

TRIBUTE TO MAMA: ACHALA-UGO-NWANYI

by

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

*M*y 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 you 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.

