

HISTORY OF ROSA MYSTICA HIGH SCHOOL, AGULU

THE PRELIMINARIES

The birth of Girls' High School, Agulu (now renamed 'Rosa Mystica High School, Agulu') was forerun in the missionary enterprise of the early missionaries whose interest was fundamentally the establishment of church as well as schools. In other words, the missions of the early missionaries were inseparably about God and learning; hence, Mission Schools. Thus, schools were veritable means of learning more about God, self, the world and fellow human beings.

In his second Missionary journey to Agulu in 1914, Rev. Fr. Albert Bubendorff opened an evening school that was to be an opportunity for more learning and exercise of faith. The choice of Nwagu-Agulu as a central place in the town for the school was welcomed as Chiefs Agupugo Ejelue and Anyoke Ogbudaa donated a land at Onike/Ogbuduli Agulu. The evening school serving also as the Church was very functional till 1924 when some members from Agulu-Enu asked that an equivalent should be established nearer to them lest they began attending Masses elsewhere.

In 1927, the Agulu people from Umuowe, Umunnwu, Umuifite, Ifiteana and Nneogidi villages first decamped from the Mission school at Nwagu and had their own Church, 'St. Matthias Mission School' at Ikpo. In 1934, considering a more central position, the Church and Mission at Ikpo were relocated to the site of the present 'St. John's Catholic Mission, Agulu'. Consequently, the same year, 'Eze-Anyanwu Primary Mission School' was opened through the generous donation of land by Chief Muojama Ezeobikili of Nneoha village, Agulu. This school was regarded as "Agulu B Station" which later metamorphosed into 'St. Patrick's Catholic Mission, Agulu'.

Consequent upon the internal crisis at 'Eze-Anyanwu Primary Mission School', a new mission school that gave birth to the present 'St. Theresa's Catholic Mission' was opened at Isiamagbo village Agulu through the generous donation of land by Mr. Ofo Mgbachi. With the transfer of Rev. Fr. Liddane to Adazi in 1930, a decree was made that closed all the stations (except for evening classes) nearer to Adazi where Holy Masses were being celebrated every Sunday. In 1936, 'Agulu Catholic Pioneer Teachers' comprising of few members came and made peace among all the stations in Agulu. Their efforts yielded fruits as a central catechumen class involving all the stations was established and the town became united once more having a central committee and central finance. In 1938, through the influence and sponsorship of the union, a big football field was carved out on the same land at Nwagu that accommodated the Central Catechumen class attached to 'St. Mary's Agulu' and a football match was held on 27th December, 1938.

In 1947, another school named 'St. John Bosco's Preliminary Training Centre' was opened at the same Nwagu-Agulu for one year course for teachers. The school was later re-named 'St. Anthony's College' serving as Elementary Training College (ETC). With Fr. Chamberline as her first Principal, it started running four years program. The 'St. Mary's Infant School' became the Practicing School for the college and has remained till today. St. Anthony's Elementary Training College became very famous through the notable leadership of her various Principals: Fr. Chamberline (1948-1950); Fr. Halpping (1951-1956); Fr. Edward Hurley (1957-1962) and Fr. Cockran (1963-1965) who was heading the school until 1965 when the government of Eastern Nigerian Region closed down schools of such kind. The 'St. Anthony's Elementary Teacher Training College' phased out but the Practicing School remained in the land of St. Mary's, Agulu. The closure of the college was a very painful one to all but little did anyone know that God had a plan: the foundation of 'Girls' High School, Agulu'.

THE BIRTH OF GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL AGULU

The 'Girls' High School, Agulu', formerly called 'Catholic Girls' Secondary School, Agulu' was founded in January, 1966 by late Archbishop Charles Heery (C.S.Sp.), the Archbishop of Onitsha. According to the preliminary accounts above, the site, formerly a big forest uninhabited by people first became the former Practising Teachers' College converted in 1964 to lower Elementary Training College popularly known as 'St. John Bosco's College, Agulu and later to higher Elementary college named 'St. Anthony's Teachers College, Agulu'. With the clearing and lease of land by Rev. Fr. Liddane, the then Parish Priest of Adazi-Nnukwu, the College was solely owned and managed by the Catholic Mission. Initially, the Holy Ghost Fathers from Kimage Manor in Ireland: Rev. Fathers Halpping, Chamberline, Regan and finally Rev. Fr. Edward Hurley were in-charge of the school while Mr. Nwabugwu and Mr. E. C. Ezeobi were of much help in the administration of the school.

Significant to mention was the enormous effort of Rev. Fr. Edward Hurley. With his administration, the then 'St. Anthony's College' was famous for discipline, high academic standards and excellence in sports. He constructed the buildings, the sports arena and the present school auditorium. His enviable personality and effective presence made much impact on the former St. Anthony's students and teachers who, in a way, were respectively the prefigures of the students and teachers of Girls' High School, Agulu. Pleased with God, Fr. Edward Hurley died in active service in the school in August, 1962 while about completing the auditorium which later was named after him (Hurley Auditorium) in the school. We pray for the peaceful rest of his soul in the bosom of the Lord.

The first Principal of 'Girls' High School, Agulu' was Rev. Sr. Mary Emmanuel (S.J.O.G) (1966-1970). She worked for two years (1966-1969) when the Nigerian civil war started in 1967 and disturbed the normal academic program. The beauty as well as the progress of the school was halted and ruined with the inhabitation of the Nigeria soldiers in the school in 1968 and later, the Biafran soldiers who drove them out. In early 1970, the Nigerian soldiers came in again and occupied the school. Despite several appeals to quit the school, the Nigerian soldiers lived in the school till 1975. The school Chapel was desecrated and turned into a court and the school buildings were in ruins. Meanwhile, the school was relocated to Agulu Town Hall.

At the end of the civil war in 1970, the East Central State Government took over all schools in the state and changed the name of the School from 'Catholic Girls' Secondary School to 'Girls' High School, Agulu'. The first indigenous non-European Principal after the civil war was Mr. Bernard Nduegbunem Okoye (1970-1972). Thanks to his effort, the school was inspected and approved for West African School Certificate Examination on 17th and 18th May, 1971. The next Principal after the civil war was Mrs. Mediatrix Eneasato as from 4th March, 1972 (1972-1979). Assisted by Mr. John Ukoh of Agulu, she walled some parts of the school and barred people from encroaching on the school land. With the transfer of Mrs. Eneasato to 'Ogidi Girls' Secondary School', Rev. Sr. Miriam Theresa Ozomma (1979-1984) transferred from the same Ogidi Girls' was posted to Agulu on 8th September 1979 and she became the third indigenous Principal of the school. During her administration, the challenges were more about improving the academic standard of the school, providing accommodation for boarders, water supply, security, provision of electricity and furniture. In response to her letter of request to Agulu People's Union (A.P.U) at Onitsha, the latter built a storey building to ease the congestion. A six-classroom block was built due to increment in the number of students. Consequently, there was a remarkable improvement in the area of academics and discipline.

The school began to enjoy power supply in 1982 as the State Education Commission provided a little money on 28th October, 1981 for wiring the electricity in the compound. In 1982, the refectory which was formerly used as Dormitory was equipped with twenty formica tables and two hundred and forty plastic chairs for students' use. The popularity of the school and the population of the students continued to increase as many parents fell in love with the school and sent their children to be trained there. Annually, awards were given to students for both academic and moral excellence. In the field of sports, 'Girls' High School, Agulu' had been on the lead in the State; maintaining Gold Medals in Basketball, Hockey and Volley ball for many years. In academics, the progress was enviable.

Worthy of note is the efforts of the P.T.A of the school since the existence of the school. The P.T.A helped financially to construct one dormitory block. The P.T.A also financed the completion of fencing the school compound; built ten water system toilets with twenty modern bathrooms; laid pipes and financed the provision of furniture for the new science laboratories. Presently, the same P.T.A re-built the old chapel to ensure that a good number of students are well accommodated for religious worship.

The following are the names of the subsequent Principals that have served in the school after Rev. Sr. Miriam Theresa Ozomma (1979-1984); they are: Rev. Sr. T. M. Anyika (1984-1992); Mrs. Maria Azi (1992-1994); Mrs. A. N. Anyakwo (1994-1998); Mrs. O. C. Adimorah (1998-2004); Comrade F. U. Onyeka (2004); Rev. Sr. Dr. M. R. Terese Okeke (2004-2007); Mrs. C. U. Nriagu (2007-2012) and next was Rev. Fr. Dr. Anthony Ezeogamba (2012-2013) who in September, 2010/2011 Academic Session, was also appointed as the first Manager of the school owing to the return of schools of such kind to their original owner (Catholic Diocese of Awka) by the Government of Anambra State under the governorship of his Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi on September 14, 2009 when Most Rev. Dr. Paulinus Ezeokafor had become the Bishop of the Diocese.

With the Mission, precisely the Catholic Diocese of Awka in control of the management of the school, the face of the school changed from nothing to something and from abandonment to acceptance. Rev. Fr. Dr. Anthony Ezeogamba moved the school to a very high esteem in his managerial work. During his regime, many of the dilapidated structures in the school were rebuilt and renovated. The Government of Anambra State assisted the Church financially and this Reverend gentle man of God used the money for the development of the school effectively. Notably, about seven hostel blocks for boarding were given a new facelift. Other structures like the Refectory, the school auditorium popularly known as Hurley hall and a classroom block were renovated. The entrance road into the school (School Main Avenue) was tarred, thanks to the intervention of the then State Governor, Mr. Peter Obi. New 15 water system modern toilets were also built for the students and many catchment pits were built to check erosion, to mention but few of the projects done through the managerial acumen of Rev. Fr. Dr. Anthony Ezeogamba. Besides these structural developments, were also academic, moral, physical and spiritual developments in the lives of the students. The latter learnt to study hard and for success; they were taught good morals; they were made to love sports and they took joy in praying and communing with God every day.

Next in sight as the Principals of the school were: Rev. Sr. Felice Anyikwa (2013) and Lady Nonye B. Ezeuzo (2013). Barely two months after the latter resumed work as the Principal, had the Diocesan Bishop send Rev. Fr.

Augustine A. Uzodigwe to the School on November 1, 2013 to be the second Manager of the School. The first challenge the administration and management met was the menace of erosion in the compound. Consequently, a central drainage running from the Principal's lodge through one end of the 'Practicing School' field was solidly built to check erosion. A lot has been rebuilt, renovated and built to improve the school and the students. Culverts and fallen fences were rebuilt, walling off the boarding area was done, Principal's lodge, two hostel blocks and infirmary were renovated and extended; temporal library was re-roofed and a temporal guest's house was made out of old staff room.

As a matter of fact, a completely new look has been given to the school against the state in which it was left when the Government was in management. Through the proprietorship ability of the Diocesan Bishop, Most Rev. Paulinus Ezeokafor, the financial assistance of Anambra State in her marriage with the Church and with the freewill donation of some outstanding individuals, the management led by Rev. Fr. Augustine Uzodigwe improved the school all the more. The history of the school cannot be complete without a mention of the immense contributions of the past Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi (Okwutendiigbo), a son of the soil whose love for the Church, his state and students made him invest tremendously in schools. Presently, thanks to his Government and personality, Rosa Mystica High School Agulu, erected a storied building, a magnificent Administrative Block replacing the old Principal's bungalow office. A gigantic Grotto of our Blessed Virgin Mary is also built in the heart of the school to afford the students the opportunity to honour our Mother Mary. In the area of morality, discipline and academics, there is a tremendous improvement. The 2014, 2015 and 2016 till date, WAEC/NECO results are laudable testimonies.

Worthy of mention is the fact that Rosa Mystica High School, Agulu is tagged a model, "The Best School for the Best Girls". She has produced so many great women in so many fields of human endeavor; Professed Religious, Professors, Lecturers, Medical Doctors, Surgeons, Pharmacists, Bankers, Traders, Lawyers, Ambassadors, soldiers to mention but few. The school is the mother of many including men who were her prefigured children having passed through 'St. Anthony's Teacher College, Agulu' that somehow served as her preliminary school. More works are yet to be done in the school both structurally, formatively and academically.

On November 18, 2016, the school celebrated her Golden Jubilee (50 years anniversary) of its existence while enjoying the Pastoral Visit of His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Paulinus Ezeokafor, the Catholic Bishop of Awka Diocese.

The School motto remains: ***LUX ET VERITAS (LIGHT AND TRUTH)***.

In late 2017, the then Manager, Rev. Fr. Augustine Uzodigwe made a tremendous and mind thrilling steps to change the name of the institution having the belief that the name Girls' High School Agulu and now, a returned school owned by the Catholic Diocese of Awka needed to adopt a modern nomenclature and with a Catholic origin, perhaps, Our Lady's name (especially as the School had one time been named St. Mary) extracted from the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Roman Catholic Church whose feast shall be celebrated in the school. He sought the consent and approval of the Proprietor of the School, Bishop P. C. Ezeokafor, the Government, represented by the Ministry of Education, Anambra State and the Traditional Rulers of the host community. All turned in positive affirmation and the official approval was given for the citadel of learning to be addressed as **ROSA MYSTICA HIGH SCHOOL, AGULU** by the State Government on 8 June, 2018.

Rev. Fr. Casmir Osigwe and Sr. Stella Maris Nworji were appointed as the Supervisor and the Principal of the school respectively by the Proprietor of the school to foresee the affairs of the School when Fr. Augustine Uzodigwe left for further studies in July, 2018.

Then, in October, 2018, two priests arrived sent by the Proprietor as the Manager and Assistant Manager of the school; Rev. Fr. Roland Victor Okoli and Rev. Fr. Henry Oduenyi respectively. Their relentless effort is evident in the much feasible structural projects in the school and their enthusiasm in motivating the students to study remained inherent in them. Their administration started the School ICT Complex, which was completed under their successor Manager, Rev. Fr. JMC Ezeonu (2020 – 2022). The School now have her Principal as Lady Chinwe Maduka (2020 till date).

Now, the School is under Rev. Fr. Paul Chimezie as the Manager (2022 till date).