

## **ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN ENUGU STATE**

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### **Abstract**

The rate at which corruption spread among political leaders both at local government and state level in Enugu state is alarming. The ex-governor Chimaroke Nnamani was accused of laundering ₦4.5 billion between 1999 and 2007 while ex-governor Sullivan Chime was accused by the anti-graft agency of ₦13 billion contract for the new secretariat complex and campaign fund allegedly collected from former petroleum minister, Diezian Alison Madueke. The causative factors of this corruption have been traced from selfish, greed, avarice, etc, hence the topic “Roman Catholic Church and the fight against Corruption in Enugu State, Nigeria”. This has affected the well-being of individuals and retarded development and progress in the State. The embezzlement of public fund, rigging of election, kidnapping of political opponents, thuggery, and political motivated killings formed the core of activities of some of the political leaders. Though several national programmes and ant-corruption agencies like Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) have been put in place to combat this menace, corruption continues to get worse. Many people that have been fingered to be corrupt but because they belong to APC ruling government or they decamped from PDP to APC become sacred cows or saints. The Roman Catholic Church has used preaching, praying, exemplary life styles, social action and sacrifice as strategies against corruption in Enugu State. In view of the degree of corruption in Enugu State, and the failure of these agencies, the question there is, what further strategies can Roman Catholic Church employ to reduce corruption to the lowest minimal? This paper, through phenomenology method, critically examines the role of the Roman Catholic Church and

the problem of corruption among political leaders in Enugu State.

**Keywords:** Politics and Roman Catholic Church.

### **Introduction**

Corruption is a social menace that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian polity. Starting from the colonial era of Nigeria, bribery and corruption have been in existence but these recent years, it has been on increase. All the past administrations in Nigeria till this present have involved themselves in one corrupt practice or the other. This is why Chuta (2004) traced the problem of corruption from the pre-colonial to the colonial and the self-government era. Similarly, Ugwu (2002) traced corruption to colonial period when he posited that:

It has been argued that the major roots of corruption were sown during the colonial period when a lot of structures were created for the purpose of administration. The pro-colonial society knew little or nothing about corruption but soon after Nigeria's independence in 1960 and shortly afterwards in 1963 after Nigeria had become a republic, there grew in galloping proportions corruption in every sphere of human life (p.16).

According to Obasanjo (2017,p9), "corruption has been responsible for the political instability of successive government since the first republic. Every coup since then has been in the name of stamping out the disease called corruption". Nigeria's external image took a serious bashing, as the country began to fixture on every corruption index. Corruption therefore, seemed to have become part of the daily life of Nigerians. Not many Nigerians now think that hard work pays. Equally not many think that honesty is worth trying (Achunike, 2006).

It is in this sense that the connection between the church and the fight against political corruption should be articulated. Politics is a game of number and the church has the number that can make them control the government of the day. Agha (1988) posited that "Any society is moralized by ideas, and ideas must work through the brains and arms of good and faithful men and women". Since the church as a segment of the civil society, it should be concerned about arming their brains for good governance in the country. The church has the duty to speak out with any articulate voice on moral failures within the church as to reflect positively on the country's political process to appreciable extent (Ojo, 2004). The church should carry out its missionary mandate in order to sanitize politicians and the society at large. In this sense, the role of the Roman Catholic Church in combating political corruption in Enugu State cannot be over stated considering the fact that Enugu State, like most states of Nigeria, has had its own share of corruption among its political leaders. The need to study the Roman Catholic Church role in the fight against corruption in Enugu State

therefore necessitated this study. The period under study covers 1999 up to this present democratic dispensation in Enugu State.

### **Corruption: A Historical Overview in Nigeria**

Corruption has been severally defined by different scholars because of its ubiquity. The word “corruption” has become a household word in the minds of an average Nigerian because of its endless and constant spread and its stability in any government in Nigeria (Amujiri, 1997). There is no government in Nigeria that the leaders are not corrupt. Okoye (1989) referred to it as a phenomenon that has survived from one historical epoch to another in different forms. Amujiri continued that corruption has been described as “a living stone, which lives for ages”. This means that no government in Nigeria has ever come into power without being corrupt. It has become part of Nigeria way of governance without a change.

According to Otumegwu (2007), corruption has brought about the siphoning of limited public funds that are meant for industries, hospitals, schools and other infrastructures. In most cases, public funds mapped out for infrastructural development are embezzled, misappropriated and depleted through kickbacks and over-invoicing by government agents. This has occasioned poor infrastructural development and dilapidated facilities that endanger human lives and property. Some contractors receive payment for the contracts that are never executed thereby subjecting the masses into suffering and penury. Nwigwe (2008) lends credence to the above position noted that the entire system of governance has been saturated with the system unqualified, incompetent and dubious cronies and relations. The fear is that if official corruption when not checked as observed possess a corrosive potential that can ultimately destroy Nigeria.

Moreso, Robinson (1998) maintained that corruption has played a major role in understanding political and economic progress in Nigeria. He said that this has led to the resurgence of interest in analyzing the phenomenon and the diverse forms that corruption assumes in developing countries like Nigeria under different historical epochs. Okeke, (2003) said that corruption whether in the form of bribe fraud, embezzlement, kickback; etc has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian society. Achebe (1983) declared that corruption in Nigeria has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage; and Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed”. It is in the light of the above that Ulu, (2008) likened corruption as “a deadly virus, which attacks the vital structures of the society, thus putting its existence into serious peril”. Furthermore, Maduagwu (1995) continued that ministers, governors, party officials, supporters of all the political parties, business associates, all rallied round to share the booty.

Similarly, El-Rufia (2003;6) posited that, “corruption covers a wide range of social misconduct, this ranges from massive fraud, extortion,

embezzlement, bribery, nepotism, influence peddling, bestowing of favour to friends, rigging of elections, sale of expired and defective goods like drugs, foods, electronics and spare parts to the public etc. El-Ruffai's statement above shows that corruption is endemic in Nigerian society. Ugwu (2002) is of the view that, "the Nigeria society is in a very serious state of moral, social, political, economic, legal and educational decay. El-Ruffai and Ugwu made significant points because corruption has touched virtually all sectors in Nigeria, both economical, religious, educational and socio-cultural. According to Eze (2002;p1) "corruption is one serious contagious disease that has endemically and indirectly involved every Nigerian, quite irrespective of one's position and upbringing, while the ability to contend and if possible avoid it, is a courage and sacrifice yet to be cultivated by Nigerians". It is obvious that virtually every Nigerian is involved in one corrupt act or the other and it still remains a stamp on the faces of all Nigerians both old and young ones. According to (Transparency International 2011), acknowledge that corruption has become a way of life in Nigeria. It has been so pervasive that it permeates all aspects of national life. It is found in all public institutions today, civil service, electoral commission, universities, polytechnics and colleges, the judiciary, police, military and other security organisations etc are all bastions of corruption. Ugwu (2002) acknowledged that corruption has reached an unprecedented and alarming proportions pinpoint that it has become too difficult to be controlled as it affects almost every sectors. Corruption in form of bribe, fraud, embezzlement, kickback, etc has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian society.

However, there is no disputing fact that endemic corruption in Nigeria poses devastating consequence in all ramifications of national development (social, economic, political, educational, religious and socio-cultural) which has directly or indirectly contributed to poverty. According to Ibrahim (2003), public corruption has become one of the main reasons for the development of poverty and underdevelopment of the country's economy. Ibrahim is not far from the truth based on his ideas above because corruption hinders growth in all ramifications. Corruption is a stumbling block to the people that are supposed to gain the dividends of democracy.

Corruption is a huge challenge in the public administration in Nigeria. It has been viewed as "any act of illegality, immorality and dishonesty" it implies acts of financial and material dishonesty. Of all forms of corruption, political corruption has remained a major obstacle to national progress in Nigeria. Corruption is indeed the major explanations for the seemingly insoluble problem of poverty, diseases, hunger and general acute of development tragedy in Nigeria (Diara and Onah 2014).

### **The Nexus between Church and Politics**

Church has been an indispensable phenomenon in Nigeria. Since the attainment of Independence in Nigeria, politic has since gone religious. It had

become an important factor in political discourse (Adigwe and Grau, 2007). The influence of religion is not only limited to politics but its power influences virtually all other facts of life. Political power affects economic prosperity, social relation, educational advancement, and the psych of the society.

In recent times, Laguda (2008) has argued that Christians in Nigeria would rather not get involved in politics but that fact remains that Jesus Christ did not discourage political participation for the faithful. However, Laguda's argument is unconvincing due to the fact that there are many Christians who involved in politics and that have won political seats as governors, senators and honourable. In Judaism, which is the source of Christianity, the God of Israel, Yahweh, is the God of war (Josh. 6.20), economy (Ex. 16), Obedience and moral virtual (Num. 21: 4-8). Yahweh is all in all in the Judaic traditional thought, religion and politics. The most significant interaction between politics in church history was witnessed during Constantine and the post-constantine era, where the emperor used machinery of the state to promote Christianity. Thus, religion became politicized, and politics also married the progress of the church during this period. Jesus teachings and Pauline theology encourage political process which stand for respect for those in political offices, since they are representatives of God (Matt. 22: 17 – 20).

The Church in Nigeria is becoming problem to the government of the day and to the nation, religion does not make people good or bad. On the contrary, it is being used as instrument of oppression and deceit in Nigeria in general. It breeds incessant religions riots, discrepancies, discrimination between one religion and another. The Boko Haram in the country that has proved unstoppable is also caused by religious fanatics. Also the Fulani herdsmen that is terrorizing the country is the off short of religion and tribe. All these have created political instability in the country thereby undermining the peace, progress, poor productivity in the country and also drive the foreign investors aware. The misapplication of church in the country has made it impossible to see the relevance of the church in the nation building. Ekwunife (1992) condemned this attitude when he averred, that once the selfish interest of these hidden elites is at stake, they sponsor the ever-willing fanatical religious group to rebel against constituted authorities and the laws of the nation.

According to Merton (1968), during the last two decades, religion has again come to the forefront of socio-economic and political life of many countries. Religious organizations have been actively involved in various efforts aimed at conflict resolution and peace. The people of Africa turned to churches for direction and solutions. African churches suddenly became the centres of socio-political life. For example, the churches initiated the peace agreement in Liberia. They also conducted National conferences in Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, Gobon, Togo, Liberia, Mali and Democratic Republic of Congo. These national conferences, usually led by religious leaders, brought all political, social and economic forces of the country, to draft a provisional

constitution and to institute an interim government to lead the country's transition.

However, Greg (1997) notes that the church organization helped many countries to draft the new constitutions. In countries like Benin, Congo, Togo and DRC, Religious leaders were asked to be speakers of parliament. In Togo, for example, a bishop acted as speaker of parliament for two years and in Congo, a bishop acted in the same capacity for almost four years. In Liberia, during the war, the head of the Lutheran church was asked to be the vice president of the country while people were looking for means and ways to end the civil war. Former President Nelson Mandela appointed Archbishop Desmond Tutu to lead the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deal with Crimes of apartheid and bring about reconciliation.

In view of (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004;p 220) the Catholic Church values and teaches the participation of all in public life. in the Vatican II the Fathers of the Council taught that it is fully consonant with human nature that there should be politico-judicial structures providing all citizens without any distinction with ever improving and effective opportunities to play an active part in the establishment of the juridical foundations of the political community in the administration of public affairs, in determining the aims and the terms of reference of public bodies, and in the election of political leaders, the church specifically condemns any political set up that unnecessarily restricts personal autonomy and participation in political life. The church values the democratic system in as much as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate.

The church is in support of authentic democracy, not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures, the dignity of every human person, the respect of human right, commitment to the common good as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life. If there is no general concern or those values, the deepest meaning of democracy is lost and its stability is comprised.

As far back as February 1979, the Nigerian Bishops issued a long letter. They explained that the proper use of one's vote is an exercise of patriotism and piety. They called for prayerful reflections as well as adequate information "voting conscientiously and purposefully is the citizen's most available and direct way of contributing to the election of most suitable leaders and support of publicly beneficial policies". They suggested that voters should reflect well, discusses with fellow citizens the choices; critically appraise the claims, promises and platforms of the candidate and parties (Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, 1979:20:24). The basic principle is "one person, one vote". This gives every citizen some share in the government; the right to choose his or her

leaders. The right to vote gives the common people a weapon over the few, the rich and the wealthy. Since it is a right, it is freely exercised and so no person can be compelled to vote. Yet in the catholic tradition, it is a right that should be taken very seriously, even as a duty. This Pius xi could state that “Catholic will be very careful not to neglect using his right to vote when the good of the church and that of his country is at stake”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (ccc: 2240) is even stronger when it makes voting a moral obligation. “Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good makes it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote and to defend one’s country”.

In practice, the Catholic Diocese of Nsukka has constantly stressed the relationship between participating in political exercises, especially voting for the right person and the sacrament of the Eucharist (Osauzo, 2010). On the eve of the 1999 elections, the Nigerian Bishops put this challenge before citizens;

The electorate should exercise their civil rights responsibility by voting only for leaders who can be expected to serve honestly and selflessly, and insist to have the leaders of their choice. They should resist every temptation to sell their votes for money, for as we said in 1983, “it is criminal to buy or sell votes”. They should demand to be duly informed of all that they need to know for the exercise of their civic duty to vote and participate in the electoral process (Schineller, 2010).

The implication is that citizens should;

- (a) Use one’s vote for the good of Nigeria, not the good of a particular party or tribe or individual.
- (b) Vote for candidates who are accountable, and concerned for the common good for basic rights such as education, health, social services.
- (c) Remember that not to vote may mean the wrong person is elected and
- (d) Vote according to one’s conscience not allowing oneself to be pressured or bribed. In a similar way, the Nigerian Bishops in 1983, wrote “we encourage Christian laymen and women with a talent for the difficult yet noble art of politics to prepare for it, for we believe that the sacred task of providing food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, shelter for the homeless, schools and hospital for all, can be promoted through active participation in politics, it makes them available on a large scale, through democratic measures” (Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, 1983:p40).

A former Archbishop of Abuja also echoed this severally; “If one political life is chaotic and full of dishonest people, it is all the more reason why good people should squeeze their way into it ... The main task of the catholic politician is to ensure that justice is done to all, including the church too, and that the society is well governed (Onaiyekan, 2000).

One of the greatest contributions of the Catholic Church to Nigerian politics is election monitoring and other election issues. In 2007 the CIDJAP Enugu, coordinated the conference and the south eastern zonal launch of the Nigerian Alliance for Peaceful Elections (NAPE) (CIDJAP, 2007:21). In 2003 the National Justice Development and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church (JDIPC) recruited up to 200,000 election monitors who posited a marvelous performance going by the bravery they displayed and the gravity of the information they harvested from the field (Odigbo, 2008:p90). For the 2011 elections, various diocesan organs of JDPC are the catholic national JDPC is among the project 2011 swift count coalition that intends to see to effective monitoring and reporting in the 2011 elections, in all the 774 local government areas in Nigeria (Babalola, 2010).

The Catholic Church plays a major role in the politics of Enugu State bearing in mind the numerical strength of the church. The Catholic Church through Mbaka in 2019 declares No vacancy in Enugu Government House. He stressed that Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi has done excellently well in office and deserves a second term. He poured encomiums on Governor Ugwuanyi, describing him as “a good, kindhearted, humble, peace-loving and God-fearing leader”, who has judiciously managed the lean resources of the state for the benefit of the people. The catholic priest also described Ugwuanyi as “the best Governor so far in Enugu State”, adding that he is “an epitome of peace; a sanctuary of conflict resolution and model for rural and urban development” (Amoke, 2018).

### **Corruption and the Maladministration in Enugu State**

The history of elections in Enugu is the history of rigging of election with impunity, brutality, thuggery, intimidation, maiming, stabbing, killing, snatching of ballot boxes or ballot boxes openly stuffed up with ballot papers, electoral officials reported of massive turnout of voters in areas where no voting took place at all or election results fabricated. Starting from election of Dr.Chimaroke Nnamani, it was a free and fair due to the fact that his godfather was popular and respected in the State. His godfather was formal Governor Chief Jim Nwaobodo. Dr.Chimaroke Nnamani was residing in abroad when Jim Nwobodo invited him to come and contest for the election. He came back and contested under the plate form of peoples’ Democratic party (PDP) which he won and became the first Executive Governor of Enugu State His first election from – 1999 to 2007 did not witness too much rigging of election but it was seen in some quarters where there was snatching of ballot boxes and stuffing of ballot box with voters papers.

It was Nnamani’s second tenure that was characterized with rigging of election, voting before the real voting day, snatching of ballot boxes, maiming etc. It was at this regime that Enugu State witnessed what is called electoral malpractice or electoral fraud. Electoral fraud, refer to illegal interference with



the process of an election. The act of electoral fraud tends to involve actions affecting vote count to bring about a desired election outcome, depressing the vote share of the rival candidates or both. Indeed, many kinds of voter fraud are outlawed in specific electoral legislation, but others are in violation of more general laws such as those banning assault, harassment or rebels (Okolie, 2009). The term electoral fraud also covers acts which although legal, but are considered to be morally unacceptable outside the spirit of electoral law or in violation of the principle of democracy. The above conception of electoral fraud corroborates the view of the Nnaa (1985) who conceived electoral fraud as any dishonest act inimical to the societal acceptable standards of doing things with the ultimate aim of influencing the outcome of election results to one's favour.

After the second tenure of Governor Chimaroke Nnamani, he brought Barr. Sullivan Chime as his godson which he made sure through every possible means and install him as the governor of Enugu State. Chimaroke Nnamani used all the government machineries to rig the election in favour of Sullivan Chime. The good relationship of the godfather (Chimaroke) and the godson (Chime) did not last long as they started having problems with each other. Sooner after swearing in of Governor Chime, there was frosty relationship between him and Nnamani (Vanguard, 2008). Governor Sullivan Chime came into power as the governor of Enugu State on April 2007, under People's Democratic Party (PDP) Platform and sworn into office on 29 May 2007. He served two terms as governor of Enugu State from May 29, 2007 to May 29, 2015. Sullivan's re-election was a tug of war between him and Dr. Okey Eze of Labour Party (LP). Many voters knew there was massive rigging of election but the common people could not do anything. Though Dr. Okey Eze went to tribunal but the case was quashed in the law court (Daily Independence, 2011). After the second tenure of Governor Sullivan Chime, he presented Hon. Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi to be the flag bearer of people's Democratic Party (PDP). Sullivan became the godfather and Ugwuanyi became the godson. Due to the fact that Enugu State is PDP state, anybody presented by the ruling governor, the masses will automatically support him. There is no strong political party in Enugu State that can challenge PDP. Governor Ifeanyi Lawrence Ugwuanyi's election did not witness any hitches due to the fact that it is the turn of an Nsukka man to be on that lion Building. People from other zones from Enugu State supported him as he came from the most popular party called PDP. Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi assumed office on 29, May 2015 and he is still on the seat till date for his second tenure is still on. The issues of godfatherism only work in Enugu just during election but after election, both the godfather and the godson will be at war. This godfatherism is another name for corruption. When these godfathers help their godson, and the godson assumes office, the godfather dictates what happens in the state and it became time to pay back for making the godson the Governor. This is another way of carting away the resources of the State and handing it over to the godfather.

### **How Church encourages Corruption**

The church of God, the priest and the followers that supposed to be holy has turned out to be a corruption ground for all. Those that are mostly involved in these corrupt practices are the priests and the members of the church council who are directly involved with the money of the church. The church in Nigeria is more interested in receiving from its members instead of giving which is contrary to the church of old. It is a place where you go and be filled both physically and spiritually. Jesus gave examples of what the church or the believers should be like by feeding five thousand men (Mk.16:30–44); healing a paralytic man (Lk.5:17 – 26); Jesus healing many people (Mtt.8:14 – 17); raising of Lazarus from death (Jn.11:44). These were examples laid down by Jesus whom the followers should emulate from Him. The early Christians followed suit by teaching of oneness and equality among believers. An example was in Acts 5:32 – 36, where no one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another not equally but according to each person's need. That is how Jesus established His church but the church today are being fed by their members. Obasanjo (2019), in a convention of Victory Life Bible Church International in Abeokuta, Ogun State gave a speech titled "The role of the church in the fight against corruption in Nigeria". He is of the opinion that, if the church as an institution does not take bribe or get involved in other corrupt practices, the behaviour of some of our men of God leaves much to be desired. According to him, they not only celebrate but venerate those whose sources of wealth are questionable. They accept gifts (offering) from just anybody without asking questions. This gives the impression that anything is acceptable in the house of God (Premium Times, 2017). I concur with the above statement to a large extent because; it is not hidden to the general public that many of our so called leaders have derailed from the injunction of God. To them, church is now a business venture. Christian ethics and doctrines have since been corroded by materialism, just as corruption has corroded people's confidence in the priesthood.

The Vice President of Nigeria, Osibanjo compared Nigeria churches with Coca-Cola Company which emulate the company, envies its success, but it has rejected the processes by which it employs to sustain itself. He said that Coca-cola audits its accounts and reviews its decisions. He cited an example with the Pentecostal pastors who hide under the Holy Spirit and refused proper administrative and financial accountability and run their churches as sole proprietorships. The churches are embodiments of opacity and arbitrariness, the very demons that have perpetuated corruption in the society (Vanguard, 2017). In every church in this country, the must be corruption, in most cases, the church will not like to make it open to the public. Few years ago, the top flight British historian, David Storkey, dismissed the Catholic Church as irredeemably corrupt from top to bottom, stirring a hornet's nest. From the top of the Catholic Church

hierarchy, Pope Francis admitted that the Catholic Church harboured “streams of corruption” featuring sexual abuse of minors by church officials, gay lobbies, among other morals howlers (Punch, 2017). There are corruption in the Catholic Church dioceses of Agwu, Nsukka and Enugu which is glaring. The construction of Cathedral house of Nsukka diocese is a good example. Every Cathedral church is the headquarter of any diocese. It is in fact, the only church that houses the seat of a Bishop of a diocese. For more than 29 years now, the entire people of Nsukka have been struggling to build a befitting edifice that could stand the test of ages (Eze, 2017). This is a sign of corruption. May be they are building and waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus. Imagine, it implies that many people who started contributing from the foundation are almost dead and yet it has not been completed. Many have amassed wealth through the construction and a lot of materials and money wasted.

Meanwhile, the church’s attitude of accepting and approving wealth acquired illegitimately encourages corruption. During an occasion or function in the church like harvest and bazaar, second collection or donation, people who buy or donated higher are being recognized in the church not minding their sources of income. The Catholic Church in Enugu diocese through Rev. Fr, EjikeMbaka of Adoration Ministry Emene, Enugu exhibited corruption. This was linked with Peter Obi, the Vice President aspirant of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) during 2019 general election of Nigeria. During the harvest and bazaar 2018 of the adoration ministry, Mbaka suggested to Obi to make a financial contribution to sway his 31<sup>st</sup> December prophecy to his favour. Mbaka threatened that the Atiku-Obi ticket will fail unless they build a project for his ministry. He also told the Buhari team that came for the bazaar that Buhari will fail unless he comes to visit his ministry with monetary gift (Vanguard, 2018). What a shame! Prophecy has become the highest bidder. That is a good sign of the church losing its taste and all these are in the name of making money. Obi later donated five hundred thousand Naira (₦500,000) for the breaking of kola nut while Senator Hope Uzodinma of All Progressive Congress (APC) who is the governorship aspirant in Imo State donated two million Naira, and promised that Buhari will build hospital for ministry. It was on this note, that Mbaka said that Senator Uzodinma will become the next governor of Imo State by the grace of God (<https://www.concisenews.global>). With the above statement, it becomes imperative that the highest bidder or donor in the church can become the President, Governor, Senator etc.

Also, in the church, the selection of the members of Nights of St. Muluba or St. John are based on how rich one is because they are the main people that donate big amount of money in the church. Moreso, the title given by the Catholic and Anglican churches to their members are based on how rich you are. The titles are, “Mother of Faith, Good mother (Ezinne), Mother of all (Nnemuruoha) etc. before this title will be bestowed unto a person; the person must pay a certain amount of money that will qualify her. If one is unable to pay

the agreed amount of money, you automatically seize to be a member. The church will not be interested on how a particular person gets the money.

Moreso, another area that priests and pastor perpetrate corruption in the church is the area of paying of tithes which they use to cheat their members. Almost all the pastors and priests are interested in making money instead of winning souls which were their primary role. The most annoying part of it is that, even when the pastors and the priests are aware that a donor's source of income is questionable, they will still accept the money. An example was what happened in a local church in Benue State where someone paid ₦42 million as tithe for three months and his identity was shielded from the public (Guardian, 2017). The news agency of Nigeria (NAO) has it that, the money was paid into the UBA account of the "*Non go Kristu U Sudan Tiv*" (NKST). The pastor, Dr. Fredrick Ikyaan, initially denied knowledge of such offering, but the copy of the months of January – March, confirmed the payment of the said amount. It also states that the church had an income of ₦56.2 million and an expenditure of ₦33.7 million within the same stipulated time. This is a clear indication of corruption in the church. If not, the donor's name would not have been shielded and moreso, the pastor would not have denied it.

On the other hand, the transfer of the priests is always characterized with politics and corruption. Those close to the bishop or the priest incharge of the transfer are always posted to the parishes or stations that are economically viable, while those in the black list of the bishop are posted to the areas that are not yet developed. This is why some priests are on punitive transfer due to lack of not remitting enough money to the bishop or the leader as the case may be.

Corruption has penetrated every society (Boer, 2003). Not even the church of God is left out in this shameful act. A critical survey of the state of things in the church in Enugu State shows that the church has witnessed a phenomenal growth with an attendant increase in the rate of corruption Awoniyi (2007) said that with the numerical strength of Christians in Nigeria and practical example, corruption should not continue to thrive in the society. Agidimolaya (2008) stated that:

My problem all along has been with our so called Christian and Christian Pastors. My problem is the various interpretations of our Bible texts. My problem is our various denominations and strange religious practices. My problem is lies and fraud in the house of God. Is not supposed to be a holy temple? Are we not supposed to be Holy people? Habba! (p.2).

He further added that nowadays, spirituality had vanished from the pulpit. Many pastors or preachers of the gospel are not knowledgeable enough about the scripture or word of God. These days, you find it difficult to know who is true Christian or Pastor as church these days is just like social club

meeting where they go, talk and have meeting and identify with one another in case one has problem or dies, so that they will help or bury him/her when the time comes without thinking of where the soul goes after death. One must suggest that the reason why the church has not been able to wage war against corruption in Enugu State is that the church itself is corrupt and the gospel bearers carry alongside gospel with corruption.

### **Efforts at fighting Corruption in Nigeria**

During the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo's first tenure in office of May 29, 1999, his government had a good gender for fighting corruption in the country. He showed a serious commitment to fight against corruption and to ensure public accountability and transparency of government. President Obasanjo in June 12, 2001, set up the Independent corrupt practices and other Related Offences commission (ICPC) which Justice Akanbi led. Also in a similar vein, his government in September 2004, set up another agency that will fight against crime and corruption in the country. It was named the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) headed by Nuhu Ribadu. Some government officials were indicted like, former Senate President, Adolphus Wabara, former Inspector General of Police Mr. Tafa Balogun, former minister for education, Professor Fabian Osuji and many other governors (Nwachukwu, 2010). Though much was not done to them due to Nigerian factors. Moreso, the agencies did not last long in their work as many of their officials were caught at the same web of corruption. To support this, eleven of the top EFCC were sacked on 24, August 2008 (Daily Sun, August 25, 2008:p1).

After his third term bid that failed, Yar'Adua was elected as the president of Nigeria on May 29, 2007 with his Vice President, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. The President prorogated his seven point agenda with emphasis on Zero tolerance of corruption, respect to the rule of Law and the notion of transparency as what circle form the pillar of his administration. He was the first president to declare his assets when he came into power. This assertion is true as no former president have ever declared his assets. With this, one can rightly access his assets after his tenure thereby giving a clue if his administration looted or not. His administration did not do much because he was incapacitated with ill health that claimed his life. His death was a good luck to Goodluck Jonathan as he assumed office of the president of federal Republic of Nigeria. President Goodluck came into power unprepared, though he made use of ICPC and EFCC but he could not achieve much because he has no political will to fight corruption.

During his regime, things went out fine, but in terms of fighting corruption, his government was so corrupt to the extent that nobody was found guilty of corruption. In his bid to be voted back into power, he distributed a lot of money to the top government officials and also his party official-people's

Democratic Party (PDP) to ensure his return to power which he later loosed. His lost of office as the president brought in his opponent from All Progressive Congress (APC) President Muhammadu Buhari into office as the President of the Country. Though, Buhari came into office through the back door of corruption, and he claimed in his inaugural speech that “I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody” (Guardian, 2015). Buhari is making use of the corrupt agencies established by ex-president Obasanjo, though Buhari is claiming that his administration is fighting corruption but his fight for corruption is loopsided. This assertion may be true to a large extent. This is because the previous regime did not have political will in fighting corruption even when it was glaring that his administration was swimming in corruption in which was the major reason his administration was voted out of office. He is using the EFCC to fight only his political opponents. Any PDP that is corrupt and that have been indicted, as far as the person joins Buhari led APC party, the charges against the person is quashed.

President Buhari failed to notice that tribalism and favouritism are also part of corruption. In a country of many tribes, his governments mainly favour people from his tribe. Almost all his political appointees are his people and he sees the Igbo tribe as a sacrificial lamb. The Indigenous people for Biafra (IPOB) are agitating for marginalization, there activities are not hidden, they don't go about with knife nor guns, there demonstration is always peaceful but Buhari through the court proscribed the association as terrorist group (Punch, 2007). While the brothers – Fulani herdsmen that are vandalizing and killing people day by day, state by state, and they move about with knife and gun (AK45) are not proscribed as terrorists. All these acts are part of corruption and that is why Buhari and his administration is corruption personified.

### **The Roman Catholic Church and the fight against Political Corruption in Nigeria**

One of the strategies the Catholic Church is using to fight corruption is its prayer for Nigeria Against Bribery and Corruption which the church usually pray in all the catholic in the country, for almost two decades now. Obasanjo, (2017) observed that the religious leaders of the Catholic Church in Nigeria have lead the road as they produced a prayer against bribery and corruption in Nigeria which is said every Sunday masses by all members. It is being prayed thus:

Father in heaven, you always provide for all you creatures so that all may live as you have willed. You have blessed our country Nigeria with rich human and glory and for the wellbeing of every Nigeria. We are deeply sorry for the wrong use of these your gifts and blessing through act of injustice, bribery and corruption, as a result of which many of our people are hungry, sick, ignorant and defenseless. Either you alone can heal us and our nation of this sickness. We beg you,

touch our lives and the lives of our leaders and people so that we may all realize the evil of bribery and corruption and work hard to eliminate it. Raise up for us God fearing people and leaders who care for us and who will lead us in the part of peace, prosperity and progress. We ask these through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (p.15).

In another related development, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria in a joint pastoral letter emphasizes the civic and political responsibilities of all Christians. This excerpt represents the general content of the letter

... it is the noble right and serious duty of every responsible citizen to do what he can towards the establishment, maintenance and successful operation of a good government. The prospective voter should be convinced of the importance of his vote. Neglecting to vote is the denial of potential support for social justice and progress ... voting conscientiously and purposefully is the citizen's most available and direct way of contributing to the election of most suitable leaders and support of beneficial policies. It is also in this sense that selling one's vote or cashing it for short-sighted gain is offensive before God and man (Schineller, 2002).

Kukah (2003) refers to this document as particularly significant "because coming from a tradition of non-political involvement, Catholics in particular and Christians in general were literally obsessed with the fact that politics was a dirt game, in which no good Christian could participate". Why the catholic bishop's of Nigeria stressed so much about casting voter was the experience Nigerians are aware that most of the times voting does not count and votes casted are not votes that are announced. It is a general knowledge that every election in Nigeria, the votes the INEC announces are not real, it is fabricated.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN 2015) in a communiqué, constantly condemned corruption, violence and injustice, to embrace a life of transparency and service. They affirmed that the war against corruption is not just a battle for virtue and righteousness in our land but a fight for the soul and substance of our nation. They believe it is a collective responsibility that requires a collective effort. All Nigerians should be part of this struggle, which ought to be carried out at all levels, in order to recover wasted opportunities. They believed that to guarantee sustainable success in fighting corruption, Nigerians must transcend ethnic, religious and regional affiliations and sentiments. Those who are genuinely identified to have either stolen or recklessly used the national wealth must be compelled to make comprehensive restriction. In this process, the Bishops strongly urge all to eschew personal interest, political vendetta, and bitterness. They advised those

with the mandate to facilitate this process so that they should be guided by a true sense of justice and act in accordance with the rule of law. This is the stand of Catholic Bishops of Nigeria (CBCN 2015).

The Nigerian Catholic leaders fight corruption through vocal speech without fear of what the outcome will be. They are of the opinion that the President Muhammadu Buhari has “failed woefully in the fight against corruption”. Buhari came to power in 2015 promised to undo the endemic corruption in the country and was reelected February 2019, again promising to root out the endemic graft that has plagued the African nation for decades. Ishu (2019) in Good Shepherd Newspaper told Crux that the Nigerian president has not really tried to tackle corruption. “Instead, his administration is busy persecuting perceived enemies of his government. Besides, there are some monies recovered from individuals, where are those monies? Buhari government is busy intimidating the judiciary arm of government. He has not done much in the fight against corruption. Also, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal John Onayekan, in a keynote address at the catholic laity council of Nigeria political conference in Abuja, condemned the bad idea of politician who does not believe that for “any politician who does not get rich is a fool and not many Nigerians want to be fools. The mismanagement, embezzlement, looting of our resources is one of the most brazen stealing anywhere in the world. Nowhere else in the world do leaders and citizens tolerate this sort of theft in broad daylight with nothing happening to the thieves”.

The Catholic Bishop of Sokoto State Bishop Matthew Kukah, called on all religious leaders to avoid “the temptation of being seduced by filthy lucre and power for personal or any other gain. He said that the current president, Muhammadu Buhari, has faced criticism from religious leaders-especially Christian for failing to live up to his campaign promises to fight corruption, defeat the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency, and improve security throughout the country. Bishop Kukah in his Easter message (2019) informed “Mr. President, that you are too distant from your people. There is a sad feeling that you do not share in the pain and suffering of your people; for now, before your eyes and in your hands, our country, our communities, our people are all in a state of stupor”. Bishop Kukah also used this medium to rebuke Nigerian state governors, legislators, senators, and other politicians for engaging in “the culture of cronyism ... and primitive accumulation” which has led to the decline of the Nigerian nation.

The Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Adewale Martins, has urged Nigerians to go beyond prayers in the fight against corruption by imbibing and practicing values that witness to honesty and mobility. He urged Nigerians to put aside personal interest, political convenience and bitterness in the fight against corruption which is “our common enemy”. He also suggested that, to guarantee sustainable success in fighting corruption, Nigerians must transcend ethnic, religious and regional affiliations and sentiments. For Nigerians to curb



corruption, they must imbibe the virtue of selflessness and learn to be sensitive to the needs of others (Punch newspaper 2017).

Moreover, the Catholic Church in Nigeria said is ready to take its anti-corruption fight in the country to the next level, now that the church has its own television station. Patrick Alumuku, the director, Catholic Television (CTV), said the station would aid the fight against corruption, as well as be a voice of the Church in Africa. "We are trying to share with Nigerians the fact that corruption can do so much harm and the absence of corruption can bring about so much development. We want to be able to show the positive values which we Catholics believe in". (Premium Times 2019).

The Catholic Church has always been instrumental in her vital role of providing social welfare services, protecting human rights, fighting corruption and propagating moral aptitude apart from her major role of spiritual molding. The fight against corruption has become a sing-song for catholic and every religious institution in Africa. On February 1st, 2018 Pope Francis as Supreme Pontiff (Head of the Roman Catholic Church) condemned corruption during a sermon on television and described "corruption as a process of death that feeds the culture of death". (United Against Corruption for Development, Peace and Security, 2018).

The Catholic Bishops' conference sent a memorandum to the then president of Nigeria in 2012 to fight corruption. It reads, serious allegations of corruption have been leveled at some top government officials and other Nigerians. Very little, however, has been done to thoroughly investigate and prosecute the culprits. Those who have been indicated have either escaped from custody or been set free. The Nigerian citizenry has the right to receive comprehensive reports on the management of fuel subsidy, along with appropriate application of justice on the criminals. Fighting corruption demands courage and sincerity, and the fight has to start from the top to the lowest cadre.

Politics in Nigeria is still perceived by many in authority more as a self serving pursuit, opportunity for easy money and prestige, then as genuine service for the good of all. The probes on fuel subsidy have exposed the depth of corruption in the highest echelons of our government. This cankerworm of corruption unfortunately, also affects other sectors of Nigerian life, even to the grassroots. To eradicate corruption, graver responsibility falls on those in public life whose acts of public administration, ought to be regulated by due process and the rule of law. To regain the trust of citizens demand a certain definite firmness on the part of the government pursuing sound and clear objectives, along with disinterested application of justice. They challenged President Goodluck Jonathan and the leadership of this nation to address with greater courage, forthrightness and political will the problem of corruption (Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria, 2012).

## Conclusion

Corruption is as old as man and which has affected the society adversely. From the happenings in the country, corruption has come to stay as it manifest in different administrations and have refused to go. It is not exaggeration that all our political leaders both past and present are corrupt in one way or the other. Some are corrupt in terms of looting while some are corrupt in the area of marginalization of others in providing political appointment.

Successive governments have tried to punish the corrupt ones but when looked deep into it, they are only punishing their political opponents. The anti-corruption agencies are not performing well because they are being tale-guided by the Presidency. Due to the failure of these anti-corruption agencies, it became imperative for the Catholic Church to stand firm and fight the political leaders who are corrupt. The church has been trying in terms of preaching, praying, crusade but these are not enough. This is no more time of praying alone but coming out in mass to protest not alone at Federal Capital, both National Assemblies, State Capitals and even at Local Government level of the country.

Finally, that Nigerians are poor today is as a result of bad leadership. Every politician sees it as a means of enriching self and not a call for service. Any corrupt politician should be treated like an armed robber or a kidnapper because all of them are doing the same thing only that kidnappers and armed robbers are operating with gun. The war against corruption should not be left out in the hands of the anti-corrupt agencies alone; also, the church should play a vital role to fight against corruption. After all, all the corrupt politicians come from one particular church or another. The church should go back to the drawing board in inculcating the right attitude to their adherents.

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