

**Msgr Obiora Ike**

**OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN  
EDUCATION IN ENUGU DIOCESE - (1962 TO 2012)**

**THE TAKEOVER AND RETURN OF VOLUNTARY AGENCY  
AND MISSION SCHOOLS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF EAST  
CENTRAL STATE OF NIGERIA**

**1. Mandate and Focus:**

This paper seeks to give a cursory background to the role of the Church in Enugu diocese in the promotion of integral evangelization, humane civilization, cultural authenticity and all round educational excellence that promotes people and makes them truly human and divine. The mandate for this activity derives from the call of the Lord to his disciples thus: *“GO INTO THE WHOLE WORLD, TEACH ALL NATIONS AND PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION” (MATHEW 28:18 - 20)*. The paper takes into consideration the challenges of establishing schools by the early missionaries, the incident of a three year genocidal war against the Biafran people, the expulsion of the missionaries by Nigeria, the forceful and illegal take over of the schools by government and the eventual return with final settlement of the details of the schools return by a benign, rational and fair minded government under Sullivan Iheanacho Chime

As is clearly understood and known to many throughout history, the focus of the mandate of the Church, received at the beginning of the first millennium has remained one of teaching, healing and sanctifying of people of all nations and these have remained great challenges. At the same time, this has been her greatest asset in her mission of over 2000 years in the service of humanity and the divinity. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, son of God and founder of the Church instructed his disciples as a last testament before his ascension from the mountain to go into the whole world and teach all nations (evangelization) through *“proclamation, dialogue, inculturation, the practice of justice and peace and communication”* (cf. John Paul II, 1994, *Ecclesia in Africa*) This good news reached the shores of Igboland in December 1885 when Father Josef Lutz and companions of the Holy Ghost Congregation from Europe arrived the shores of the river Niger in Onitsha, Aguleri and Igbariam and started the process of Christianization, Civilization and Europeanization of

the peoples of the lower Niger. At the time of their arrival, the British Empire was already present and busy with political and colonial adventurism, economic exploitation of human, natural and mineral resources and commercial enterprise in Nigeria.

The strategy of the British was by all standards not primarily the development of the place and people but for conquest under the Crown. This was shown through the many forms of subjugation and imposition of foreign laws on the natives. Like Elisabeth Isichei has written in her book: *A History of the Igbo people* “*Colonialism, throughout the world has always been an essentially violent phenomenon. It was imposed by violence and maintained by its potential capacity for violence*”. It is pertinent however to mention that the missionaries, though Europeans themselves, came from varied nationalities such as France, Germany, Ireland, Britain and had a slightly different agenda in Igboland and Nigeria. Their mission was to preach Christianity, help stop slave trade, restore the dignity of the African peoples battered by centuries of degradation and work to bring Gospel values of universal love, enlightenment, cultural transformation and light to the people of the territory.

## **2. A pagan Chief Onyeama of Eke invites Christian Missionaries to his territory:**

In 1910, a local traditional chief called Owushi Onyeama, the Okwuluoha of Agbaja who hailed from Eke town was made a paramount and warrant chief under the British colonial administration in recognition of his influence. He had known western lifestyle and dynamism as a trader beyond Igboland. At this time, his interest in western education came to its peak and sought immediate realization. Thus, after a failed relationship with the Church Missionary Society (Anglican Church) founded in 1799 in England “*out of commiseration for the cruel wrongs which the slave trade had inflicted upon them*” as Ekechi F.K. had recorded in his book “*Missionary enterprise and rivalry in Igboland 1867 – 1914*”. The CMS had come to the Agbaja territory and settled at Udi. They thought the children in Igbo language and spoke vernacular as they were local black people. Chief Onyeama abhorred this local level of teaching. He had rather a wish for the modern, the new and the higher educational content which the Europeans who spoke foreign languages brought with their Christian mission. The Catholics had this characteristic, thus Chief

Onyeama extended his invitation to Father Joseph Shanahan in Onitsha who was the apostolic prefecture of the territory for the Roman Catholic Church. He wanted his children and his people to speak the white man's language, learn modern European education and skills, gain entrance into modernity and gradually join to lead the rest of Nigeria, which at the time was wallowing in all forms of superstition, ignorance and cultural stagnation.

Father Shanahan acted swiftly and sent Reverend Father Aloysius Mueller, then resident in Igbariam to explore the new area of Eke and the request of the warrant paramount Chief and put up a scheme for missionary activities which was primarily education. Arriving into Eke in 1910, Father Aloysius swung into action, celebrated holy mass and discovered that the only successful means of evangelization was through the schools. The blue print designed by Father Mueller consisted in the erection of a school, some health centers, use of English language among other things in the evangelization of the region. This was happily received and approved by Chief Onyeama. With this development, the paramount chief made a decree that solely empowered the Catholic missionaries in Agbajaland to spread their educational and missionary news amongst the populace, whilst suspending the CMS for the tenure of his administration.

The seed that started the educational presence of the Catholic Church, alongside other denominations such as the Methodists and Anglicans in the territory known today as Enugu, Nsukka and Agwu dioceses was the strong initiative of a pagan local chief who stayed true to his own tradition but allowed his children to be converted to the catholic faith.

### **3. Education as key to Evangelization:**

Knowing too fully well that the future of a people lie in the quality of the virtues they develop, their inner ability to respect their consciences and spirit beyond the external book knowledge, certificates and postures which people seem to externally possess, the Missionary and Voluntary Agencies constructed standard primary schools in every village and in some cases colleges also called secondary schools to prepare the people for the tasks of a new world and era. Education is and has remained the basic instrument and tool for the realization of the missionary enterprise in Enugu diocese. With education is the agenda for the restoration of dignity of the African people.

On November 12th 1962 Enugu was carved out of Onitsha Archdiocese and raised to the status of a diocese. It comprised of the Old Enugu and Nsukka districts. The first bishop consecrated on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1963 was Right Rev John Cross Anyogu who had been the auxiliary Bishop of Onitsha from 1957. He built the seminary which bears his name at Nsukka for the training of young men as seminarians and spent time personally inspecting schools and colleges within the diocese. He died on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1967, the very day Nigeria declared war on Biafra. From this date until 17<sup>th</sup> march 1970, the territory was administered by Msgr Stephen Ezeanya who led a diocese on exile and without a bishop for three years. With the appointment of Bishop Godfrey Okoye as the 2<sup>nd</sup> bishop of Enugu, a new era dawned in the educational pursuit of continuing the legacy of the early missionaries. He was an educator, a rector of a seminary at All hallows and a man endowed with wit, talent and vision. He acquired large parcels of land for educational purposes, built many of them and challenged the apathy of society with his optimism and practical approach to solving issues. He died on march 17<sup>th</sup> 1977 and was succeeded by the holy, disciplined, ascetic pastor and formator of men and women.

With the appointment of Michael Ugwu Eneja on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1977 as the third bishop of Enugu diocese and his consecration on 26th February, 1978, education was placed at the centre stage of the Church's mission and identity in Enugu diocese. Bishop Eneja emphasized all round excellence and total education of the whole person. He trained a large number of his seminarians (including the author of this paper) priests and religious and sent many abroad for further studies. Everything was done to foster education and its progress as a pastoral priority as it targeted the youth who were still innocent and open to new ways. Many Igbo people were deeply embedded in the old ways of life and culture. It was difficult for them to accept the new ways and the new Christian faith that had dawned in the territory as Chinua Achebe ably portrays in his seminal book: Things Fall Apart.

#### **4. The take over of Mission schools by the post Biafra Governments of Nigeria**

The introduction of education in Igboland by Bishop Joseph Shanahan of the Catholic Church was one of the foremost instruments used to

evangelize the people and secure the land for Christianity, especially for Catholicism. The success of the educational approach is particularly visible in the statistics which have shown the Igbo dioceses to have the greatest concentration of Catholic people in the whole of Africa. The political climate of Nigeria from independence in 1960 to 1966 turned sour. The large country of 380 tribes, 420 languages, and 4 political regions knit together by the British for their own purposes did not hold as the military made a coup on 15th January 1966 and took over power. The historical antecedents of that military coup was initially hailed as a fight against corruption, inept leadership, irredentism, discrimination and backwardness but was soon misconstrued and given a tribal and religious connotation. War ensued from 6<sup>th</sup> July 1967 until 10<sup>th</sup> January 1970 and the country was divided between the eastern region of the country largely made up of Christians and traditional religionists known as the Republic of Biafra versus the northern and western parts of the country which remained Nigeria.

The first recorded history of genocide in Africa was the Biafra war, with a systematic extermination of the Igbos. Over one million children of Biafra, a large number of soldiers and adults lost lives, limbs and belongings. The trauma of that war still hangs over Nigeria as it revealed the faulty foundations upon which the British erected Africa's most populous State without consideration of the peoples Will, Voice or integrity.

At the end of the Nigerian civil war on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1970, Mr. Ukpabi Asika, the administrator of the East Central State appointed by the military government of General Gowon of Nigeria declared by an Edict and White Paper the Government take over of all mission and voluntary agency schools. The document titled *Public Education Edict: East Central State of Nigeria Gazette Number 3, Enugu, May 1970* removed the Church from its ownership and control of its Mission schools. This meant that a very important vehicle and tool for evangelization through the schools had been removed from the Church in Igboland. It was followed by the expulsion of all the missionaries from Europe as a punishment to the Church and the Igbos for the Biafra war. It was said that the missionaries had supported their faithful and given food and medication to the suffering people of Biafra. In blunt terms, the education authorities and government declared that evangelization or to use their very exact term "*indoctrination*" should not be carried out through the school (Public

Education Edict, number 3). There is thus granted, complete freedom of religion or irreligion in so far as it is compatible with the keeping of public order. The nation's public life, its economic and cultural affairs are being organized outside the domains of the Church and without any reference to religion.

##### **5. The fight for the Return of the Schools to the Missions:**

Incessant appeals by the Catholic Bishops, catholic laity organizations, individual personalities, groups, missionaries at home and abroad and well meaning Nigerians to government to return the schools confiscated, albeit illegally and contrary to moral law, conscience and the natural right to ownership of property, fell on deaf ears. In 1974, the Bishops of East Central State, Nigeria wrote a “*Joint Christian Declaration on take Over of Schools*” dated June 26<sup>th</sup> 1974. It was strongly held that education without morality was like humanity without a soul. If people would go to school and gain general knowledge but not have character and virtue, society would be poorer for it and humanity would be less advanced. The effects of the school's take over in Igboland and Enugu diocese are telling. An Irish missionary father Dr. D. O. Sullivan, who worked in Igboland before the expatriation of all missionaries and later visited the country in 1974 (four years after the Biafra war had this to say:

*“The nationalization of the schools dealt the Church much harder blow than the sudden dismissal of 300 foreign priests and 200 foreign sisters... the school has been, since the beginning of the century, the primary instrument of evangelization. The school, its teachers and its managers communicated the faith together with education in general. The adult catechumen was linked with the school, its teachers being the catechists during their off hours. In most villages, the school building was the Church. In it mass was celebrated and the sacraments administered. With a stroke of the pen all this was changed. The Church no longer controls the schools. Evangelization is in jeopardy. Religious and moral instruction is at low ebb”.*

Efforts for the return of schools continued. Government refused bluntly to consider the return of mission property but reluctantly offered to pay compensation for the structures and land upon which the schools were built to the voluntary agencies. The Catholic Mission bluntly refused to accept any compensation for its schools, citing the ancient wisdom “REX

CLAMAT AD DOMINO” (Things cry for their owners) as their slogan. The Anglican Bishops on the other hand and some private school owners accepted compensation which was paid to them. Thus they gave up their moral rights under law to their mission schools and properties. The cause for the full return of schools was championed principally by Bishops G.M.P. Okoye, Francis Arinze and Anthony Nwedo. Many other names, uncountable to mention, were active at all levels and fronts on this agenda.

Following the astute leadership, diplomatic persuasion and convincing moral authority and efforts of Bishop Okoye, the new Military Administrator of the East Central State Col Anthony Ochefu, who was appointed in 1974 following the coup of General Murtala Muhammad that toppled General Gowon as head of State and consequently the government of Ukpabi Asika for the first time, approved and conceded that junior seminarians be considered secondary school students and deserving to be allowed conduct of the West African Examinations (WAEC) and General Certificate of Examination (GCE) in their seminaries. This was the first time, after Ukpabi Asika that seminaries were approved as secondary schools and deserving of the status of exam centers. Hitherto, no seminarians did any of the West African examinations within the seminary. They were considered external students and could do the WASC and the General Certificate of Examination of Cambridge University, England as external candidates.

Under Bishop Michael Eneja and his exemplary, quiet diplomacy, prayerful engagement, moral authority and subtle but very successful negotiating skills, Chief Jim Nwobodo was compelled to get the Anambra State House of Assembly vote on *a Bill that passed a law to transfer to and vest on Voluntary Agencies the Proprietorship, management and Control of Four educational institutions in the State. Known as the “Schools Transfer Law of Anambra State on Return of Schools” dated 1983.* That law effectively handed over for the first time, four schools to the Christian Missions, namely two schools to the Anglican Communion (St Monica’s Teacher training College, Ogbunike and St Cyprian Teacher training College, Nsukka) and two schools to the Catholic Mission (Holy Rosary College, Enugu and St Charles Teacher Training College Onitsha). The next governor of the State Chief C.C.Onoh prepared a clear agenda for total hand over of all the Mission schools in the New Year of January

1984 but was caught up by yet another military coup led by a hard liner, General Muhammad Buhari on the eve of the handover, 31st December 1983. Efforts thereafter to effect the return of other schools proved impossible. In fact, many other States of Nigeria outside Biafra went ahead to take over Mission property such as schools and health centers. Schools take over became therefore a national matter and needed the joint efforts of all and sundry to clamor for its return. Yet, with daily falling standards in education, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) vehemently opposed, frustrated, protested and refused to agree to the hand over of any Mission school to its lawful and moral proprietors. The only State that did not do so in Nigeria is Benue State.

It took the gentle persuasion of a team of diocesan experts appointed under Bishop Anthony Gbuji in 1998: namely Msgr Obiora Ike the Vicar General and chairman of committee, Msgr Anthony Anijielo, Msgr Anthony Aso, Sr Mercy Anih (MSHR) and Sir Igwe Iloeje to convince the Commissioner of Education, Architect Offor and the military administrator in 1999, Navy Captain Benson Adekunmi Agbaje to designate a date for the hand over of the next batch of other schools for return to their owners through an edict known as TRANSFER OF SCHOOLS TO VOLUNTARY AGENCIES ORDER 1999. He transferred by this ORDER publicly gazetted, nine (9) schools to the original owners: four to the Anglicans, *namely Girls Secondary schools Awkunanaw; Nsukka High school, Nsukka; Union Secondary School, Awkunanaw; Girls Secondary School, Ngwo* and transferred another five schools to the Catholic Mission, *namely: College of Immaculate Conception (CIC); Queen of the Holy Rosary College (QHRC) Nsukka; Rosary High School Awgwu; St Paul's College Eke; St Theresa's College Nsukka*. The schools returned had a transitional period of nine months for effective take over of the schools by the Mission on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000. This meant that from this date, the Missions would take over all responsibilities of the management and running of the schools including financing. The Anglicans were not comfortable with this arrangement. They wished for the State to pay fully.

With the arrival of the civilian dispensation under Governor Chimaroke Nnamani in May 1999, the Missionary proprietors of the newly handed over schools were restrained from fully implementing the take over of schools already accorded them. Governor Nnamani requested for time as

the new incoming governor and suspended the immediate implementation of the law of hand over of schools already packaged as Edict and ORDER by Navy Captain Agbaje. The new governor was supposedly under pressure by the Nigerian Union of teachers with a threat to strike action. This was the height of illegality but even then, the Missionaries took it coolly working assiduously for an opportune time to effect total hand over of all their schools.

#### **6. The Final Return of all Catholic Mission Schools in 2009 by Governor Sullivan Iheanacho Chime:**

On 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007, Sullivan Iheanacho Chime was elected Governor of Enugu State. An astute lawyer, quiet performer and a man of destiny, he was approached by Msgr Obiora Ike, key negotiator and head of the Catholic led Committee to agree to a total and complete return of all the schools of the Catholic Church in Enugu State. Several discussions and Memos were written over long days and nights with stakeholders and under the prudent guidance of the Bishop Most Rev Anthony Okonkwo Gbuji, himself an educationist. The realization had dawned on all and sundry that Education is key to development and the Catholic Church remained the only credible, relevant and reliable stakeholder with experience to manage its own schools within the State which at this time had virtually collapsed. Handing over was probably the best way out for a government that had forcefully taken over Missionary properties in 1970, turned moral values upside down, produced armed robbers and semi illiterates with certificates but without wisdom or character and unable to deliver. The State unable to cope with the education crisis and high crime rate, failures of students in examinations, ghost teachers in schools, children not attending any classes in many rural areas and urban centers chose the path of wisdom and joyfully agreed to return all the schools to their owners. Many schools had dilapidated roofs, littered and abandoned, children without teachers, education was in year 2007 at an all time low. Yet, it must be considered nobility and courage that Governor Sullivan Chime decreed the complete hand over of all the mission schools.

#### **7. Joint Letter of the Bishops to Government:**

The three bishops of the Diocese of Awgu, Enugu and Nsukka on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2008 wrote a 15 page joint letter to the government of Enugu

State, justifying the reasons and urgency for the return of the schools to the Missions. A summary of that letter is hereunder given:

*Part A:*

**COMPLETION OF THE FULL HANDOVER PROCESS OF FIVE (5) SECONDARY SCHOOLS ALREADY RETURNED TO THE CATHOLIC MISSION (ORIGINAL PROPRIETORS) AS APPROVED BY LAW IN 1999**

We the leaders of the Catholic Church in our State of Enugu present the following request with this memo to your Excellency: **The full actualization of the law on the return of schools to the Catholic Mission by Government in 1999.** This in effect means that the mission schools already handed over are not only seemingly but actually handed over according to the law of the State gazette in 1999. It also implies the financial responsibility of the mission over these schools. Government would give grant-in-aids as part of its budget to cover staff and teachers in these schools who are government employees as is done in some other states and as was done even before the takeover. As a sign of partnership, we shall invite the government to inspect our records and standards and we intend to abide by the laws guiding education in Enugu State. The Catholic Church intends to lead with accountability and all round standards in the delivery of qualitative educational services.

***REQUEST FOR THE RETURN OF ALL OTHER 12 REMAINING MISSION SECONDARY SCHOOLS NOT YET HANDED OVER TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:***

The Catholic Mission hereby ask your government to return the Catholic Church all the remaining twelve (12) schools within Enugu State built by the Catholic Church, but forcefully taken over unjustly in 1970 by the military/ civilian administration of Yakubu Gowon and Governor Ukpabi Asika government. As has been mentioned already, other states of Nigeria have handed over completely the schools they forcefully took over. The remaining mission schools applied for are:

**CATHOLI DIOCESE OF ENUGU**

- 1. St. Patrick's college Emene***
- 2. St. Joseph Teacher's Training college Emene (now Emene Grils High School)***

3. *St. Theresa's college, Abor*
4. *Fatima High School, Aguobu Owa*
5. *Ezeagu Secondary school, Isiugwu, Umana*
6. *Sedes Sapientia Girls Secondary school, Oghe*

AWGU DIOCESE

1. *Teacher's Training college, Ihe (Now special science school, Ihe)*
2. *St. Vincent college, Agbogugu*
3. *Corpus Christi college, Achi*
4. *Awgu County Secondary School, Nenwe.*

NSUKKA DIOCESE

1. *Teacher's Training College Aku (Now Boys Secondary School, Aku)*
2. *St. Patrick college, Obollo Eke*

***3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND GRANT-IN-AID FOR THE PHYSICAL REPAIRS OF THE DILAPIDATED AND RETURNED SECONDARY SCHOOLS***

We urge the Government of Enugu State under your able administration, to give adequate financial support and regular Grants-in-aid to the Proprietors of these schools, to enable repairs on dilapidated physical infrastructure, address the difficulties caused by nine years delay in the implementation of the handover accord and purchase of needed equipment to put these schools on functional status. Our experts and engineers have calculated for the said repairs, a substantial sum of thirty million naira (30,000,000) for each of the 12 schools.

***The Catholic Church desires to take over these schools upon your approval with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008, and restore them within three years to certain measures of their past glory. The mission shall undertake quality staffing, welfare of the teachers, funding through schools and parent Teacher Association (PTA) as well as government Grants-in-aid for the immediate rehabilitation of the dilapidated infrastructure.***

PART B:

**REQUEST FOR THE RETURN AND HANDOVER OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS BUILT BY THE CATHOLIC MISSION AND EXISTING WITHIN CATHOLIC MISSION PREMISES IN THE DIOCESES OF AWGU, ENUGU AND NSUKKA**

1. In view of the serious observation by well meaning citizens, community and religious groups, the statement of our national

political elders in Government at all level (Federal, State and Local) on the falling standards of education, especially at the primary school levels; and in view of the commitment which the Catholic mission places on the need for all round qualitative education that is *child-centered* and begins early for children, we, the leaders of the Catholic Church in the Dioceses of Awgu, Enugu and Nsukka, all located in Enugu State have decided to ask from your Excellency and your government, the return of our primary schools which were built and managed by the mission in our various communities in the past and are located within Catholic Mission Premises.

2. Many of these schools have dilapidated unfortunately and are often left without teachers. We are eager to restore these schools to a certain measure of decency and overall quality provision in terms of educational content as provided for by the educational progress of children in Nigeria's Primary Schools towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the Universal Basic Education objectives which aims the Catholic Church shares.
3. After careful deliberation and research on the consequences and havocs caused to our children by the absence of the basic ingredients that make for quality education in Modern society, we are eager to support these intelligent children with access to all round quality education in those Primary Schools that exist within Catholic Mission Premises.
4. We assure the State of the desire of the Catholic Church to Partner with your Government towards improving the overall standards of life of our people, particularly through educational provision and re-confirm our ability, vision and mission to set target for quality education for our people imposed by the challenges of globalization.
5. *We therefore ask for the return and handover of all primary located with Catholic Church Premises in our many rural and urban parishes, and ask for these schools to be run under the original proprietors namely; the Catholic Mission.*

6. As you are aware, several conflicts have ensued within some of these schools existing on Church land and premises but managed by local government and state authorities. The confusion caused by the usage of the same building for both religious worship and classroom purposes would be easily avoided since the Catholic Church and proprietors would, where necessary erect permanent structures under its management; for primary school usage and arrange religious affairs within Church premises in an atmosphere of peace, tranquility and order.
  
7. It is really odious and "*much of bad blood*" has been caused due to this situation where the land and buildings are church property but the management of the primary school is under another authority. With your approval of the complete handover and return of these Primary schools to the mission which built them in the first place and is the bona-fide proprietor, problem of conflict would be solved once and for all, and the youth shall benefit from our strategy of all round educational services to the State.

Furthermore, we assure your Excellency that the Catholic Church would continue the training of our children within its premises at Primary School levels and promote qualitative education within an environment that is suitable.

Specifically, we ask for the handover and return in the time being, of the following schools enclosed in this memo attached herein as **Annex III**

## 9. FINAL PRAYER AND REQUEST

**WE ASK FOR YOUR IMMEDIATE APPROVAL AND PRIORITY ATTENTION TO THIS EDUCATIONAL MEMO SUBMITTED TO YOUR EXCELLENCY, THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF ENUGU STATE**

Aware that time is gradually eluding us, we once again solicit your immediate and priority attention to this matter of unconditional returns of our schools I the following requests:

1. Completion of the handover of five Secondary schools already returned to the Catholic Mission proprietors as approved by law of

- Enugu State in 1999 which schools are identified in the annex 1 of this memo
2. Request for the return of the remaining 12 Catholic mission secondary schools not yet handed over to the Church as enclosed in the annex 2 of this memo
  3. Return and handover of all Primary schools within Catholic Mission Premises as indicted in annex 3 of this memo
  4. Financial support and Grants-in-aid for the physical Repair of buildings of the returned and handed over Secondary Schools, as well as Financial support and Grants-in-aid for the primary Schools requested for handover and return as listed in the memo.

## CONCLUSION

We are united in prayer for your Excellency and goodwill with all those who work for a just, spiritually uplifted and democratic society and assure you of our continued co-operation at all levels. By approving the requests presented to your Excellency on the Educational Memo presented, your government shall encourage the Catholic Mission to enhance all round knowledge and greater qualitative education for our children, healthy competition, the welfare of staff and students and the achievement of the laudable aims of the government of Enugu State, and indeed, the Federal Republic of Nigeria which has continued to emphasize the utility and indispensable nature of Education as the basis for any meaningful development. We ask Government to encourage the church within its competence to fulfill its mission in Nigeria, which as ***“a God given mandate, a natural right and a constitutional provision which has always characterized the unique role and the status of the selfless, qualitative and patriotic contribution of the Catholic Church to the all round growth of Nigeria especially through our educational involvement”***.

Devotedly yours in Christ

-----  
+Anthony O. Gbuji  
Catholic Bishop of Enugu Diocese

-----  
+ Francis O. Okobo  
Catholic Bishop of Nsukka

-----  
+ John I. Okoye  
Catholic Bishop of Awgu.

The letter of the Bishops was approved by the government of Enugu State and communicated to the Bishops in a letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2009. The letter read thus:

#### **8. RESPONSE FROM OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR GHS/22/XXVI/123A**

**The Honourable Commissioner**  
Ministry of education  
Enugu

Dear Sir

#### **RE-REQUEST FOR COMPLETE RETURN OF CATHOLIC MISSION SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE AND RETURN OF MISSION PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Your letter reference number **ENS/MOE/COM/241/XX/152** of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2009 and its annexures on the above subject addressed to His Excellency, the Governor (copy Attached) refers. His Excellency the Governor has graciously approved your request. Accordingly, you are directed to take appropriate steps to implement His Excellency's approval.

Accept the assurance of my esteemed regards, please.

-----  
**Ifeoma Nwobodo (Mrs)**  
Chief of Staff to the Governor

**Copy to:**  
His Lordship  
Callistus V. C. Onaga  
Catholic Bishop of Enugu

His Lordship  
Francis O. Okobo  
Catholic Bishop of Nsukka

His Lordship  
John I. Okoye  
Catholic Bishop of Awgu

***9. GOVERNOR'S REACTION/ DIRECTIVES TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE***

**GHS/26/XIX/322**

5<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY  
2009

**The Hon Attorney-General/ Commissioner for Justice**  
Ministry of Justice  
Enugu

**The Hon. Commissioner for Education**  
Ministry of Education,  
Enugu.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

**RE-REQUEST FOR COMPLETE RETURN OF CATHOLIC MISSION SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE AND RETURN OF MISSION PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Attached herewith is copy of memo dated September 19, 2008 and its annexure on the above subject jointly addressed to His Excellency, the Governor by His Lordship Anthony O. Gbuji, Francis Okobo, John I. Okoye, Catholic Bishops of Enugu, Nsukka and Awgu respectively. His Excellency, the Governor has graciously approved the request contained in prayers 1, 2 and 3 of paragraph 9 of the letter under reference. Accordingly, you are directed to take appropriate steps to implement His Excellency's approval.

Accept the assurance of my warm regards.

**Ifeoma Nwobodo (Mrs)**  
Chief of staff to the Governor  
Copy to:

**His Lordship**

Callistus V. C. Onaga  
Catholic Bishop of Enugu

**His Lordship**

Francis O. Okobo  
Catholic Bishop of Nsukka

**His Lordship**

John I. Okoye  
Catholic Bishop of Awgu

**10. CONCLUSION:**

For the completion and summary of this exercise, a letter was written by Msgr Obiora Ike to their Lordships on the specific key points of the hand over and its details which memo is hereunder submitted:

Most Rev Dr Francis Okobo, Bishop of Nsukka  
Most Rev Dr John Okoye, Bishop of Awgu  
Most Rev Dr Callistus Onaga, Bishop of Enugu

**SITUATION REPORT ON RETURN OF CATHOLIC MISSION SECONDARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE BY GOVERNMENT**

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2009, Government of Enugu State sent a letter to Your Lordships approving the application the Bishops had made earlier dated September 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, returning to the Catholic Mission, the requested number of Secondary and Primary schools in Enugu State, in the three Dioceses. I enclose a copy of the said letter of Government in this mail for your ease of reference (Annex 1).

With your mandate and on your behalf, we made several consultations to further the negotiations with the Government side on the details of implementation of His Excellency, the Governor of Enugu State's approval with the responsible Ministries in Government, namely, the office of the Commissioner for Education and office of the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice and concluded on the following fundamentals:

1. **Twelve new secondary schools (Enugu 6; Awgu 4; Nsukka 2) are approved for handover with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009.**  
(Ref Annex 2).
2. **Government will continue to pay the salaries of all the teachers in these secondary schools over the years.** We asked for indefinite period for payment of salaries of the teachers, although there was insinuation that this could be limited for 5 years and renewable. I am assured that the indefinite payment of the teacher's salaries as we requested shall carry and this shall be contained in the Handover Gazette/letter, expected to reach your Lordships soon.
3. **Completion of Full Handover process for the 5 secondary schools earlier returned to the Catholic Mission in 1999,** but not implemented by the past Government. The schools in question are: Enugu 2 – (CIC and St Paul's Eke); Awgu 1 (Rosary High School Awgu); Nsukka 2 (St. Theresa's College and Queen of the Rosary College). These schools are now fully returned to the Catholic Mission and shall follow the principles already enunciated in 2 above.
4. In other words, the payment of teacher's salaries shall continue by Government whilst the **Catholic Mission which is the Sole Proprietor takes care of the Management, Discipline, Administration, Employment, and overall total quality services in the educational sector in all the schools, both primary and secondary, of which the Catholic Mission is a best- in -class in Nigeria.**
5. **Return of the 1<sup>st</sup> batch of primary schools located within Catholic Church premises has been approved.** The transfer shall take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009. There are a total number of 159 primary schools in phase 1 as the Catholic Church requested of Government. Enugu 65, Nsukka 64, Awgu 30. The details are herein enclosed as annex 3.
6. **Government undertakes the unconditional payment of all salaries of all teachers and the maintenance of structures under the Local Government Areas where the schools exist in collaboration with the Mission proprietors.**

7. On the initiative of the Government side at the negotiations, the Catholic Church was asked to demand for any of its remaining primary schools, even the **schools outside the Catholic Church Mission premises**. We consulted widely and have submitted a further list titled Phase 2. **Phase 2 has a list of a total of 289 primary schools (Enugu 116, Nsukka 128, and Awgu 45)**. The same conditions shall apply to these schools once handed over.
8. In summary therefore and for the purposes of clarity and information, I have the pleasure to inform Your Lordships that the overall total primary schools applied for in Phase I and Phase 2 therefore for transfer to the Catholic Dioceses of Enugu, Nsukka and Awgu is 448 primary schools (159 in Phase 1, and 289 in Phase 2). The total number of primary schools for Awgu diocese is 75, Enugu 181 and Nsukka 192.
9. The implementation date for the return and full takeover as stated by the Honorable Commissioner for Education, Dr. Festus Uzor to me is with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009.

#### **Request for a Forum for Briefing of the Bishops**

In view of the urgency of the foreseen handover of the above mentioned institutions by 1<sup>st</sup> September, and whilst we still await the official letter of Government I consider it very important to share a forum of briefing and strategy with your Lordships, as it is expected of us the **PROPRIETORS**, to develop an effective Catholic diocesan education secretariat at both Enugu State and individual diocesan levels; to implement the practical dimensions of the takeover via unified policies on supervision, administration, discipline, finances, work, curriculum development; teacher training, catechesis, infrastructure, standards, employment to mention but a few.

**Suggested dates and Venue:** I am available and suggest to your Lordships, a meeting on any of the following dates in **August 2009: 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> August at Enugu, Holy Ghost Cathedral, at 11.00 am on any of the days you may chose**. I shall

be consulting Your Lordships individually to agree on a suitable date.

With gratitude for the opportunity to serve and asking for your blessings,

**Msgr Obiora Ike**  
(Director CIDJAP)