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# Catholic Communications Ltd

Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, Media House, P.M.B. 5099 Nnewi  
Anambra State, Nigeria. Tel. (+234).803.799.1656, 0803.798.7301

**October 10, 2022**

## **THE SPIRITANS IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NNEWI**

The attention of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi has been drawn to multiple documents circulating on the internet alleging that the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi has sacked the Spiritans from ministering in the diocese.

The Spiritan Fathers have, over the years of the life of the young Nnewi Diocese, been a force to reckon with. They will remain beloved. Recently though, some pastoral exigencies have necessitated some adjustments which may in the face, appear not immediately welcomed but for the benefits and salvation of souls, remain the most appropriate pastoral steps to take. After several dialogues the Bishop directed them and few other congregations to leave the parishes where they had care-of-souls. All other congregations complied except the Spiritans in St Martin of Tours Parish, Ihiala. Their claims are: that the Parish was given to them in perpetuity; and that the Bishop relieved them of the pastoral responsibilities without due process.

However, apart from emotions, the Church says that a Religious can be removed from the office entrusted to him or her at the discretion of the Authority who entrusted it after notifying the Religious Superior. And, the Bishop did exactly this. On the other note of having St. Martin of Tours in perpetuity, it is instructive to know that the term perpetuity in Church' life means that a gift is irrevocable until such time as the competent authority or one' successor determines otherwise. Hence, perpetuity is determined by the will of the competent Superior.

The backgrounds that led to the adjustments affecting the Spiritans are these:

- i. The uncooperative attitude of the Spiritans towards the resolution of the dispute between the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi and her landlords in respect of the land where both the Holy Ghost Juniorate and St. Martin of Tours Parish Ihiala are situated.
- ii. The disabusing of the mind of the faithful over the creation of St. Mary Mother of God Parish Eziani, an outstation, hitherto, of St. Martin of Tours Parish, Ihiala. Their situation arrived to the point of locking out the Bishop' Vicar from celebrating the Holy Mass in the Church on Sunday June 26, 2022.

The Catholic Diocese of Nnewi states that there is no crisis within the Diocese and that it has no prejudice or bias against the Spiritans or any Religious Order at all. After all the Holy Ghost Juniorate Ihiala and their Spiritan Mega Farm Okija are untouchable. We all have one mission and are collaborators with the Bishop in the work of evangelization within the Diocese.

**Rev. Fr. Martin Onwudiwe**

Director, Catholic Communications, Nnewi Diocese



# Nnewi Diocesan Priests Association (NDIPA)

Motto: The Family of God on Mission

October 10, 2022

## **SPIRITANS STAKING OUR BISHOP' REPUTATION: NDIPA REACTS**

Some of us are privy to a recent letter of appeal to the Congregation for the Institute of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life signed by Very Rev. Fr. Greg Olikaenyi CSSp., the outgoing Provincial of the Congregation, and co-signed by Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Nwosu CSSp., the incumbent Provincial Superior, they stated inter-alia that tension is mounting in the Diocese and especially in Ihiala." One wonders what is the purpose of these malicious and misleading assertions, more so when they are coming from people who should know.

Fr. Olikaenyi is from Lilu town and Fr. Nwosu hails from Nnewi town both in Nnewi Diocese.

Would they please explain to the public where these tensions are mounting, or, would their priests in St. Martin of Tours Parish Ihiala, led by Fr. Valentine Eze, inform the public in which of the 14 parishes in Ihiala town there is unrest. In point of fact, there is in no Region, Deanery, and Parish of this Diocese in which there is a public demonstration or unrest. How would ordained Catholic priests be involved in calculated efforts to malign our beloved Bishop who, since the inception of office, has been labouring strenuously to sustain order and discipline in various spheres of the diocesan life for which both the priests and lay faithful are giving him their maximum support? How would these Spiritan Priests, with all these calculated and mischievous attempts continue to damage the image of the Holy Mother Church, because of selfish reasons devoid of the ultimate salvation of souls!

The new parish of St. Mary Mother of God Ihiala has just been carved out from St. Martin of Tours Parish Ihiala. The Spiritans resisted this for five years. They had been reporting to our emeritus Bishop the Most Rev. Hilary Odili Okeke that they were not yet ready to become a parish. But on Sunday 9th October 2022, the new Parish celebrated her first Holy Mass with their new Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Paulinus Enemu. The Holy Mass began by 6.30am with great attendance. After the Holy Mass, the Parishioners were so overjoyed and his welcome turned into a carnival that lasted till about 12 midday.. This is joy and hope that the CSSp' have bottled up for years.

Is it not evident enough that both the outgoing and incoming Superiors are, perhaps unknowingly, out to deceive and mislead the Holy See, the people of God, and the general public? Should it be pointed out to them the grave responsibility on their shoulders to have to repair the damage which they have done to our Bishop' good name, in the light of can. 220? The Canon states, inter- alia, that "no one is permitted to harm illegitimately the good reputation which a person possesses..."

Rev Fr Linus Iloegesi  
President

Rev Fr Emmanuel Chukwujekwu  
Secretary