

# THE VIRGIN MARY STORY: INTERVIEW WITH MRS. AGNES OKAFOR

by  
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**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!  
O melu mu. Nne ka nne.*

My great mother! Mother of Jesus!  
The One that does for me. Mother  
that is the greatest.

*Nne oma mu. Nne Jesu.  
Omelu umu ogbenye.*

My good mother. Mother of Jesus.  
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.  
Biko nonyere nnwa m -o.*

My child is asking about you.  
Please be with my child.

*Biko chedo kwe umu mu-o.*

Please guard my children.

*Umu nine itinyere 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, osighi 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 ibe. 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?<sup>2</sup>

**Mama:** No. She's not white like *onye ocha*.

**Chinyere:** Then what?

**Mama:** *O di ka mmiri na awu na inyi ocha*. 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,<sup>3</sup> 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.