INTRODUCTION

At the end of Nigeria civil war in 1970, there were very few Catholic Church Parishes in Enugu Urban. Such were St. Patrick’s Coal City Camp, St. Mary’s Iva Valley, St. Michael’s Construction (Old Artisan Quarters) Sacred Heart Uwani and Holy Ghost Cathedral Ogui. The Christ the King Parish, Government Reservation (Residential) Area (GRA) which came on about 26 years after the war was a combination of zones 15 and 16 of Holy Ghost Cathedral Parish Ogui. It includes the entire GRA environs.

A few years after the civil war, there was explosion in the number embracing the Catholic faith. There was a corresponding explosion in the erection of parishes in Enugu diocese to match the numbers and especially, to build parishes/churches in such a way that members could walk to their churches for their spiritual needs without taking taxi, bus or motor transport.

THE BEGINNING

Before the resumption of school activities in 1970, some wounded soldiers, victims of the war, were based at the Government Technical College (G.T.C) opposite Polo Park (now occupied by “Shoprite and Games” cold market). Catholic faithful at the GTC were being visited by priests for their spiritual welfare. Some of the priests were Msgr. Cyriacus Mba, Fr. Peter Nwachukwu (of the Bigard Memorial Serminary) Fr. Theophilus Nwodo, Fr. Daniel Okwor, Fr. Maurice Odo, Fr. Peter Oforji etc. Rev. Fr. Dr. Anthony Egbo (noe Msgr).

Other Catholic members also used to benefit from such visits for their Sunday Mass and for confession. From this uplanned arrangement arose the idea of a catholic parish/church for the GRA. From about 1988 keaders fo the GRA church members including Chief Gregory Onyiuke, Chief Lawrence Ezechukwu, Nze N.P Iloeje (Igwe), Chief A. N Nwachukwu, Chief Nich Ode, Chief P.N Okeke, Mr. Philip Ezeogu, Chief T.N Onaga, Mr. Meg Okolo, Mrs Kate Ilo, Clement Obiadi, Patrick Nwakoby and a host ofothers started sitting together after Mass on Sundays to discuss how to attract a parish to the GRA. Our parish priest at Holy Ghost Cathedral Rev. Fr. Patrick Ugwu (now Msgr.) us that there was land already leased from Government for the construction of a church at Ekulu West Area of the GRA and that there a bank account opened for the project. We started paying church collections including bazaar proceeds into that account, with his permission and approval.

At the inception of the parish, a building committee under the chairmanship of then Nze N.P Iloeje (now Igwe Iloeje) was constituted. The first project was the old parish office which has given way and remodeled by the incumbent parish priest for a parish secretariat today.

Early in the 1990s the members of the church formed a Works Committee with responsibility for bazaar and selected Chief Ode as its chairman. By 1992, members felt that we had collected enough to go into the waiting land to start work. Contractor Ifemeluma of Emene was contracted and a bulldozer (D6) was hired in 1993 to start reducing the spot which was a pure cone, plus burying abundant waste materials being poured, unsuccessfully, to fill the cliff the land was made of. When our financial resources exhausted the excavation was halted. The works Committee had met Architect Mbanefo to contribute to the bazaar efforts. Surprisingly, he told us that his organization would draw a plan of the church FREE OF CHARGE. Within the space of a year, he gave us a plan of the church as it is today, an octagon, perimeter-wise. Architect Azubuike the kingpin from the Mbanefo organization supervised the work of the church construction. Others with him were Engrs Odenigbo, Ugwuodo, Amadi, Arch Okoye. In 1996, Ifemeluma’s bulldozer was hired again to cut down, and consequently, widen the base of the ground.

**THE POSTING OF FR. MBAKA TO CHRIST THE KING GRA**

Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka and Rev. Fr. Malachi Ezeonu were curates to the cathedral administrator Holy Ghost Cathedral Rev. Fr. (now Msgr.) Patrick Ugwu. The two curates were directed by parish priest to visit Christ the King station G.R.A and St. Anthony’s station Ogui New Layout on alternative Sundays. This resulted in conflict in procedure. For after discussing with one priest on one Sunday, the procedure to adopt in solving the problems of the new station, when the next priest came the next Sunday, he would like to follow another procedure. There was, therefore, inconsistency in our policy decisions. The Vice Chairman of Christ the King Parish Chief Greg Onyiuke took Chief Ode and Chief Mrs. Grace Okeke to the parish priest Fr. Ugwu for discussing the imbroglio. After about two hours of discussion, intertwined with office work, Fr. Ugwu told us he would be sending Fr. Mbaka to be constant at GRA and thus was posted to Christ the King in 1996. As so as Rev. Fr. Mbaka was given Christ the King station to supervise, members looked accommodation foe him in the GRA. We found one in Onoh Quarters, paid for it but Fr. Mbaka did not stay for up to a month there before pressure to leave came and he left. We found another building along Okolo Ozomma Crescent, paid for one year but pulled out soonest because the roof was badly leaking and destroying Fr. Mbaka’s books and other properties. Thereafter a parishioner, Mrs. Oliaku Igbo gave the parish a duplex **free of charge.**  When her children heard about the condition, they protested, the parish paid. The priest was living in that building until the parish house got ready, about one year later.

**BUILDING OF THE CHURCH AND THE PARISH HOUSE**

The building of the church was started around 1998 and was roofed in the year 2000 – a miraculous exercise! While it was going on the Catholic Woman Organization (C.W.O) under the able leadership of Mrs. Ada Ozongwu started the building of the parish house. The parish slowed down the building the church and completed the parish house so that Rev. Fr. Mbaka who had been living in a hired building moved into the parish house. The work of building the Church involved day and night effort. On many occasions we had to light a generator to complete structures that would go bad if left till the next day like the pouring of mixed concrete. Most of the time Rev. Fr. Mbaka was there with the workers supervising and directing. The same engineers and architects supervised the construction of the parish house – Arch Azubuike, Arch. Okoye, Engr. Odenigbo, Engr. Ugwuodo, Engr. Amadi and others, while Chief Ode was the Parish treasurer having taken over from Mrs. Ngozi Onaga. The parish house however took one year to be completed.

**2008 EROSION CONTROL PROJECT**

A few years after the construction of the church building, the north western side of the grounds around it caved in, about three meters from the foundation. On January, 23rd 2008, a 7-peprson committee of Engineers, architects, financiers etc headed by Chief NCO Ode started remedial work from the point of impact. Real granite stones, rods of the biggest sizes, granite chippings, sand and cement mixed almost on equal basis were used to close and hold the crevasse from expanding. That portion was the area where earth released during the bulldozer work was poured to fill very large gaps. The committee working in three stages also built a supporting concrete wall to hold the western portion of the parish grounds along the Church View Lane until it went down the sharp slope of the hill on that side. The committee continued the extension of filling crevasse down the cliff, intending to build 14 steps but ended up with 21, all on the northern side of the church grounds. That was a second stage. The third stage has 17 steps down the cliff. It contains very strongly constructed underground concrete tank which has not yet been used. The erosion control gulped millions which were recorded on daily basis by able parish accountant, Mr. Clement Agbowo. The resultant record book has 86 pages and the work ended on 16/12/2008, successfully. The seven – person committee was made up of Mr. Clement U. Agbowo (Parish/Project Accountant), Mr. Victor O. Njoteh (Chairman Parish Finance Council/Project Finance Offocer), Engr. Augustine I. Odenigbo (Project Engineer), Engr. Steve O. Ugwuodo (Project Engineer) Arch. Nobert E. Okoye (Project Architect), Mrs. Franca Egbunike (Member Project Committee) and Chichi Nicholas C. O. Ode (Vice Chairman Parish Pastoral Council/Chairman Project Committee).

**CHALLENGES OF THE PARISH**

There is **Land Hunger** in the Christ the King Parish GRA. The lease-hold from the State Government was a space of about four medium sized plots. The rectangular utility building which was doomed to be knocked down after the building of the church was not pulled down, after all, because there is no land for another one. A sort of small oblong building facing the church which was commercially used for the sale and storage of Aqua Rapha products was remodeled by our new parish priest, Rev. Fr. Theodore Ozoamalu in 2017. To confirm the theory of land hunger on needs to see the distance between the church base and the separating wall from the main road on the southern side-about one meter. This is side facing the Teaching Hospital.

The parish since her early stages has made historical landmarks that people from all the corners of the world know about her especially as the first parish priest made it so and the parish got identified with “parish fada mbaka”. She has not had many priests in her 22years history. Fr. Ejike Mbaka who is the Pioneer parish priest ended on the 30th of January 2016 and the mantle of leadership taken over by the current parish priest, Fr. Theodore T. Ozoamalu. The parish has had one resident priest Fr. Joseph Ozor (2016-2017) and also two assistant parish priest (Fr. Patrick Ozonweke (2017-2018)) and Fr. Edwin Udeh (2018 till date).

Be that as it may, some have helped in the piloting of the affairs of the parish as pastoral council members and has had the following as Vice Chairman of the Council, Chief Greg Onyiuke (Late), Col. Ikpeama (Rtd), Chief N.C.O Ode, Mr. Victor Njoteh and Mr. Ndubisi Isiadinso.

The parish has five zones, four within the jurisdiction of the parish and an international zone. The organs of the church and pious sodalities are all in place. The spiritual life of the parish has been top notch. Currently celebrating 4 masses on a Sunday, the Sacrament and other Spiritual re-awakening program.

In her history as well, she has received about 63,504 people into the sacrament of infant baptism, about 2,100 into adult baptism, about 1,870 into the sacrament of Holy Communion, about 2,070 into the sacrament of Confirmation, about 2,259 into the sacrament of Holy Matrimony etc.

Within the parish jurisdiction as well, we have many chaplaincies and religious houses, among which include; the Capuchins, the Carmelites, the Somascans, St. Rita’s Chaplaincy (ESUT Parklane) Enugu State College of Education Chaplaincy, Carmelite Sisters, DMMM Sisters etc. Holy Spirit Parish Golf Estate GRA was carved out of CKP, GRA.

We thank Fr. Ejike Mbaka who built the foundations of the parish and completed most projects like the church, parish house and initiated a proposed school building. The church owes him a lot.

In the first two years stay of the incumbent Parish Priest, Rev.Fr. Theodore T. Ozoamalu, he has adjusted the parish house to give the assistant priests more comfort and created more rooms and study places. Fr. Ozoamalu also ended the very serious sheet erosion that was attacking the entire compound by laying floor tiles, and tarring all round the church and the parish house floors. Fr. Ozoamalu ingeniously expanded the first oblong building by removing the roof, putting adequate holding concrete bars and raising the building to a one –story structure thereby, providing a cute hall as well as offices for the priests and others. The small commercial building has also been remodeled and reproduced as a modern building for society’s prayer area. He has retouched the church by repainting it and making other necessary adjustments. Parish life and programs all put in peace. The church thanks Rev. Fr. Mbaka and Rev. Fr. Ozoamalu for their efforts.

We can only get better as parish life has really returned to the parish and all we welcomed to be of the history of the parish. God bless you.

Complied by;

**Chief N.C.O. ODEH AND ENGR. VIN OKOLOEKWE.**