

Indigenization Of Catholic Charismatic Renewal: The Role Of The Less Privileged

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Abstract

Pentecostalism which translates to charismatism in the mainline churches was propelled by the less privileged Christians. The consequent implosion of charismatism within the Catholic Church was dominated by the activities of these grassroots Christians. Many of them faced great opposition by the members of their former churches and were therefore forced to found their own churches. A good number remained in their parent churches and worked assiduously to bring about spiritual renewal. However, within the Catholic Church in Nigeria, the early charismatics were empowered by the visit of some foreign missionaries. But it must be pointed out that charismatic features were internally induced through the Tuesday prayer groups by Father Ikeobi, and similar organizations run by some Catholic Priests. However, after the visit of MacNutt, some intrepid but less privileged Christians were emboldened to start private prayer meetings. They experienced some difficulties and suffered many indignities from their older Christian brethren. But their persistence and doggedness won the attention of the church's hierarchy. Consequently some priests joined them and helped in controlling their seeming excesses. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria in 1991 produced a guideline that is in use within the Catholic Church till the present.

Introduction

Pentecostalism which did not entirely leave Christendom experienced a resurgence in early 20th century. The terms "Pentecostal" and "Charismatic" are often used interchangeably and even scholars find difficulty in making a

distinction between the two terms because they have common features. However "Pentecostal" refers to those who belong to classical denominations like the Assemblies of God, Foursquare Gospel church etc. On the other hand, charismatics are those operating within the mainline denominational churches. But considered separately as Pentecostalism or charismatism or jointly as Pentecostal-charismatism, it is worthy of note that it has enjoyed unprecedented acceptance after its early rejection, and consequently a phenomenal growth, the world over. Pentecostalism therefore is a worldwide phenomenon, having penetrated almost all countries of the world.

For the purpose of this article, the term 'less privileged' refers to those charismatics whose education is scarcely up to average. It refers also to those charismatics that are poor even though there are a few rich ones among them who generously support their course. It further refers to those charismatics whose holiness ethic is puritanical and generally aim at heaven; and whose liturgical knowledge concerning the Catholic Church is not particularly deep. They are the vast masses of Christians who desire to deepen their knowledge of the word of God, but who are not particularly endowed more than their peers. The above ideology and the expectations of material blessings and a better life in the hereafter combine to make them a formidable force within the Catholic Christianity in Nigeria. The church's top hierarchy restricted and controlled those who wrote asking for permission to propagate the CCRN for fear of its outcomes. Indigenization depicts the domestication of this foreign religious fervour.

This paper therefore argues that the success story of Pentecostalism is made possible by the dominant roles played by the less privileged or the grassroots people. It further argues that the activities of the charismatics have helped the hierarchy within Catholic Christianity to indigenize the movement. But did Pentecostalism or charismatism enjoy a smooth beginning? Were the Pentecostals and charismatics easily accepted within their church groups? Available accounts show otherwise.

Early Charismatic/Pentecostal Experience

The experiences of the early Pentecostals and charismatics were not palatable. They were rejected in their former churches for daring to believe some strange doctrines. The Pentecostals believe in all miracles of the bible and covet the experience at the present day: healing the sick through prayer, prophecy, conversions and speaking with tongues (Hollenweger 1972:41). Synan(ed) (2001:xxii), Burgess, Van Der Maars (eds) (2002:xxii) Ward in Synan (ed) (1975:99ff) attest to the Pentecostals/Charismatics high level of

rejection in their church groups. Indeed, many Pentecostals and charismatics were actually disfellowshipped in their former churches and were consequently forced to start their own churches. They equally suffered untold indignities from their fellow Christians. According to Nichol (1966:70):

Within a short time, however, the Pentecostal revival became the object of scurrilous attacks. It was denounced as "anti-Christian", as "sexual and devilish", and as "the last vomit of Satan". Its adherents were taunted and derided from the pulpit as well as in the religious and secular press. Some leaders were actually subjected to violence. Those ministers and missionaries from the old-line denominations who embrace the doctrine of the Holy Spirit baptism were removed from their pulpits or dismissed by their mission board.

This seeming untoward behaviour against the early Pentecostals was very common in one country after another. However, the Pentecostals were undaunted by the actions of their fellow Christians against them. It was under this atmosphere that Father Francis MacNutt visited Nigeria with his team and organized Seminar-Retreats on Charismatic Renewal in many parts of Nigeria in 1974. It must be observed however, that Father Godwin Ikeobi had started his Tuesday prayer at Nnewi and Monsignor Mathew Obiukwu also started a similar prayer group at Immaculate Heart parish Onitsha before the arrival of MacNutt and his team. Nonetheless, the awareness and enthusiasm created by MacNutt's visit made people to be eager to start prayer meetings.

Attempts By Priests And The Laity At Starting Prayer Meetings

The domestication of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria came in two waves: the church hierarchy and a few courageous but less-privileged individuals. While the Nigerian Catholic bishops were still studying the movement, attempts were made at the base community for a follow up on the seminar-Retreat organized by Francis MacNutt and his team on the renewal movement.

Dundon (1974:1) a Jesuit priest in the Chemistry Department of the University of Benin wrote a letter to Priests and Sisters to join the beginnings of the charismatic Renewal. Part of the letter is as follows:

Many have asked me about the follow up on the promising beginnings made during the seminar-Retreat on Charismatic Renewal, of which I served as local coordinator during October. I am happy to communicate to you.

1. Bishop Patrick E. Ekpu has appointed Father Gregory Abiebhode as chairman of the committee for Charismatic Renewal in the Diocese.

2. Life in the Spirit Seminar will be held during January and February at Ekpoma under the leadership of Brother Gerry Becker S.M. They will be on seven Saturdays beginning January 4 at 10.30 a.m and finishing at noon. These seminars consist of a short talk followed by a small group discussion.

3. Father MacNutt's book Healing and other paperbacks on Charismatic Renewal are on sale at the Cathedral bookshop, Benin City. I am more convinced each day of the rich potential of the Catholic Pentecostal Movement in our state. Since its founding only 18 months ago at Holy Cross Cathedral Benin, three candidates for the priesthood have come forward from the Pentecostal movement. More will follow, I feel confident. The match between the promise of this movement and the spiritual needs of our Diocese seems to me to be perfect.

The author of the above letter also wrote a personal letter to Archbishop Arinze inviting him to come for the Life in the spirit seminar at Brother Romans centre in Ekpoma on Saturday at 10.30 am from January 4 through February 15, 1975 and to help disseminate the information in his diocese. It is instructive that no action seemed to have been taken on Dundon's letters. However, George Akubeze of 58 Oguta road Onitsha in the same 1975 wrote Archbishop Arinze asking for his permission to start a prayer meeting. Akubeze was inspired to write after reading Richard Farmer's letters. Akubeze opined that the purpose of prayer meetings in to praise and glorify God as God's true children. Since prayer meetings have no rigid liturgical formalities, Richard farmer recommended some procedures (generally used in organizing prayer meetings) which Akubeze mentioned in his letter.

According to Akubeze (1975:1) they include.

- a) Hymns: Members can lead in hymns in turns. It is hoped that there will be guitar musical accompaniment.
- b) Prayers: Spontaneous prayers by individual members. These can include psalms and canticles.
- c) Scripture Readings: Members shall prepare passages privately before hand to read in the prayer meetings. Discussions shall follow, arising from what was read.
- d) Testimonies of the powerful working of the Spirit in people's lives and the exercise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, particularly the gift of tongues and interpretation, prophesy and healing. It is advised that we should have open minds to the spirit so that he can move us to say what he wants said. It is warned that one must have the gift of discernment of spirits by which he is able to distinguish between his own spirit speaking, the Holy Spirit speaking and the evil spirits speaking. Akubeze got a reply to his letter, encouraging him to associate himself with the Tuesday prayer organized by Godwin Ikeobi. According Arinze (2 July, 1975:1):

The conducting of prayer meetings has been studied in Onitsha Archdiocese and I have adopted the policy that for the moment only priests approved by me are to conduct such. I do not therefore approve of your starting or conducting any such meeting. But I advise you to attend that conducted once a week in your parish of Christ the King by Rev. Father Godwin Ikeobi. Similar prayer meetings are conducted once a week in Fegge church and in the Cathedral. You can choose any you wish. If you have still a point to raise, please refer to my secretary.

The following year, efforts were made by the church hierarchy at Onitsha to approve more prayer meetings in more parishes. This is because people, dominantly the less privileged, desired and attended these prayer meetings en mass. Archbishop Arinze wrote a letter to the priests in the parishes that ran such prayer meetings, for a meeting with him. The letter was addressed to the parish priests of Madonna parish Agulu, Holy Trinity Cathedral parish Onitsha, Christ the King Parish Onitsha, Ekwulobia Catholic Parish, Immaculate Heart Parish Fegge Onitsah, St. John Cross Parish Nnewi, Sacred Heart Parish Odoakpu Onitsha and Catholic Parish Umuoji.

Arinze (1976, Letter) wrote to the concerned clergy in the following words:
 Rt. Rev. Monsignor/My Dear Fathers.

Meeting Of Priests Who Conduct Prayer Meetings

In the past three years a prayer meeting has been started in your parish with my approval. These non-liturgical prayers, from available reports do answer a felt need. They help to deepen faith and to reduce or remove the attraction of the "Alleluia Churches".

It is to be expected that problems will arise as each priest experiments. It is now necessary, or at least very useful, that all the priests in the archdiocese who run these prayer meetings should meet to exchange experiences, to assess successes and failures, to underline dangers and negative results, to arrange how to avoid excesses, and to search for a common approach on how to get the best out of these prayer meetings.

I therefore hereby ask Father G. Ikeobi to call a meeting of all the Archdiocesan Fathers who run these meetings. Where the prayer meeting in any of the parishes mentioned above is conducted by the Assistant Priest, I should be grateful if this letter is passed on to him. He is the one to attend the meeting which Father Ikeobi will call. If I am in Onitsha that day, I shall be happy to say a word of welcome to the meeting.

Two months after, the above meeting was held. Archbishop Arize did the opening address. He spoke on spontaneous prayers which started three years back. He remarked that unlike an average protestant, our Catholics had not attained the mastery of spontaneous prayers because we intend to be over intellectual and rigid. He observed further that the object of these prayer meetings would not simply be to get bodily cures but "to share prayers with others, pray for others, share the scripture readings and understand one's sufferings with Christ. The purpose of holding meeting of prayer meeting organizers, was to see the progress and failures of these prayer meetings and to exchange views with those who organized them.

The organizers deliberated on the methods or style of organizing the

prayer-meeting. Matthew Obiukwu's method was: praying the Rosary, Hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Holy Mass, Scripture Readings and meditations, talks from individuals and individual prayers. Godwin Ikeobi was of the opinion that prayer meetings should not be formularized but rather instinctive and spontaneous with the active personal involvement of the organizer.

The problems confronting the prayer-meeting organizers were looked into. It was agreed that a sympathetic approach merely solved the problem's half-way. But this sympathetic approach satisfies the grassroots people and even when their problems were not solved, they always go home happy. The problems experienced by the less privileged people did not invite any manner of philosophizing, but taking-things-as-they-are-told and leading the person to the point where he could take decisions. It was agreed within the meeting that the prayer meeting must be organized within the holy mass. John Mary Anojulu was of the view that foreign elements like the clapping of hands should not be allowed since it will liken the prayer-meetings to those of the "Uka Ekpere" (praying church) or the Aladura churches. But Anojulu's observation does not pass muster. According Achunike (2004:69):

Clapping and dancing are in themselves indifferent, and they have been used by biblical worshippers. There is nothing absolutely wrong with hand clapping. Hand clapping is biblical (Psalm 47:1). And hand clapping is African. We have to humbly learn from our separated brethren the good things *they have*.

However, people in some prayer meetings have been clapping and dancing with some exuberance. The names of priest-organizers of prayer meetings who attended the September, 9, 1976 meeting were as follows.

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Names	Priests/Town	Day Of Prayer Meeting	Time
Fr. G. Ikeobi	Christ the King Parish, Onitsha.	Wednesdays	7.p.m
Msgr. M. Obiukwu	Sacred Heart Parish Odoakpu, Onitsha	Tuesdays	7.30 a.m
Fr. J. Uto	Umuoji Parish	Tuesdays	9. a.m
Fr. R.C. Ebedeagu	Nnewi Parish	Wednesdays	9. a.m
Fr. J.M. Anojulu	Holy Trinity Cathedral Parish, Onitsha.	Wednesdays	5.p.m- 8.p.m
Fr. S. Azuka	Madonna Parish, Agulu	Wednesdays	8. a.m
Fr. B. Azuka	Akpu Parish		

A Critical Look At The Formation Of Prayer Meeting

In April, 1977 Father Ikeobi studied and evaluated the charismatic prayer group run at Odoakpu, Onitsha by Msgr. M. Obiukwu. Ikeobi looked at the positive and negative aspects and the dangers associated with the charismatic solutions which worked for other countries may not be the wise thing for us to do, here in Nigeria. He suggested an in-depth knowledge of our people and constant trying and changing of things to arrive at something we can call our own. (Ikeobi, 1977: 5) He further suggested caution with regard to clapping and dancing even though he used these features at his Tuesday prayer group. He finally, advised that M. Obiukwu should listen to the remarks and reactions of the good Christians around him. He concluded that Obiukwu was doing a nice job as it was not easy to start and sustain an innovation. Obiukwu (1977:1-3) equally did a write-up on charismatic renewal movement. He pointed out that the movement was aimed at deepening the faith of members and in this way helped the people to enter into deeper relationship with God. To achieve this aim, charismatics assiduously read the Bible to know more about Christ and his works and especially the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Obiukwu further remarked that the charismatics have weekly prayer meeting where members devote a lot of time for

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spontaneous prayer, meditation, singing praises while worshipping God with joy and emotion. The principal inspiration of these prayer meetings is the Lord's promise of "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" Matt 18:20, and also Psalm 150:6 (Obiukwu 1977:2) Obiukwu seemed to be conscious of the dangers in the renewal movement. He insisted that members should avoid illuminism and religious indifferentism and must guard against holier than thou attitude. Charismatics must uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church. He suggested that charismatics should act as a leaven among Christians in Onitsha Archdiocese.

Pressure From The Grassroots People From Outside Onitsha Archdiocese To Establish Prayer Meeting

Okafor (1977: 1) of 88 Uselu Lagos Road Benin City wrote Archbishop Arinze a letter in defense of the charismatics. He proposed that the Archbishop should read Matthew 12:36. He further proposed that the Archbishop should also read Hosea 4:6 for our society is corrupt because people failed to read the Bible. However, no reply was given to Okafor's letter. Again John Azuka wrote a letter to the Archbishop. According to Azuka (1972:1-2):

For a long time we have been praying that the Holy Spirit will come and renew the face of the earth. And now that the spirit is working, let nobody go against what God has ordained. Help introduce the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in all the parishes under you. Their task is to renew the church of Christ and to unite it because Christ is one and it is him who died for us and not churches.... The teachings of the Charismatic Renewal is sound and they will enlighten our church. Let us leave them alone. They are not against the teachings of our church. They will also help the people to receive the Holy Spirit, as prophet Joel said in Joel 2:28-29

Azuka's letter was not replied to. But this did not deter others at Benin from writing. Often these letters seemed harsh and disrespectful in tone. However, Christopher Obi wrote a more carefully worded letter to Archbishop Arinze seeking for permission to establish the CCR in "his diocese" Obi (1978, Letter 1-2) wrote thus:

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Letter/Note Of Permission To Establish

We the citizens from your Archdiocese residing at Benin City in the Bendel state of Nigeria, wish to express our gratitude unto God and yourself, for the good physical and spiritual leadership and encouragement we receive always from him through you, as we race towards eternity.

It is also our intention to make known to you our desires for the Archdiocese and Dioceses. It is also noteworthy that ourselves, being involved in this new movement of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church, which your Grace is aware, have tried on several occasions to introduce this Renewal Organ as a movement within the churches in our local parishes but are often faced with difficulties. In most of the places where we managed to start a little group, we find the parish priest banning their existence for fear of what might be the outcome. Further more, most of these priests who are open to the movement often required us to give them a "clearance note or letter of permission to establish the renewal movement" issued to us by Your Grace. This is to remove any fear the people may try to develop and also to make you aware of what is happening in your area. We saw the sense in this point and supported the idea. One of such places is Ihitenansa Orlu parish in Owerri Diocese. In the light of the foregoing, we pray Your Grace to look into the situation and kindly cooperate by issuing us the letter of permission or a note of right to establish the renewal in the areas under the supervision of Your Grace.

We promise that if this request is granted, in every place we are able to introduce the renewal, we shall train leaders to handle the members in order to avoid mistakes. We also appeal to Your Grace for both physical and spiritual assistance, wherever we call for your help.

Obi's letter got a response; the reply was to the point, short and corrective. Arinze (1978: Letter) in his reply said:

I refer to your unsigned letter of 3rd May, 1978 in which you asked for my written authorization for you and some of your companions to establish Charismatic Renewal centres in Onitsha Archdiocese.

Presuming that the letter is really from you, I reply that adequate measures have already been taken in that direction in Onitsha Archdiocese. Therefore your group in Benin City should not try to set up any centre in Onitsha Archdiocese.

Ihitenansa-Orlu which you mentioned in your letter is in Owerri diocese. If you have any further question or doubt I suggest you come to Onitsha with this letter and discuss with one of my secretaries. Wishing you God's blessing, I remain Francis Arinze.

Role Of A Bishop

Archbishop Arinze did not stop at replying to private letters and answering some questions posed by some less privileged individuals. He went further than that. He studied the activities of the prayer meetings and wrote down his observations. In 1977, he convoked a meeting of the different prayer groups within Immaculate Heart and Sacred Heart Parishes at Sacred Heart Church premises, Onitsha and made his views known to them. In a paper titled: In the Unity of Faith, he gave several reasons for joy (about the charismatic renewal) and reasons for caution. Under reasons for joy, Arinze pointed out the gains of the prayer meeting: deepening of Christian prayer or spirituality on the personal and group levels, assiduous reading of the Bible, spontaneous prayer, attempts to favour deep and illuminating religious instruction, Christian insights into pains, sufferings, death etc and the zeal for a more active involvement in the prayer meeting (Arinze, 1977, Letter:1) Under reasons for caution, he outlined the following points: sheepish copying of some Charismatic Renewal Groups in the USA or some non-Catholic prayer groups in Nigeria, suggested "prayer groups" or "prayer meetings" as names to be adopted since "Charismatic Renewal Group" (sic) is debatable; adopting a holier than-thou attitude, proper guidance in the person of a priest or a proven leader, religious indifferentism as sign of the cross, praying the *Rosary and reverence to the Blessed Virgin Mary are no longer fashionable*. He suggested that hand clapping should be done more meaningfully and he

6 *decried the deceptive belief that one is a better Christian by merely belonging to a prayer meeting (Arinze, 1977, Letter:1)*

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R Nevertheless, the charismatics were undaunted in their belief, and from 7th to 14th May, 1978, they organized their first Pentecost week. Talks were given by mainly invited priests. The Pentecost week was rounded up with music entertainments by the Charism Band of the Sacred Heart parish Odoakpu Onitsha and the Monks Band of Immaculate Heart Parish Fegge, Onitsha. Another Pentecost week was organized in 1979 during which a welcome address was presented to Archbishop Francis Arinze. The charismatics observed that they engaged in the church's renewal which is the renewal of hearts and minds of the members. Consequently, they have developed interest in the bible and devotional Christian literature. They further noted that their Wednesday prayer meeting and Saturday Bible Studies coupled with group meetings within the week have gone a long way to make people experience God in their lives, and practice Christianity not only on Sundays alone but at every moment of their lives. They remarked that their efforts to make the Gospel reach more people made their bands to launch two records: "The life of Bishop Okoye" by the Fegge wing of the band and "Anyam Ga Ahu ya" (my eye shall see him) by the Odoakpu wing. With the help of Monsignor Matthew Obiukwu, the Charismatics engaged in teaching religion in primary schools and in Secondary Commercial Schools. (Oforka and Anakwe, 1979: 1-2) Before the creation of Awka diocese in 1978, the charismatics had opened their branches at Umunze, Igboukwu and Amawbia parishes but not without difficulties. According to (Oforka and Anakwe, 1979:2):

We are unhappy to note that at Umunze, we faced a heavy persecution and after we had openly launched it there, at the request of the parish priest, with mass said by M. Obiukwu, it was abruptly closed down. We thank God that the spirit cannot die, since some of the former members are here to share with us. We feel, with much concern, some unfounded allegations and agitations leveled against us and Msgr. Obiukwu by people who cannot even for a moment watch the prayer meetings or lectures of the movement; such people can only see two or three stragglers without taking cognizance of many loyal soldiers in front. They see not many who would have left the church

but are brought back by the movement to the faith.

The charismatics used this occasion to thank M. Obiukwu who stood solidly behind them after his return from the USA. They further high-lighted their future plans of buying a luxury bus that will enable them in their evangelism and solicited the help of Archbishop Arinze in buying the vehicle at fifteen thousand (N 15,000) Naira only. They requested that priests, from time to time would organize lectures, seminars and retreats for their proper knowledge and guidance. Arinze did not waste time in replying to the address. Writing to the charismatics through M. Obiukwu and I. Umejesi: their chaplains or spiritual directors Arinze (1979: Letter) states:

I wish through you to thank and praise the Charismatic Renewal groups in your parishes for the zeal which they put into their movement, for their celebration of the Pentecost Novena, for their study of Sacred Scripture, and especially for their apostolate in the catechetical field. They all showed very high devotion and discipline last Sunday.

Among other matters mentioned by them in their address of welcome to me are their desire to spread the movement to other parishes and their request for support from our priests. As I answered orally that day, I prefer that they do not try at the moment to carry the movement to other parishes. Rather, let them perfect it in Odoakpu and Fegge Parishes. I have given a few priests permission or support to conduct prayer meetings. It seems good to allow these various initiatives to develop for the movement without an attempt to make them also one type.

If there are excesses by some members as the address of welcome hints on page two, I know your pastoral watchfulness will seek a remedy.

However, the charismatics were not alone in asking favour from Archbishop Arinze. Other prayer groups did. For instance on 31st January, 1980, representatives of the Tuesday prayer meeting led by G. Ikeobi, met with Archbishop Arinze and discussed how they could be provided for in one of

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the new parishes which were being planned in Onitsha Urban. Their request was granted (Arinze: 1980: Letter). They were provided for at the Holy Spirit parish Omagba, Onitsha. Father G. Ikeobi became the parish priest. But by January 1998 the Tuesday prayer group moved to St. Mary's Catholic Parish inland town Onitsha with Ikeobi still as the parish priest.

Working In Collaboration With The Nigerian Bishops' Conference

By January 1977 Father Ebben wrote a letter to all the Catholic Archbishops and Bishops in Nigeria, reminding them of the written report he sent them after the Benin City Leaders' Conference on the Charismatic Renewal in August, 1976: One hundred and thirty people attended the conference. He also reminded them that he had requested that the National Episcopal Conference discuss the renewal at its meeting in Kaduna. He further suggested that perhaps the conference, after studying the Charismatic Renewal in Nigeria, might wish to make a statement supporting it or at least encourage priests to be open to the renewal. The bishops' silence made Ebben to ask series of questions in his letter. According to Ebben (1977: Letter) "As regards the conference, however, I do not know if any consideration was given to my letter. I do not know if you discussed the renewal. I do not know if any action was taken relative to my suggestion.

However, Ebben went on to inform the bishops of the newly formed National Service Centre for purposes of sound teaching and reliable communication among the numerous members of the CCRN. He finally pledged the loyalty of the members to the church. According to Ebben (1977: letter) the aim of the National Service team is to service the growing number of prayer groups and the church in Nigeria. In his words:

To help serve the need for sound teaching and reliable communication among the ever-increasing number of prayer groups in the country, at the request of the leaders' conference a national service centre was established. This is to be staffed by three full-time volunteers. At the present time we are two, myself and a Nigerian Layman. We pray that soon a Nigerian priest will join us so that as soon as possible the centre will be administered and served by a fully Nigerian staff. As director of the centre, I want to assure you that our efforts, however limited they are at this early stage, are at the service of the church in Nigeria. May the Lord use it to advance the work of his kingdom.

It must be observed that this National Service Centre was situated at Funtua in a house generously offered by Bishop Michael Demsey O.P, bishop of Sokoto diocese. When it became necessary that Bertrand Ebben, its pioneer Director should return to his country the USA, the work of continuing the running of the National service centre fell on his Assistant Paul Anie, a laic. When Ebben left, the centre was transferred to Ibadan where the Dominican community gave the centre its deserved necessary support. Anie (1979:1) wrote the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria a letter in these words.

So far, the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church has proven to be a powerful means of evangelization in the Catholic Church in Nigeria today. At the last Leader's Conference in Lagos, many leaders testified of the rate lapsed Catholics were coming back to the church with the desire to rectify their sacramental life with greater faith in the power of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. As of now, there are about 85 groups in the country, each group ranging from 30 to 100 people. These groups are the ones we are in contact with. I have tried to pay official visit to most of these groups so as to find out how best we can help them to maintain the authentic doctrines of the Catholic Church. Most of these groups have followed our sincere guidance, yet we are aware of some of the doctrinal problems facing some groups, and that is why I want to humbly ask you to reconsider the involvement of your Priests, Sisters and the Religious in the renewal... It is very obvious then that the Renewal has important role to play in the life of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. If you encourage your Priests, Sisters and the Religious to get themselves involved in the great renewal of the Body of Christ all over the world, you will surely see great changes in the life of the faithful throughout this country.

Paul Anie went further in the same letter to inform the Bishops of the newly formed National Advisory Council which directs, regulates and guides the activities of the National Service Centre of which he was the incumbent director. According to Anie (1979:1-2).

The National Advisory Council is a body made up of Priests, Sisters and some lay people around the country. The body directs, advises and guides the activities of the National Service centre. Fr. Jim Beimingham was asked to be the chairman of the council during the last meeting of the council. Jim is the pastor of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Oshodi, Lagos. In addition, the members of the council are coordinators in the various regions. They coordinate the activities of all the prayer groups under their region... At this stage, it will be good for the National Episcopal Conference to make a public statement on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal... Finally, I will humbly ask your fatherly advice and reflections on what you think we can sincerely do in bringing better understanding of the Charismatic Renewal to the people of God in this country.

However, the National Service Centre which Anie was its director was later moved from Ibadan to Benin City in 1979, in a house graciously provided by Bishop Patrick Ekpu, the then Episcopal Liaison between the Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. When the centre was closed down at Benin, Father Jude Mbukanma took over from Paul Anie as the Director of the centre and ran the centre from Ibadan until May 1989 when Father S. Nagba was elected as the new coordinator of the centre. He served in this capacity until 1992 when Father Emmanuel Nwosu succeeded him.

The National Service Centre is presently and permanently located at Ubulu Uku in Issele-Uku Diocese. Bishop Anthony Gbuji gave unprecedented help in the acquisition of land for the centre. He donated 50 Acres of land for the development of CCRN. The members of the renewal are making the development of the land one of their priority projects presently. It is a known fact that the National Leaders Conferences were held in Benin, 1979, Lagos 1977, Auchin 1984, and Ibadan 1987. The Regional Conferences were also held in Zaria and Benin in 1979 and 1980 respectively. Of importance is the successful organization of the First National Conference held in Benin City Sports Stadium in August 28-31, 1980 under the chairmanship of Monsignor Matthew Obiukwu. The conference was attended by more than 5,000 charismatics from all parts of Nigeria. In

attendance also were Communications... the many distinguished... of Onitsha Francis... Zambia, then living... Bishop Ekpu of Benin

The success... the New Life With... years. For instance... was "Jesus is Power... the theme "Jesus is... was present. It was... place at Township... 2000." The conference... cardinal Ekandem... theme, "Jesus The... 21 September 1987... Complex along Ba... renewal members... Bishops Conference

Conclusion

The phenomenon... today. This is because... most of whom... difficulties and... spiritual revival... charismatics were... domesticate char... movement in their... Onitsha Archdioc... unremitting. The... administrator, has... ubiquitous presence... Catholics by non-... The outcome of... Guidelines for the... This has effectively... their excesses.

attendance also were participants from Ghana, the USA and the International Communications Office in Belgium Bruxelles now situated in Rome. Among the many distinguished speakers at the conference were the then Archbishop of Onitsha Francis Arnize and Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo of Lusaka Zambia, then living in Rome. The closing mass was concelebrated with Bishop Ekpou of Benin Diocese as chief celebrant (CBCN: 1991:13-14).

The success of the maiden conference at Benin City titled "Living the New Life With Jesus" inspired other national conferences every three years. For instance it was held at Owerri, 15-18 December, 1983. The theme was "Jesus is Power". That of Enugu was held 13-16 November, 1986 with the theme "Jesus is Lord of Lords". Again Archbishop Emmanuel Milingo was present. It was held at Polo Park, Enugu. The fourth Conference took place at Township Stadium, Kaduna with the topic. "Jesus For All By the Year 2000." The conference held 10-13 October, 1991. The fifth took place at the cardinal Ekandem Seminary ground Uyo 18-21 December, 1994 with the theme, "Jesus The Light of the Nations". That of Lagos was held between 18-21 September 1997 with the theme "Jesus the Bread of Life" at the Trade Fair Complex along Badagry Express Way, Lagos. All these activities by the renewal members provoked the writing of the guidelines by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria in 1991.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of charismatism which started in the 1970s has lasted up till today. This is because of the commitment of the vast majority of Christians most of whom are less privileged. They were undaunted despite the difficulties and name-calling they encountered at the early stages of the spiritual revival. Some priests and the laics became interested in what the charismatics were doing. Attempts were made at the parish level to domesticate charismatism while some catholic theologians analyzed the movement in their own right. But pressure from some charismatics outside of Onitsha Archdiocese seeking for permission to establish prayer groups was unrelenting. The then Archbishop of Onitsha, Francis Arnize, an astute administrator, handled the upsurge of charismatics in his own way. With the ubiquitous presence of the charismatics and the perceived infiltration of the Catholics by non-Catholics, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria were worried. The outcome of their collaboration with the charismatics is the timely *Guidelines for the Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria* authored by the bishops. This has effectively controlled the activities of the charismatics, thus limiting their excesses.

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