicate duty assigned to the bishops by Christ himself. Christ expects the faithful to follow their lead when He declared to the Apostles, “Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me” (Lk 10:16).

As shepherd, the bishop comes close to the flock, in order to hear the yearnings of their hearts and their cries for help and offer fitting remedy. By this, he would be able to live “with the odour of the sheep,”² to use the words of Pope Francis. Being close to the people also aids him to offer them distinct and clear direction, so that they may not wallow in theological and practical ambiguity, thus not knowing which road to follow to a

¹ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* no. 20.

² Pope Francis, Homily at Chrism Mass, 28 March 2013, St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome; available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html; accessed 3 October 2017.

good pasture. Even when necessity calls that he applies some disciplinary measures to correct errors,³ he does so with love and unimaginable solicitude for the flock, without discrimination, so that through him they could experience the love of the Father who tends to his flock with utmost tenderness and compassion and wishes that none of those given to him be lost.⁴

The bishop's life should be such that the people of God will see no contradiction between it and his teachings. He guides the people through holiness of life and selfless service to God, the Church and humanity. In short, the bishop is called to take after Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who offered his life for the flock.

The bishop cares for the priests with whom, as co-workers, he is involved in the work of guidance of the people of God and with whom he forms a single presbyterate.⁵ He promotes the vocations to the priesthood and the religious life within his jurisdiction, and works with the laity in promoting the Kingdom of God in the world. He forms the centre of the life of the Church in a given area and harnesses this for the greater glory of God and for the good and salvation of humanity.

In the messages contained in this book, Most Rev. Paulinus C. Ezeokafor has proven his sincere concern for the flock of God, through regular teaching and guidance. He does this with a fatherly heart and humility so infectious that the people of God are drawn by it to the heart of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd *par excellence*.

The book contains various subjects addressed by the Bishop to different people at various occasions, and is relevant to priests, religious men and women, and indeed to all Christ's faithful, irrespective of denomination or worship.

³ Cf. canon 392 § 1-2; 1341.

⁴Cf. Canon 383 §1.

⁵Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* no. 2.

I therefore encourage the people of God not to miss the golden opportunity provided them by our diocesan bishop on the pages of this powerful book.

***Jonas Benson Okoye**
Auxiliary Bishop of Awka

PREAMBLE

Brief Biography of Most Rev. Paulinus C. Ezeokafor

Most Rev. Paulinus Chukwuemeka Ezeokafor was born on 13 September 1952. He is the second child and first son of the six surviving children of late Mr. Raymond Enukebe Ezeokafor and late Mrs. Veronica Nwasinwa Ezeokafor of Ifite Nanka, Orumba-North Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria.

He had his primary education at St. Anthony Primary School, now Central School, Isiagwu-nwagu Ifite Nanka (1959-1966). On account of the Nigerian civil war, he could not go for the post primary studies immediately.

Three years later (1969), he gained admission into All Hallows Seminary Onitsha, which was at the time taking refuge on account of the civil war at Ukpor in Nnewi South Local Government Area, Anambra State. At the end of the civil war in 1970, the Seminary relocated to its original site in Onitsha. The young Paulinus successfully completed his post primary education in 1974, when he obtained his WASEC in Division One

After his post primary education, he was sent to the Archdiocesan Catholic Secretariat Onitsha, for one-year Apostolic Work (1974-1975); then to All Hallows Seminary Onitsha (1975-January 1976). On 7 January 1976, he was admitted into the Faculty of Philosophy, Bigard Memorial Seminary (now St. Joseph), Ikot-Ekpene. He completed his four-year philosophical studies in June 1979, and obtained a

Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy (B. Phil) from the Pontifical Urban University, Rome.

As he was determined to answer God's call to the Sacred Order of the Catholic Priesthood, he proceeded to Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu for a four-year theological studies (1979-1983), where he bagged Bachelor's Degree in Divinity B.D. (Hons), from the same Pontifical Urban University, Rome. Paulinus was ordained a deacon on 18 December 1982, and a priest on 30 June 1984 by his Lordship Most Rev. A.K. Obiefuna, at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Awka.

After his priestly ordination in 1984, he worked as the Parochial Vicar of All Saints Catholic Church, Awgbu (1984-1985). In October 1985, he was made the Parish Priest of St. John's Catholic Church, Neni. He worked at St. John's Parish until August 1992, when he left for Rome for post-graduate studies in Moral Theology.

It took him four years to complete his Master and Doctoral studies in Theology at the Pontificio Universita Della S' Croce Rome, the famous University of the Opus Dei. On his return to Nigeria in November 1996, he was appointed the Rector of St. Dominic Savio Seminary, Akpu, where he served efficiently for one decade. During these periods, he also served as the chaplain of different societies and sodalities in the diocese, as dean and episcopal vicar, and as member of different diocesan committees and bodies.

In October 2006, he was reassigned and made the Rector of St. John Bosco Seminary Isuaniocha, the post he held until his appointment and eventual ordination as the Auxiliary Bishop of Awka on 28 April 2007. On 18 July 2011, Most Rev. Paulinus was appointed to succeed Most Rev. Simon A. Okafor of blessed memory as the Bishop of Awka Diocese. He is currently the episcopal Chairman of the Committee on the Laity, Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN).

Since assuming the post of the chief shepherd of the diocese, Bishop Ezeokafor has unmistakably displayed enviable qualities for which a loving shepherd of souls should be known.

He is gentle, humble, and unassuming, always recollected, sociable, and very good in administration and general pastoral work. As a good pastor of his flock, the bishop is truly committed to living the ideals of the Catholic social teaching, especially the preferential option for the poor. This could be seen in his various charitable programmes for the less privileged in the society and his campaign for reduction of costs at funerals. His 2017 Pastoral Letter titled, *“Our True Home Is in Heaven” (Phil 3:20): Befitting Burial and Funeral for the Dead*, addressed this issue very extensively. His hobbies include reading, meditation, tennis, gardening, building, and designing.

Bishop’s Motto/Book Title - “May My Love Be with You All in Christ Jesus” (I Cor 16:21)

I chose the bishop’s motto as the title of this book principally because this year 2017 marks the 10th anniversary of his episcopal consecration. I judged it fitting to explore his teachings and life as a bishop against the background of what he chose at the moment of his ordination to the Sacred Order of bishops as an encapsulation of his vision and ideals. Without any pretension to read his mind, I can comfortably assert, within the bounds of sound theological reasoning and practical consideration, that when Most Rev. Paulinus Ezeokafor adopted as his motto - *“Caritas mea cum omnibus vobis in Christo Jesu”* (“May my love be with you all in Christ Jesus”), which is a text from I Cor 16:21, he intends to call our attention to the eternal significance of that reality - Love - that is at the very centre of the being and life of God (a Trinity of love); the uniting principle in the intra-Trinitarian life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the principal reality in the extra-Trinitarian divine actions of creating, governing, conserving, and redeeming of the entire universe.

The bishop surely wants Christians to contemplate the centrality of the love of God in their lives. John notes in his Gospel, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son” (Jn 3:16), meaning that His love for us is unbounded. Paul

reasons that having given us His Son, which is the highest of all gifts, God cannot withhold anything good from us (cf. Rom 8:32).

Our Christian faith is founded on this eternal love of God, driven by it, and has as its end the reconciliation and consummation of all in the love of God, who is Christ. In the last sentence of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (I Cor. 13:13), Paul sums up everything in love, meaning that, without it, all we are doing is in vain. He makes love the fulcrum of all human relationships and witnesses. Three things, Paul tells us, last, viz., faith, hope and love, the greatest of which is love.

By adopting this motto, the bishop depicts his positive response to the call of God to the Sacred Order of bishops as one to be modelled after God's love for humanity, especially realised in Christ. It is therefore a call to service and selflessness. It entails seeing the office as unmerited, but sustained by the love Christ has for His Church and humanity. That is why the pages of this book are flooded by the bishop's call on the priests and the people of God in the diocese to join forces with him in patterning their lives after Christ, the ultimate end, by whose exemplary life of selfless love our salvation was wrought.

Going through the messages, one immediately senses coherence of thought, clarity of direction, and practical demonstration of burning love for the flock. That is why it is so inviting at a glance as if one hears a voice speaking to him or her "*tolle et lege*" ("take and read"), as was the case with St. Augustine. As you pick it up and start to read, you discover instantly that it is captivating to read, and very impressive in its spiritual effects. In short, every Christian should take time to savour the wisdom embedded therein.

Methodology

The book is divided into two sections. Each of the sections is further divided into chapters. The eight chapters of the work are contained four in each of the sections. The first section

addresses the messages of the bishop to his priests, religious men and women working in the diocese, and seminarians. The messages of the bishop to his priests at their annual New-Year get-together form the bulk of this section of the work. This is followed by his messages to priests at their second plenary meeting of each year, which usually occurs in August or early September. It is at this meeting that the bishop ordinarily announces the new pastoral placements for priests for the upcoming pastoral year, which starts in October each year. His messages to priests at their regular seminars, theological and liturgical, at other gatherings, and to the religious and seminarians are not many compared to the above-mentioned two.

In the second section, I assembled the bishop's addresses to the people of God in general – messages to civil authorities, the youth and other organizations and sodalities in the Church. Also contained in this section are his messages at Easter and Christmas, as well as the annual World Communications Day. The bishop's annual Pastoral Letters and his messages to the Catholic Men Organization and Catholic Women Organization were deliberately omitted in this volume for methodological reasons. They could possibly form a strong part of subsequent compilations.

Appreciation

My special thanks go to my bishop, Most Rev. Paulinus C. Ezeokafor, whose thoughts and messages are compiled in this volume, especially as he celebrates the 10th anniversary of his episcopal consecration. With sincere prayers to God to sustain him in his ministry of selfless service to the people of God, I thank him for granting me the permission to compile and arrange this volume. The encouragement I receive from him, as his secretary, is second to none. The Auxiliary Bishop of the diocese, Most Rev. Jonas Benson Okoye did a great job in the Preface, by bringing to the consciousness of the reader the need to go through the messages from the perspective of faith and

with an ecclesiological mind-set that is truly Catholic. His effort deserves sincere appreciation.

I also thank my predecessor in the office Rev. Fr. Lawrence Nwankwo, whose dedication to duty gave me a huge boost. Rev. Fr. Anthony Chiegboka has done two volumes of compilations of the messages of late Most Rev. Simon A. Okafor, the immediate predecessor of Bishop Ezeokafor. Credit goes to him for the initiative, the line of which this current volume toes. Sir Emmanuel Nwakama KSS, who sponsored this publication, deserves to be appreciated for his kind heart and generous spirit. God will surely reward him abundantly. Indeed, the level of encouragement that the priests, the religious, and the lay faithful of Awka Diocese give to each other in their journey of faith is something to be proud of. May God continue to sustain us in the faith of our fathers, the ancient faith, so that we remain committed to it till death.

Rev. Fr. Michael Muonwe

Bishop's Secretary

(who compiled and arranged the publication)

To order a free copy of the book, kindly send your order request to makkymuo@yahoo.co.uk.

Please, note that you will bear the cost of postage. Postages to addresses outside Nigeria may not be honoured.