

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN NSUKKA TRADITIONAL SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

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Abstract

The Catholicity of the missionary mandate which the Church received from her founder Jesus Christ has its permanent validity at all times and in all places. The obvious implication is that the Church's universal mission must engage the multi-variant strata of humanity and her structures. The gospel is both for the urban citizens and rural dwellers. This work discusses the rural development initiatives in Nsukka Traditional Society and their implications for the Church. In the course of this study, the findings reveal that evangelization is not an exclusivity undertaken from the pulpit in the comfort of the Church buildings and in the city centers among the rich. In its inclusiveness, it has also to give life in abundance to the rural poor by improving on the quality of their lives and surroundings founded on the integral dimensions of human beings. In the rural spaces where the poor indigenes and the peasant varieties dwell, one finds their development initiatives which unfold their capabilities and form their survival strategies from the times of ancient civilizations. These initiatives, inadequate though, form their interactive consistencies which are evidences of their social aspects and naturalness. The Church as missionary among them should recognize these development strategies and advance them in Christ. This idea is central to the persuasions which are proper for this paper. The methodology employed in this study is descriptive-observational which means that the development initiatives prevalent in Nsukka cultural zone were observed and studied over time.

Keywords: Rural, Rural development, Nsukka, Traditional Society and the Church

1.0 Introduction

The Church is sent into the world as a universal sacrament of salvation. The Catholicity of the Church makes it mandatory for her, therefore, to preach the Gospel to all human beings after the mind of her founder Jesus Christ. The apostles were forces to reckon with in the spreading of the faith, they begot Churches in different nations among different peoples and cultures. The Church on earth draws her missionary character from the fact that her origin is explicable only in the mission of the son through the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the plan of God, the Father. Christ, the first missionary entered human history and culture by taking human flesh (John 1:14) and pitched his tent among men so as to fulfill his salvific mission. However, he moved round about the Palestinian world but then had his missionary vision on the whole world for he so wished that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim 2:4). He, for the continuation of the mission, gave the missionary mandate, of which the implication for and in the African environment has gained increased interests in Multidisciplinary scholarship. This is informed by the fact that Africa is part of the "all nations" "the whole world" or "all creation" to which the gospel must reach. (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15). She is a continent with a similar though to some extent different cultures, religions, philosophies and world views. The supernatural character of the Church stops here from being a stranger anywhere in the world including Africa (Ele, C.O, 1996:46 & 48).

The question is; what does missionary mandate entail in the African milieu in general and specifically in Nsukka environment? Nsukka enjoys a geo-spatial continuum and she, as a people is a homogenous cultural fact. In the words of Nweze, A.C (s.d:22). Apart from political delimitations, the people of Nsukka zone share the same characteristics. They are homogenous in every aspect. Their dialect, music, dance and drama, folktales, social organization, religious observance and festivals and arts, belief system, socio-economic stratification and prejudice are essentially the same. Their peculiar ways of life are found in their history, geography and culture."

As buttressed by Onah, J.O (2001:22), the word “Nsukka” has become an enigma. It has many dimensions and meanings to different people. To some, Nsukka is a town “Nsukka Asadu”, a local government or a senatorial zone and to others, Nsukka is a vast land area covering;

Igbo-Etiti
Igbo-Eze North
Igbo-Eze South
Isi-Uzo
Nsukka
Udenu and
Uzo-Uwani Local Government Areas.

Nsukka has also become a philosophy or a way of life “Nwa Nsukka”. Nwa – Nsukka has been broadened to mean a way of behavior. Nsukka people are perceived to behave alike”.

Nsukka people are Igbo by tribe. They are natives of Enugu state in the South eastern part of Nigeria. They share a common boundary in the East with Ebonyi state, in the West with Anambra state, in the South with udi zone in Enugu state and in the north with Benue and Kogi states, all in Nigeria. The description, “Nsukka man” refers to anybody from the Igbo communities which occupy the northern – most part of Igbo land described above with a surface area of approximately 3,691 square kilometers. This description includes individuals and their off-springs either in Nigeria or in diaspora. The current population estimate of the area is in excess of 1,500,000 (Odo, E. 2004:9).

In Christendom, Nsukka is a Diocese of dual relevance. Nsukka is a Catholic Diocese. She is also a Diocese of Anglican communion. She has also pockets of other denominations, sects and ecclesial bodies. Our study here is on Nsukka as a Catholic Diocese. The nomenclature “Nsukka Diocese” was derived from “Nsukka Asadu” which is an ancestral and homogenous town where the foremost British colonial founders settled finally and adopted as their permanent residence and the headquarters of colonial administration. The multiple attempts made by them to settle at Nkpolugu, Okpoga, Obollo-Afor met with difficulties and was consequently unsuccessful.

However, on 19th October, 1922, those areas were left finally and all infrastructures and offices were moved from Obollo-Afor to Nsukka town with Mr. Warrington as the Colonial District Officer incharge of Nsukka division. This colonial arrangement made Nsukka the seat of civil government and of the Church till today. From this background, the name “Nsukka Diocese” took its origin (*Catholic Diocesan Social Communications*, 2005:vii).

The proverbial mustard seed which begins as “the smallest of all seeds” (Matthew 13:31-32) captures very adequately the humble beginning and the gradual metamorphosis of Catholicism in Nsukka area. The pioneer missionaries, Revd. Fr. Vincent Davey and Rev. Fr. Aloysius Muller began their work of evangelisation. “missio ad gentes” in Nsukka area in 1910. Christ sent the pair into Nsukka (Mark 6:7). However both entered Nsukka from different axes, but very strikingly, through the invitation of the “pagans” traditional rulers (Ele, C.O 2006: 35-37). Nigeria is a Third World Country or better put, she is a developing country. She is essentially a rural society with the vast majority of her population dwelling in rural areas. The 1991 census reveals that over sixty percent (60%) of her population which according to the Population Reference Bureau’s estimate in 1999 is about 113.8 million dwell in rural communities. This population lives in widely scattered settlements all across the nation and engage largely in primary production activities such as agriculture, pastoralism, fishing/hunting, wood cutting and gathering foods and other material resources from the natural environment (St. Matthew – Daniels, B.J. 2000:305). Since a huge portion of the Nigerian population lives in the rural areas, rural development should be central to her development initiatives. Unfortunately, “the manner in which rural development has been conceived by the successive Nigerian Governments, and the type of rural development policies that have been implemented overtime in the country have contributed substantially to the currently poor state of the rural economy (Olanrewaju, S.A, 1992:14).

Nsukka is one example of such a rural part of Nigeria. Therefore, evangelization among its rural population has to integrate within its vital schemes, those development initiatives that would enhance their quality of life. Christ said that He came so that human beings may have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10). This means that integral human development is an essential constitutive element of evangelization. Consequently, the Church’s mission has to yield positive results evidenced concretely in the life of the people. Nsukka is a rural Diocese. Her parishes are basically agrarian with more than 85% of her population engaged in various small-scale forms of agricultural activities. Despite the vast mineral resources buried in the earth’s crust at various locations in Nsukka, the presence of the famous and prestigious University of Nigeria, Nsukka and her available cheap and skilled labour, she remains a developmental laggard without large scale impactful industries and modern infrastructures.

The objective of this work is to discuss rural development initiatives in Nsukka traditional society. It asserts that the success of those development initiatives in the traditional society is linked with the facts of their being founded on the cherished cultural values of Nsukka people. The implications of these human cultural values for the Church today as she embarks upon evangelization through rural development initiative in Nsukka Diocese form an integral part of our discourse. The paper argues that the enormous cultural wealth of Nsukka people are rich treasures for development. Again, the Church can draw inspiration from the traditional models of development and boost them with the forces of contemporary trends. Our starting point naturally is the family, the nucleus of the society and of the Church.

2. Family System

Nsukka traditional society is built around the family at the foundation, the extended family (Umunna), the kindred (Nkpuru), the town (Obodo) and the tribe (Agburu) at the peak of social structure. Among Nsukka people, there is a high sense of community, a deeper sense of communion and a strong sense of family loyalty, all rooted in the sacred bath of consanguinity or in the strong tie of affinity. The individual person is defined and appreciated in terms of his or her family ties. Consequently, a person is identified primarily and most importantly as a member of a particular family. Hence, the social anthropology is based on the metaphysics of being with others expressed in integral belongingness to the kith and kin of familyhood. The I-existence as elaborated by the Cartesian "Cogito ergo Sum" (I think therefore I am) is not true for Nsukka people. Instead, the we-existence within the warmth and integralness of the family is of paramount importance to Nsukka people. This is why exile and banishment from one's blood relations remain terrible punishments in her traditional society.

In Nsukka culture, the extended family system is obtained. It is a strong family tie. So "brothers" and "sisters" go beyond the immediate nuclear family to include a group of persons and families who are descendants of one common ancestor. The individual person is the icon of his or her family whose history and respect he or she carries and represents wherever he or she goes. This informs the reason why marriage inquiry is taken very seriously. The family backgrounds of the suitor and spinster are investigated thoroughly and respectively by each party before marriage. There are reasons for doing this: first, every individual is conscious of family respect which he or she represents, therefore, people tend to behave well. The children of those families that are known for crimes like adultery, murder, robbery and other abominations in the land find it difficult to get married. This is because the idea of the family is related with blood, character and image in the traditional thought pattern. If a particular family goes with the trade mark "robbery is in their blood" for example, other families will not like to have marital affinity with such a family. The neglect of thorough pre-marital inquiries as some do today has led to divorce and other hazardous consequences in the homes in particular and the society at large. Secondly, the kindred whose good image is threatened or tarnished by one of their own punishes the defaulting family or individual with fines, banishment or sanctions like social ostracism. This judicial structure protects morality and justice. People generally dread being cut off from one's family.

Consequently, every body works towards solidarity, familyhood, community building and togetherness. In typical traditional family, every person feels at home. The welfare of the individual remains a serious concern for the entire family. In ancient Nsukka society, there is no house built specifically as old people's home and neither do beggars roam the streets. There is no motherless baby brought up in an anonymous environment that has no reference to his or her bio-social roots. Ordinarily, these old people, beggars, motherless babies and other less privileged in the society are taken care of in the elastic provisions of the extended family system (Ele, C.O. 1996:6)

In Nsukka traditional Society, the family is the first school where socialization of the young takes place. The parents are the teachers and every adult qualifies to tell the young the correct pattern of behaviour. An Nsukka child can thus receive education from the parents, members of the nuclear and extended family, village or town's people. The writer's particular interest here is on the hundreds of thousands of moonlight stories, folklores and proverbs through which the young ones are given proper enculturation of moral values. The tortoise could speak in those didactic stories and the lessons from those calabashes of wisdom are learnt. Through the lessons drawn thereof, the young could learn how to eschew selfishness, violence, pride, laziness, craftiness and imbibe egalitarianism, brotherhood, friendliness, respect for elders, hospitality, peace, honesty, justice, humility, industry and love. These values in Nsukka traditional society mould one's character and enhance social progress.

Apart from moral education, there exists physical education which is taught through wrestling, demonstration in mock 'warfare and acrobatics found in dances and masquerade displays. In Nsukka culture, each community tries to meet the work needs of her inhabitants. Generally the young males are trained in subsistence farming, bee-keeping, rearing of domestic animals, drumming, carving masks, wine tapping, basketry, hunting, building of thatched and mud houses, black smithing, petty trading, fishery, among others. The girls are taught cooking, weaving, weeding of grass- crowded farms, baby care and hair-plaiting, et cetera. The children are incorporated into the social life of the community through ceremonies, and rituals. They learn through recitation, observation and imitation.

There are some cultural values which safeguard the individual and collective well-being of family members. These are areas of theologico-cultural synthesis. The missionary in Nsukka Diocese must realize that "there would be no understanding of the gospel except from the context of the people's understanding of themselves" (Okere, T 1978:10). Therefore "the challenge of a thorough knowledge of the edifice of Nsukka cultural values is of paramount importance and necessary for the herald of the gospel since Christianity cannot exist in a cultural desert"(Ele, C. 2001:45). In the light of the above, the cultural values in the family system are highlighted below:

i. Nsukka Sense of Community

In Nsukka "togetherness", "familyhood", "community spirit" and "brotherhood" are situated in the family where the welfare of each individual is the concern of other members. The family is a place where sharing and solidarity are cherished and celebrated in such a manner that every member feels at home. In her evangelization through rural development initiatives, the Church in Nsukka should give adequate attention to the people's communal feeling. One traditional proverb In Nsukka says: "*anya kwaba, na imi akwaba*" (when the eyes cry, the nose in solidarity cries too). This saying, gives credence to the fundamental theology behind the people's acceptance and enthusiasm to raise money during the 2000 jubilee Year as a parish, deanery and Diocese to improve the quality of life of others who had no access roads.

The venture was understood in Nsukka to mean that they were continuing something to improve the welfare of their brothers and sisters who were identified as members of the extended family. The cultural values in context here are those of loving and trusting relationship between all the members of the Church which are expressed concretely in "care for others, solidarity, warmth in relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust" (John Paul II; 1995 *Ecclesia in Africa*, No 43). The cultural heritage urges the Catholics in Nsukka Diocese to preach and witness to the gospel of solidarity and love and by that token, eschew individualism and selfishness which are foreign to their sense of community. Solidarity brings about rapid rural development as evidenced in the successful completion of many rural development projects as it is today in Nsukka Diocese.

ii. Education

Another cultural value in Nsukka family system is education. Through proverbs, folk tales and moonlight stories high moral principles are inculcated into the young. There are vocational and professional training in the traditional society; often times, from father to son or mother to daughter. Kindreds or families are also known for their arts, crafts, trade, work or profession. The implication this has for the Church in the Diocese is that she should establish schools that would meet the educational needs of the people. Based on the people's cultural value, therefore, the school curriculum should have moral education, agriculture, physical training, Nsukka thought and culture, civic responsibility and citizenship, vocational training and skill acquisition as its core subjects. Science and- technology alone cannot bring about integral development since human beings have body and soul with an eternal destiny. Therefore, religious education is an essential and irreplaceable contributor to authentic human development.

3. Community Development

Nsukka traditional society has wide range of indigenous organizations which foster development. The traditional self-help tendencies of the people from the ancient times help them strive to satisfy their basic needs: food, clothing and shelter. Nsukka traditional society has political authorities whose responsibility it is to lead the people. The political leadership in Nsukka is gerontocracy with democratic principles. The oldest man (*Onyishi*) is the head of the kindred. He has other elders (*Okpara*) from different families who help him in administration. There are age grade, and women (*umuada*) groups. Every adult male can attend kindred meeting in, "*Obu Ogwa Onyishi*" the kindred's public hall).

Town unions, students' union and elite groups are recent developments. The political structures guarantee freedom, solidarity, security and peace. The local community leaders mobilize indigenes to improve their standard of living. Community projects are carried out through the people's collective action and the proper channeling of both the human and material resources towards the desired goal. Women, youths and children are involved in community development projects. There are collaboration, co-responsibility and solidarity among the indigenous population. The positive effect is that they build their bridges, construct and rehabilitate their roads and establish their markets. They map out areas for distant agricultural fields which are away from the home settlements and pay levies for different community projects. Kindreds have their halls and towns have community centres built at a place convenient for everyone to reach for social and religious activities. Village night watchmen have their posts at strategic locations in the village to ensure the security of lives and properties of the people. During planting season, farmers organize themselves to work in each other's farms. The procedure is rotatory. It reached everybody's turn according to the agreed process. The person whose turn it is entertained them. This strategy helps to ease the cultivation of vast portions of land and satisfy the food needs of the community. The agricultural fertility and plentiful harvest are attributed to the benevolence of "Ufajioku" - the god of crops. There is "mkpuru nkashi", the new yam festival. In Nsukka traditional society, farming is not only an economic matter, it has links with their religious metaphysics. The missionary in Nsukka an agrarian environ, should know this cultural index.

At the beginning of dry season; the community organizes herself according to age grades, families or kindreds for the road maintenance. This is an annual event. A few local musicians would play music which is ancient and historic. This music is taken to be part of the road work. It contributes to its success. The flutist could call people by name and trace their history. Elders and women would come to greet the workers and musicians with kola nuts, food and wine according to one's resources. These items are brought in charity, shared responsibility and solidarity to thank and encourage the workers. Women constitute the majority of traders in the local markets but the men generally rebuild the old market stalls and dilapidated community schools. However, with the spread of money economy, social interaction outside one's nuclear family and government's intervention, the scope and complexity of rural dwellers' needs increased. New problems which emerged from lack of rural infrastructure, poor health facilities, low productivity of agriculture, low purchasing power arising from marketed products and other poverty- induced variables multiplied the misery of rural people. The Church's concern became how to evangelize these poverty- stricken populations and improve on their distressed environment. She adopted rural development initiatives as a pastoral strategy. The success of the Church's rural development initiatives depends on the Church's understanding of the environment: political, economic, socio- cultural and religious. The implication for the Church is that she has to dialogue with these structures in order to arrive at any meaningful community development. To enhance this understanding, some of the cardinal cultural values are enunciated below:

(a) Collaboration

In Nsukka traditional society there are collaboration and shared responsibility as underpinning cultural values in the implementation of their community projects. The organizers of community ventures in the traditional society mobilized the youths, women and everybody to achieve the set goal. The missionary in Nsukka Diocese should take special note of this principle. He or she should involve the community leaders and the lay faithful in the Church in the implementation of rural development initiatives. Experts in the field of agriculture, finance, construction and education, depending on the type of project, should be committed each in one's own area of specialization and competence. The missionary should understand that as Okeke, H.O (1993:28) wrote, "the participation of the lay members is not therefore a concession from an overworked clergy which needs the laity as a matter of expedience, perhaps to relieve the burden of work. It is a theological necessity, a right flowing from the Christian identity of the lay members of Christ's faithful". The missionary mobilizing the Church members is collaboration *ad intra ecclesia* (within the Church). The missionary should also mobilize the beneficiary communities to support the rural development projects. This can be done through the leaders of various indigenous groups. This means that parish priests should know about the operations and constituent members of the political authority in the locality so that the correct string would be pulled to bring about the desired mobilization of the people. This theologico-cultural synthesis is inevitable today so that the Church will give due authoritative direction and guidance for effective implementation of rural development projects. In Ette parish for example, the indigenes of Ette, Catholics and non-

Catholics alike, support the road construction project in their parish. They channeled both their time and talents towards its success. The Church in rural development projects should in the words of Akukwe, F.N (1994:78) " work with the people rather than work for them, to learn from the poor how they feel to be poor, to hear their groans, help them express their privations and suffering, listen to their tales and aspirations, and with them work out probable solution. In the light of this, the missionary can also conscientize the government to hearken the cry of the rural poor and improve their living conditions. The Church's shared responsibility with non-ecclesial bodies and agencies is called collaboration *ad extra ecclesia* (outside the Church). There is need for the Church to collaborate with the government in capital intensive projects. On this Akukwe, F. N wrote:

Nothing is gained by one opposing the other. It is true that after independence, the new power elite in Nigeria resented the great influence which the Church has on the people through the provision of social services. They gradually worked towards curtailing this influence which culminated in the government unilateral take-over of schools and some hospitals from voluntary agencies. This was a show of power and not use of authority (1994:8).

The Church should continue to alleviate the suffering of the poor masses through rural development initiatives. The obstacles, from the kingdom of this world should strengthen her as in the time of persecution. She has to fulfil the mission given her by her divine founder, Jesus Christ. She has to follow the government's regulations and policies on rural development and also insist that the schools and hospitals forcibly taken away from her be returned. Some, however have been returned but with obstacles in the contexts of policies and their implementations. Meanwhile, she collaborates with the government to improve the living conditions of the rural poor.

(b) Charity

Charity propels community development in Nsukka traditional society. Charity is an inherent value also in Christianity. The early missionaries used social development as indirect methods of Evangelization and their apostolate yielded good results. Ozigboh, R.I.A (1994:47-8) recaptures the history vividly:

The use of indirect methods proved even more successful and fruitful. The greatest of the indirect methods was the tactical use of charity and social development devices in winning converts for Christianity. Charitable programmes were undertaken as a means of gaining the goodwill of the people. They were meant to soften the people up and dispose them to respond favourably to the new religion. The missionaries joyfully spent themselves and their meagre resources on works of charity. The mission schools, dispensaries, refugee and rehabilitation centers, creches, and Christian villages were initially and generally operated on largely charitable basis. Where fee was charged at all, it was merely as a token.

The Church in Nsukka Diocese is then challenged to follow the cultural value of charity in Nsukka and the footsteps of the early missionaries in order to ensure that the fees in the schools she founded and the bills in the hospitals she established can be afforded by the rural poor. The current trend of high charges in these places questions the motive behind these foundations. The writer hopes that the Good News does not kill but would instead, save the rural poor.

(c) New Yam Festival

Nsukka is an agricultural zone. In Nsukka traditional religion, it is believed that *Ufajioku* is responsible for good harvests. Ugwu, D.C. (1987: 34-5) describes the new yam festival in Obukpa, a typical Igbo society in Nsukka Urban Local Government Area. According to him: The *Mkpuru-Nkashi* is the feast that ushers in new yams. No Obukpa man, especially the elders eats yams before the first part of the *mkpuru-Nkashi* is celebrated. The *Mkpuru-Nkashi* feast is announced by the *Attama Nimu* silently through Umudiogu village who in turn inform the *Umuada*. When Umudiogu inform the *Umuada* that *Mkpuru-Nkashi* season has arrived, the *Umuada* start the ceremony of road blocks where they collect gifts of kola nuts and money from passers-by for the worship of *Nimu*. The first part of *Mkpuru-Nkashi* is *Ogo Ufajioku*, celebrated on an *Oye* day. That day, new yams are cooked, and all other sorts of food - *ayaraya*,

nli osise are prepared and members of the household gather at the household barn (*ese*) where the *Ufiajioku* shrine is. The head of the household is the priest and all the members of the household partake in the feast. After the special offering of all the crops to the *Ufiajioku* by the priest, all the household members join in a special ceremony of offering the crops to the *Ufiajioku*. Assorted crops are packed into a basket and all present hold the basket and try to carry it up as they sing:

Palie ji, onyi
Palie Una, Onyi
Palie alibo, Onyi

This means, carry up the yams, it is too heavy; carry up the bitter yam, it is too heavy; carry up the cassava, it is too heavy. So big a harvest is expected in many fields that the members of the household cannot carry it up. So they sing as they try to carry up the basket, always pretending that it was too heavy to carry up.

The second feast day in the *Mkpuru-nkashi* season is *Ogo chi na Ukwu*. That day, Obukpa people sacrifice to their personal gods. Each person has a personal god, a guardian god or *Chi*. This *chi* is responsible for a person's everyday activities and takes over the guardianship of a person from the day of the person's conception in the womb. Most people sacrifice cocks to their *Chi* while the wealthy sacrifice goats. *Ogo chi* is always on *Afor* night, a day after the *Ogo Ufiajioku* day. All the victims are killed and cooked that night but usually kept till the following day, *Nkwo*, the *Olia Anu Oku* day. According to Ugwu D.C (1987:35);

During the *Mkpuru - Nkashi* season, *akatakpa* masquerades parade the town for about four local weeks before *Ogo Chi* day. The appearance of *akatakpa* masquerades on the street herald the *Mkpuru-Nkashi* season. These *akatakpa* stop parading on *ogo chi* night signifying the end of the feast.

New Yam festival is a cultural feast the Church has to dialogue with in Nsukka Diocese in the process of inculturation. This feast should be elevated in Christ through inculturation. This is important because Nsukka as a people celebrate rich harvests, enjoy the *akatakpa* masquerade display and the new yam festival in their own Nsukka context. *Iri ji ofuu* (new Yam festival) is a big feast in the whole of Igbo land. Chibuko, P.C (1996: 39-40) asserts that studies on inculturation should focus on "blessings of the land at the beginning of the planting season, harvest time and new yam festival", among others. Anyanwu, J.E (2006:64) testifies that "the New yam Festival has almost become a nation-wide celebration particularly South east of the Niger. In these parts of the country, it has gradually become a Christian feast celebration, dedicated to Mary, Mother of God ("Iri-ji Virgin Mary"). Nsukka Diocese engages in large scale production of food such as rice, yam and cassava in her farms at Adani, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area. These farms located in the rural sector of the Diocese are expected to impact positively on the development of the country side. And too, the religious metaphysics of Agriculture and food production should be linked to the beliefs and practices in Christian faith.

4. Health Care Delivery

Nsukka people from antiquity value life and good health. Hence, they believe that "*Ndu bu isi*" - life is the foundation of everything and "*Ndu ka*" - life is supreme. Nsukka cosmology, a typical African specimen, is an interwovenness of the material and the spiritual; there is a porous demarcation between the sacred and the secular. As succinctly put by John Mbiti (1981:134) "Disease is not just a physical condition according to African interpretation and experience. It is also a religious matter. They use religion to find out who has been responsible for it or has sent it to sick person".

In Nsukka traditional health care, the entire human person afflicted with sickness is restored to wholeness, rehabilitated within the society and reconciled with the spiritual sources of illness through rituals prescribed for healing. In the words of Aylward Shorter (1985:37)

It is not illnesses that are healed but people. In the human person, there are many levels of being; the physical, the psychic, the social, the moral and the spiritual. The human person may be afflicted in one area than the others but all the levels are affected. There is lack of wholeness.

Nsukka traditional health care is holistic; it has both preventive measures and curative dimensions. It also takes care of the whole human person: physical, psychological and spiritual. They believe that “prevention is better than cure” and as such they work to maintain personal hygiene by washing their bodies, cleaning their teeth and washing their clothes, et cetera. They engage in environmental sanitation by an imperative sweeping of the compound daily in the morning, cleaning of streams and rivers which serve as sources of water supply, sweeping of markets and the village squares (*Otobo, Obodo, Ofu, Onokoro, Ama*), et cetera. They also 'try not to offend any spirit that can inflict sickness. The curative dimensions include the services of the traditional medicine men. In Nsukka traditional society, all the branches of medicine exist in her health-care delivery. Examples include:

- Traditional gynecologists, nurses, midwives who take care of pre-natal, natal and fertility questions;
- Traditional orthopedic doctors for bone dislocation and fractures;
- Traditional pediatricians for children's diseases convulsion, fever, etc;
- Traditional virologists for venereal diseases;
- Traditional dentists and opticians for teeth and eye problem respectively;
- Traditional hematologists and surgeons for blood related issues and surgery cases respectively;
- Traditional general physicians for malaria; typhoid, dysentery, et cetera.

Their effectiveness informs the relevance of traditional health care in modern day society. Its dynamics confronts modern- day health questions and competes very favourably with the Western medicare and successfully wins some literates and highly placed citizens as her clients. Every forest in Nsukka has a host of pharmaceutical variations where Nature- Pharmacist offers herbs and roots to our traditional medicine men. The local oil from palm kernel has inherent power to cure illness. In Nsukka, traditional medical personnel include men and women. Some learnt theirs from elsewhere while for others, the art of medicine is in their family.

The traditional health care has sustained health and life since the ancient times. This has a positive effect on the population of the area which has been on steady increase.

Today's pathological cases arising from pollution and ecological degradation, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), among others can reverse the trends of population increase if adequate measures are not taken. The traditional health care in Nsukka has implications for the Church today in the area. In her rural development initiatives, she has to take note of these cultural values:

(a) Preventive measures in Health-Care

The Church shall try to encourage cleanliness of the rural dwellers at its personal and communitarian levels. Every Saturday, members of Catholic Women Organisation (CWO) in their sub-groups sweep the Churches and the premises in preparation for the Sunday Mass. This practice is inherited from the traditional practice of *Iza Otobo* (sweeping of the village square) which has both social and sacred implications. The Church will help educate the people on immunization against diseases and insist that abstinence is the best protection against AIDS. Since rural development initiatives are all about the welfare of human beings, their good health should be guaranteed for there to be any meaningful development since a healthy community is a wealthy community.

(b) Source of Sickness

In Western medicare, microbes are the sources of diseases and sickness, In Nsukka traditional society, it is witchcraft, human or spiritual enemy or sin. Instead of consulting a doctor and making use of diagnostic laboratory outfit, some consult the diviners where they are misled as sacrifices are often recommended. The sacrifice of white cock and seven kola nuts on *Eke* day before a particular shrine for instance can never cure appendicitis through appendectomy. Consequently, health and lives are lost and development is retarded. The Church's effort in rural development through health care delivery should include proper education on sources of sickness and the need for medical tests before medication. This will not only bring about health and development but settle quarrels which arise from suspicion and superstition. The establishment of hospitals and medical laboratories in the rural areas will open the rural dwellers' eyes to the gains of modern science in health-care delivery.

(c) Research into the Potency of Traditional Herbs and Roots

The truth is that some people in Nsukka do not believe that a Christian should take traditional medicine or encourage its practice. But the herbs and roots are Our God-given heritage. Revd Fr Joseph Okeke Obetta, a diocesan priest incardinated into Nsukka Diocese and works there has distinguished himself in this version of health-ministry. His research in this area is yielding some good results and fostering human development. Besides, he has also shown that one can be a traditional doctor and a good Christian. Further research into the medical bio-diversity and potency of herbs and roots will help achieve quality health through traditional medicine.

(d) Inculturation

Authentic inculturation process in the health sector will improve integral human development in Nsukka Diocese. Oil from palm kernel is an essential material used for healing in Nsukka traditional society. The same oil can be used as *Oleum infirmorum* (oil for the sick). Strongly in support of this view, Anyanwu, J. E (1990:80) wrote;

Aware of pastoral needs and the difficulty involved in obtaining the olive oil – the prescribed matter for valid administration of the sacrament of anointing ... Here, in Nigeria, the oil extracted from palm kernel is a common place commodity in the southern states. It is widely acknowledged of being curative and it is often used, for example, as an apt antidote for convulsion.

The Church in Nsukka Diocese with a resolute thrust for inculturation should apply herself to reaping the benefits of the elastic provisions offered in the *magisterium* of Paul VI (1972) which says “The sacrament of anointing of the sick is administered to those who are dangerously ill. They are to be anointed on the forehead and hands with blessed olive oil or, as circumstances suggest, with another oil extracted from plants...”

In our local context, oil extracted from palm kernel is such an “oil extracted from plants” which the Holy Father refers to. The saying “health is wealth” is true. Therefore, good health for the rural population, means a promotion of authentic and integral rural development in Nsukka Diocese.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to facilitate rural development initiatives in Nsukka area by the Church using the implied lessons got from the already existing practices in her traditional society, the following recommendations are made. They are:

1. The Church missionaries should have a thorough knowledge of Nsukka cultural values in order to understand and evangelise the people properly. This will bring out integral development in the area and deepen the roots of Christian Culture.
2. There is need for adequate emphasis on people’s communal feeling – the zonal or basic Christian communities should enforce this. The Church as family of God is one family and heirs of the kingdom and therefore has to care for others.
3. There should be a greater collaboration with the local inhabitants and politicians to bring about the desired goals in Rural development projects.
4. The Church should engage in Rural Development projects so that her mission becomes comprehensively fulfilled. Hence, Christ came that human beings may have life in abundance (John 10:10).
5. Works of charity for rural dwellers should be aggressively done through her desks of Justice, Development and Peace Commission.
6. There is need to initiate inculturation process to dialogue with the feasts in traditional society such as New Yam festival in order to make it a Christian festival.
7. Proper catechesis informed by vast investigations into the traditional healing methods is necessary to enable the Christians differentiate between idolatory, suspicion, superstitious beliefs and the God given pharmaceutical potency domiciled in African roots and herbs.

6. Conclusion

In some areas, rural development is regarded as an archaic issue. This is not so in Nsukka where the population is largely rural and the government priorities and the models of many donor agencies are expected to be focused on the welfare of the rural poor. The unabated impoverishment of the rural

population and environment in Nsukka cultural zone challenges the Church in the area of her social gospel. She has to rise up to this challenge by initiating a good number of rural development projects which would impact positively on the lives of the people. This action would indubitably reveal the pastoral relevance of the Church in the area and beyond. The Church does not understand development as a commodity which could be measured by the statistics of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Product (GNP) alone since this is only an economic growth which does not take care of the whole dimension of the human person.

Instead, development for the Church means the process of change which fosters the development of each person and the whole person. This authentic understanding of development incorporates human-oriented projects, collaborative action and the empowerment of the people to achieve their aspirations. The Church in Nsukka Diocese and elsewhere should involve the local people who are indispensable contributors and beneficiaries of her rural development initiatives. She should apply those traditional values of the people which guarantee the integral progress of the human person and of the entire society in her approach to sustainable rural development. Most importantly, she does not only strive to alleviate the misery and suffering of the rural population, she tries to get down to the very roots of those structures which breed human misery and uproot them.

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