

Forever
.....in our Hearts

The life and times
Of



Mary Nkemfulu
OGUEJIOFOR
(NEE UMEH)

(a.k.a. Mamao, Young, Ifeatu)

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

– Romans 8: 18



Mamao @ her prime

The Biography Of

MRS. MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR

(NEE UMEH)

(A.K.A. MAMAO, YOUNG, IFEATU)

(March 07, 1936 – March 11, 2019)



my eyes behold, I accept.” It is pertinent to point out here that this name had a great impact on the life of our mother, who during her health challenges, entirely surrendered herself to the will of God.

Her children and loved ones called or referred to her as “Mamao.” The womenfolk also gave her the name “Young”, which depicts her elegance, especially in her youth. It is, however, pertinent to note that in the twilight of her life, Mamao personally chose the name “Ifeatu” (a model, an exemplar). According to her, though she was still 'young at heart' during this stage in her life, she was a model or exemplar of faith from the perspective of perseverance in the face of sufferings and pains.

Mamao spent the early part of her life with her parents and they profoundly influenced her life, especially by the devout life of her father, Mazi Francis Umeh. She recalled her father's advice to them (the children) ***“to be patient in their endeavours especially in the midst of temptations. It is patience, which would enable them to overcome challenging situations of life.”***

Birth/Early Life



Mrs. Mary Nkemfulu Oguejiofor (nee Umeh) was born on March 7, 1936 in Amata Clan of Adazi-Nnukwu. She was the third child of the five surviving children (3 females and 2 males), of Mazi Francis Agufusi Umeh (*a.k.a. Amakeze*) and Oliaku Juliana Nwamgboye Umeh, both of Amata Clan in Adazi-Nnukwu. Her parents gave her the Igbo name, ***Nkemfulu***. Literally, Nkemfulu means ***“the one I have seen”*** or ***“the one my eyes behold.”*** Like all Igbo names, this name is quite significant and depicts the circumstances of her birth. The parents had previously lost five children in apparently mysterious circumstances. The first two surviving children after this horrendous experience were females. Our mother was the third surviving female child. Mazi Francis Umeh, being a deeply devout man, believed that whomsoever God had given to them either a male or female child was acceptable to them. Hence, the parents named the child, Nkemfulu (the one my eyes behold), which is an abridged form of *“Nkemfulumwelu -the one*

Educational Attainment/Career



Our mom started formal schooling in 1947 at the late age of eleven years, because she had to help take care of her younger family members. She quickly adapted to the challenges of the academic programme, and because of her excellent grades, the school waived a year (Standard II) for her. Thus, the school promoted her from Standard I to Standard III. She graduated from

Standard VI in 1953 as one of the best students in her class. She subsequently sat for the entrance examination into the nursing profession and was admitted after a successful examination and interview. Mamao did her initial nursing training at St. Joseph's Hospital, Adazi-Nnukwu; later on she went to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Ihiala, for Midwifery course, and she also did part of her nursing training at the Community Cottage Hospital, Awgu. In 1956, she retired from the nursing profession because she was getting married.

Before delving into Mamao's marital life, it is pertinent to point out that getting married did not diminish her intense desire for education as she truly believed in the aphorism of Francis Bacon that **"knowledge is power"**. Hence, in 1982, at the age of 46, she sat for and passed the entrance examination into Women Teachers College (WTC), Maiduguri. On the day of the interview, the principal of the school was so impressed with her performance that she instructed that she be exempted from doing Year I and to start from Year II. Mamao was excellent in her studies and won several prizes. Because of our dad's transfer from Maiduguri to Lagos, Mamao had to complete her teacher training programme at Loretto Teacher Training College (LTTC), Adazi-Nnukwu, and she graduated in 1985. ***Mamao's successful completion of her studies at Loretto was simply an academic validation of her intense desire to savour from the springs of knowledge and a booster for her children and loved ones.***

Marital Life



Mamao got married to our late father, **Chief Job Chukwudebelu Oguejiofor**, on November 9, 1956, and the Mass was officiated by Rev. Fr. Clifford. The tragic death of her brother-in-law, Felix Ndibe Oguejiofor, less than two weeks to her scheduled wedding day led to the ceremony being low-key and bitter sweet.

Mamao was the bedrock of the family, providing stability, as our dad rose through the ranks of the Federal Civil Service in diverse locations across the country. Mamao took good care of her mother-in-laws, Margaret Nwamgbeke Oguejiofor and Mgboye Oguejiofor, the second wife of her father-in-law, Omile Oguejiofor.

Mamao and her young family resided in Lagos in the early 1960s, but relocated to Adazi-Nnukwu during the national crisis that preceded the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967. After the civil war ended in 1970, Mamao remained in Adazi-Nnukwu with her young children. This was to enable the children to continue their schooling uninterrupted, as our dad was reabsorbed into the Federal Civil Service and had to endure numerous transfers from one part of the country to the other. In fact, Mamao spent a greater part of her marital life at Adazi-Nnukwu as a fulltime housewife, apart from the few years she lived together with our dad in Ibadan, Lagos, Ilorin, and Maiduguri. God blessed her marriage with seven children (five surviving male children and a female child, the last in the family). The sixth of the male children, Tobechukwu, passed unto eternal glory at barely two and half years old. It is pertinent to point out that our mother lived happily together with our dad, for almost fifty years before God called our dad to eternal glory on July 17, 2005.

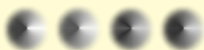
Spiritual Life



Mamao was quite human in her relationship with God and neighbour. In her humanness and brokenness, she strived everyday towards greater perfection. She lived according to the dictates of the moral maxim, **"Be human and be holy"**. It is this moral maxim that shaped her spirituality.

Mamao was an active member of the Purgatorian Society and prayed every day for the remission of the sins of the souls in purgatory. Mamao also was a special devotee of St. Faustina, who propagated the Divine Mercy Prayers, which she recited at 3pm every day. She prayed the rosary with her grandchildren and other members of the family in her room. It is also pertinent to note that she had favourite prayers which she conscientiously recited every day. We have decided to include these prayers in this brochure since we believe that they will be of spiritual benefit to many.

Mamao's Philosophy of Life

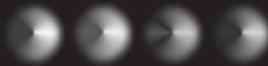


The following excerpts from her autobiography, dated December 20, 1993, encapsulate Mamao's philosophy of Life and why she indeed is "Ifeatu" (model, exemplar):

"... I will continue to thank my God all the days of my life for the children he blessed me with, and for their good behaviour both at home and outside. When they were little, they used to fetch water from the stream for their Papa and Mama Amata, as they usually called my parents. The people around my village at Amata used to praise them and at times give them little gifts. I must confess openly that I am proud of them and their behaviour."

"9th November 1993, made it 37 years of my marriage and all that while, I can say that everybody does his or her own share of the job (both grownups and children) perfectly. At least, one most outstanding quality we have is complete "Respect" for one another, and we praise God repeatedly for that. My children have every reason to thank the Lord. If they want to live a successful married life, let them simply follow the footsteps of their parents and their grandparents. If they do this, they will have nothing to regret. I wish my children and grandchildren good luck, good health, long life and God's blessings. Amen, Amen."

Twilight of her Life



In the course of her life, Mamao suffered from debilitating arthritis which caused her severe pains and affected her physical mobility, a condition which she endured for more than three decades. The grace of God enabled her to bear this condition with equanimity and she would always give thanks to God for the blessings in her life. She firmly believed that she had already spent her purgatory on earth and that God would never allow her to experience another purgatory after her terrestrial existence.

The loving care that her son, Ogonna Oguejiofor, a professor of endocrinology, and his amiable wife, Charlotte Oguejiofor, who is also a medical doctor, provided for Mamao was a source of immense joy and succour for her. Mamao also enjoyed both the financial and emotional support of her other children, daughters-in-law, son-in-law as well as siblings, nephews, nieces, and other relations.

There is no gainsaying the magnanimity with which the nurses at Ojiofor Specialist Hospital, Newi rendered caring service to Mamao.

Mamao's son, Rev. Fr. Kenneth Okechukwu Oguejiofor, anointed her on Friday, March 8, 2019. On Sunday, March 10, Mamao also received viaticum. God called Mamao to eternal glory, surrounded by her children, in the early morning of Monday, March 11, 2019 at 6am, after celebrating her 83rd birthday on March 7, 2019. ***In hindsight, it was a farewell birthday celebration as her demise took us unawares, occurring less than 4 days after the joyous birthday celebration, though she apparently had premonitions about her passage into eternal glory.*** She was interred same day according to her wishes. Her son, Rev. Fr. Kenneth Okechukwu Oguejiofor, CMF, presided over the Mass with three other Claretian priests: Rev. Fr. Stanley Ogaraku, CMF, Rev. Fr. Henry Osuagwu, CMF, and Rev. Fr. Anthony Azinta, CMF, who said the prayer of final commendation of her soul to the bosom of the Lord. Rev. Sr. Chinelo Umeh, DMMM, Mamao's niece, was also present. Claretian seminarians sang at the Mass together with other members of the faithful.

Mamao lived to celebrate the silver jubilee of the priestly ordination of her third son, Rev. Fr. Kenneth Okechukwu Oguejiofor, who she fondly called "Ukochukwu Okechukwu". To God be the glory for the life of our mother and for those whose lives she impacted.

Mamao is survived by the following:

Siblings:

Mr. Luke Umeh (brother) and Mrs. Rebecca Offiajiaku (sister)

Children:

Mr. Ositadinma Felix Oguejiofor

Prof. (Engr., Dr.) Chukwuemeka Ethelbert Oguejiofor

Rev. Fr. Okechukwu Kenneth Oguejiofor, CMF

Prof. (Dr.) Ogonna Celestine Oguejiofor

Dr. (Pharm.) Nnabueze Cosmas Joshua Oguejiofor

Barr. Mrs. Ngozichukwuka Obianuju Anofochi (nee Oguejiofor)

Grandchildren:

Somtochukwu Pedro Chetanna Francis Ugonnediaso Imelda-Mary

Chioma Mary-Clare Kenechukwu Francis Ikenna Michael Uchechukwu Andrew

Ojiofor Jonathan (OJ) Diana Joy (DJ) Angel Añulika Kenechukwu Celestina (KC)

Kosidimma Trisha (DeeDee) Chibeze Josh (CJ)

Ebubechukwu Zoe

Daughters in-law

Mrs. Ngozika Vivian Oguejiofor, a.k.a Odiukonamba (nee Ojiako)

Mrs. Mavis Barbara Oguejiofor, a.k.a Oyibokwesili (nee Okafor)

Dr. Mrs. Charlotte Oguejiofor, a.k.a Obidia (nee Nankeng)

Dr. Mrs. Ngozika Lilian Oguejiofor, a.k.a Dimanu (nee Okoye)

Son in-law:

Engr. Chinazo Anofochi

Numerous, nephews, nieces, and other relations



Tribute To Our Mother,

**MRS. MARY NKEMFULU OGUEJIOFOR (Nee Umeh)
a.k.a. (Mamao, Young, Ifeatu)**

A Model of Faith Exemplified in Christian Suffering

In the words of C.S.Lewis, “*God whispers to us in our pleasures; speaks to us in our consciences, and shouts to us in our pains. Pain is God's megaphone; pain is heaven's loudspeaker.*” From the aphorism of Lewis, it is quite evident that in all these modes of God's communication with us, His presence is amply made manifest in the phenomenon of human pains and sufferings. It is in this vein that the British process philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, speaks of God as “*a fellow sufferer*”. God suffers when humans suffer. The aphorisms of both Lewis and Whitehead resonated in the life of our beloved mother, Mary Nkemfulu Oguejiofor, who suffered from debilitating arthritis, which caused her severe pains and affected her physical mobility, a medical condition, which she bore and endured for more than three decades.

In the face of pains and sufferings, the human person exhibits various kinds of attitudes namely a denial of reality, a rejection of the phenomenon of pains by affirming “it is not my portion,” a questioning of God's omni-benevolence and posing the question “why me?”, assuming an attitude of self-pity, self-rejection, or self-hatred, or assuming a stoical attitude, etc.

In the life of our mother, we see one who understood the phenomenon of pains and sufferings from a Christian perspective and who, in the course of her life, united her sufferings and pains with the passion of Christ for the remission of the sins of the souls in purgatory, for her own sins, and the sins of the world.

The great St. Therese of the Child Jesus (the Little Flower) affirms that, “*she would spend her heaven on earth doing good.*” In an analogous sense, we believe that Mary Nkemfulu Oguejiofor spent her purgatory or purgation on earth through her pains and sufferings, which God used in purifying her just as gold is purified through fire. She was a devoted member of the Purgatorian society and her life was an eloquent testimony of the tenets of this sodality.

Our mother, like Jesus, learnt obedience through suffering; and like our blessed mother, Mary, whose name she bore, a sword truly pierced through her soul. However, in the midst of her trials, pains and sufferings, she bore them all with equanimity and serenity. She remained a gallant soldier of Christ, and never gave in to despair, dispiritedness, despondency or questioning the reality of the love of God for her. She persevered in the midst of her sufferings. Even in suffering, her countenance radiated peace and inner joy. She accepted her situation and interpreted it from divine perspective. Despite her pains, she never lost the zest of living, but still saw meaning in life. The people who visited her often wondered how she was able to remain peaceful and calm despite the pains she was undergoing. She remained a role model and exemplar of faith (Ifeatu) in the face of pain

An aphorism has it that, “*An attitude of gratitude makes our life beatitude*”. Our life becomes a blessing when we express gratitude to God, who is both the author and finisher of our being. This aphorism is amplified in the life of our mother. Her entire life was fundamentally one of gratitude to both God and the caregivers who attended to her. ***Her usual morning greeting was, Good morning, and God bless you.*** After someone had assisted her in doing something, she would utter words of gratitude and blessing. ***She remained grateful to God for the progress and success of her children in their various fields of human endeavour. She would always say to us, “Why I am still here with you is because you are the source of my joy and consolation.”***

Mamao often recalled special moments of divine interventions in her life. The first was as a teenager when she almost drowned in Agulu Lake (EzuAgulu), but God and our mother Mary rescued her from imminent death. She would always quip in her moments of elation, “*The Agulu Lake could not swallow me because I am a child of Mary.*” The second was that our mother gave birth to all of us, while having the symptoms of fibroid, and only underwent surgery afterwards. She recalled this incident as God's special intervention in her life. She would often say to us, “*The day God created me, I do not think he created another person.*” Such was the life of Mamao – a life filled with gratitude and contentment.

>>>>>

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Mamao's life is a lesson for us. She taught us that we, too, can find meaning in life even when we are confronted with a hopeless situation, especially when facing a fate that we cannot change. Whatever our fate, therefore, we always have a choice between seeing our challenges of life as a tragedy devoid of meaning, or as an opportunity for spiritual growth. This attitude to life is aptly captured in the words of the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, *"To live is to suffer; to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering."* Nietzsche further postulates that *"only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the human spirit."* (Cf. Nietzsche, in the *GayScience*, pref.3)

Philip Igbo in his work, *Suffering and the Crisis of Faith*, affirms that *"In spite of the trials, the pains, the sufferings, we encounter on the journey of life, God remains in control of the events of history. One answer to the puzzle of life is to lean on God in faith."* (Philip Igbo, Enugu, 2016:76). Igbo further underscores the views of Charles Stanley, *"Our heavenly Father understands our disappointment, suffering, pain, fear, and doubt. He is always there to encourage our hearts and help us understand that He is sufficient for all of our needs. When I accepted this as an absolute truth in my life, I found that my worrying stopped."* (Ibid.) Indeed this was the attitude and prayer of Mary Nkemfulu Oguejiofor. Her prayer when confronted with the problems of life was always, ***"Let God take control."***

Our mother, like the great St. Paul, has fought the good fight, has finished the race; she has kept the faith. All that is now left is the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward her on that day; and not only her, but all those who have longed for his glorious coming. (Cf. 2Tim.4:7ff).

Therefore, we say to Mary Nkemfulu Oguejiofor, ride on gallant soldier of Christ! Ride on in majesty!! Ride on in triumph!!! May our blessed mother, the Virgin Mary, whose name you bore intercede for you before the throne of God's mercy. May perpetual light continue to shine upon you until we meet to part no more.

Adieu Mamao, Adieu Young, Adieu Ifeatu.

Rev. Fr. Kenneth Okechukwu Oguejiofor, CMF.

[On behalf of the family](#)

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Mamao's third son, Rev. Fr. Kenneth and other fellow Claretian Priests during her 80th birthday celebration.



Mamao @ 80th Birthday

Prayers

**RECITED DAILY BY OUR MOTHER,
MARY NKEMFULU OGUEJIOFOR**

O my dear Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, my redeemer and my sanctifier. I offer to thee the repose, which I shall draw this day/night in union with that eternal repose, which thou has at the bosom of thy Father; and of that temporary repose, which thou didst take during the whole course of thy abode on earth. I offer up to thee every breadth, which I shall draw this day/night, every motion of my life and death begging that they may all be so many acts of love, praise, adoration, benediction, joy and thanksgiving. I offer up that homage, which will be paid to thee during this day/night in heaven and which infinite worlds might render to thee throughout all eternity. Moreover, I earnestly beg that thy blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and all the angels and saints may love, praise, bless and glorify thee for me during this day/night and throughout all eternity. *Amen.*

Jesus for thee I live; Jesus for thee I die; Jesus I am dying in life and in death. *Amen.*

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I pray for the grace to love thee daily more and more, and to love my neighbour as myself.

O Jesus, I choose thy sacred heart for my dwelling place, that it may be my strength in all my struggles, my light and my guide.

O heart of love, I place all my trust in thee, for though, I fear all things from my weakness, I hope all things from thy mercy.

O Jesus meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine.

O Jesus meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine.

O Jesus meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto thine.

V. From thy anger

R. Deliver us O Lord

V. From the pains of hell (R.)

V. From a sudden and unhappy death (R.)

V. From all evils (R.)

V. From all dangers of soul and body (R.)

V. From the hands of the wicked (R.)

V. From the hands of the unbelievers (R.)

V. From the malignant enemy

R. Defend us

V. At the hour of our death

R. Call us, and bid us to come to thee, where we and thy angels and saints may love and praise thee for everlasting ages. Amen

O Mary, my mother and my queen, to thee I offer myself without any reserve; and to give thee a mark of my devotion, I consecrate to thee during this day/night my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart and my whole person. Since I belong to thee, O my good mother, preserve and defend me as thy property and possession. O my good angel, whom God has appointed to be my guardian, enlighten, direct, protect, defend, guard and govern me during this day/night.

O Lord, help us with thy grace while we are awake and defend us by thy power while we are asleep, that whether we wake or sleep, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ may always be with us.

Visit we beseech thee O Lord, all our family members, and drive far from us all snares of the enemy. Let thy holy angels dwell with us, to protect, to direct, to defend, to guard and to govern us in peace, and let thy blessings be always upon us through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

May the divine assistance always remain with us, and may the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. *Amen.*

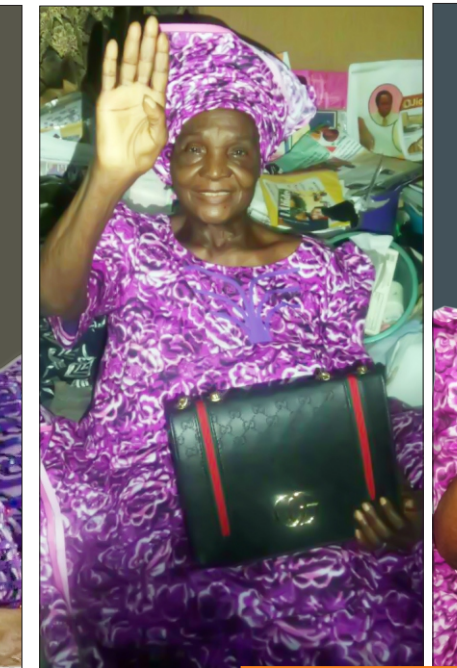
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, may I die in peace in your blessed arms.

>>>IFEATU<<<<
it is well with your Soul





“Our mother, like Jesus, learnt obedience through suffering; and like our blessed mother, Mary, whose name she bore, a sword truly pierced through her soul. However, in the midst of her trials, pains and sufferings, she bore them all with equanimity and serenity. She remained a gallant soldier of Christ, and never gave in to despair, dispiritedness, despondency or questioning the reality of the love of God for her. She persevered in the midst of her sufferings. Even in suffering, her countenance radiated peace and inner joy. She accepted her situation and interpreted it from divine perspective.”

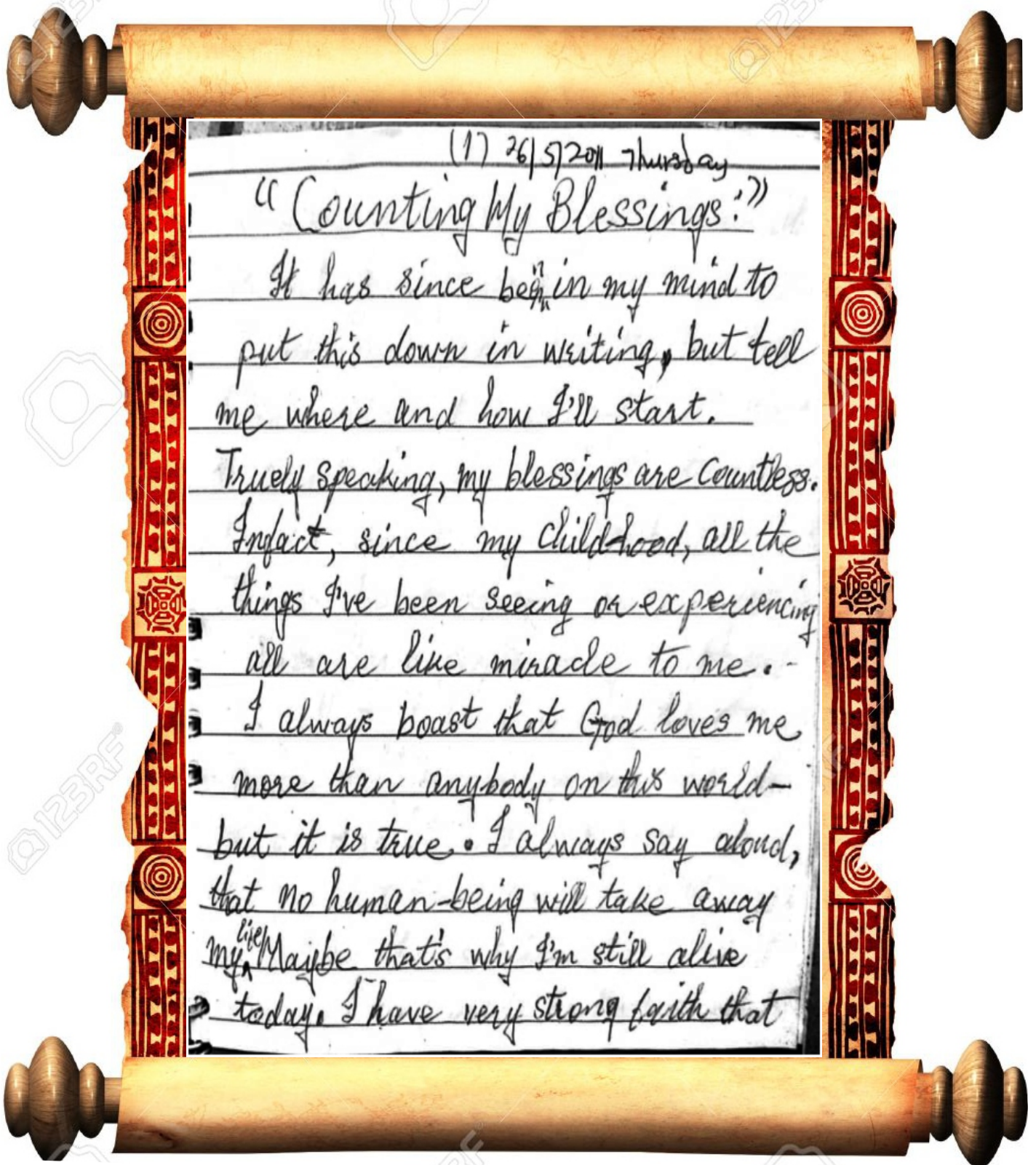


Personal Reflection

By Our Mother,

MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR



(1) 26/5/2011 Thursday

“Counting My Blessings:”

It has since been in my mind to put this down in writing, but tell me where and how I'll start.

Truly speaking, my blessings are countless.

In fact, since my childhood, all the things I've been seeing or experiencing all are like miracle to me.

I always boast that God loves me more than anybody on this world-

but it is true. I always say aloud, that no human-being will take away

my ^{life}. Maybe that's why I'm still alive

today. I have very strong faith that



Personal Reflection

By Our Mother,

MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR

(2)

God will in His mercy protect me, it is not by my power or my goodness—no. Thanks and praise be to God that I have clocked seventy-five this year. It sounds like unbelievable to me, for I never knew it can be possible. Thanks be to God who makes it possible. ~~People~~ Some people may doubt if I say that it has now completed (2) yrs. since I've ^{been} down from one sickness to another. I will not be telling lies if I say that I'm a special child of God. No wonder I was miraculously saved from drowning inside Agulu Lake, when



Personal Reflection

By Our Mother,

MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR

(3)

I was eleven-years old. That was the first miracle I experienced in my early life. An unseen force ~~threw~~ threw me head-long inside the water where I stayed inside the water not drowning for at least half an hour, I was gently carried out of the water - why to me, I can say that I'm not an edible food for the unseen forces, so I was vomited out of the water - safe, & alive. Does not this show clearly that I am a special child of Jesus and Mary? Yes!! I tell my children that anytime it pleases God to take me, let nobody say

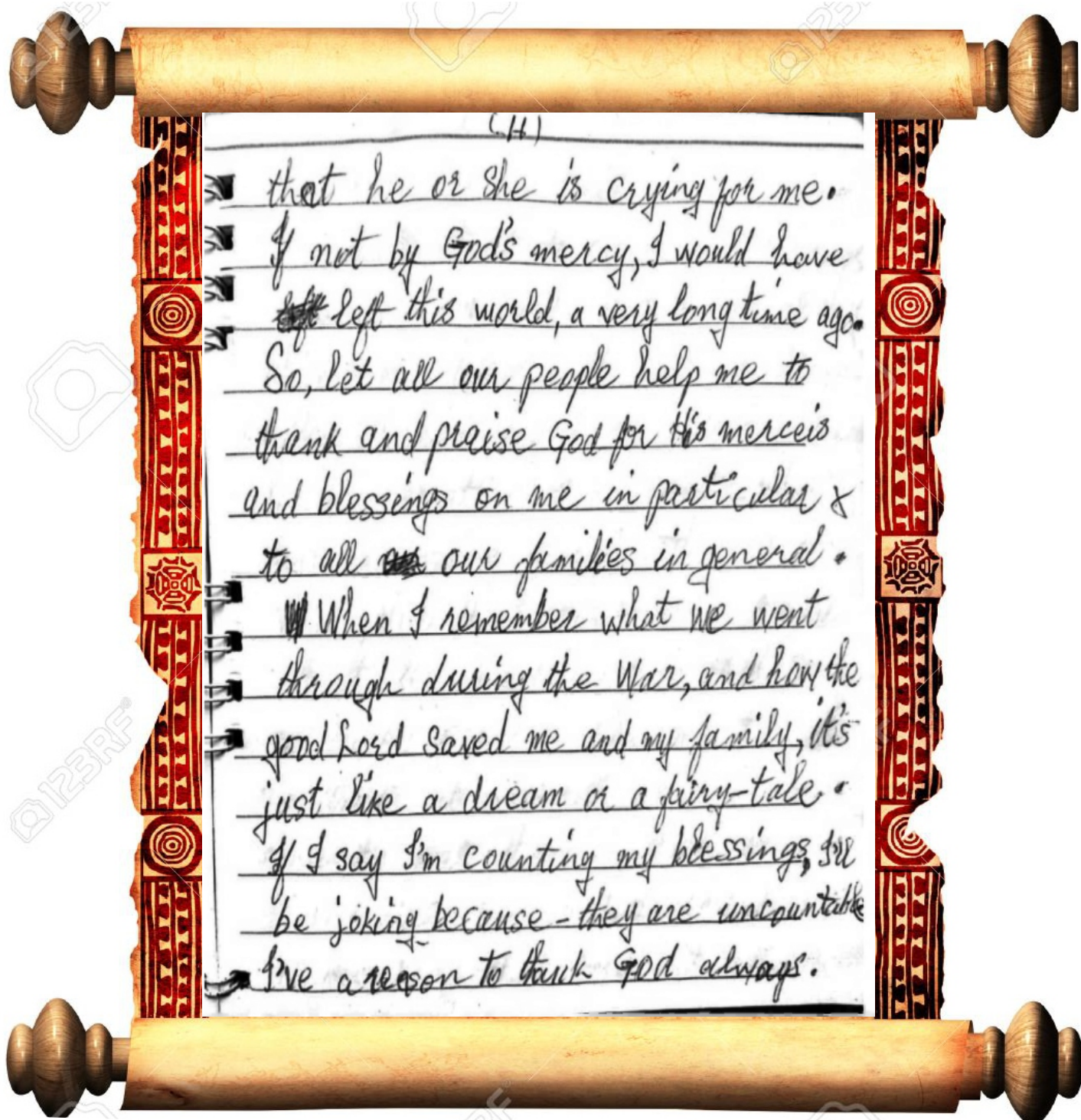


Personal Reflection

By Our Mother,

MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR



(11)

that he or she is crying for me.
If not by God's mercy, I would have
~~left~~ left this world, a very long time ago.
So, let all our people help me to
thank and praise God for His mercies
and blessings on me in particular &
to all ~~our~~ our families in general.
When I remember what we went
through during the War, and how the
good Lord saved me and my family, it's
just like a dream or a fairy-tale.
If I say I'm counting my blessings, I'll
be joking because - they are uncountable
I've a reason to thank God always.



Personal Reflection

By Our Mother,

MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR

(5)

As I've already said, I don't know where to start to count my blessings. I was very lucky that I had all my children by normal delivery. "3 yrs." after I had my last delivery, I had operation of "Fibroid" - what an amazing story! The doctor who did that operation said that he had never seen such a lucky person like me. To speak the truth, it was not easy for me then to pass through those years. It was like seeing hell fire. Now, I always pray that God will not allow

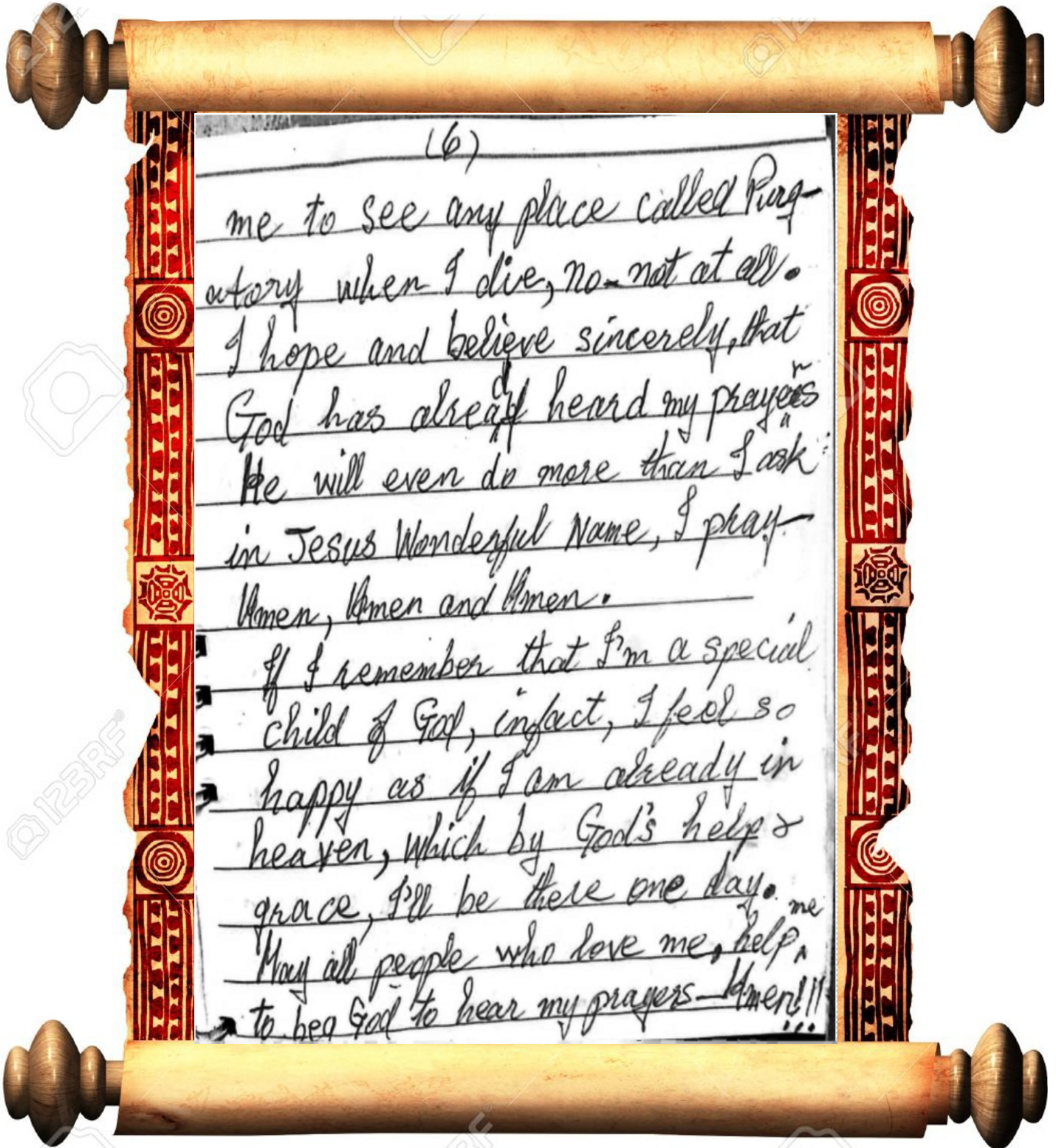


Personal Reflection

By Our Mother,

MARY NKEMFULU

OGUEJIOFOR



(6)

me to see any place called Purgatory when I die, no, not at all. I hope and believe sincerely, that God has already heard my prayers. He will even do more than I ask in Jesus Wonderful Name, I pray. Amen, Amen and Amen.

If I remember that I'm a special child of God, in fact, I feel so happy as if I am already in heaven, which by God's help & grace, I'll be there one day. May all people who love me, help to beg God to hear my prayers. Amen!!!



Appreciation

The Omile Oguejiofor family of Adazi-Nnukwu heartily expresses our profound gratitude to the Auxiliary Bishop of Awka Diocese, Most Rev. Jonas Benson Okoye, for your fatherly presence at the funeral Mass of our beloved mother, Mary Nkemfulu Oguejiofor. We are most grateful to the Provincial Superior, Claretian Missionaries, East Nigeria Province, Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Okezuo Nwobi, CMF; the parish priest St. Andrew's Catholic Church, Adazi-Nnukwu, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Onwukike, all priests and religious for your comforting presence and prayers. We equally express our thanks to our uncles, aunties, cousins, nephews, nieces, in-laws, friends, and well-wishers for commiserating with us in our moment of grief. Our special thanks go to the doctors and nurses of Ojiofor Specialist Hospital, Nnewi and all of Mamao's other caregivers for taking good care of her.

May the good Lord reward and bless you all abundantly.

We wish you all safe journey back to your respective destinations.

Ositadinma Felix Oguejiofor
On behalf of the family.

