

PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO THE OTHER CITIES (LK. 4:43): THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AWKA DIOCESE ON THE MOVE IN THE SPIRIT OF SYNODALITY

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Abstract

Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry moved from place to place doing good and healing the sick. He never got endeared to a particular town or village to the extent of pitching his tent permanently there; rather he was constantly on the move and the impact of his message was felt everywhere. The apostles on their part engaged in missionary journeys aimed at spreading the kingdom of God in every nook and corner among the Jews and Gentiles. Further still, the Fathers of the Church carried long their own missionary engagement through their writings. In this way, they were able not only to spread God's message but also to defend it against heretics. The Church continues in that line as handed over by the apostles. She continues ceaselessly to proclaim of the message of the Gospel to the men and women of today taking cognizance of their historical and cultural contexts so as to help in a better and more lasting understanding of the message. However, sometimes some human elements like desire for power, ambition and tendency to stay put tend to create obstacle in this move. This research aims at unravelling how the pastors of souls in Catholic diocese of Awka has continued to keep the Church in motion in the spirit of synodality, notwithstanding the attendant challenges. The researcher used the qualitative methodology of sourcing information from available literatures and extracting the facts that aided the diocese in her move.

Keywords: Preaching, evangelization, synod, synodality, Awka Diocese

Introduction: Understanding the diocesan structure

Diocese is derived from the Latin word *Dioecesis* which in the time of the Roman Empire refers to a governor's area of jurisdiction which is a subdivision of a prefecture containing many provinces. However, it fundamentally derives from the Greek *dioikesis* which is a combination of *dia* meaning thoroughly and *oikos* literally meaning house but further refers to economy, housekeeping. Furthermore, the verbal form *dioikein* means "to control, govern, manage a house, administer". As time went on, it was adopted in the Latin Church to refer to a bishop's area of jurisdiction (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/dioecese>). It is interesting to note that, the secular diocese as in the time of the Roman Empire was subdivided into provinces, each with its own governor; but, in the Church's adaptation of the system, the province became the larger territorial unit, administered by a metropolitan bishop and subdivided into dioceses administered by bishops (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/dioecese>). It is in that light that the Code of Canon Law (c.369) defines a diocese as

a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a bishop for him to shepherd with the cooperation of the presbyterium, so that, adhering to its pastor and gathered by him in the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.

Dioceses are further divided into parishes each with its own pastor. However, Can. 526 §1 stipulates thus: "a pastor is to have the parochial care of only one parish; nevertheless, because of a lack of priests or other circumstances, the care of several neighboring parishes can be entrusted to the same pastor." In the same vein, when extraordinary situation arising from paucity of pastors arises, Can. 517 §1 adds that

the pastoral care of a parish or of different parishes together can be entrusted to several priests *in solidum*, with the requirement, however, that in exercising pastoral care one of them must be the moderator, namely, the one who is to direct the joint action and to answer for it to the bishop.

The Congregation for the Clergy (2020) referred to such grouping of parishes as pastoral units (cf. The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church, n. 55). Further still, for administrative purposes the diocese is divided into regions and deaneries. Congregation for the Clergy (2020) maintains that the vicar forane or dean is in charge of the vicariate forane or deanery (cf. Can. 553 §1). A group of vicariate foranes or deaneries which in some areas is designated as region could be manned by an episcopal vicar. According to Can. 476,

whenever the correct governance of a diocese requires it, the diocesan bishop can also appoint one or more episcopal vicars, namely, those who in a specific part of the diocese or in a certain type of affairs

or over the faithful of a specific rite or over certain groups of persons possess the same ordinary power which a vicar general has by universal law, according to the norm of the following canons.

The Catholic Diocese of Awka falls under this administrative category. It was erected by Pope Paul VI through the bull of erection dated 10 November 1977. The bull states thus:

Ab archidioecesi Onitshaënsis districtus administrativos, ut hodie dicunt, vulgo Awka, Njikoka, Aguata, et eam partem districtus vulgo Oji River quae ad archidioecesim Onitshaënsis pertinet, detrahimus, iisque novam dioecesim condimus, quae ab urbe principe regionis, Avhaënsis cognominabitur, et Sedi metropolitanae Onitshaënsi, e qua nata est, suffraganea erit. (We remove from the Archdiocese of Onitsha the administrative districts, as they are called today, commonly known as Awka, Njikoka, Aguata, and that part of the district commonly known as Oji River which belongs to the Archdiocese of Onitsha, and we establish a new diocese in them, which will be named after the principal city of the region, Awka, and will be a suffragan of the Metropolitan See of Onitsha, from which it was born).

Msgr. Albert Kanenechukwu Obiefuna was appointed as first bishop and was equally ordained on February 5, 1978. Thus marking the inauguration of the new Diocese. According to Ofojebe, W. and Obi F., (2017) “the focused leadership of Bishop Albert Obiefuna placed the Catholic Diocese of Awka on solid religious, moral, pastoral, educational, sociocultural and political standing.”

At its earliest beginning the diocese had about fifty priests and eighteen parishes. The diocese moved on and continued to strategize pastorally through the creation of more parishes and the building of the Diocesan Minor Seminary named St. Dominic Savio Seminary, at Akpu, Orumba North Local Government Area. The seminary was opened on October 1980. This was meant to cover the Junior Secondary level. Later in 1982, St. John Bosco Seminary, Isuaniocha in Awka South Local Government Area took off. It was aimed at taking the students of Senior Secondary level. But with the creation of the diocese of Ekwulobia the former now falls within the territory of Ekwulobia Diocese and the latter within the territory of Awka Diocese. In this way the diocese continued to grow in leaps and bounds. Following the pioneer bishop was Most Rev. Simon Okafor and the incumbent bishop, Most Rev. Paulinus Ezeokafor.

Unravelling the inner dynamics of preaching

Preaching is derived from the Latin verb “*praedico-are-avi-atum* – to make publicly known, proclaim, and publish” (Simpson, 1959). Basically, the preacher in our context is one who announces the “word of God” (dabar Yahweh)” (Komonchak, J.A. and Collins, M. (eds.) (1990). 792). It is the word of God that transforms the life of the people towards the good, “that brings good news to the poor, proclaims liberty to captives and sight to the blind and frees the oppressed...” (Lk. 4:18) and engenders positive attitudinal change and spiritual facelift to the people of God. “...So is my word that goes forth out my mouth: it will not return to me idle but it shall accomplish my will, the purpose for which it has been sent” (Isaiah 55:11).

Preaching is one of the moments in the whole gamut of evangelization. It is a process that answers the concern-laden missionary questions that go thus: “And how can they believe in him without having first heard about him? And how will they hear about him if no one preaches about him? And how will they preach about him if no one sends them? ... So faith comes from preaching, and preaching is rooted in the word of Christ” (Rom.10:14-15,17). The response to these pressing interrogations experiences a seeming dramatic reversal in the responses, which come in ascending order. Hence, someone is to be sent, he preaches, his preaching effects belief and faith is actualized. The primary venture then is mission. This is “the special undertakings in which preachers of the gospel, sent by the Church, and going into the whole world, carry out the work of preaching the Gospel...” (Vatican II, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, n.6).

In this way, evangelization is inaugurated. It goes with zealous but trusting concern to bring God’s message to all nations. It is the spreading of the Good News of salvation to all men. In the light of this Paul VI (1975) opines that:

evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.... The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelises when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.

Evangelization is composed of different components that help in disseminating the Gospel message to the grassroots; otherwise, it will appear too global. These moments though seemingly discreet in themselves,

nevertheless, have a central focus; that is, renewing the face of the earth and in our context extricating the poor from the shackles of intellectual, material and spiritual poverty by making the gospel meaningful to them.

It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelise the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus – the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, witness of sanctity.... (Also) a means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction”(*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn.. 41-44).

Preaching is therefore usually used interchangeably with homily; although there is a subtle nuance between them. Hence, “preaching is the oral proclamation of the Word of God made by the Church through her ministers to the community of the faithful in such a way as to induce a response to the demands that the Word makes” (New Catholic Encyclopaedia vol. 7, 1981:114). On the other hand, homily is “an exposition of the mysteries of faith and the guiding principles of the Christian life expounded from the sacred text read in the liturgy during the liturgical assembly” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* n.52). It is “a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ ever made present and active within us, especially during the celebration of the sacred liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* n.35). Apparently, there is no doubting the fact that preaching in the words of John Paul II (1990: n.44) should fundamentally be anchored on “...Christ who was crucified, died and is risen: through him is accomplished our full and authentic liberation from evil, sin and death; through him God bestows “new life” that is divine and eternal. This is the “Good News” which changes man and his history, and which all peoples have a right to hear.”

Against this background, it is crystal clear that although all men are called through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation to bear witness to the Gospel, preaching in this context, is meant for the pastors of soul. “Proclaiming the Gospel is a ministry deriving from the Sacrament of Orders and is exercised by the authority of Christ” (Congregation for the clergy^{n.15}). Therefore, the pastor of soul affirms John Paul II (1985: n.26) “proclaims the word in his capacity as the “minister,” as a sharer in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church.” In the same vein, the priest as the collaborator with the bishop and his mouthpiece, “owe it to everybody to share with them the truth of the Gospel in which they rejoice in the Lord.” (Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Decree on the ministry and life of priests, n.4).

This divine assignment requires an assiduousness that is equiperable with its demands. The ministry of preaching apart from being a liturgical activity aimed at getting the faithful abreast with the demands of mystery of salvation equally requires a psychological skill that enables the preacher to take into consideration the various levels of mental development of his audience. It should therefore not be a mere Babel of words or a persistently uncoordinated bandying on words; but rather a grace-filled thought that flows from one’s encounter with the Lord in prayer. John Paul II (1985) admonishingly writes, “...the priest himself ought first of all to develop a great personal familiarity with the word of God.... He needs to approach the word with a docile and prayerful heart so that it may deeply penetrate his thoughts and feelings and bring about a new outlook in him...” As a corollary Gregory Nazianzus (1996:219) stressed on the sanctity of life when he advised that priests “before purifying others, they must purify themselves; to instruct others they must be instructed; they must have to become light in order to illuminate and become close to God in order to bring others closer to Him; they have to be sanctified in order to sanctify.” Therefore, what is preached should not be a mere show of eloquence or rhetoric, but ought to cohere to a reasonable degree with the life of the preacher. A preaching that is incongruent with the life of the preacher is at best a hypocritical exercise. Exemplary life is, therefore, a more efficacious preaching.

Albeit, preaching must be contextualized to the life situation of the people. It will be more meaningful when the mystery of faith is interpreted to address the concrete life of the people; condemning evil and extolling the good deeds. The poor, widows, orphans, downtrodden, oppressed, rejected and dejected must find solace in the gospel message. Preaching that avoids concrete application risks saying nothing. To this issue of concretising the gospel, Vagaggini (1976) adds that “preaching must be in contact with the true situation, personal, familial, social, economic etc., in which our faithful do in fact find themselves today, the problems which are of vital interest to them in their daily lives.” We must make haste to caution that the doctrine of the Church should not be watered down in the bid to make it concrete. The pastors of soul ought to be ardently zealous with the preaching of the gospel for it is the primary instrument of evangelization. Adequate seriousness should be brought to bear in the manner the Word of God is presented by the preacher bearing in mind that ministry of preaching is a sacred exercise and must be treated as such. To realise this demand,

elegant accurate language, comprehensible to contemporary men and women of all social backgrounds, is always useful for preaching. Banal commonplace language should be eschewed. While preachers must speak from an authentic vision of faith, a vocabulary must be employed which is comprehensible in all

quarters and must avoid specialized jargon or concessions to the spirit of materialism... Preachers should know their objectives and have a good understanding of the existential and cultural reality of their congregations... every preacher should know his flock well and use an attractive style which, rather than wounding people, strikes the conscience and is not afraid to call things for what they really are. (Congregation for the clergy, 1999:20).

For preaching to yield the desired fruit, it should be “simple, clear, straightforward, well adapted to the hearers and firmly rooted in the teaching of the gospel. It must follow the magisterium and should be inspired and guided by that apostolic zeal which is inherent in it. It must be full of salutary hope and foster peace and unity” (Paul VI, 1975:n.43).

Preaching the kingdom of God

The earthly life of Jesus Christ is summed up in the fact of proclamation of the Gospels. John Paul II (1994 n.40) described him as the “proclaimer of the Gospel.” He himself is the evangelizer. In the words of Fisichella (1996) “he who is the Gospel becomes at the same time Proclaimer of the Gospel.... Christ the evangelizer renders every believer an evangelizer. He sends every Christian into the great city of this world to take a message which many have no time for...” Preaching the kingdom of God is a huge responsibility. Consequently, preachers have to bear in mind always that they “have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7) and as such susceptible to untold vulnerability. To that effect, the daily life of the preacher must not contradict the gospel he/she preaches. He/she should be embellished with all virtues. For his/her life is the first channel of evangelization.

It is of utmost importance to note that the preacher of the kingdom has to pay deep-seated attention to the main area of his/her work: preaching the word of God and casting out demons. Preaching the word of God is not a solitary assignment. The disciples were sent two by two. It is an ecclesial mission. It is an expression that the Christian life is lived in community; expressed in fraternal communion and not in atomic individualism. In the light of such fraternal communion “if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:10). Francis (2023) urges Christians not to keep their Christian hope to themselves because it is meant for everyone; rather they have to remain “open, like canals in which the hope of Jesus can flow and spread in all the areas where you live.”

Their apostolic strength is Christ himself who sent them; the mission is entrusted to them by Christ who works through them and they are working in the name of Christ. Therefore, they must be totally engrafted in Christ in order to be meaningfully engaged in the mission and spiritually enriching to others. They are called to be witnesses of the Gospel in season and out of season; and to carry the banner of Christ and preach his word.

More still, the only authority that Christ gave to his disciples is that of casting out demons. This does not in any way refer primarily to the practice of exorcism. It could rather refer to everything that dehumanizes and demonizes such as the disgusting disposition of living contradictory life, chronic desire for ambition, wanton accumulation of wealth, the promotion of injustice, flagrant extortion of the gullible masses and every other form of dishonesty in the name of the gospel, All these create a dehumanized world that is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. But wherever and in whoever the word of gospel is truly incarnated these demons automatically take to flight. That goes to say that the word of God cannot cohabit with these demons. Therefore, to be part of Christ means to assume what is proper to him.

Understanding Synod on synodality

Synod is derived from the Greek preposition *syn* meaning “with, together with” and *hodos* meaning “way, path.” So *syn-hodos* literally means walking together, assembly, meeting, reunion (Rocci, 1966). It is translated in Latin as *synodus* or *concilium*. Synod therefore indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. That working together, that path must lead and refer to the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:6), and to the fact that Christians, His followers, were originally called “followers of the Way” (International Theological Commission, (2018). *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, n.3).

At this juncture, it is important to note that, synod of bishops can be assembled in a general session, that is one which treats matters that directly pertain to the good of the Universal Church: such a session is either ordinary or extraordinary. It can also be assembled in a special session, namely, one which considers affairs that directly pertain to a determinate region or regions. (Cf. Can. 345)

Ordinary General Session consists of members of whom the greater part are bishops elected from each session by the conferences of bishops according to the method determined by the special law of the synod; others are appointed directly by the Roman Pontiff; to these are added some members of clerical religious institutes elected according to the norm of the same special law. Such ordinary general sessions of the synod have treated issues like evangelization, family life, formation of priests etc. (cf. Can. 346 §1).

A synod of bishops gathered in an Extraordinary General Session to treat affair which requires a speedy solution consists of members of whom the greater part are bishops designated by the special law of the synod by reasons of the office which they hold (cf. Can. 346 §2). Others are appointed directly by the Roman Pontiff to these are added some members of clerical religious institutes elected according to the norm of the same special law. One convoked in 1985 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II.

A synod of bishops gathered in a Special Session consists of members especially selected from those regions for which it was called, according to the norm of the special law which governs the synod e.g synod for Africa, Europa, Oceania etc. (cf. Can. 346 §3).

On the other hand, synodality involves a process of examining the synodal process itself, in order to ensure that the walking together is actually and fully put into proper action without throwing overboard any constitutive element. In fact, synodality is the specific *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission. (International Theological Commission, (2018:n.6). Further still, synodality indicates the particular “*style* that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Synodality ought to be expressed in the Church’s ordinary way of living and working.” (Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, 2021). Indeed synodality reflects the dynamism of ecclesial communion. It is a communion that ought to be all-involving, the bishops with the priests and their collaborators. All in all, in this synodality “the communion of the faithful (*communio fidelium*) is at the same time the communion of the Churches (*communio Ecclesiarum*), which is manifested in the communion of the bishops (*communio episcoporum*)” (XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024: n.10). All in all, “synodality can be understood as Christians walking in communion with Christ toward the Kingdom along with the whole of humanity. Its orientation is towards mission, and its practice involves gathering in assembly at each level of ecclesial life. It involves reciprocal listening, dialogue, community discernment, and creation of consensus as an expression that renders Christ present in the Holy Spirit, each taking decisions in accordance with their responsibilities” (XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 2024: n.5).

Awka Diocese: The ‘Church on the move’

Jesus Christ moved from town to town preaching the Good News of salvation. He was not restricted to a particular town. Even when the people wanted to make him king he fled from them. “Traveling to neighboring villages and throughout the whole of Galilee (and beyond), Jesus remained continually on the move so that everyone could benefit from his saving words and works.... It is precisely by going beyond what people expected of him that Jesus accomplished his saving mission” (Kadavil, A. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2018-02/sunday-gospel-commentary.html> 2/2/2018). In the same vein, Francis (2020) often insists that the Church does not need to be closed up to herself. “The mission, the ‘Church on the move’, is not a programme, an enterprise to be carried out by sheer force of will. It is Christ who makes the Church go out of herself. In the mission of evangelization, you move because the Holy Spirit pushes you, and carries you.” It is a move that is founded on hope. Such “Christian hope sustains the journey of our lives, even when the road ahead seems winding and exhausting. It opens our eyes to future possibilities whenever resignation or pessimism attempts to imprison us. It makes us see the promise of good at times when evil seems to prevail” (Francis, 2024).

The pastor of souls like Christ is on the move. Not moving in terms of sauntering about but rather with the aim of bringing hope and joy to the Christ’s faithful. Such assignment is to be accepted with joy, initiated joyfully and committedly carried out more joyfully so that the Gospel message will continue to bear positive fruit; ‘for this is why he is sent.’ Indeed, “the Father has sent him (Christ) to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. Jesus explicitly affirms that Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in his person and his preaching. “For this why I am sent”, Jesus says, as if to underline the purpose of his mission and to remove all doubts as to what he intends to do. From then on he will go from village to village, from town to town, seeking out those who are lonely and abandoned, he will share the plight of the poor in order to make visible through his life, his words, his gestures, the Father’s loving mercy.” (Fisichella, 1996)

In the same spirit, the Catholic Diocese of Awka is constantly on the move in the spirit of synodality. From the handful number of priests in its beginning, the diocese now boasts of about three hundred and eight six indigenous priests, one hundred and sixteen parishes, and many chaplaincies. Many of the priests work within the diocese but a reasonable number work in diaspora within or outside Nigeria. However, on 5th March 2020, the Catholic Diocese of Ekwulobia was carved out Awka Diocese to the greater glory of God. It is important to note that with the passage of time more Local Government Areas were created in Nigeria which added Anaocha, Awka South,

Awka North, Dunukofia, Orumba South, Orumba North, within the territory of Awka Diocese. In the light of that, the papal bull for the erection of Ekwulobia Diocese reads:

Proinde, Apostolicae Nostrae potestatis plenitudine, territorium in praesens finibus circumscriptum civilis regionis vulgo Anambra State, ex tribus constitutae districtibus vulgo Aguata, Orumba North et Orumba South nuncupatis, a dioecesi Avkaënsi distrahi statuimus atque ex ita distracto territorio novam dioecesim, EKVULOBIANAM usurpandam, erigimus ac constituimus. (Consequently, with the fullness of our Apostolic authority, the designated territory in the boundaries of the civil region known as Anambra State, from the three districts commonly called Aguata, Orumba North and Orumba South, we decided that they be separated from Awka diocese and so from the dismembered territory, we erect and constitute a new diocese called Ekwulobia).

The creation of the new diocese obviously manifests an additional evidence of growth and letting the gospel reach the grassroots. In the same vein, the growth in faith is evidenced by Church that is journeying together with all and sundry. The lay faithful have full participation in the life of the Diocese through the statutory bodies – Catholic Men Organization, Catholic Women Organization, Catholic Youth Organization, and the Holy Child Association. All of these bodies form the Laity Council. More so, in the spirit of listening without neglecting any voice, the lay faithful contribute regularly and positively to the growth of the Diocese. Such deep involvement of the lay faithful has in no small measure continued to enhance more active participation and communion. In other words, since the creation of the diocese, a steady material and spiritual increase in the faith has been registered and noticed. Despite increase in the number of ministers, the burden of work has continued to grow steadily and the grace of God has continued to nourish the faith of his people. (Our history, how we started, <https://catholicdioceseofawka.org/history/25/7/2025>).

In the same token, the school apostolate both in the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in the Diocese has continued to grow and improve. All effort is geared towards not only catching them young but also nourishing a continuity in other levels of education. The vision is that the child will be trained in such a way that he/she will be useful to himself, to the parents, to the society and in the end gain eternal life. Summarily, in the end they will be found worthy primarily in character and then in learning.

According to the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care." In response to that, the Catholic Church in Awka Diocese has devoted much interest in the hospital apostolate. Thus the diocese to follow the step of Jesus Christ himself who went about healing the sick among other things. The diocese therefore not only preaches the gospel but also cares for the sick and the needy.

Regrettably, even as the Diocese takes noble pastoral strategies towards the preaching of the kingdom to other cities, there is an obvious pastoral challenge that bedeviling the Church and that is, the ugly element of young people abandoning the church and going back to traditional religion. It calls for urgent re-evaluation of pastoral method and the need for re-catechizing the lay faithful. That calls for an urgent attention to the culture of the people in the process of re-evangelization. On that note, for effective and adequate communication of the content of the deposit of faith, one needs to pay ample attention to questions of culture. In fact,

Culture is the vital space within which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel. Just as a culture is the result of the life and activity of the human group, so the persons belonging to that group are shaped to a large extent by the culture in which they live ... From this perspective, it becomes clearer why evangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related to each other ... the Kingdom of God comes to a people who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing elements from human cultures (John Paul II, 2000 n.21).

Conclusion

There is an Italian dictum that says *Chi sta fermo è perduto* (He/she who hesitates is lost). However, it literally means "who stands still is lost". This is a call for constant movement, that is, activity, catechetical and pastoral initiatives. These initiatives are not expected to be impeccable but rather grows to maturity through necessary pruning and chiseling. He who is on the move has boundless hope and conversion. In the movement one can get soiled up but that is also part of the movement. When the dirt is cleared, life goes on, lessons are learnt and improvements are made.

The Catholic Diocese of Awka has weathered the storms of many challenges in the process of her growth. Those challenges have made her stronger. As a mother diocese that has generated another diocese, it assumes the full

role of *mater et magistra* (mother and teacher). The pastoral fecundity has through a generative process given birth to many parishes, chaplaincies, schools, hospitals and a plethora of pastoral endeavours.

As the diocese continues on her move, the challenges will continue to be addressed unstopably because church is dynamic in nature.

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