



# ICCUUSA: Our Rewards, Our Legacy

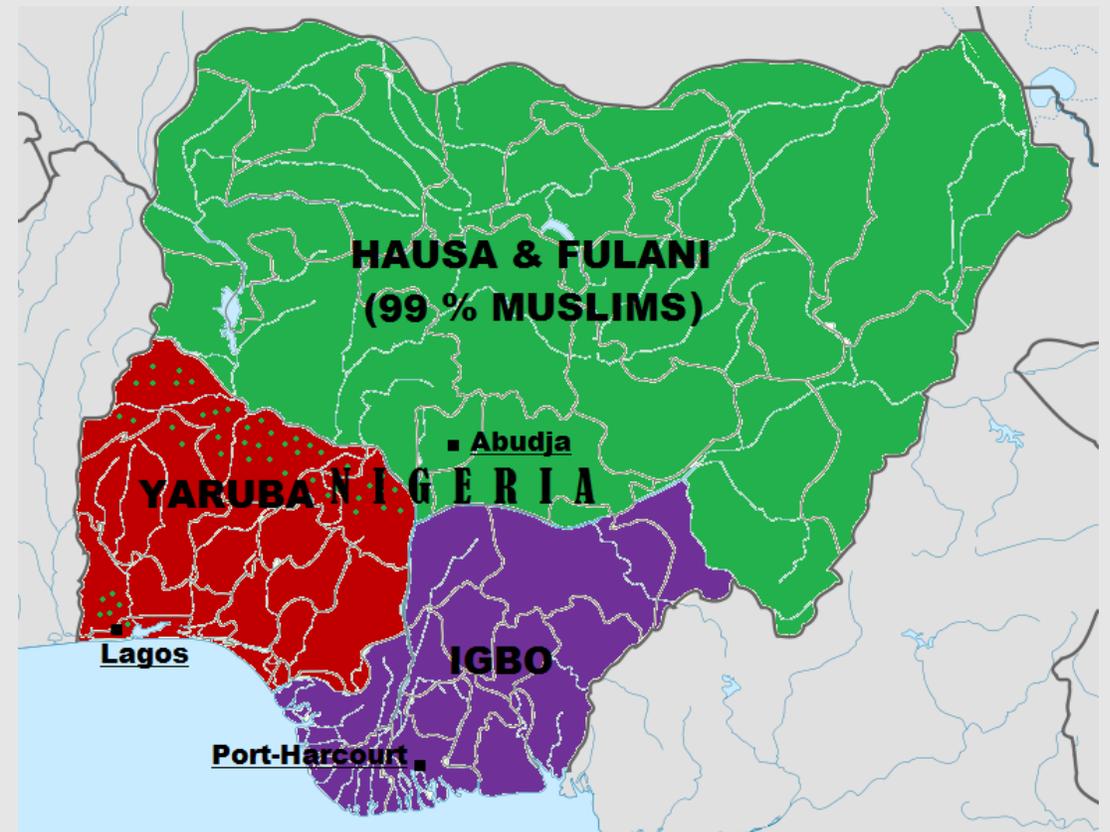
Presented At The Annual Convention In Hayward, CA.

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# Facts About Ndi Igbo

- Geography – Homeland lies between River Niger and Cross River in Nigeria
- Culturally homogeneous – identical kinship structures, religious practices & symbols, exogamic marriage patterns, etc.
- Population estimated between 50 – 100 million worldwide.
- Language – a unifying factor and cultural marker



# Christianity Among Ndi Igbo

- Solid beliefs and ideas about life and reality in general
- Belief in God and their own understanding about the created order
- Well established kinship patterns and modes of governance which served them well
- Beliefs about the human person and moral codes that helped them navigate social and personal relationships.
- First arrival of the Christian Missionary Mission (CMS) of the Anglican Church in England to Onitsha in 1841
- Holy Ghost fathers of the Roman Catholic Church followed in 1885
- Conversion to Christianity in part a means of identity protection and coping with the new reality of European colonization of Africa

# Catholicism Among Ndi Igbo in The USA

A “people on the go” – carry their faith with them

Many Catholic communities in Northern Nigeria owe their origins to the presence of Ndi Igbo who migrated there

Igbo Catholic Community USA (ICCUSA)

Focus on creating avenues for deepening the faith of the community and for handing the faith to and growing it in the younger generation of Igbo children in the USA

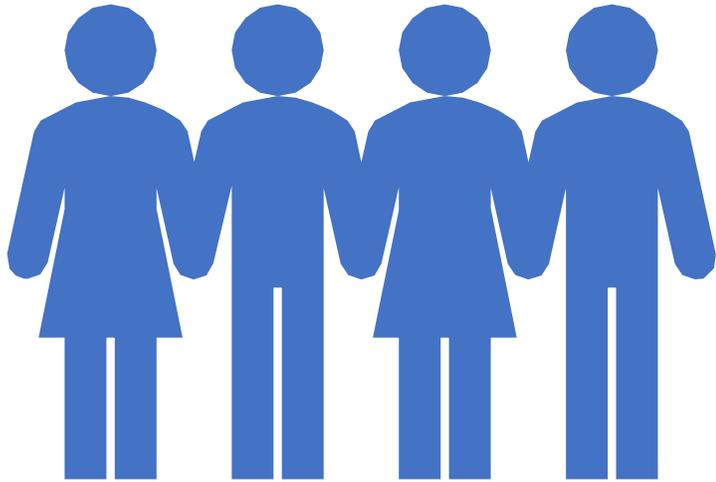
Aim of ICCUSA pastoral plan

Find ways to foster and grow a community **truly Igbo, truly Catholic and truly American**



Confidential

# Challenges To The Igbo Catholic in America



- **Cultural**

- Language – Igbo children can neither speak nor understand Igbo
- Clash of cultures – parents trying to assimilate in America without compromising the values they understand to be right
- Social media – negative impact on children

- **Religious**

- Alienation – minority in USA who is merely tolerated
- Way of worship – uninspiring, homilies designed to appease the congregation instead of challenge them existentially and uplift them spiritually

- **Different way of being church**

- Help Christians to pray
- Provide avenues for faith-based social interaction
- Collective visibility and voice – involve lay Christians in the governance of the church
- Platform for support among the people

- **Marriage and family life**

- High percentage of Igbo Catholic marriages have failed, are failing or will soon fail
- Crisis precipitated by harsh economic and social realities in the USA – use Sunday to work more or catch up on rest, thus reducing participation in church activities
- No "village" to help couples raise their children
- Little ecclesial support
- African couples have imbibed the ethos of easy divorce rather than find ways to settle their disputes together

# What Benefits Are You Deriving from ICCUSA and What Legacy Are You Leaving For ICCUSA? (1)

- **The Pastoral Plan – an attempt to provide reasonable solutions for the challenges**
  - Envisaged as a multi-layered and multifaceted framework to guide formation of viable new chapters – strong chapters translate to an even stronger ICCUSA
  - Develop and implement various programs in local chapters
- **Continue annual conventions – a mechanism to share best practices**
- **Consider ICCUSA Think Tank**
  - Conflict resolution within the community and among members
  - Development of viable cultural and religious programs for the community
  - Youth training in various areas
  - Religious/social/political advocacy in matters affecting Igbo Catholics in the USA
- **Marriage advocacy**
  - Carefully chosen group of professionals with experience and proper knowledge in theology, canon law, social and behavioral sciences, practical knowledge, etc.
  - Cultural elements and religious sensibilities which inform African marriages
  - Maintain database for easy reference to other Igbos or Nigerians, catholics or non-catholics who desire their services
- **Establish support groups to help people in their times of need**
  - Encourage Catholic traditional practices such as visits to the Blessed Sacrament or gathering in groups or within the family for rosaries, bible sharing, etc

# What Benefits Are You Deriving from ICCUSA and What Legacy Are You Leaving For ICCUSA? (2)

- **The Chaplain – a crucial element in the formation, sustenance and leadership in the community**
  - Provides pastoral leadership, leads in prayer in the community, provides intellectual, moral and religious guidance for the group, etc.
  - Relationship between the priests and ICCUSA and the clergy and religious is one of mutual respect, trust and collaboration
- **ICCUSA chapters should seek out Igbo priests in their areas to invite to membership in ICCUSA**
  - Those capable, available, and willing to serve should be invited to the role of chaplaincy and/or membership on the various ICCUSA consultancy groups
  - Priests to be involved in these positions must be ones who are in good standing with their superiors and local ordinaries both here and back in Nigeria, where applicable
  - Should not be very difficult to find priests and religious who would identify with ICCUSA and be prepared to provide pastoral services for the group at various levels.



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