

IGWEBUIKE THEORY OF IMMORTALITY: REMEMBERING THE RT. REV. MSGR. JOHN BOSCO AKAM

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Abstract

Monsignor Akam was a singular figure on the national and global stages. He was a man of quiet dignity and towering achievement, a giant of philanthropy and a down-to-earth human inspiration. His life, works, speeches and empathetic actions towards the other lifted hearts in dark times, gave hope in despair, refined the characters of men and women, inspired brave feats, gave courage to the weary and changed the course of history. This paper presented on the day of Msgr's remembrance at Tansian University Umunya, focused on his symbolic or social immortality, accompanied by African paradigms that bring the understanding of the memorial of his person and life home to the Igbo-African. The objective of this presentation is to promote the fascination of Prof. Akam even in his physical absence. The dimensions of his symbolic immortality were discussed under his educational creative immortality, academic creative immortality, social/philanthropic creative immortality and ecclesiastical creative immortality. This work was weaved around the Igwebuike symbolic theory of immortality, which connects our present presence to our future unavoidable absence. The paper discovered that the immortality of the individual absolutely interpenetrates the immortality of the community, and it is within this context that the immortality of Msgr. Akam is understood and discussed.

Keywords: Monsignor John Bosco, Akam, Immortality, Mortality, Quintessential

Introduction

Late Monsignor Akamnonu reminds me of the story of the popular Akamnonu family among the Arondizuogu people of Ndiakunwanta. Ndiakunwanta has a proto-ancestor known as Okoli Udozuka. He lived in the present Ndiakunwanta, Arondizuogu about three hundred years ago, where his Obi still stands in admiration. He was a slave trader, which was a major business at the time. Okoli was not just a man, he was a living deity, and was well known for his physical and metaphysical powers. It happened that on a certain occasion when he was on his way to sell slaves at Uzuakoli, he was intercepted by some men and one of the men took the centre stage in challenging him verbally- the man obviously wanted a fight. At the time, Okoli was travelling in the company of his guards and the slaves he

had for sale. To avoid giving the noisy man undue relevance, he inquired from among his slaves if any was ready to fight on his behalf. One of the slaves accepted and came forward. The fight began and it became a very bad day for the young man who had challenged Okoli Idozuka. After the fight, Okoli set the slave free, blessed him and gave him a new name: AKAMNONU, which means ejihu onu aka or eme¹. In English, it can be translated as, “I supersede those who talk by what I do”. Today we celebrate an unusual man: Msgr. AKAMNONU, who distinguished himself not by what he said but by what he did while he lived. While the story of the Aro AKAMNONU is always told because of what he did, the story of Monsignor will always resound because of what he achieved.

The Elgon Forest dwellers say that “little dreams” are of no great significance, but if a person has a “big dream”, the entire community must be gathered and told. How then does an Elgonyi know the difference between a big dream and a little dream? Upon waking up, there is an instinctive feeling about the significance of the dream for the community, and the thought of keeping such a dream secret never occurs². The present event celebrating Msgr. Akam will be counted as one of the greatest dreams and achievements in the historical evolution of this citadel of learning and centre of academic excellence.

What the Vice Chancellor has done through this Memorial Lecture in honor of Monsignor is that he has made the moon to shine, and as Chinua Achebe says: “When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk”³. This event has brought us together and made many of us hungry for a walk to Tansian University. The Vice Chancellor has also created the required atmosphere to tell a true story- the story of a lion. I choose to refer to him as AGU because in the Things fall Apart, Okonkwo was referred to as a LION because of an attribute he has: he never did things by halves. In a manner that supersedes Okonkwo, Monsignor was a man who “never did things by halves”⁴. This event creates the opportunity for the story of Monsignor to be told. Chinua Achebe writes that: “until Lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”⁵. As Monsignor rests eternally, this Memorial Lecture reassures him that he has left capable hands behind and that his labours have not failed.

To have been adjudged capable of giving this First Memorial Lecture in honor of a late eminent ecclesiastic and professor is to me a privilege and an honor. It is a privilege because

¹Story from Mazi Emmanuel Nwafor Kanu on the ancestors of Obi Okoli Udozuka told on 20th July 2021, Irete, Owerri, Imo State.

²Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, *Igwebuike: An Operative Condition of African Philosophy, Religion and Culture- Towards a Thermodynamic Transformative Ontology*. An Inaugural Lecture Presented at Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State. Altgrade: Abuja, p. 8

³Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, London: Heineman, 1. 2.

⁴Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, London: Heineman, 19. 16-18

⁵Chinua Achebe, 1994 interview with the *Paris Review*, Issue 133. winter.

I am confronted with the responsibility of sounding a drum for a masquerade of such unquestionable distinction, whose inventiveness, innovativeness and creativeness are distinctive - a man of towering achievement, a giant of philanthropy and a down-to-earth human inspiration. It is equally an honour, because this event marks the beginning of the celebration of the symbolic immortality of Monsignor's personality, philosophy, values and deeds. His life, works, speeches and empathetic actions lifted hearts in dark times, gave hope in despair, refined the characters of men and women, inspired brave feats among his contemporaries, gave courage to the weary and changed the course of history.

What keeps Monsignor Akam alive in spite of death and remembered in spite of the passage of time is his relationship with the 'other' while he lived. This establishes a nexus between Igwebuiké philosophy and this paper. And as a result of this Igwebuiké philosophical element in the life, personality and deeds of Monsignor AKAM, this paper will be weaved around the Igwebuiké symbolic theory of immortality, which connects our present presence to our future absence, and holds that the immortality of the individual absolutely interpenetrates the immortality of the community. This notwithstanding, a fundamental question looming at the horizon of this paper, is: how has the question of immortality fared historically?

The Question of Immortality

Questions bothering on immortality have remained consistent within the corridors of the historical development of philosophies. The Greeks were among the first to attempt a systematic philosophical treatment of the problem of immortality. In the thoughts of the Ionian philosophers, the idea of immortality was interpreted with the sense of mystery and not the haste of mastery. Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander were in search of that which remains permanent in the midst of the changes in reality and that which remains the unity of the plurality of things⁶. They were in search of that which remains after the dissipation of mortality and that is immortality.

Pythagoras' distinguished teaching was on the transmigration of the human soul - describing it as that which exists beyond death, and that which can be reborn in other bodies⁷. Socrates, in the *Phaedo*⁸, taught vigorously about the afterlife on his last days;

⁶Algra, Keimpe (1999). "The beginnings of cosmology". In Long, A. A. (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 250–270. ISBN 978-0-521-44667-9;

⁷Kahn, Charles H., *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History*, Indianapolis, Indiana and Cambridge, England: Hackett Publishing Company; Zhmud, Leonid, *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans*, translated by Windle, Kevin; Ireland, Rosh, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2001; Burkert, Walter, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985; Copleston, Frederick, "The Pythagorean Society", *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1 Greece and Rome, London, England and New York City, New York: Continuum, 1946.

⁸Fletcher R., *Platonizing Latin: Apuleius's Phaedo* in G. Williams and K. Volk, eds., *Roman Reflections: Studies in Latin Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 238–59

beyond being a man of integrity and courage, his concept of afterlife could be interpreted as the basis for Socrates taking hemlock⁹. Plato, taking advantage of his master's position that is Socrates, in the *Phaedo*¹⁰ and the *Republic*¹¹ advanced the argument for the immortality of the soul. His thoughts on the World of Forms as our ideal world remind us of nothing less of immortality. Aristotle, in his *De Anima*¹² and *De Memoria*¹³ does not contradict the position of Plato on the immortality of the soul, not minding the variations in their thoughts.

These notwithstanding, among the Greeks generally, the idea of immortality is used in relation to the soul, and the soul is understood in two different ways. The soul is, on the one hand, something that a human being risks in battle and loses at death. On the other hand, it is what at the time of death departs from the person's limbs and travels to the underworld, where it has a more or less pitiful afterlife as a shade or image of the deceased person¹⁴. With the advent of the medieval ages, with scholars like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Boethius, William of Ockham, etc., rather than immortality being a journey to the underworld, the image of the deceased, a pitiful afterlife, the immortal state becomes a point of hypostatic union, glory and rest with God.

The idea of immortality employed in relation to Monsignor is slightly different. It is not only in the sense of the continuation of the existence of the soul after death. The Christian faith already teaches us that he lives beyond the physical death of his body. The concept of immortality used here is the African version, which is strongly hinged on remembrance. In Africa, a father achieves immortality when he is remembered by his children because of who he was to them¹⁵. And for the African, we are what we do, but at death, we become what we are remembered to have done¹⁶. It is a social and symbolic kind of immortality which finds expression in the works of western scholars like Kastenbaum¹⁷, Matthews

⁹Lorenz, Hendrik (22 April 2009). "Ancient Theories of Soul". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved 2013-12-10.

¹⁰Plato. *Plato's Phaedo*. Oxford: Clarendon press, 1911.

¹¹Plato. *Plato's The Republic*. New York: Books, Inc., 1943.

¹²*De Anima* 3.7, 431a14-7; 3.8, 432a7-10;

¹³*De Memoria* 1, 449b31ff

¹⁴Lorenz, Hendrik, "Ancient Theories of Soul", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/ancient-soul/>>.

¹⁵A. F. Udugwomen, Traditional African solutions to the problem of personal immortality. In A. F. Udugwomen (Ed.) *Footmarks on African Philosophy*. Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers, 2002, p. 78; J. S. Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1985, p. 25; J. I. Omeregbe, *Knwoing philosophy: A general introduction*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers, 2005, p. 25.

¹⁶Lee Garth Vigilant and John B. Williamson, *Symbolic Immortality and social theory: The relevance of an under-utilized concept*. In *Death and Social exchange*, 2021, pp. 173-182; Lifton Robert Jay, *On death and the continuity of life: A new paradigm*. History of Childhood Quarterly, 1974, 1. 681-696; Lifton Robert Jay, *The broken connection: On death and the continuity of life*. New York: American Psychiatrist Press.

¹⁷Kastenbaum Rovert, S. Peyton, B., Kastenbaum, Sex discrimination after death. 1977, *Omega*. 7. 351-359.

Robert and Mister Rena¹⁸, Schmidt Raymond¹⁹, Moremen R., and Cradduck, C.²⁰, Blacker David²¹, Cortese Anthony²², Goodman David²³, Talamini John²⁴, etc. This kind of immortality is achieved personally by living a meaningful life and contributing positively to human society and development²⁵. It is within this context, that this paper will be discussing the social and symbolic immortality of Late Msgr. Akam.

Igbo-African Paradigms, Identity Formation and Immortality

As a scholar with an African appetite, this Lecture in honor of Monsignor John Bosco Akam would be described from African perspectives. These perspectives will serve as paradigms for discussing the immortality of Monsignor. These paradigms will, therefore, help to draw a link between memory and our continued existence after death.

First, this event in honor of Monsignor can be described with the imagery of the Ikeji festival. This is important as Ikeji is not just a time for celebration but also an avenue for the community to retell and remember the history and stories that unite them. And in this case, it is the story of Monsignor that unites us. He is the wood for which the termites have gathered. The Ikeji festival of Arondizuogu has in recent times, transcended the status of a local festival of thanksgiving to an annual homecoming and reunion feast, drawing Aro sons and daughters from all over the world back home to reignite their cultural values and the reason they are called Ndi Aro²⁶. By this event, we are not only having the opportunity to retell our stories of Monsignor and to keep the fascination of his personality, deeds and ideas alive, it is also a moment of reunion for all the friends and relations of Monsignor.

The Ikeji festival originated from the parent community in Arochukwu where it was celebrated around the month of September. During that time, Mazi Iheme, who was a regent placed by Mazi Izuogu in the new Arondizuogu settlement to manage it, would travel to Arochukwu to celebrate the feast in his master's household and to pay him all the homage

¹⁸Matthews Robert and Mister Rena, measuring an individual's investment in the future: Symbolic immortality, sensation seeking and psychic numbness. 1987, *Omega* 18. 161-167.

¹⁹Schmidt Raymond, Symbolic immortality in ordinary contexts: Impediments to the nuclear era. 1982, *Omega* 13: 95-116.

²⁰Moremen R., and Cradduck, C., How will you be remembered after you die? Gender discrimination after death, twenty years later. *Omega* 38: 241-254.

²¹Blacker David, *Dying to teach: The educator's search for immortality*. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1997.

²²Cortese Anthony, The Notre Dame Bengal Bouts: Symbolic immortality through sport. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*. 1997. 3. 347-363.

²³Goodman David, Symbolic immortality in modern Japanese literature. In Charles B., Michael F., (Eds.). *Trauma and self* (pp. 205-220). 1996. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.

²⁴Talamini John, After the cheering stopped: Retirement patterns of major league baseball players. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*. 1989. 17: 175-178.

²⁵Ejikemeuwa Ndubisi, Celibacy and African concept of personal immortality: A reinterpretation, *Or-Che Uma: African Journal of Existential Philosophy*. 5. 2. 2017, p. 107

²⁶Kanu, Ikechukwu A. and Precious Okoye, "Tourism, the diaspora and Ikeji festival of Arondizuogu: Culture and the exigencies of modernism". *OCHENDO: An African Journal of Innovative Studies*. Vol. 3. No. 2. 2022, pp. 144-161.

rites due to him as his master, in accordance with Aro tradition. Upon return to Arondizuogu, Mazi IHEME would return the favour the next year by extending an invite to his master Izuogu to the new settlement-Arondizuogu to officially seek his blessing and permission to till the land²⁷. This was usually done in March/April and was a celebratory occasion where Mazi IHEME would entertain his master to a grandiose feast and colourful masquerade displays during his stay²⁸. As we remember Monsignor today, we sit on the investment and labors of Prof. AKAM. In an Ikeji style, we pay him the homage due to him through this memorial event.

This memorial lecture has a lot in common with the Igbo New Yam festival. This is so, as this lecture is an opportunity for us to harvest from the immense and measureless garden of knowledge, wisdom and values, which have matured for us as a result of the personality and labors of Late Prof. John Bosco Akam. Implicit in the concept of harvest is a preceding period of sowing or planting²⁹. This explains why harvest is a period of blissful celebration, marked for us, especially as Africans, by group dances and colorful masquerades, by goodwill visits and exchange of gifts³⁰. The nature and quality of the harvest are logically determined by the kind of seed we sowed, on what kind of soil we sowed it and how painstakingly we manured and tended it³¹. As we celebrate Msgr today, it is simply because, while he lived, he skillfully, vigorously but beautifully sowed his seeds, especially in the social institutions, inter-group and inter-personal relations which he established³².

The traditional image of late Prof. Akam that resonates in my mind today, is the image of a big masquerade that has performed at various important ceremonies on the stage of life. Listening to the stories of those who have experienced him, there is abundant evidence that he did not only dance but danced beautifully well³³. From emerging testimonies, it is obvious that Monsignor's spectators were impressed, and that his dancing steps were not

²⁷ Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony, "Ikeji Festival of Arondizuogu: Retelling the Stories and Rekindling the values of an Ancestral Homeland". *International Journal of Religion and Human Relations*. Vol. 9. No. 1. 2017, pp. 156-179.

²⁸ H. A. P. Nwana, *Arondizuogu Traditional Values*. Standard Publishers Ltd, Nigeria, 2005. P. 24 - 27.

²⁹ A. E. Afigbo, *The age of innocence: The Igbo and their neighbours in pre-colonial times*. A lecture delivered at the 1981 Ahiajoku Lecture, p.7.

³⁰ Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony, *Igbo-African Christological Construct: Towards An Inculturated And Contextualized Theology*. An Inaugural Lecture at the University of America, Department of Catholic Theology and Orthodox Studies, California, Temecula. Autograde: Abuja. p. 7

³¹ Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony, *Review Of Management, Society And Development: a Festschrift Celebrating a Distinguished Professor*. A paper presented at Awka, Anambra State, p. 2.

³² A. E. Afigbo, *The age of innocence: The Igbo and their neighbours in pre-colonial times*. A lecture delivered at the 1981 Ahiajoku Lecture, p.7.

³³ A. E. Afigbo, *The Igbo and their neighbours*. Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1987, p. 10

monotonous and insipid, neither did he repeat any of the other dance steps that he presented while on the stage of life.

When I speak in these ways about Late Monsignor using popular Igbo traditional images, it is only my idiosyncratic way of beating the big drum for AKAMNONU, and paying my unreserved respect for our big masquerade.

Igwebuiké, Otherness and Symbolic Immortality

From the Igwebuiké perspective, the journey towards immortality is reciprocal - while the story of Monsignor cannot be told without his world, his world cannot now tell its story without reference to Monsignor. It is in this Igwebuiké process that history is made. It is also in this process that social immortality is achieved.

It is also in this sense that the Igwebuiké theory of immortality holds that the immortality of the community and the immortality of the individual interpenetrate absolutely. Monsignor, while he lived, remembered his community and now, in his physical absence, his community does not forget him. Because he once immortalized their joy, now the community immortalizes his being.

The framework of Igwebuiké philosophy understands that there is a common circle in existence. While we interact together, we become one together. This also goes beyond interaction to involve understanding, in the sense that if I understand what you understand, I become your understanding. Monsignor did not only help people who were poor and sick, he understood them, and in helping them he became part of their memory, understanding and story. It is such that each time they remember and tell their stories, they remember him and tell his story as well. It is in this Igwebuiké philosophical sense that Monsignor has achieved immortality.

Therefore, the Igwebuiké theory of immortality, establishes a connect between what we do at the moment with those around us and what we become through their memory in the future. It is a theory that makes a nexus between the present and the future and consequently between mortality and immortality. And so, the quality of a person's immortality is determined by who he or she was while he or she lived in relation to others. And in this, Monsignor distinguished himself.

Igwebuiké philosophy provides an ontological horizon that presents a human being as that which possesses a relational character of mutual relations³⁴. 'To be' is 'to be with the other',

³⁴Kanu, A. I., *Igwebuiké as a trend in African philosophy. IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 2. 1. 2016, 97-101.

in a community of beings³⁵. Life as a shared reality, and it is only within the context of complementarity that life makes meaning³⁶. Life is a relationship in which case the two or more coming together make each of them a complete whole³⁷. Therefore, every being has a missing part and is at the same time, a missing part. The world found in Monsignor her missing part, and Monsignor through his services to the people of God and society as a Catholic priest found meaning in his existence.

If the other is my part or a piece of me, it means that I need him or her for me to be complete, and for me to be what I really am. The implication of this is that in being there for the other, one helps the other to become what he or she wants to be or ought to be. It is in this sense that one completes the other. In completing the other, I am also enriched and completed. It is in this act of complementing and completing the other that we achieve social immortality and thus become immortalized in them. It is those whom we completed their being while we live that will complete our story while we are no more. While he lived, Monsignor completed our being, and now that he is no more, through this memorial lecture, we complete his story.

Concretization of Msgr. Akam's Symbolic Immortality

The symbolic immortality of Monsignor Akam, for the purpose of systematization and precision would be categorized into educational, academic, social/philanthropic and ecclesiastic creative immortality.

a. Educational Creative Immortality

Lifton speaks of the possibility of achieving creative immortality through the creative works that we have done, in the sense that great achievements live on after their creators have died³⁸. In this sense and in so many other senses, Monsignor has achieved immortality as he has left behind him one of the fastest growing private universities in the South East of

³⁵Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike* as an Igbo-African hermeneutics of globalisation. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 2 No.1. 2016, pp. 61-66.; Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike* as the consummate foundation of African Bioethical principles. *An African journal of Arts and Humanities* Vol.2 No1 June, 2016, pp.23-40; Kanu, I. A., *Igwebuike* as an expressive modality of being in African ontology. *Journal of Environmental and Construction Management*. 6. 3. 2016, pp.12-21; Kanu, I. A., African traditional folktales as an integrated classroom. *Sub-Saharan African Journal of Contemporary Education Research*. Vol.3 No. 6. 2016, pp. 107-118.

³⁷Kanu I. A., *Igwebuikeconomics*: Towards an inclusive economy for economic development. *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 3. No. 6.2017, 113-140; Kanu I. A., Sources of *Igwebuike* philosophy. *International Journal of Religion and Human Relations*. 9. 1. 2017, pp. 1-23; Kanu, A. I., *Igwebuike* as a trend in African philosophy. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 2. 1. 2016, 97-101; Kanu, A. I., *Igwebuike* as an Igbo-African philosophy of inclusive leadership. *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Vol. 3 No 7. 2016, pp. 165-183.

³⁸Lifton Robert Jay, *The life of the self*. New York: Touchstone, 1996; Lifton Robert Jay, *The protean self: Human resilience in an age of Fragmentation*. New Yor: Basic Books.

Nigeria - Tansian University. He has also left behind him a tradition of excellence, a culture of professionalism and an era of transformation.

Monsignor founded other educational institutions like Our Lady of Waldenstein Educational Centre, Uga, Anambra State, which houses Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools. He also founded the Queen of Peace Educational Centre, Enugu, which remains a *primus inter pares* in the South East³⁹. He has erected memories that cannot be erased, monuments that cannot be destroyed. He has handed over an institution glowing with pride. These achievements live after him and echo his immortality in spite of death.

b. Academic Creative Immortality

Lifton also writes of achieving creative immortality through the works that we have done in terms of cumulative knowledge and teaching, which are carried forward by others⁴⁰. It is said that "Teaching is the immortalization of oneself". Monsignor was a man who immortalized himself through teaching, with commendable and admirable expertise. He was not only an ecclesiastic; he was a professor of his own class.

Bertrand Russell made a classification of professors into three categories:

- i. those who are figures of fun, who are totally out of their element in the academic environment, who see professorship as a retirement benefit to be enjoyed and indeed exploited;
- ii. those who are technically competent but uninteresting;
- iii. those, usually a minority group, whom inquiring minds admire wholeheartedly and enthusiastically⁴¹. They are not only competent but interesting.

Of the third group, there are few indeed. And it is a matter of joy that in the front rank of that small group of dedicated intellectuals, we have our own late father, friend and brother, Prof. John Bosco Akam.

In his books, which include but not limited to: *Man: Unique but in plural*; *Oracle of Wisdom: Towards a Philosophic Equipose*; *Ecumenism: A positive approach to Christianity*; *The path of hope*; *Towards a civilized society*; *Turn the other cheek*; *The blind twins: Love and hate*; *Prayer: A life guide*; *The ABC of Solfa and Staff Notation*, one comes 'face to face' with a true academic and spiritual bee. You can only applaud at the end of each chapter of his books and wait to applaud again at the end of the next chapter. His achievements in the academia are pre-eminent. He was a productive scholar; an academic

³⁹Ejikemeuwa, J. O, and Ejikeme, P. O., Profile of Very Rev. Msgr. Prof. J. B. Akam. *Society and Human Development: Essays in honour of J. B. Akam* (pp. x-xi). Anambra: Bobpeco Publishers, 2017, pp. x-xi.

⁴⁰Lifton Robert Jay, *The life of the self*. New York: Touchstone, 1996; Lifton Robert Jay, *The protean self: Human resilience in an age of Fragmentation*. New Yor: Basic Books.

⁴¹ A. E. Afigbo, *Salute to a Colleague*. 1979 Ahiajoku Lecture. Owerri: Imo Newspapers Limited, 1979, p. 5.

whose productivity are marked by happy versatility, rich variety, unfailing originality, consistent incisiveness, high voltage reasoning, limpidity of style and unwavering logic. And for these, Monsignor cannot be forgotten.

c. Social/Philanthropic Creative Immortality

In Monsignor, we learn that immortality can be socialized. He was loyal to the world in which he lived and was inundated by the readiness to sacrifice for it⁴². He founded philanthropic organizations⁴³ through which he reached out most effectively to the poor and needy. These include:

- i. Peter Hermon Foundation (PHF)
- ii. Voice of the Poor Foundation (VPF)
- iii. Konigin des Friendens Scholarship Foundation (KFSF)

Through these foundations, he provided scholarships for more than 1000 students who would never have had the opportunity of having primary, secondary and university education. He also built houses for the poor and paid hospital bills for many who would not have been able to get medical treatment without help. He found his life and joy in creative service to his community. In the lives of those he served, his story still re-echoes.

d. Ecclesiastical Creative Immortality

Monsignor was not only a scholar; he was a renowned ecclesiastic who served the Church in several notable capacities.

- i. He was ordained a Catholic priest on 24th April 1976 by Francis Cardinal Arinze;
- ii. He was the Spiritual Director of All Hallows Seminary, Onitsha in 1977;
- iii. In 1986, he lectured at the then Bigard Memorial Seminary Ikot Ekpene, now Saint Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene;
- iv. He was mandated by the Bishops of Onitsha Province to re-open a Philosophical Faculty in Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu in 1989;
- v. In 1989, he was also appointed Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy;
- vi. He was appointed Rector of Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu in 1992.
- vii. In 1995, he was appointed by the Pope as Papal Chamberlain;
- viii. He was appointed the Education Secretary of the Catholic Diocese of Awka in 1996;
- ix. In 1999, he was appointed Priest-In-Charge of Saint Augustine's Parish, Amafor, Nkpor-Agu;

⁴²John, B. Boodin, Social Immortality, *International Journal of Ethics*, p. 196

⁴³Ejikemeuwa, J. O, Roman Catholic priesthood and celibacy vis-a-vis African concept of personal immortality: A reinterpretation from the life of J. B. Akam. In Ejikemeuwa, J. O, and Ejikeme, P. O. (Eds.). *Society and Human Development: Essays in honour of J. B. Akam* (pp. 1-16). Anambra: Bobpeco Publishers, 2017, pp. 1-16.

- x. He launched the vision of founding the Missionary Sons of Blessed Tansi, a religious institute he hoped would care for the elderly and disabled⁴⁴.

With these impacts within the ecclesiastical circle, the footprints of Monsignor on the sands of the Church will not be forgotten.

Conclusion

As we remember Monsignor today, we might need to adopt more strategic ways of preserving our memory of this great sage, and this can be done in several ways,⁴⁵ which include:

- i. reinterpreting our experience of him or giving new meanings to our past experiences of him;
- ii. idealizing the major and desirable aspects of Monsignor's life and personality or lived experiences;
- iii. creating a continuing bond by organizing activities that stimulate our remembrance of him;
- iv. establishing symbols that come to serve as 'sacred' representations of him.

If there is a place where this should begin, it is here, where he has one of his greatest legacies and with this event, it has begun beautifully well.

May God bless Tansian University!

May God bless the Vice Chancellor for doing Monsignor this honour!!

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