

FUNERAL ORATION PRESENTED AT THE GRAVE SIDE OF OUR MOTHER, GRAND MOTHER, GREAT GRAND MOTHER, IN-LAW, FRIEND AND WIFE, MAMA NKE UKWU HELENA ADAOHA CHUKWU IHEANAETU. ADADIORAMMA 1904 -2009 TODAY 17TH JULY 2009.

Few words on the page cover can sum up all that I have to say here today.

The mother

The myth

The symbol

The end of an era.

It has become crystal clear that whatever goes up must come down. In Paul's second letter to Timothy 4: 6 – 8 “As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed. The time is here for me to leave this life. I have done my best in the race. I have run the full distance and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory price of being put right with God, which the Lord the righteous judge, will give me on that day. And not only to me but to all those who wait with love for Him to appear”. Those who knew mama very well will never move from faith to doubt that she had already grabbed the crown.

Our mother was born when the people of Umuekebi, her maiden home town, was having their traditional ceremony. The father was Mazi Iwuchukwu, a man of honour. Her mother was Ogbedie Iwuchukwu. Immediately after her birth people from all works of life shouted **ADAOHA!** **ADAOHA!!** **ADAOHA!!!** They did not go to the fortune teller as was practiced in those days.

Ezumoha had a strong deity called “Ogbunorie”. This deity was so powerful that people from different places came there to settle their disputes. Pa Iwuchukwu was one of them. Information gathered from him indicated that mama was born two years earlier before the Europeans destroyed Ogbunorie. Ogbunorie was destroyed in 1906. It was the same year that the first white man took a perilous journey from Owerri to Okigwe. The point we are making here is that mama was born in 1904.

HER BAPTISM AND THE COMING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN OSUH.

Our mother was baptized in 1912 at Nsu in Ehime Mbano L.G.A. Her baptismal name was Helena. Osuh was evangelized by the missionaries from Emekuku who first centered at Nsu via Anara and Umuelemai. These two stations were the mustard seeds whose branches now spread throughout the whole Osuh. The spread of the gospel was and is still a continuous exercise to every village/town in Osuh.

The woman to be buried today, Mama Helena, embraced the catholic faith over 105 years. She was one of those Christians who were travelling to Nsu for almost every religious obligation they had to fulfill. They had to trek to Nsu to transport the church teachers and the Rev. Father's luggage from time to time as occasion demanded. For those who would receive Holy Communion the following day would taste neither food nor water twelve hours before the time.

During the period under review, there were no Igbo priests, no interpreter. Our mother did not hear English Language but maintained unshakeable faith in God. There were pegans and pagan

sacrifices everywhere. All her twin brothers and sisters were used for sacrifice which almost rendered the parents childless if not the special grace of God.

The catholic missionaries began to instruct the people on the fundamentals of Christianity because they were responsive. From “Dibias” and other pagans came threats that anyone who renounced his traditional religion would certainly die within one year. Such threats obviously were designed to dissuade people from embracing Christianity proved futile. The people remained steadfast and were firmly devoted to their new found allies. By 1918, majority of the members were baptized. Their break with the old society seemed complete as they gave all their ‘offor’ and ‘ikenga’ to Rev. Fr. Howel, the famous pieces of wood to be destroyed.

EZUMOHA CATHOLIC MISSION FROM 1938

The founding fathers of Ezumoha catholic mission were Mazi Raphael Nwachukwu Ihenetu whose wife is to be buried today, a church warder Dennis Akanno, James Nwakire, Gabriel Agube, Francis Ajonuma and others, all of blessed memory.

Mrs Raphael as she was fondly called headed the women organization. As the number of converts increased geometrically, the members deemed it necessary to divide the people into three manageable groups for proper accountability because they were all illiterates though enlightened enough to appreciate the value of western education. The first group was headed by Mother Helena Chukwu Iheanetu, the second group by Mrs Nwakire while the third group was by Mrs Louis from Umuozu.

After the death of Mrs Louis and Mrs Nwakire, all the groups came back again under the leadership of mother Helena. When age and strength was no longer on her side, coupled with the era of education for women, the mantle of leadership changed. She led the women of Ezumoha for over 50 years.

Mama and some of the men I mentioned earlier found it necessary to bring catholic church in Ezumoha because some villages who were not tickly populated had already had their own church.

HOW CATHOLIC CHURCH CAME

1	St. John's Anara	1916
2	St. Anthony's Umunachi	1918
3	CKC Umunchi	1918
4	St. Joseph's Oboh	1920
5	St. Gabriel Umuagu	1927
6	St. Innocent Anara	1928
7	St. Francis Umuaro	1933
8	St. Mary's Okohia	1934
9.	St Michael's Umuekebi	1934
10.	St. Mary's Eziama	1937
11.	CKC Ezumoha	1938

Their prayer was answered in 1938.

Mama was sick on two occasions throughout her life time. The first was in 1957 during the influenza epidemic. Another was in 1993 when she developed heart problem. On the 4th of June 2009 by 7am she slept in the Lord.

LITTLE CITATION ON MOTHER HELENA ADAOHA CHUKWU IHENETU. ADAOHA 1 OF UMUEKEBI, UZUZA MITARA AKU 1 OF EZUMOHA, UGO CHI DERE OF ST ANTHONY'S CATHOLIC WOMEN, NNE OMA 1 OF OSU PARISH, ADA DI ORA MMA OF OKIGWE CATHOLIC DIOCESE.

In 1919, the people of Umuekebi her maiden home bestowed on her the best beloved lady during the "Alija dance" ceremony as Adaoha 1 of Umuekebi.

In 1929 she featured prominently during the Aba women riot. She equally featured at Isi-Ala Mbanu in 1956 when there was unprecedented increase in school fees of children.

In 1965 she was the treasurer and member of Board of Governors Aquinas Secondary School, Osu. A position she held until the war started.

In 1991, mama was honoured with the prestigious title of life member of the Catholic Church by the Catholic Bishop of Okigwe Diocese, His Grace Bishop A. E. Ikonu. The ceremony coincided with the golden jubilee of her wedding in April 1941.

Osu parish in 1994 honoured her with 'Nne Oma' title. She was a good disciplinarian and a church leader.

In 2004 St Anthony's parish bestowed on her again another title Ugo Chidere 1 of St Anthony's.

In 2006, the catholic mission Ezumoha went through her profile and crowned her a legend. Mama was a member of St. Anthony's Guild, Legion of Mary and CWO world wide.

HER SUCCESS IN LIFE

1 She had firm belief and trust in the Almighty God.

2 She was always neat in thought, words and deeds.

3 She was always in support of the needy.

4 She never took sides.

5 Never flippant

6 Equal love for all her children.

7 She had respect for people especially the male folk.

8 She was loved by all.

Among the numerous life lessons she demonstrated are ... "punctuality is the soul of business. Decency is no pride. Hard work does not kill, it is anxiety that kills". Mama believed religiously in forgiveness and reconciliation as she was essentially peace loving. "Blesses are the peace makers, they shall be called the children of God".

Conversely, mama slipped into her old age peacefully, carried it gracefully and enjoyed it with her infectious sense of humor. With a vibrant faith she calmly anticipated death and prayed constantly, offered masses for the souls in purgatory and for a holy and happy death for herself. She discussed freely with her children to this effect hence as early as 3rd August 2004, the following valedictory statements were made to us:

1. “Mos” meaning Moses “when the time comes do not cry, are you the only one who mother had died? What I need mostly is prayer.
2. My children and grand children will not die in my presence anymore. I will go before them to take the rightful place. I know where I am going, after they may come.
3. Give Umuekebi and your well wishers food when they come.
4. Always go to confession.
5. Remain united and love one another.
6. I love you all”

Our noble mother lived exemplary Christian life of faith and love. By the special grace of God, she did not only scale the biblical 70years but added 35 more to surpass the 80years that the Holy writ allotted even to those who are strong ... (a centurion). This afforded her golden opportunity to bather her purgatory on earth by her suffering and sickness tagged with old age.

Mama was always with her Rosary from Stone Age till death. Her source of inspiration was her dream church very close to her house. “I am with Jesus and Virgin Mary the mother. They are my guide”.

Your children draw comfort from the words of Bede Jarrett. “As we seem to give them back to Thee, Oh God, who givest them to us. Yet as Thou didst not lose them in giving, so do we not lose them by their return. Life is eternal and love is immortal and Death is an horizon and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight”.

We let go with mixed feelings

The vacuum occasioned by the physical loss of a precious MUM like you can never be filled by anyone else. Our joy is that you have transformed to the unalloyed glory of God almighty. We believe that your spirit lives on to guide and intercede for us as you had always done. We shall strive to promote the value you staunchly stood, lived and died for.

We are eternally grateful to God for giving us the dearest of all mothers who showered on us immeasurable love and care with gentle and friendly disposition.

Farewell!

Chief Nwabinobi Mama

For the family.