

FROM A SOUL IN PURIFICATION

by
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As a medical doctor I have witnessed a number of close calls, but my mother's case stands out. I was inspired by Mama when I was a child. Papa would always refer to how hard she was struggling, and tell us that it was because of us. He said that we must play our own part and work hard at school. I was awed by Mama's strength, her drive and dedication to us. She used to wake up by four or five to begin her business.

By the time I came back from England in 1981, my parents had retired and were living in Emene. I specialized in Internal Medicine and this enabled me to be of assistance to them and our people in general. Of course, I was following in the steps of my uncle, my mother's brother, Dr. Anthony Illo. Mama has gone through many health challenges. She had a close call in 1984 at the University Teaching Hospital, Enugu. I was working there at that time. She had a cholecystectomy, splenectomy, and appendectomy. Four stones were removed from her gallbladder.

When Papa saw the tubes that went into parts of her body, he was shocked. He called her, "Misisi Mu." Her reply was weak, but he was happy. That was hope. He went to the Blessed Sacrament. He made sure that priests came to her bedside every day. When she survived, he organized a Thanksgiving celebration. Monsignor Madike came from Christ the King Church, Onitsha. He joined Bishop Eneja, Father Buckley and other priests to celebrate the mass. Mama made a speech in which she praised God for saving her life many times. She said that she had enjoyed great love of God through her family and

friends, and that she was ready any time God decided to take her finally. That was twenty five years ago. She is still here as I write this memoir in 2009. She is healthy, strong, and agile. She walks without a walking stick and likes to go downstairs to sit outside and chat with people. She uses her walking stick occasionally especially when she is going to church or traveling. She is a very strong woman, especially spiritually and emotionally.

In 1983, she had an eye operation at UNTH, Enugu. She had another one in 1993 at the Moorefield Eye Hospital in London, England. As she got to her eighties, she still remained strong, but her eyes had become weak so she always went to the market with Eunice. She went



back to England in 1995, not for treatment, but just to stay with my sisters, Beatrice and Ngozi. When she returned, she began to spend a lot of time with my sister, Monica, who was her first child. When Monica finished her cases at the high court, she would come here to chat with Mama. They would laugh as if they were

friends. I understand that Mama was a young teenager when she gave birth to her.

When Monica passed, Mama insisted on going to the funeral. Mama is a woman that nobody can stop from doing what she wants to do. The only person that could stop her was Papa and since he passed on in September 1987, we have never figured out how to stop Mama. Mama likes to be in control of herself, her house, and her environment. So she went to the transition ceremony of her first daughter and friend. She came back here and went into a coma. Another close call. We took her to the hospital but my colleagues felt that she was passing and advised that we should take her home to be with family during her final period.

Father Buckley, our family friend, came here and gave her the last sacrament. After some days, she got up and told us that God said that it was not yet her time. In spite of this, she lost the zeal for life. She did not want her car anymore. It was a gold colored Mercedes 230 that she really loved. She told me to sell the car. I sold it. Four years after that, she wanted another car. We were happy because she had gained back her joy of life. We bought her a car. We went home to Aochukwu last December in the new car.

She likes to spend her holidays in Arochukwu. My brother, Charles, makes sure that she spends some time there from time to time especially during the Christmas time when many people returned to the villages. Early this year, two of my sisters, Ngozi and Beatty, returned from London. That made Mama very happy. Her grandchildren from Ifeanyi, Bendan and Christian, also returned. Charlie's daughter, Amaka, and her husband, Emeka were there with their children. Our brother-in-law, Cosmas, was with us too. Florence, Helen, and Mama Emma as well as Chinyere's children, Chinyereugo and Chinedu, were there. My brother's wife, Joe, made sure that her kitchen accommodated our large appetite. Mama had a great time surveying all of us as we chatted and bantered with each other and with visitors that kept coming. Mama also enjoyed the attention of relations and friends who came to see her.



There was one sad spot; the passing of her brother, Dr. Illo. He was buried early this year. I don't think that Mama has recovered from it. When my sister, Chinyere, returned from America in July this year, Mama was happy, but later she began to cry. She regretted that her brother was not there to share with her the joy of Chinyere's return. She said that Onyenkuzi (my father) had left her to enjoy the children alone and that her brother had been enjoying with her. Since his death, she has become alone again. My brother-in-law, Cosmas, said something that made her laugh and we all began to laugh. He said, "every time you talk about this your brother and call him Nwa Onye Ogaziere. Are we not blessed by God also?" Mama began to laugh and told us that we were all blessed. Then she explained that the name "Onye Ogaziere" was the nick name of their father. He was a merchant who made a lot of money at a young age, so people began to call him "a child blessed by God."

Mama is still very energetic. Her eyes are weak but she uses her glasses to read her prayer books. She likes to watch videos of her children and grand children. She likes to watch the videos of her singing and dancing with friends. It is amazing that she still sings and dances at ninety. Sometimes she goes to the kitchen to take over the cooking. She likes to wash her clothes and see that they are kept in their appropriate places. She knows when something is missing and raises hell until it is found. And you better make sure that it is found or else she will show you "pepper." I strongly hope that Mama will pull through this close call. But first, let me relate what happened yesterday.

By two thirty in the early morning of 11th October 2009, someone knocked on my door. It was Florence's voice. "Mama wants you to come now now." She said.

I took my stethoscope and rushed to my mother. She was lying on her bed, but got up when I came in. I examined her vital signs.

"I am not ill. Go and bring a pen and paper. I want you to write down what I want to say."

"Sit down. Florence, sit down and be the witness," she said.

"Mama, what is it?"

“When I leave, I don’t want anybody to cry. You all have been very good children and I pray to God to bless you. I bless all of you including my grand children and their families. You all must continue to hold on to God as your father did and as I am still doing. Jesus is the only way. Follow Him and His mother and all the saints. You can’t go wrong. You must tell this to all your brothers and sisters. Tell them to tell their children and friends. Have you written it down?”

“Yes Ma.”

“When I leave, just dress me up in my Life Member attire. Take me to the church. Call the priests and ...”

“Mama, why are you telling us all these now?” I said.

“Don’t interrupt me again. I’m not saying that I’m dying. I’m just delivering my will to you, and Florence is the witness. There is some money at the bottom of the first drawer. You will see it in a small box. That money is for Chinyereugo and Chinedu. It is for their education. They are my only children that I have not seen through school. They are always praying with me and massaging my legs. My son Ifeanyi; his children, Brendan and Christian, are okay. Charlie is taking care of them. My daughter Orbi-y is fine.” She paused before continuing.

“I have seen Ifeanyi and Edwin. They are very very well. But I have not seen my brother yet and they are telling me to go back. Well, I don’t know what is happening, but something is happening and I am still praying to God Almighty.

Oka aka.	The greatest!
Onye kelu igwe an ana!	The One who created heaven and earth!
Nekwe, nekwe, nekwe	Look, look, look,
Nekwe Jesus.	Look at Jesus.
Anyway, <i>unu ama abụ nya.</i>	Anyway, you people won’t see Him.

He is here. Jesus is everywhere,

I see Him all the time.

A lot of bad things are happening ...

Have you written everything that I said?”

“Yes Ma.” I said.

When my brother, Charles, and his wife, Joe, came to see us last week, they talked about “purification.” The priests of St Joseph’s parish come here every day to give her holy communion. One of them talked about purification. Monsignor Enem came here the other day. He is from Saint Mary’s Catholic Church, Uwani, Enugu. He prayed for Mama and also talked about “purification.” They say that some saints go through periods of purification before they die. This is a spiritual interpretation. I will regard this as another close call of a different form. Mama’s doctors are doing their best. Mama is a good patient and we commend her for it.