In Her Own Voice
AGNES OKAFOR TELLS HER STORIES

Contributing authors: Agnes Okafor, Michael Eneja, Charles Okafor, Beatrice Madike, Ngozi Nwosu, Andrew Okafor, Cosmas Madike, Josephine Okafor, Chinyere Okafor, Orbi Edozie-Ighofose, Okechukwu Okafor, and Kelechi Anyadiegwu
TRIBUTE TO MAMA: ACHALA-UGO-NWANYI

by
PROFESSOR CHARLES O. OKAFOR

on behalf of the Okafor family of Amuvi, Arochukwu, Abia State, Nigeria

My mother, Mrs. Agnes Okafor, was born in 1918 to the Illo family of Amuvi, Arochukwu, Abia State. She was the first of three children from her mother. She married my father, Mr. Thomas Nwokolo Okafor. They had nine children and parented many more, who looked up to them as Papa and Mama. We are saddened by Mama’s departure to the great beyond. God allowed her the biblical three scores and ten, and added over twenty more years. We praise God for granting her a long happy life.

I title this tribute, “Achala-Ugo Nwanyi” because that was what Mama’s friends called her. Ugo means eagle. It is special in Igbo folklore. It is rare. It is beautiful. It is strong and rules the sky as it flies. The feathers of the eagle add prestige to crowns and caps of titled people. Mama you were and eagle to human beings, and you strove to be an eagle to God through your special relationship with Jesus Christ and your devotion to His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

You and Papa went from village to town developing schools, sometimes at great personal risk. You were a teacher, business woman, seamstress and home maker who showed us the example of how a spouse supports the family. We aspire to create the same rapport in our own families. You and Papa loved people and kept a hospitable house. Your kitchen was always busy especially on Sundays when people came to socialize in our house after mass. You taught us how to share even when we did not have enough. You loved us unconditionally, taught us how to love, and was the example of how a human being lives life with dignity accepting the ups and downs of life.

Your love, kindness, and compassion had no boundaries. You extended them to all especially the less privileged. Your hard work, cheerfulness, and easy laughter were inspiring. Thank you for the values that you taught us. You were the good example to my siblings, friends, and all those who came in contact with you.

Because you were strong and mentally alert, we thought that you would be with us for a much longer time. When you asked the priest for the sacrament of reconciliation, we did not think much of it. When you began to pray more, bless people more, give us messages, some people predicted that your were purifying your soul for final departure. They said that saintly people do this. All your life you prepared yourself for heaven. There is no doubt in our minds that the Merciful God was waiting for you and that was why the smile remained on your lips as you left this earth. I know all this, but I still hurt. I miss you, Mama. All of us miss you very much.

Di Ma-ama, my siblings and I promise you that we will honor your name by maintaining the legacy of Christian life, love, kindness, and hard work that you inculcated in us. You were the best mother. Goodbye Mama; till we meet again.
INTRODUCTION

This booklet contains interviews, personal stories, and anecdotes; all centered on Agnes Nwamgbo Illo who became the wife of a school teacher named Thomas Nwokolo Okafor, son of Okoroafo Enendu of Amuvi, Arochukwu in Abia State, Nigeria. Marriage gave her the additional appellation, Mrs. Okafor, but she always referred to her roots in the Illo family and remained close to her brothers, Anthony and Sylvanus, and one sister called Theresa Nwangbo. Her biological children include Monica Uzoamaka, Charles Okolo, Beatrice Chioma, Edwin Dominic, Ngozi Cordelia, Andrew Chukwuemeka, Chinyere Grace, Anthony Ikechukwu, and Patrick Ifeanyichukwu. Other children include Michael Eneja, Clement Enem, Innocent Manulukpe, Augustine Esom, Peter Nkedife, and others. Grand children and great grand children are listed at the end of this book.

There are many contributors to this book yet the title, “In her own voice” implies that one person speaks. This title should be seen through the heroine’s construction of self. Popularly known as Mama, the heroine sees herself as an individual with extensions to family linked to friends and society. It is not possible for her to talk about herself; needs, roles, and joy, without bringing in her husband and other people. Her use of the image of body with limbs to express self is very illuminating: “All of you are my hands and legs; the ones that are good are mine and the one that is sick is mine also. Na mai bodi.”

The “hands and legs” are the authors that narrate personal stories about their mother in this book. They capture snippets of the life of an extraordinary woman whose pride in self rests on her being a mother. She struggled with her husband to make a better life for their children including the ones that they adopted. She was the submissive mother who regarded family needs as her personal ones, yet her assertive personality and individuality are unmistakable in the way she managed her affairs. She made her family and her world to accept her in her own terms without pandering to any traditional, patriarchal, or racial stereotypes about women or black people. In a world that was mostly black, one could feel the undercurrent of racial thinking that made her engage a white man in a “fight” because “somebody needed to tell him to stop slapping people about.” She regarded Catholic Christianity as the religion. She was able to maintain her Igbo roots in a remarkable way by sometimes translating African hospitality and care giving into Christian love.

One of the stories, the one about the wedding shoes, is told by Mama’s first grand-daughter, Orbi Julie, who is the daughter of Mama’s first daughter, Monica. Ada (first daughter) is significant in Igbo culture. It has a lot of respect, authority, and responsibilities. Similarly the first grand-son, Okechukwu, who is the son of Mama’s first son, Charles, has an important position with its own authority, roles and expectations. His story about Mama’s questions speaks to Mama’s submission and faith in God.
**Di Ma-ama Speaks:**
**Interview with Mrs. Agnes Nwangbo Illo Okafor**

by
**Chinyere Grace Okafor**

*Friday, July 22, 2005, at No. 26 Agbani Street, Emene, Enugu State, Nigeria*

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**Chinyere:** Mama, tell me about yourself.

**Mama:** “What do you want to know?”

**Chinyere:** Tell me anything that you want your children to remember about you.

**Mama:** I want all my children to remember that I love all of them; I mean all of them, not just those of you who love me back but even the one that does not come to see me.

*(I laugh. She laughs)*. All of you are my hands and legs; the ones that are good are mine and the one that is sick is mine also. *Na mai bodi*.

**Chinyere:** *(Laughing)* Di Ma-ama!

**Mama:** *(Laughing)* *Na me*. I thank God everyday for giving you people to us and for giving us our grandchildren and their children. You are good children that are not like the wind that blows at its own will. You follow in the footsteps of your father, Thomas, who is now in heaven. I am very happy that you have continued to take care of me as your father did. You come here to see me; even those who are in London and America come to see me here whenever they can. It makes me very very happy. But let me say something – o. In case I have offended any of you in any way, I ask for forgiveness, but the person has to tell me so that I will know. I still ask for forgiveness and I ask God to forgive me all my sins both those that I remember and those that I don’t remember.

**Chinyere:** Why are you talking about forgiveness now?

**Mama:** I want everybody to remember that I have forgiven him. You have to forgive people and also ask for forgiveness. That is peace. I have finished pounding and kept the mortar. *Ana mu agba ka mu data ego*? I’m not looking at anybody’s face; just telling truths without fear of anybody. Only God.

**Chinyere:** Yes Mama. I don’t want to know more about your children. I want you to talk about yourself. What will you like us, your extensions, to know about you?

**Mama:** Okay. I want you to know that I am the daughter of a very great woman and a great man, but my father died when I was young, so we had to go and live with our mother.

**Chinyere:** What’s her name? Tell me about her.

**Mama:** You don’t know the name of your grandmother?

**Chinyere:** She was dead before I was born. The woman that was my grandmother was not your biological mother.

**Mama:** That’s true. My mother’s name is Ogbonnie Mgboro. She was a merchant. She had enormous *ngwa abia*. The men that carried her merchandise were many. Sometimes, they were up to thirty. They would travel to distant places to buy and sell.

**Chinyere:** Mama, describe her.

**Mama:** Oh, I’m sorry that you did not know her. She was a very beautiful woman. Your sister, Beatty,
looks like her; very tall, very dark and very smart. She used to stand \textit{piam!} No nonsense! The way she tied her wrappers was special. She would gather the inside one like this (\textit{She gets up and demonstrates how to make wrapper to look like a pleated skirt}). Then she would tie the top one; her buttocks would be emphasized. Then she would follow her carriers. That was how she went on her trading trips.

\textbf{Chinyere:} What did she sell?

\textbf{Mama:} All kinds of things, but she was known for \textit{aku} and \textit{nsi egbe}.

\textbf{Chinyere:} I can understand her selling wrappers, but a woman selling gun powder?

\textbf{Mama:} Yes. She sold gun powder and \textit{jioji} wrappers. She was strong and rich.

\textbf{Chinyere:} But she did not send you to school. She sent your brother, Anthony, who went on to become a medical doctor.

\textbf{Mama:} You don’t know what you are talking about. Do you know how far the school was? Arodiogbu was a boy, so my mother could allow him to go to that distant place. She sent me to the nearby school and then to Women’s Training School in Onitsha.

\textbf{Chinyere:} How far was the school that your brother went to?

\textbf{Mama:} The school was in Udi. We were living in Umuaga at that time. You pass Udi, pass Amokwe and continue to Umabi and Umuaga. These are big towns. Do you want me to trek for up to ten miles to get to school? They could not even accept my brother at Udi School because he was very small. Only big boys were accepted because of the long journey. My mother took Arodi to the house of the District Officer in Udi. No, it was the house of the priest. She shocked the white man. You know that they were not used to the boldness of our women. Before he knew what my mother was up to, she brought out a lot of money to show him that she was very rich and could pay for my brother to live in his house and go to school.

They put him in the school and changed his name to something that they could pronounce. That was how he became Anthony. He was baptized as Anthony. My mother did not care about the new name. Because of her travels, she knew that school education was valuable. She was prepared to spend any amount of money to see that we were educated. Umuaga was the center of her trading venture. From there, she would go to Adazi and Onitsha areas. She would come back and then go to interior places. But then I saw your father and wanted to get married.

\textbf{Chinyere:} Tell me the story.

\textbf{Mama:} I told you the story before.

\textbf{Chinyere:} I want to hear it again. Please.

\textbf{Mama:} Alright. We went to watch a football match. Everybody was looking forward to it. I did not know the teams that were playing, but we watched and cheered. I saw your father darting here and darting there and shining like electricity.

\textit{(Mama’s eyes sparkle as if she is in that field watching my father play soccer. At this point, I begin to laugh. Mama also laughs).} Don’t you know that your father was a football player? He played center forward. That was why your brothers played for their schools too.

Charlie was the captain of his team when he was in college. Edwin played also. That was what they used their bow legs for. Some of our grand children inherited his legs. Look at Emeka, Monica’s child; he has the legs for playing football but because of the family’s love for education, he had to become a lawyer like Monica and John Edozie. Your father was very popular. That day, his team won the match. The members carried him on their shoulders and ran around the field. The crowd cheered. We stood at a distance and watched. You could not mistake him on top of their shoulders because of his electric color. Everybody talked about him. He was very good looking, very intelligent and had already become a teacher even as he still studied.

Then, one day, as I was playing with my friends, I saw him in the company of some people. I could not mistake him.
“That’s the footballer,” one of the girls said.

“Teacher!” They ran towards him. I ran back. They were going to our house, so I took a short cut to our house.

I said to my mother, “Mama, some people are coming to our house with that footballer!”

My mother went to the door to find out. By then, they were almost at our door because I heard her greet them. I ran inside. I was excited. From inside, I peeped to see them. Then Mama came inside unexpectedly. She caught me peeping and began to laugh (She laughs). She put kola nuts in the okwa and told me to take it to the visitors. I almost dropped the okwa because I trembled, but as soon as I opened the door, I became strong. I did not stumble or anything. I just greeted them and ran back to the room. I was shy.

After they left, Mama told me that the men were your father’s uncles, and the woman with them was a trader that used to buy things from her. She was their guide to her house. They wanted to know whether my mother would like your father to marry me.

Yes, yes, yes, yes! I said “yes” many times. My mother laughed. Then she said that she would think about it. I think that she spoke to people who liked money too much. She told me that your father was in a profession that did not make money. She preferred another man who was employed by the Railways, but I did not like the man.

“People who work in Loco make a lot of money. I want somebody who can take care of you and the children that Chineke will give you,” my mother said.

“Mama please, I want the football player.”

My mother later changed her mind. “At least he has education and this is what will rule the world in the future,” she said. I was sent to a training school in Onitsha. The owner of the school was Mrs. Madubuuko. She was the mother of Philomena, Barrister Byron Onyeama’s wife. That woman and the teachers taught me how to be the wife of an educated man. Even though I learnt how to tie fanciful jioji from my mother, and use uli and ufe to make up at festivals, I did not know about lipsticks and high heeled shoes. It was in Onitsha that I learnt how to use lipsticks, stretch my hair with hot comb to make it in the style of educated people. We learnt how to sew clothes, make table cloths, knit, crotchet, bake, and how to make all kinds of things that were needed in the house. I used to make handkerchiefs for your father. I used to sew heart and flower shapes in the handkerchiefs. Then we began to talk about the wedding.

Chinyere: Was it in that school that you learnt how to tie and dye?

Mama: No. I learnt it later when your father was teaching in Egede or maybe Ukana. Do you remember Ukana? On your way to Nsukka, you pass Ngwo, Abor, then you get to Ukana. You continue, and then you’ll see the road that leads to Egede. Egede is the hometown of Reverend Father Innocent Egbugije, our good son. We were living in his hometown when I had my wrapper died for the first time.

I had a friend, Mrs. Adinde, who was living in Enugu at that time. She was from Owa. She named her daughter after mine so she was Mama Monica just as I am Mama Monica. Mama Monica Adinde knew the latest fashion in the city. We used to buy wrappers together and we would sew them. One day, I did not like the color of the wrapper, but I bought it because of its popular name. She told me that we could redesign it. We went to one Yoruba woman who did wonders to it. My wrapper became different. One in town!

Chinyere: Di Ma-ama!

Mama: Ai no dey hear that time – o. I continued to dye my clothes even after we left Egede. After church, women would come to me to ask me where I bought my blouse or wrapper. Many of my friends wanted to redesign their wrappers and even blouses. All these gave me the idea. I went to Enugu and learnt how to dye cloth. Women would buy wrappers and want me to redesign it so that it would be unique.

My house was the center of fashion at that time because of my eye for dressing and also because of my sewing school and the girls that I trained. There was one woman that inspired me in Eke at that time. She was a fashionable woman called Mrs. Ifudu. She and her husband would sometimes dress to-match; blouse and shirt of the same color and sometimes helmets of the same color. Your father used to wear helmets too. He used to look good in white shorts, white shirt, and white...
helmet. Sometimes he wore suit. Sometimes he wore chelu-ka-m-kwuo. He looked good in everything. People used to line up to watch us when we walked up to our seats in the front.

Chinyere: Mama, you refer to Eke more than any other place.

Mama: We lived in Eke for over twenty years. We went back and forth. We always returned to Eke. It used to be the headquarters in those days. We knew The Blessed Tansi when he was a seminarian. At that time, your father said that Tansi was exceptional and that he would like to know “what the man would be in the future.” I’m happy that your father was alive when the miracles that were leading to his beautification began to happen. We even witnessed the one at Ugbene where Tansi also served.

We lived in many other places. We lived in Oghe, Eke, Abor, Ukana, Egede, Isigwu Umana, Akpakwume Nze, and so on. I remember all of them. We still have friends in those places. Some of the places were rural at that time in the forties and fifties. But they were good places without crime or maybe very little. In Isigwu Umana at that time, they would perform aja-mme on criminals, so people did not commit crimes. For example, if someone stole something, they would pour dirt on him, and make him go round the villages of the town while the crowd sang and mocked him. It was such a big shame that the person usually ran away from the town; maybe to the city where nobody knew his background. They don’t do such things these days because the modern police have taken over, but they can’t cope with the job. Look at all the armed robberies that go on these days. Some robbers even have better guns that the police.

Anyway, let me continue with the story. Isigwu Umana was not developed at that time but people were good and there was love. You had to trek for about two miles before you got to the spring called Umio. It was a tiny spring, but it was like a social center. People were always there, washing clothes, waiting for their clothes to get dry, waiting for their containers to fill up, eating and sharing snacks, telling stories, and laughing. We lived in the Mission that consisted of the school made up of two huge buildings; one for the junior and one for the senior classes. There were offices for the headmaster and a staff room. There were lots of flowers in the school compound. Your father was the headmaster. There was also our house and an apartment building for the teachers. We had a lantana hedge in front of our house. A long yard separated our house from the teachers’ quarters. Some of them would always walk across to our house on Sundays after mass. We would talk and eat. When your father bought gramophone, the villagers would come too and he would play music for everybody. Some would dance. Those days were good, but there was a big problem. We did not have enough money. Our income was not growing, but the family was growing. My mother had told me a long time ago that money would be a big problem. That was why I made sure that I always struggled to make extra money.

Chinyere: Tell me how you did it.

Mama (inhales deeply, shakes her head and begins to talk): Where will I begin? What didn’t I do? As the children came, it dawned on me that we needed a lot of money as my mother had predicted. I also knew that the money would not come from one source only; the teaching profession. Teaching gave us respect; but my mother said that “you cannot eat respect,” and she was right. I began in a very small way. I started by having a training school where I taught girls the things that I learnt from my school in the city of Onitsha. People ordered things like bed sheets and pillow cases from us. We also made other
things for sale. I used to make a lot from the sale of handkerchiefs. We made dresses for girls and blouses for women. We also made school uniforms. That was how I started.

More girls came to my school. Sometimes they were up to five or ten or more than that. As they graduated, more came so there were always many of them. Not all of them liked to sew. Some of them preferred to trade, so I took them with me to my stall in the market. I was what they called a petty trader then. I sold soap, creams, and things like that. I also sold provisions, but fish was the thing that people bought more than other things, so I had a stall for fish and it brought in a lot of money. Sometimes I went to Enugu to buy the things. Most of the time, I went to my brother Sylvanus in Uzo Nkwagu, Amokwe. We would travel to Onitsha to buy bags of stockfish and *mangala*, cartons of tinned milk and all kinds of soap for bathing and for washing clothes. Silver had a big store in Amokwe. From Amokwe, I would return home. My market stalls were always busy. I also had a shop in our compound. I sold soft drinks, bread, biscuits, milk, sweets and other provisions. The place was always busy even when the girls had closed for the day. You know our people; some of them would come at night and beg me to sell something to them.

**Chinyere:** It is amazing that my father supported you in all these. I remember how he used to take care of me and IK when you were away. He used to take us to his school and spread a mat on the floor for us to play. That was how we learnt all the poems that they recited at school even before we started going to school. My father was very nice. How many men take care of children while their wives leave the house ... *(Mama interrupts me).*

**Mama:** Why won’t he take care of his children? Do you think that it was easy for me? It was struggle. He struggled and got promotion in his job. Me? I did not fold my hands. Which woman would not like to stay in the house and have a man bring money to her to take care of the house? But I had to do what I had to do because of the size of the family. Where would your father have got the money to train all of you including the ones that we adopted? And don’t blame us for adopting them, especially because some of them forget us after they have made it. The reason for adopting is to help. That is what God wants us to do. God wants us to use what we have to help God’s children in any way that we can. When I came into your father’s house, he presented me with a son.

**Chinyere:** What?

**Mama:** Don’t you know Michael? Michael Enejia?

**Chinyere:** Okay. You are referring to the bishop.

**Mama:** Don’t you know that he is our first son. You father had brought him in before I came, so I just followed the pattern. We did not have money, but we still managed to send him to college. He wanted to be a priest and we also supported that. He became a very good priest. God blessed him and blessed us with him.

**Chinyere:** But he doesn’t do anything for us, Mama. He did not pay school fees for any of us and he has not ...”

**Mama:** He is doing God’s work. He is doing a lot for us and for the whole world. He prays for us. He comes here to see me. He comes to every important family function. Your father goes to consult with him before we decide on matters of the family. Do you remember when your uncle, Celicious and his ship were seized near Burutu during the Nigeria-Biafra war? That was after my child, Edwin, was stolen by death in the war. Your father’s brothers said that we could not endure another mishap. I remember how they made suggestions. Do you remember Pius Okoro, the father of Grace, Edwin and Kevin? There were Nwakanmma and Osegwo who were farmers in Ugbo Nike and Ugbo Odogwu. Raphael and John Aghabanti were in Arochukwu. Basil was living in Enugu. Gregory, the father of Vicky and Martina had his own ideas. Frederick looks exactly like your father. People used to mistake him and your father. Mathias; the father of Richard, Virgie, Fed, Cletus, Adeline and another young one ...

**Chinyere:** His name is Uchenna. Remember that you are telling me your story.
Mama: I cannot talk about myself without talking about Thomas, my husband, and I am part of Okafor family, so his brothers and sisters must come into this talk. I have mentioned your sibling, Edwin, and the Nigeria-Biafra war. We had never seen a thing like that in our lives. When they fought the Second World War, we heard stories from those who returned from overseas. Your father’s cousin, Pius Okoro, fought in the Second World War. He was in the British army. He told us about the battles, but the Nigeria-Biafra war was in our midst. We saw it. Edwin died early in the war. Your father’s sister, Ikodinya, the mother of Goddy and Uloko, came with suggestions for the family. Your uncles and aunts were right to worry about the extended family. Bishop Eneja came with a plan for fasting and praying throughout the war.

When Eke was threatened, we decided to run to the interior of Biafra. Your father could not run without going to collect his sister and her family. I also could not run without collecting my brother, Sylvanus, and his family. My brother Anthony was still in Germany then. We loaded a few things in the car and a lorry. We traveled to Owa first to get some of our people. We had a home there, you know. That was where your father’s father, Okoroafo Enendu, settled. The rest of your father’s relations through his father, Okorafo the son of Enendu, son of Orji, son of Esomonu, and the rest were in Arochukwu and the place was safe at that time. So those in Owa were our main concern because Owa was threatened, but Ikodie, Mama Edwin, refused to come with us.

Chinyere: Can you tell me why they called her Mama Edwin even though you are the biological mother of my brother, Edwin?

Mama: Ikodie was Ori’s wife. Ori was your father’s brother. When he died, Ikodie was young and could have gone back to her parent’s house, but she stayed with your grandmother, Udeaku Ugo. On top of it, she did not have a child. I kept having children and had many. She was always unhappy. When we came home during the holidays, she would say that I did this or that. At one time she said that I bought many wrappers for myself and brought a few for her. Another time, she said that this child or that one insulted her. When the troubles were too many, your father’s sisters came to settle the matter. We had a family meeting. They said that she was unhappy because she had no child. In front of everybody, I told her to choose one of my children and she chose Edwin. That was how she became Mama Edwin. Edwin was her child. When he died, she could not be consoled and she never recovered from her agony. When we went to collect her during the war, she refused to leave the house. She was still wearing black clothes for mourning Edwin and did not want to leave the compound with memories of him.

You did not waste time during the war. One second could be the difference between your life and death. When your father saw that she was adamant about not leaving, he said that we had to leave without her. We hugged each other and wouldn’t let go. We wept because of the loss of our son, Edwin. We wept because of the unknown thing that had descended on us and made us to run away from our homes. Your father called me in a stern voice. I was very sad to leave her. I didn’t know whether we would survive the war.

We then went to Amokwe to get your aunt, Ikodinya, and her children, Goddy, Uloko and others. Goddy enlisted in the army. We also got my brother, Sylvanus, his wife Lucy, and their children. My sister, Teresa Nwangbo was safe in Aba with her husband and children. We all fasted and prayed throughout the war. I searched for my son, Augustine Esom, throughout the war because he had traveled to see his uncle and Okeke Nze in Umana. He did not run with us from Eke. Whenever new refugees flocked into Biafra from Nigeria, your father would go asking about him. Many of our people died in that war. There was a day that
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we lost seven members of the family in an air raid. They went to bury someone who had died, and then an enemy plane bombed the place. That was how seven left at a time. Many people died in the war. Many survived. Celicius survived. Ikodie and Augustine Esom that did not run with us survived the war. We thank God.

You see, I’m not saying that the bishop saved our family, but his spiritual guidance was good. Your father’s leadership was good. He would listen to everybody. The thing was that he always agreed with the bishop’s view. After all, he trained him. When Mathias was ill, your father went to him also. Mathias was your father’s brother from the same mother, Udeaku Ugomma. Do you remember their mother, your grandmother? Ezenwanyi Udeaku Ugomma was very beautiful. She would wake up in the early hours of the morning; have her bath even before we woke up. At her age, she would still line her eyes with otanjele, and use edo around her eyes. She would dress up, tie her scarf and sit at the entrance of her house in the morning when we went to greet her.

(Mama laughs) Do you know how she became a Christian? She said that since her children and grand children were Christians, she had to follow them to their new religion. She chose the name Monica because of her love for my daughter, Monica. I want you people to know that the bishop contributes to this family in ways that you do not see, but in ways that are very important and effective. The Bishop prays for us. He comes to say mass at important family ceremonies. He was there when we celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary. He was there for my baby, Patrick; when God took him. He was there for Edwin. He was there for Monica. He was there for your father. What else do you want from a man of God? Nothing more.

Chinyere: Thank you, Mama, for narrating this background. I want you to explain something that came out from what you said earlier. You said that you brought a lot of money into the family. Papa paid all my school fees and ....

Mama: Look at me. Don’t put words into my mouth. Did I say that I made all the money? Your father was very strict with money. You know that. He saved a lot of money, but that was because I accepted any amount that he gave me for house keeping. I used my own money to make it up. He bought land in the city, houses and taxis. He was always thinking about the future and children’s education. His children are my children so it suited me very well.

Chinyere: And you lived happily ever after.

Mama: There were problems, but we kept them to ourselves. It was not easy to get money from your father. He would even keep it in the bank and tell me the future plan he had for the money. Many times, I bought my clothes, bought for you people, and also bought for your father. Every woman must make her own money. All the girls that came to me for training; the first thing I told them was that they must learn how to be on their own. Don’t ever depend on another person no matter who he is. Supposing a man says that he will not provide for you, are you going to die? If you show that you are a human being, he will respect you.

Chinyere: And he won’t beat you ...

Mama: No –o. He can. Don’t take men for granted. Your father gave me a dirty slap one day and I saw stars. Yes, he did. Nekwe mu na agha vuru-nya vuru-nya, ghafu iwhu di nya. I was making inyanga that I had a perfect marriage. My friends envied me. Then your father showed me that he could reduce me. I realized why my mother warned me. She said that a woman should not wear the cap of husband on the forehead; you wear it on the side, so that if it falls off, nobody will notice it. Just a few years into the marriage, my eyes opened. He started to beg me to forgive him. He said that it was a mistake and so on. He told me not to tell my mother. He was afraid of my mother. For sure, my mother would not have let him get away with it.
Chinyere: What could she have done?

Mama: My mother? Ogbonnie Ngboro. My mother was known as Agaba Nwanyi. You know the meaning of agaba? Ever-ready for war! Ready to deal with any problem! My mother did not find trouble–o, but she was ready to deal with it when it came to her. She could have made a lot of trouble for your father and he would have been in a hot soup. Your father would not have liked the manager of schools to hear about it. My mother could have ended the marriage, at least for some time until he convinced us that he would not do it again. You know that tradition would have required him to remarry me. That was what they did then, but these days; these young women will not tell anybody when their husbands misbehave. The custom of remarriage is good-o! Your father would have spent a lot of money on ceremonies and appeasement, and he did not have the money.

My brother, Sylvanus, could have retaliated. He was a musician at that time and had all these tough friends that your father said were not good for him. Sylva was a hot head at that time and could have shown your father pepper. My mother could have slapped him too-o (I laugh). Don’t laugh. It’s true. They said that my mother had single bone, because she could beat up anybody. I could too, but when your father slapped me, I was in a difficult part of the month. Anyway, to tell the truth, you can’t compare a woman’s hand and a man’s hand (she laughs).

It happened during recess; he came to the house. When he went back to school, I just packed a few things for me and the baby. I put the baby on my back, tied him properly and took off in my bicycle. Women’s bicycles in those days did not run as fast as men’s bicycles but it was fast all the same. I wanted to use it to get back to my mother’s house. That would have been a long distance. We were living in Eke and my mother was in Amokwe. Of course you know Amokwe, where my brother Sylvanus settled and where his wife, Lucy, still lives. It is up to twenty miles from Eke.

Your father might have been watching or maybe some students might have seen me. He made a plan with two other men. They took another route in their bicycles. They were faster than me. I was in Ngwo, almost at the Ninth-mile corner when I saw two men coming from the opposite direction.

“That’s Mama Monica.” Onyia said.

“Mama Charlie, where are you going to?” Becket said.

“See how you are sweating. Your baby’s neck is not well positioned.”

“Let me help you.”

(Mama mimics the voices of the speakers. There is mockery in her voice).

I was happy that they wanted to help. I untied the wrapper that was holding my baby. Onyia took the baby. I was busy arranging the wrapper for retying the baby when they took off with my baby. They were speeding. I bit my lips. Agu ata-a mu ncha n’isi! I was full on regrets. I blamed myself for not knowing their trick. I had no choice but to follow them. By the time I got home, they were there with the baby, your father, and my best friend, Christiana. He begged me. Christiana begged me. He said that it was a mistake and promised that it would not happen again. Everybody told me to give him another chance. He made me promise not to tell my mother about it.

Chinyere: You never told us all these years that Papa slapped you. And he used to preach in the church and counsel couples.

Mama: Yes and he was a very good preacher and a very good husband. We used to counsel couples together. We used our experience to talk about mistakes, repentance, forgiveness, togetherness and commitment to marriage. That someone made a mistake once is not a good reason to condemn that person forever. Your father developed his own way of avoiding my tongue. We women use our mouths as weapons. God gave us mouths di egwu. God gave every living thing its own good defense weapon. If not, others will trample on them.
**Mama’s Wedding Shoes**

by

**Orbi Edozie Ighofose**

2008

Papa Monica.
Mama Monica.
Who is Monica?

She was the Honorable Justice Monica Edozie, the first daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Okafor, the famous Papa na Mama. I am Monica’s first daughter and since Monica has passed on, I want to tell a story that she told me about Papa na Mama. It happened when she traveled to the Vatican City with Papa.

They first went to London to see our folks there. My Auntie Ngozi, my mother, and Papa were walking on Golder’s Green Road to the tube station. As they passed one particular shoe shop, Papa stopped. I think that the name of the shoe shop was Russell. Mummy thought that he was just glancing at the beautiful shoes. She and Auntie Ngozi continued walking, only to discover that Papa was not with them. He was inside the shop.

“Papa, do you want to buy a shoe for Mama?” Auntie Ngozi said.

“No, she doesn’t wear hi heels anymore. I’ll buy something else for her in Rome.”

“Then, why are you looking at the shoes,” my mother said.

“I just want to see a particular shoe; the type that your mother wore at our wedding. This was where they bought her wedding shoes you now,” Papa said.

“Really?”

“Yes, her feet were wide for the wedding shoes in the shops in Enugu at that time, so I measured her feet and gave it to Father Brushan. He helped me to order them from London. They bought them from this shop. It was a Barley shoe.”

“Russel has many branches. It may not be this particular one.”

“It may be.” Papa said.

Before my mother woke up in the hotel suite that she shared with Papa in Rome, he had already taken his bath and left for morning mass. When he came back, he was all excited because he was able to attend a mass that was performed by the Pope. He met the Pope. He bought a big chaplet and an Easter candle for Mama. This happened in 1979.
My mother visited my husband and me when we were living in Manchester, England. She went for routine physical examination and the doctor found something. They wanted to perform surgery on her and I was worried. My husband, Jo, said that we should trust God because my mother had gone through worse things.

“If your mother could survive in villages with little medical care, she will survive here with all the modern medical care available,” he said.

I thought about it for a while and agreed with him. My mind dug up a miraculous cure of my mother that I witnessed as a child.

I was very young when my mother had a very serious illness. I had not started school, or even ota-akara. My junior brother, Emeka, was a baby so I must have been like three or something, but this memory is still very clear in my mind even though I don’t remember many things that happened when I was that age. Papa called all of us and told us to kneel down around Mama’s bed. We all held hands and prayed. There was a white man with us. I think that he was a priest but I don’t know his name. We prayed that God would heal our mother.

Then one man arrived in a motorcycle. I remember his name; Mr. Chukwu. I remember it because of what my elder sister, Beatrice, said. She translated the name to English and said, “His name is God. Chukwu is God in English.”

The man looked at my mother and said, “I know what is wrong.”

He went and brought his bag. He asked for water to wash his hands.

I saw when my brother, Edwin, entered Mama’s bedroom with a basin of water and soap for Mr. Chukwu. Then we heard Mama’s shout.

“Aduhu nu mu – o!”

On hearing her in her own voice declare that she had “gained back her life,” we ran to her room. She was spitting blood into a bed pan held by Mr. Chukwu.

Later on in my life, I became friends with a girl, Teresa, who lost her mother when she was very young. She told me how she and her brothers were brought up in an orphanage. She told me stories about her hard life, her father’s love, and her regret at not having a mother. She liked to hear stories about my mother and the stories of the angels that Mama saw that day Papa told us to kneel around her bed and pray.

I am very grateful to God for hearing the prayers we said for my mother that day. I thank God for intervening in a miraculous way through a man named God. She will survive this surgery in Manchester. She will leave this earth whenever God says that it is her time to leave us.
It is with a very heavy heart that I write this update, because I was getting ready to go to Nigeria and be with Mama when news of her final exit came to me. My brothers in Nigeria took very good care of her. In fact, Emeka, who is a medical doctor saw Mama every day and took particular care of her. Even though Mama was one of the four women honored as “Life Member of Catholic Women’s Organization” in Egugu Diocese in the seventies, she got excited when they chose her as Nne-Ife at St. Joseph’s parish in 2002. She insisted that one of her daughters must return to tie her scarf for the ceremony. That was when we decided that one of us (her daughters) must travel to Nigeria and be with her every four months even though her grand-daughter, Orbi, who lives in Lagos visited her every month and my sister-in-law, Joe, saw her every few weeks. Beatrice and I were with her in February 2009. Chinyere was with her in July. When we heard that she was praying and giving messages, Beatrice took a long time off work and spent October through December with her. When I spoke with Mama on the phone in November, she insisted that I should come home to see her.

“My schedule as a Chattered Accountant in ...”
“If you want to see me alive, come now,” she said without listening to my explanation.
“Mama, please don’t talk like this.”
“Alright.”

My children told me that I must go home. My son-in-law, Uche Nnachetam, and my daughter, Kananyo, volunteered to buy me a ticket. Ugochukwu, Obinna and Lulu did not want to be left out so they also contributed. I began to get ready to travel when Beatrice returned so that she could take care of my family and hers as I was doing when she was away from London.

My brother, Edwin, whom Ngozi mentioned in her anecdote, passed on during the Nigeria-Biafra war. He graduated from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, as an engineer and joined the army immediately. That was one year before the war started in 1967. He passed on in the war, so I can’t authenticate Ngozi’s story from him. But, there is a way out. I can ask Beatrice who translated Chukwu as God.

I was lucky that our brother, Charles, and his wife, Josephine, visited me. From my home in Wichita, Kansas, USA, we had a telephone conference with our sisters in London, England, and decided that we were going to have a big party for our mother and bring all her children, grand children, and great grand children together to the celebration that would be attended by the extended family and friends. The visit gave me the opportunity to ask him about Mama’s illness. Here’s his version:
We were living in a town called Egede when this incident occurred.

Egede is located near Nsukka in the northern part of Enugu State. That was where our parents made long lasting friendship with Eneja and Egbujie families. Bishop Eneja was taken as a family member before I was born. Reverend father Innocent Egbujie became a close family friend from the time he was a boy till he became a priest. He was a very charismatic priest.

On this particular day Mama died or almost died. Father Horrigan gave her the anointment for the sick. Father Horrigan was one of the parish priests. He used to come from Eke and he visited us often. He liked Papa very much and always brought books to him. I was in middle school and I read the books too. One of Mama’s friends brought us some food. All of us ate it, including the priest. In the evening, Papa told us to prepare *abacha* because it was easy to make. Ogoamaka prepared it. She told Edwin and I to get *akwukwo-aghara* from the garden. She shredded them and used *abacha*. Luckily, we had villagers called *akpaka* Ogoamaka put them and *abacha*. That was it. No the vegetables in the fish or meat. We ate the food, just like that. Horrigan also ate it on her bed, not dying Mr. Chukwu, the but she did not get Horrigan to go back to had many duties to priests in the parish, but said that he did not want to leave us when Mama was in such a bad condition. I think that he was expecting Mama to die. He stayed with us and we prayed. You could not put Mama in the motorcycle and take her to the hospital. The movement would have killed her because the nearest hospital was miles and miles away in the city of Enugu. The best could have been to get the attention of the dispenser and Papa had already done that, but the dispenser could not succeed. We continued to pray.

Then something miraculous happened. Papa made a quick decision. He took out his bicycle and traveled to Eke where the local doctor lived. One teacher went with him in the same bicycle. When we heard the sound of a motorcycle, we ran outside to see who it was. Chief Okongwu stopped the motorcycle. (He later bought a kit-car, not the modern type of kit car. That one resembled a jeep, but bigger; it was just called kit-car). Okongwu arrived with his wife and Papa. He was Papa’s very good friend. Papa went into Mama’s room to see how she was doing. He was emotional.

“My wife is dying,” Papa said.
“God forbid!” Okongwu said.
His wife came with him. She lived with us for many years before she got married to Okongwu. Mama used to call her, “my daughter Adeline,” so we took her as our sister. She came out of the car also and brought banana and *okpa* for us.

Okongwu asked Papa’s permission to administer a drastic treatment that had fifty percent chance of curing Mama or killing her.

“You cannot kill her. God will not allow it. Apply the treatment,” Papa said and looked at Horrigan.

“God works in mysterious ways. Let him do what he has to do. One way or the other, the woman is at peace. Look at the smile on her face,” Horrigan said.

True; Mama had a smile on her face, but her eyes were closed. Her breathing was noisy.

Okongwu brought his medical kit. Then he asked for water to wash his hands. He poured some chemical into the water and washed his hands. He took out what looked like a pair of scissors. He brought out a pan.

Kpum! Into Mama's throat. Blood and all started to gush out. Mama coughed out a lot of things but mostly blood came out. Then she began to scream that she was alive and began to tell her Virgin Mary story.
Chinyere: (Seated on the red cushion seat at the foot of Mama’s bed, I ask her the question). Mama, they said that you saw the Blessed Virgin Mary when you were ill. (She springs up from her bed, and begins to praise the Blessed Mother and dance to the rhythm of her praises).

Oke Nne mu! Nne Jesu! My great mother! Mother of Jesus!
O melu mu. Nne ka nne. The One that does for me. Mother that is the greatest.
Omelu umu ogbenye. The One that does for the poor.
Nne Jesu Onye nzoputa anyi. Mother of Jesus Our Savior

Chinyere: Mama ... (I try to interrupt her but change my mind. It is inspiring to witness her joy. As if my interruption vibes affect her, she changes the praises to prayers).

Nnwa mu na aju maka gi-o. My child is asking about you.
Biko nonyere nnwa m –o. Please be with my child.
Biko chedo kwe umu mu–o. Please guard my children.
Umu nine itinycere mu na aka. All the children that you placed in my hands.
Okwa umu gi – o! They are all your children.
Osi na afo mu, osigbi na afo mu. Whether they are from my womb or not from my womb.

Mama (Sitting down): I’m very happy that you are asking me this question. Yes, I saw the Blessed Mother, and she is always with me especially when things are not going well for me.

Chinyere: How did it happen?
Mama: I saw the devil first.

Chinyere: You did?
Mama: Yes. Evil thing. Tufia kwa! (She makes the motion of spitting without actually spitting out saliva). Tufia! (She claps her hands outwards). Ajo ihe. May you never come my way (She speaks as if she is addressing the evil thing).

Chinyere: Do you see it now?
Mama: Tufia kwa! It can’t come anywhere that the Blessed Virgin Mary is enthroned. (I look at the big statue of the Virgin Mary on the form erected on the wall just for the stature and a big wooden crucifix. Mama follows my eyes to the statue).

Mama: Having the statue is part of it, but not the main thing. The main thing is in your belief in her son Jesus Christ as the Savior. She is the Supreme Mother because she is the mother of Jesus. (The thought of Ani, the Igbo earth goddess, crosses my mind, but I won’t dare vocalize my thoughts. Mama regards Igbo religious beliefs as heathen.)
Chinyere: *(I can’t resist the question)* Is she like Ani in some ways?

Mama: *(Speaking in an even tone)* She is bigger than Ani. There is no comparison.

Chinyere: Mama. What does the devil look like? *(Mama looks at me for a while. I think that she is trying to read my face. Convinced that I am asking the question because I am curious, she replies).*

Mama: You have always liked to know everything. The devil is ugly. It is huge and ugly.

Chinyere: What is its color?

Mama: It was like a huge shadow without a hand or leg but with many hands and legs that pressed on me trying to choke me. I could not breathe. I was sinking in a sea of its shadow, but it left suddenly. The Blessed Mother stood there smiling at me. Oh, such a beauty. I smiled back. I wanted to go with her. I stretched my hand, but she said no. She didn’t say it with her mouth, but I knew that she said ‘no’ because of the way she smiled. She is so so so beautiful.

Chinyere: Mama, please describe her.

Mama: I cannot describe her beauty. You feel it, you see it. *(Chinedu cries. Mama gets up to find out what the problem is. We go to the children’s room).*

Florence: Chinedu has learnt how to open the cover of the powder. He just wastes the powder. Look at the floor. I took it from him. That’s why he is crying. *(Mama takes the powder container and begins to play with Chinedu. She rubs powder all over his face. His face is just white. I have to get my camera).*

Chinyere: Describe the color of the Virgin Mary, Mama.

Mama: She is ... she is ... We don’t have the color in real life.

Chinyere: Just try Mama. I want to know.

Mama: She is fair; not like you or your father.

Chinyere: Maybe white ...

Mama: No. Not white like that paper that you are writing on.

Chinyere: Is she white like Father Buckley?²

Mama: No. She’s not white like onye ochi.

Chinyere: Then what?

Mama: O di ka mmiri na awu na inyi ochi. Bright water! That’s it! *(I’m a bit confused as I mentally translate her sentence and come up with a lame: “She is like the water that flows down the white stream.” The white stream has white sand underneath and sparkles. She knows that I am confused, so she narrows her eyes and thinks of another example).*

Mama: O na acha ka ake mmiri-igwe,³ mana o na egbuke egbuke. *(Aku-mmiri-igwe can translate as “hail stones”, but Mama qualifies her description with “mana ona egbuke egbuke” (but it sparkles). Could it be like diamond or crystal? I give up the idea of trying to know the color of the Virgin, because she has continued with her description).*

Mama: There were many angels. They were singing. They were joyful. They were just happy. I wanted to go with them, but the blessed Mother would not let me in. She wanted me to come back here in order to take care of you people. After that incident, your father and I began to adopt more children, and kept giving birth to more God’s children.
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 Moorfield 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, una ama abu nya. 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.
When I heard that Mama was not feeling too good, I phoned her and she confirmed that all was not well.

“What is wrong, Mama?”

“I don’t know what is wrong and I don’t know if anything is wrong. When are you coming to see me?” She said.

“I will be coming soon.”

“Let it be very soon—o.”

I was already planning to go to Nigeria for the funeral of my brother in law, Fred Madike. After talking with Mama, I decided to plan for a longer period in Nigeria so as to spend a long time nursing her back to her normal health. I felt that she needed one of her daughters to take special care of her. Chinyere was with her during the summer and I heard that she was emotional when Chinyere was going back to America. I talked with my other sister, Ngozi. We decided that she would take care of my family in London while I spent a long time with Mama in Nigeria. When I returned, it would be my turn to take care of her family so that she would go to Nigeria. We had been doing this every six months, but we had decided to make it more frequent. I went to my office and briefed the attorneys who would see to my clients in my absence.

My brother, Emeka, who is a medical doctor, was actually the one that took care of our mother on a daily basis. He checked on her daily and supervised the way that they gave her care. Chinyere’s kids were Mama’s constant companion; chatting, praying, and getting biscuits and other goodies from Mama. Florence was another invaluable person in the house. She gave Mama her medication, cared for her, and received constant blessing from Mama. Florence said that it was a blessing to take care of old people.

There were women who came to the house everyday to see Mama. They included Mama Ugo, Mrs. Okoro, her friend Mrs. Anyakwu and her cousin Lydia Okafor Nebo. Mama was happy that the priests came everyday from St. Joshep’s parish to give her holy communion. I was surprised that Mazi Christopher Emesi who is in his eighties would drive his car to our house to see Mama. Osondu Illo, Christian Okafor, Cordelia Egbujie Ezegirim, and many others whose name I cannot remember now, came to see Mama often while I was there. Of course, my husband, Cosmas Madike, was there.

There was this funny incident. We thought that Mama was lapsing into a state of unawareness, because of the way she reclined her head and would not participate in our jokes. When Cosmas came in, I told him my concern.

“She is now more unaware than aware,” I said.

“That’s rubbish. She’s just resting.” He began to massage her hair and praise her.

“Leave me.” Mama knocked off his hand.
“I told you. She’s not aware of who is who. She doesn’t recognize me.” I began to cry.
“Mama, Papa Ada is touching your hair,” Florence said.
“Okay. Don’t worry about it.” Mama smiled.
“Why do you people talk about what you don’t know,” Cosmas said.
“I wonder,” Mama said.
We all laughed so hard. She just wanted a quiet time.

At ninety one, Mama had become legally blind in one eye and the other one was weak, so when she was not wearing her glasses, she would not see clearly. Most of the time, she did not want to wear it and would just chat with people. Even though she did not see like the rest of us, it was amazing that she often knew things more that us.

Mama had been very ill a number of times in her life, and not only survived but became stronger. I felt that she would survive this one but occasionally she would say something to indicate that her time was near. She prayed and blessed people. She asked for forgiveness of anyone that she might have offended. She forgave someone who had hurt her. The night before I left Enugu for Lagos on my way back to London, she told Florence to call Emeka. When Emeka came, she told him to take two suitcases from her room to his apartment. After I returned to London, she passed on. The eagle of a woman lived a full life! She was ready to meet God.
The most fascinating thing about Ogo mu nwanyi is that she remained alert and beautiful even at old age.

Her brain was very quick. She had the most fascinating set of teeth that you can imagine. She always used her chewing stick. She didn’t go to the dentist; has never gone to the dentist, just like my wife, Beatrice. Of course she was her mother.

Ogo mu Nwanyi machasili mma, isi gbawa-a, just like my wife, Beatrice.

Very tall and elegant.
Very striking color,
Shinning like ebony.
Look at their posture; attu.
Any time I look at her, I see why my wife is so beautiful.

Ogo mu nwanyi! My mother-in-law!
O kwa odogwu nwanyi! She is a mighty woman!
Onwero ife nwanyi na eme, There is nothing that women do,
O na emero, me kali-sia. That she did not do, and done more.

O ma ife rinne. She is very knowledgeable.
O nwelu uche. She is very intelligent.
O di ike aka. She is hard working.
O na agba mbo. She struggles a lot.
O di ume ani. She is very kind.

What else do you want from a human being?

She had everything. On top of all these, she had long life. She had God.

She had very strong faith; never wavering. She always had the scapular on her neck even on top of any gold or silver that she wore. Her chaplet; she would always tell you that her husband brought it from Rome and that the Pope blessed it. She had another one that her daughter, Honorable Justice of the High Court, Monica Edozie, bought for her. Mama had very strong convictions about God, goodness, heaven, and our purpose in life.

She’s now a saint. She is in heaven. Ekwusigom.
hen I passed the entrance examination to enter the junior seminary, they sent us a prospectus with a long list of what to purchase. When Mr. Okafor looked at it, he was devastated, because he could not afford to buy all the items. Mama offered to help him. She said that she would produce the two bed sheets and the pillow cases. She used to buy big bags of salt that she sold in cups. She sat down and began to dismantle all the empty bags. I helped her. We washed them several times until the stamped trade mark went off. Then she carefully sewed them together. That was how she made my bed sheets and pillow cases. They were special. Today, patch-work is in vogue and young people wear patched jeans. I just laugh. This was what Mama did for me a long time ago.

The above was an anecdote that he told as part of the homily during his celebration of the golden wedding anniversary of Papa and Mama on the 12th of November 1983. He used it to illustrate how a couple should be committed to marriage and work together even when things are hard.
I am the wife of Professor Charles Okafor. There are many stories, but since you want just one, let me talk about the one that happened early in my marriage with Charlie. My husband won an award to go to Harvard University in America. He was going to work with Professor Woodward who was a Nobel Laureate for chemistry. That was a big thing and they would allow him to come with his wife. The problem was that I had two babies to take care of, so I didn’t want to go with Charlie. We traveled from Nsukka to Enugu in order to tell my parents-in-law about the good news. They were very happy, but they objected to his going to America without me.

“Anybody that is giving you an award must realize that you are no longer one as Charlie, my son. You are now two in one as Charlie and wife. You cannot go without your wife.” That was what Papa said. I did not call him father-in-law because he was like a father to me. I called him Papa and referred to my mother-in-law as Mama.

Mama immediately volunteered to take care of my little ones, Okechukwu and Nnenna.

“If Papa Monica allows me to go,” she said.

“Why won’t I?” Papa said.

I know how hard it is for men to allow their wives to stay away for a long time, but Papa allowed Mama to leave for three months. I also know how hard it is for women to leave the management of their homes and their husbands, but Mama left Papa and came to Nsukka to take care of my own house and family. That was a very generous gesture, to say the least.

What gladdens my heart so much is what she did in the last couple of visits. She would tell me to sit on her lap. Charlie would say, “Eh? You want to break Mama?” I would sit very close to her and place my legs on hers. She would hold me and shower blessings on me and my family. She would refer to me as a good daughter, wife, mother, and odozi-aku cum okpata-aku. She would call the names of my children and my grandchildren and bless them. Those were special moments.
What I found fascinating about my mother was her ability to be “cold” and “hot” at the same time. I see her as a very gentle and submissive woman, and at the same time very bold, assertive, and daring. She was ready to engage any family need even at the risk of jeopardizing her personal comfort and that was why she referred to herself as “Ever-Ready.” She would dish out food and see that everybody was eating before she began to eat and she would give you a choice piece of meat from her plate if you wanted it. However, if you became too demanding, she would tell you, “Akumueto na Achi na eri nri.” I was curious about the meaning of this sentence that she used to define the boundary that we should not cross in our demand for her love and service to us. Mama explained that Akumueto was a woman in a town called Achi. She gave birth to eighteen children. Na eri nri (She still eats) in Mama’s sentence implied that Akumeto still had time to attend to her personal needs in spite of her large family and their needs.

Mama ruled our house by creating an aura around Papa. If you wanted to do something wrong, she would warn you, and if you persisted, she would threaten to report you to Papa. That usually solved the problem. Papa would come home, throw my brother IK up, and catch him while he sang “Nto nto nto-o mu-o.”4 He played with us, but it never occurred to me to question Mama’s use of Papa as our “bogeyman.” On the other hand, my mother was tough and could engage anybody. When we were living in Enugu-Eke village of Eke, in Enugu State, she faced up to a formidable character nicknamed Oke-Ikuku (Hurricane). His real name was Reverend Father Phlin. He was hardworking, but had a temper. He slapped people very easily, but people did not challenge him because of his authority. He was strict, hard working, and liked by the authority. He was the schools manager at a time. He was the Parish Priest at another time. He was the Principal of St. Paul’s High School when he had an encounter with Mama.

Mama was a business woman during this period – early sixties. She supplied food to high schools and other establishments. She traveled frequently and we would always sing, “Mama anata, oyo-oyo-o,”5 when we saw the vehicle stop her in front of our house. Anthony Enu, Charlie Enu and Vicky Enu were the play mates of my bothers, Anthony Ik and Patrick Ifeanyichukwu and me. We also sang the same song for the mothers of the Enu household, Udu and Uzonwanyi.

On this particular day, it was Papa that brought Mama home. We all knew that something was not right, because Mama’s face indicated that she was in a bad mood. We gathered that Oke-Ikuku upset her. It was later, as an adult that my cousin, Cletus Ifeanyi, told me what happened. He was a student at St. Paul’s and witnessed part of the “fight.”
“That principal was very harsh. He used to flog us because of very minor offences. If he did or said something funny and you laughed; sam! You won’t even know when his hand hit you. And you know, we found the way he spoke very funny, so we got into trouble all the time. If you were late for assembly, forget it. He would use cane to flog you on the buttocks. If you spoke Igbo, his hand would land on your head with a knock. So when we heard that Mama was “fighting” with him, we ran to the Principal’s office to see somebody teach him a lesson for once. Mama was holding a stick and waiting for him because he locked himself inside his office. We went and brought bigger sticks for Mama. But then, Papa’s car arrived and he took Mama away.”

This account by Cletus left some questions unanswered. When Mama came for my graduation at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, she shared many of her stories with me. They had scheduled her for surgery but she had told the doctor to postpone it so that she would attend my graduation. She attended all the ceremonies with me. We went to the award ceremony, Chancellor’s party, the graduation concert, and theater. That was when I asked her about her encounter with the Principal.

“He called me a thief. That was it. I gave him an account of what I supplied. He had questions about the price of oil. I told him that the manufacturers hiked the price. He began to complain and then called me a liar and a thief. But when your father asked him about it, he said that he was talking about the manufacturers not me. But I was and I am sure about what I heard. Anyway, even if I wasn’t the one that he called a thief, it was still insulting to call the others thieves. Did he know the process of producing oil?”

“So did he hit you or did you hit him?”

“I was not one of his teachers or his students. I did not hit him, but I used my mouth. I said, “You are a liar. You are a thief. You mother is a liar. Your father is a thief.” Then I picked one of his sticks to defend myself with in case he hit me. He ran into his office and shut the door. I sat in the general office and told him that I would be there until he came out. I didn’t know that he opened the window and sent his driver to go and call your father.”

“It was while I was waiting outside his office that I really became angry. That man had cut my profit margin, but because I didn’t want to lose that line, I accepted his terms. Because I accepted, he then tried to make more cuts. I was losing money but I knew that the price would change and I would regain the money I lost. But for him to talk to me any-how was the limit. While I was outside his office, I realized that people had been waiting for someone who would square up to the man. Do you know that people did not beg me? Usually they would beg you if you want to fight, but not this time. They even gave me bigger sticks. The students were outside cheering. When I saw your father’s car, I began to weep. I knew that there would be no fight. But he learnt a good lesson.”

Mama liked to stick out for what was right. If you offended her, she wanted an apology, but I have seen her many times show kindness to an offender. This used to confuse me as a small girl until she explained that one should not juggle all issues together. An example was when one of her adopted daughters, Eunice, left her house and got married without involving family members including her biological parents. Mama was offended by what she regarded as “lack of respect.” However, the young woman had a problem and needed help. She phoned Mama. In 2008, when Eunice had “become good” with her mother and Mama, she told me why she phoned Mama. “I knew that Mama would help me, and she did so immediately, but she still wanted me to do the right thing and show respect to my family. I have seen women that Mama does not know; women we casually met in church. They would come here with one problem or that and Mama would help them. I know women that started their businesses with the money that Mama gave to them. Some of them come here to get ideas from Mama about their trade and sometimes about their family problems. She is always ready to solve problems, ready to reprimand you, ready to sing and dance, ready to pray, ready for any situation. That’s why we call her Ever-Ready.”
My name is Okechukwu Okafor. I am in the Opus Dei community.

I am a medical doctor and a specialist in Pathology. When I first joined the Opus Dei, some members of my family did not understand the full implications of my calling. It took some time before my parents, Professors Charles and Josephine Okafor, came around to full understanding of my vocation. My aunt, Professor Chinyere Okafor, made a trip to Pamplona, Spain, to either convince me to leave the community or to find out whether I had my senses, but she turned round to become one of my advocates.

As for Mama who is my paternal grandmother, she had definite questions for me.

“Will you get married?”

I explained that we develop according to how the Holy Spirit leads each of us. That was why some get married and some don’t. She understood my passion for using my talent as a doctor to help people because of God and not for money-making purposes. I explained the vows that I was going to take. Then she asked another question.

“Does it mean that you will become a priest?”

I told her the difference between priesthood and my path. This time she came up with a statement, but she made it sound like a question.

“Then it is a kind of priest with a different name or maybe even more that a priest?” She did not wait for my reply before she continued.

“My son, since you have chosen to serve God in this way, I bless you. As long as you are following Jesus, you are on the right path. I will pray for you. Pray for me also.

I bu nwa Virgin Maria”
My name is Kelechi Anyadiegwu. I am the daughter of Engnr. Emeka Anyadiegwu and Dr. Kiki Rita Edozie Anyadiegwu. My mother is the daughter of Honorable Justice Monica Okafor Edozie, my grandmother and the first daughter of Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Agnes Okafor known as Mama. I am a twenty-year-old college student; I don’t know yet where I’m going in life! But I know that I am from a long line of great women and men.

My great grandmother was someone that I did not have the pleasure of meeting in her last years, but I know a lot about her from my mother and aunties who always tell wonderful stories about her. According to my mother she was a loving woman; a woman who loved her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren all the same. She was very industrious and religious. Although she is gone now I know her memory lives through our family and her legacy. I’m confident that her spirit will help guide me in life. As I said, I don’t know where I’m going in life, but I know that with great women like Mama guiding me, I will be okay.
NOTES

1. Kola nut is a juicy nut with five or two sections depending on the specie. The five-sectioned one is usually used by Igbo people for ceremonies. They are usually the first things presented to visitors as a mark of hospitality. They are eaten with butter whose main ingredients include peanuts, pepper, and herbs.

2. Father Buckley An Irish priest who left Biafra when the Biafran leader, Lt. Col. Odimegwu Ojukwu, told foreigners to leave during the Nigeria-Biafra war. As soon as the war ended, he came back. He spoke Igbo. He retired in Emene, Enugu, where he lived till his passing. He was buried in Enugu in accordance with his will.

3. Aku-mmiri-igwe could translate as "the gem of sky water." Ake is the kernel or gem. Usually when we hear, ake, we think of the palm nut that is responsible for the germination of the palm tree. The palm is a huge metaphor for nourishment and care-taking because of its many uses. However, Mama is not talking about the gem of the palm here, but the gem of water, and not the ordinary water but the sky water. This brief explanation of the gem is helpful in understanding the symbolism of the image of the color being described. Rain water is "mmiri ozuzu." Sky water must be from the "heart of the sky." As a child, I remember how we would run outside whenever aku-mmiri-igwe was falling so that we could catch them and throw them into our mouths.

4. Playful praise that Papa coined from Anthony, which is IK’s name.

5. Palm. The leaves of a type are used to make akanya, a kind of roofing the house. The fronds are used for making fences. The tiny sticks are used to make brooms. The palm makes wine that comes in various aromas depending on the type of tree. There is nkwu enu and there is ngwo. The juice of the fruit is used for making oil. The chaff of the fruit is used to make egbendulu, a kind of candle. The coat of the seed is used in flooring. The kernel is used as snack, and also used to make iwe-aki skin lotion.
GLOSSARY OF UNFAMILIAR TERMS

Aku – Wrapper (also called akua in parts of Igboland).
Aakwukwo-agbara – A kind of slightly bitter vegetable.
Abacha – A kind of food (in stripes) made from de-starched cassava.
Adubu mu mu – o! - I have recovered. “O” is for emphasis.
Agu ata-a mu ncha na isi – Literal translation is “the goat has eaten soap on my head,” but it expresses regret. The goat is not smart and for it to overcome someone is a shame.
Ai no dey hear – Translates as “I don’t hear,” but denotes hard-headedness or willfulness.
Aja-mme – A kind of performance in which an offender is made to walk round the village as the crowd follows him/her with songs of ridicule.
Akpana – Oil bean
Ana mu agha ka mu data ego? - Am I still dancing so that people will appreciate my dance? This implies that the person has already established herself in the art or occupation and no longer needs to prove anything.
Atu – Suggests the image of a beautiful work of art.
Chelu-ka-m-kwu – “Wai, let me speak” is a style of three piece outfit for men.
Di egwu – Literal translation is “terrible,” but it denotes extraordinary, awesome or beautiful.
Di Mama – The mother. Praise name for Mama. Di is pigeon for “the.”
Edo – A particular kind of yellowish make-up used around the eyes.
Ekunsigom – I have finished speaking.
I bu nwa Virgin Maria - You are the child of the Virgin Mary.
Inyanga – Stylish display.
Isi ghawa-a – Translates as “heads have split” but implies that her beauty has been the subject of competition or fight between contenders.
Jiqi – A kind of colorful wrapper.
Mama anata, oyo-yo-o – Mama has returned. Meaning of oyo-yo-o is obscure.
Mangala – Dried fish.
Na – And.
Na mai bodi (Pigeon) – It is me/my body.
Na me (Pigeon) – I’m the one.
Nekwe mu na agha huru-nya huru-nya, gbafu iwhu di nya - I was dancing and showing off so that people will see me (huru-nya, look-at-her), but my dance turned to iwhu di nya (“just look at her” in mockery), probably because of some embarrassment.
Ngwa ahia – Merchandise.
Nnsi egbe – Gun powder.
Odozi-aku - Caretaker of wealth (implies the wife of a rich or important man).
Ogo mu Nwanyi mchasili mma - My mother-in-law is very beautiful.
Okpa – Pudding made from cow peas.
Okpata-aku - Maker of wealth (implies an important woman or person).
Okwa – Wooden saucer with a wooden dish in the middle.
Onye ochi - White person.
Onye ocha - White person.
Ota-akara - Kindergarten; it derives its name from, akara, a kind of bean cake made from black-eye peas. It implies that the kids do more eating than studying.
Otanjele – A peculiar kind of blackish powder used to line the eyes.
Piam! – Upright.
Tufia kwa - Expression of disgust. It can be demonstrated by thumbing the hands to produce noise while flinging the hands forward or by spitting or making the motion of spitting without involving saliva. It can also be just verbal in a tone of disgust.
The following was culled from the 1987 Memorial brochure of Papa, Mr. Thomas Okafor.
A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF
LATE THOMAS NWOKOLO OKAFOR
(1910 - 1987)

Mazi Thomas Nwokolo Okafor, popularly known as Papa, hails from Amuvi village, Arochukwu in Imo State. He was born in 1910. He lost his father when he was still young and was brought up by his mother, Udeaku Ugo who died in 1960 at the age of one hundred and five (105) years. Papa was baptised by the late Rev. Fr. Vincent Davey on the 22nd of December, 1922. On the 2nd of March 1924, he received his first holy communion. On the 29th of June, 1924, he was confirmed by the late Bishop Joseph Shanahan at St. Paul's Catholic Church, Eke.

**His Teaching Career:**

Mazi was a veteran educationist who started his career as a teacher in 1926. He served as a teacher and headmaster in various parts of Anambra State. A summary of his teaching career is as follows:

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Iwollo Oghe</td>
<td>3/9/26 - 8/7/27</td>
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<td>Umegu</td>
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<td>Akana Oghe</td>
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<td>Egede</td>
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<td>Isiagu-Umana</td>
<td>1/1/52 - 31/12/56</td>
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<td>Akpalwume</td>
<td>1/1/57 - 31/12/57</td>
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<td>1/1/61 - 31/12/62</td>
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<td>Obeleagw-Umana</td>
<td>1/1/73 - 8/9/75</td>
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<td>Aguobu-Awa</td>
<td>9/9/75 - 31/3/77</td>
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On the whole, this pioneer educationist taught for fifty-one years out of which twenty-one years were spent in Eke.

Mazi was very healthy and strong even in his old age. As a young man, his hobbies included soccer, cycling and gardening. From 1930 to 1940, he was the Captain and centre forward player in the then very popular 'Eke Danger' Football Team which dominated the world of sports not only in Enugu area but also in Onitsha and up to Makurdi areas.

He got married to Agnes Illo of the same Amuvi village, Arochukwu in 1933. God blessed this marriage with nine children. This happy couple celebrated the golden jubilee anniversary of their wedding four years ago, and precisely on 12th November 1983. This devoted christian husband instructed his children in his Will to "Honour your mother and never forget what she suffered for you." As a good and loving parent, Papa strived and trained all his children not only educationally but spiritually. He usually called his children and grandchildren for family prayer-meetings in which he shared with them the words of the Bible, stressing the importance of christian life, especially good neighbourliness.

Mazi was a disciplined and conscientious man, and sought to inculcate these same qualities in other people who came in close contact with him. He was modest and graceful, and associated...
himself with noble ideals and with all men of goodwill. He lived a simple, honest and God-fearing life and always admired this in people. As pioneer and foundation member of the Catholic Faith in the then Eastern Nigeria, he and his wife have sponsored hundreds of people in baptism and the Sacrament of Matrimony. Their mission station house was a kind of "Pre-marriage Training Home."

Significantly enough, Papa was one with God from his childhood up till his old age and death. His life-long friendship with his Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr Michael U. Eneja, the Catholic Bishop of Enugu, started from the latter's primary school days. Even at that young age, the bishop was a wonderful inspiration to Papa and to our entire family. While Papa was alive, he had expressed several times to us that he would be very happy to have Bishop Eneja around him in his last illness. This request or wish was literally granted by God for Papa was in fact anointed by the Bishop on that fateful day of the accident which sent him to his Maker.

When he travelled to Europe in 1979, he was so thrilled by the Christian fellowship in Rome and his meeting with the Pope that when he returned to Nigeria, like Simon, he sang the Nunc Dimittis saying: "Dunbebe O dibo gina ndokwa, O Chineke, maka na anya mu ahuna onye nzoputa mu." (Send home your servant in peace, O Lord, for my eyes have seen the Redeemer.) (Luke II: 29 - 32).

This servant of God was Christian leader who identified himself very much with the Catholic faith and practice and worked like leaven in promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. He was the mentor and guardian of many brilliant but poor pupils. Inspite of his meagre financial resources, he trained such brains even up to the Secondary School and Training College levels, and this, often at a great inconvenience to himself and his family. Papa was the patron of Zone Nine Catholic community, Emene - Enugu. He belonged to many Christian Pious Associations such as the Purgatorian Society, Christian Fathers and the Sodality of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It was on his way to the Sacred Heart of Jesus' prayer meeting that the good Lord called him through the unfortunate motor accident that led to his untimely death.

Papa lived a soldier of Christ, that is, he lived a courageous life in the service of God and humanity. The Good Lord has been very kind to him, guarding him in his service and duties to his children, grandchildren and all who know him. We fondly remember this great man for his uprightness, kindness, humility and wisdom. These are partly expressed in his letters of advice carefully written and preserved for us in a book-form so that we would not be in any doubt as to his wishes when he joined the Lord. For these and many more blessings, we mourn this great man and wear white during his funeral as a symbol of his purity.

Our dear Papa, all of us: your wife, eight children and twenty-two grandchildren, relations, inlaws and friends bid you goodbye as you join our Lord whom you served diligently during your seventy-seven years here in this world.

"Eternal rest grant unto him O'Lord and let perpetual Light shine upon him." May his Soul Rest in Perfect Peace. Amen.
CHILDREN

Hon. Justice Monica U. Edozie
Professor Charles Okolo Okafor
Cpt. Edwin Okafor Okafor
Barrister Beatrice Chioma Madike
Mrs. NgoziChukwu Cordelia Nwosu

Dr. Chukwuemeka Andrew Okafor
Professor Chinyere Grace Okafor
Mr. Ikechukwu Anthony Okafor
Engnr. Patrick Ifeanyichukwu Okafor

SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN-LAW

Chief John Edozie
Prof. Josephine Okafor
Mrs. Stella Okafor
Mrs. Chino Okafor

Chief Cosmas Madike
Engnr. Joseph Nwosu

GRANDCHILDREN

Arch. Orbi Edozie-Ighofose
Mrs. Kate Edozie- Akinlade
Mrs. Maureen Edozie Seegers
Dr. Kiki Edozie-Anyadiwegwu
John Emeka Edozie, Esq.
Mr. Afam Edozie

Mrs. Ada Linda Madike-Osuji
Mr. Ekpechi Ben Madike
Mr. Ifeanyi Samuel Madike
Mrs. Chioma Madike-Eneremadu
Mr. Ikenna Charles Madike

Mrs. Nnenna Evelyn Ofordu
Mrs. Ifeoma Ezuma-Ngwu
Mrs. Amaka Marian Awanye
Dr. Chidi Celestine Okafor
Mrs. Obiaoma Ubaka

Miss Agwalonye Mary Madike
Mrs. Agnes Kayo Nwosu-Nnachetam
Mr. Ugochukwu Emanuel Nwosu
Mr. Obinna Jim Nwosu
Miss Lulu Regina Nwosu

Miss Chiamaka Okafor
Mr. Tobenna Okafor
Miss Ogochukwu Okafor
Mr. Raphael Okafor
Miss Chiagozie Okafor
Mr. Brendan Okafor

Mr. Christian Ifeanyi Okafor
Mr. Chiemelie Okafor
Mr. Chibuike Okafor
Miss Chinyereugo Anezi Okafor
Mr Chinedu Andrew Okafor
GREAT-GRAND CHILDREN

Halima Akinlade
Kimberly Adaeze Osuji
Klaire Osuji
Kirsty Osuji
Kylie Osuji
Kenechukwu Ofordu
Ugochukwu Ofordu
Ikechukwu Ofordu
Ogochukwu Awanye
Ogechukwu Awanye
Obichukwu awanye
Chikezie Ezuma-Ngwu
Uba Anyadiegwu

Chison Ezuma-Ngwu
Amaka Ezuma-Ngwu
Chase Seegers
Chinazo Nna Orji
Colins Seegars
Monica Seegers
Chiemezie Edozie
Jaden Edozie
Sarachi Edozie
Chukwudera Eneremadu
Alexandria Edozie
Kelechi Anyadiegwu
Gozie Anyadiegwu

GRANDSONS AND GRANDDAUGHTERS-IN-LAW

Chief Michael Ighofose
Dr. Hakim Akinlade
Mr. Melvin Seegers
Arch. Kizito Osuji
Engnr. Emeka Anyadiegwu
Mr. Cyprian Ofordu
Mrs. Mwende Mwunzi Edozie
Mr. Nnanna Ezuma-Ngwu
Mr. Chukwuemeka Awanye
Mrs. Adanze UmezEronini Edozie
Mr. Reginald Uche Nnachetam
Mr. Fabian Eneremadu
Mr. Paul Chidi Ubaka
Mrs. Ifeoma Okoye Madike

MORE SONS

Bishop Michael Eneja
Innocent Manuluikpe
Emmanuel Offor

Clement Enem
Augustine Aniamalu Esom
Peter Nkedife
She confronted illnesses, lack of money, death of loved ones, and many other challenges. With prayers and hard work, she took them head on losing here and winning there while remaining faithful to life and to God. Her laughter remained as she smiled her way out of this life.

Rest in perfect peace, Mama.

Charles O. Okafor, Professor Emeritus, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria