



DEDICATION OF NEW ST ANTHONY’S CHURCH, IGBARIAM, FRUIT OF THE LABOUR OF PIONEER MISSIONARIES; SAYS BISHOP ISIZOH

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ANAMBRA STATE -

The Catholic faithful of Igbariam in Anambra State are reaping the desired fruits of the evangelization labour of the early missionaries with the solemn dedication and opening of the new St Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, Igbariam, Anambra State; the Auxiliary Bishop of Onitsha Archdiocese, Most Rev. Denis Chidi Isizoh has declared.

Bishop Isizoh made the remark in his homily at the celebration of the Mass of the dedication ceremony held on Saturday, November 14, 2020. The ceremony was witnessed by dignitaries from all walks of life within and outside Anambra State, including friends of the major financier of the new Church building, Barrister Kenneth Uba; and the faithful of the parish.

Going down memory lane on the advent of the Catholic faith in Igboland, Bishop Isizoh noted that Igbariam was the port of call of the missionaries in that area, when they arrived in 1909 with the Good News of Christ. Pointing out that Igbariam was indeed chosen by God as the breeding ground of the faith, the bishop explained that the missionaries

had to contend with many health hazards by the day and by night; yet, they persevered and endured the discomfort of the area; “with flies biting in the day and mosquito bites in the night”.

According to Bishop Isizoh; “with the dedication and opening of the new St Anthony Church, the faithful are reaping the sacrifices made by these early missionaries who brought the faith to the land.” The bishop also disclosed that the present day Biggard Seminary started in Igbariam in 1924; as St. Paul’s Seminary, with Fr. William O. Odonneli and Rev. Fr. Charles Heerey (later Archbishop Heerey) as the first and second Rectors. He added that Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi and others were the pioneer students of the seminary.

Several factors including lack of teaching staff, and the second world war led to the transfer of the senior and minor seminaries to St. Mary’s Onitsha and the closure of the parish in 1928. It was however reopened in 1981 and became a regional headquarters in 2010. Bishop Isizoh, while congratulating the parish priest and the faithful of the parish, urged them not to relent in the practice of their faith and ensure they win more souls for Christ, in the area.

On Sunday, November 15, Bishop Denis Isizoh also performed the historic dedication of Holy Family Catholic Church, Awka-Etiti, Anambra State. The bishop was accompanied to the two ceremonies by the staff of the National Directorate of Social Communications, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN), led by the National Director, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Nsikak Umoh.

