

**MINUTES OF THE 28TH ANNUAL GENERAL GET-TOGETHER OF THE NIGERIAN
ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS AND CLERGY (NARAC) HOSTED BY NSUKKA
DIOCESE HELD ON 2ND OF APRIL 2018 AT ST BONIFATIUS, ESSEN-HUTTROP, ESSEN**

PART ONE

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

The annual get-together began with the Holy Eucharistic celebration at 11.15 am as we were incorporated in the normal Easter Monday Mass for the parish. The homilist was Rev. Fr. Clement Akinseloyin. About eight priest-members of the association concelebrated in the Mass. Many religious were also present. The presence of the Choir of the African (English) Community in Essen, who sang the Mass, added a beautiful African blend to the Mass.

PART TWO

OPENING PRAYER

The second part of the get-together began at 1.40 P.M. with the opening prayer led by Sr. Philomena Ogbu, the Nigerian National Anthem followed immediately.

PRESENTATION AND BREAKING OF KOLA-NUT

The hosting diocese, Nsukka Diocese, represented by Rev. Fr Sylvester Ozioko presented us with “Kola-nut”, demonstrating therewith a welcome to the association. Other kola-nut rituals followed as Rev. Fr. Clement Akinseloyin blessed the kola-nut.

In his words of welcome on behalf of the African Community Essen, Mr. Giselyn Duala, appreciated the leadership of the Nigerian Priests in creating African Communities wherever they are in Europe as well as the pastoral directions they render to the Africans in diaspora. He encouraged the association to carry on such commendable flag of leadership in order to keep assisting our people in overcoming the challenges associated with the shock of foreign culture. His words were cheerfully welcomed and applauded by the members.

OPENING REMARKS

The president, Rev. Fr. Gerald Eze gave the opening remarks. He welcomed all the members with heartfelt gratitude for their commitment in attending the year’s meeting. He gave a special commendation to those who attended the Eucharistic celebration. He noted with apologies the difficulties of locating the venue of the Mass. Pointing out that the gathering provides an opportunity for relaxation and warm embrace of one another by which all experience the home-like feeling. He encouraged members to make efforts to always attend. On a sad note, he announced that Rev. Fr. Marcel Uzoigwe, who usually attended the meeting from Netherlands, had a car accident earlier that day. He was however grateful to God that Fr. Uzoigwe, who called to give the information, survived the accident, and prayed for his quick recovery. The president also prayed for the safe arrival of all those who were still on their way to the meeting. Finally, he pleaded that the official part of the get-together be made as brief as possible.

PRESENTATION AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Rev. Fr. Chmezie Agbo moved the motion for the adoption of the agenda. His motion was seconded by Rev. Fr Polycarp Okafor and was unanimously accepted by members.

WELCOME OF NEW MEMBERS

The following persons introduced themselves as new members:

1. Sr. Viviana Mary Umeh (DDL – Student)
2. Sr. Nnachetam Nnadiere (DDL – Student)
3. Sr. Maryloveline Osuagwu (DDL – Student)
4. Rev. Fr Polycarp Okafor (Enugu Diocese – Student)

5. Rev. Fr Virgilus Nwosu (Enugu Diocese – Language Course at Akademie Klausenhof)
The new members were warmly welcomed by Rev. Fr Stanley Ekwugha on behalf of the association. He encouraged them on the need to feel at home, no matter how difficult the challenge of new culture appeared. They were also encouraged to register themselves officially with 20 Euro each.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION BY OLD MEMBERS

About 28 old members, who were in attendance introduced themselves. Decrying once more the waste incurred in returned invitations (more than half of the invitation letters were returned) on account of wrong addresses, the secretary, Fr. Kingsley Anagolu advised members to check and update their addresses and other personal information in the list he circulated around.

AN INTERVENTION BY THE PARISH PRIEST

At this juncture, the host parish priest, Pfr. Gerd Heusch made an intervention. In his well-presented words of welcome and admonition, which he garnished with an analogy centred on the experience of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, he pointed out that we, as priests and religious, could not truly teach others about Jesus without first journeying with Jesus through the road of eye-opening interaction, listening personally to his word, experiencing the transforming moment of his breaking of the bread and engaging in prayer. He signified his warm welcome with a beautiful gift given to each of the members.

Rev. Fr Victor Anoka, thanked him immensely on behalf of the association. He appreciated especially his words of admonition, pointing out that it added a unique blend to the year's get-together.

NARAC WEBSITE UPDATE

The secretary, Rev. Fr. Kingsley Anagolu announced that the website of the Association had been updated, and its address – www.naracgermany.org – available for use for the members. He indicated that the minutes of the previous meetings of the association had been uploaded in the website, and that current minutes would be subsequently uploaded as well. In addition, he encouraged members to visit the website regularly so as to keep it active and to write articles for publication in it. Describing the contour of the website, he called on members to forward their comments and remarks to him, when they might have visited the website. “Such remarks could be helpful in improving the site,” he added.

The president thanked Fr. Kingsley Anagolu for his great sacrifice in updating the website, pointing out that he really did a good job.

ON THE CONSTITUTION

The president requested that a committee for review and reconstruction of the constitution of the association be formed. After a series of arguments with regard to the relevance of such a committee and the parameter of its constituents, the request of the president was given affirmation. In response to the parameter of getting a representative each from the member dioceses and congregations, only the following names were submitted:

Enugu Diocese – Rev. Fr. Ezekiel I. Oko
Nsukka Diocese – Rev. Fr Sylvester Ozioko
DDL – Sr. Cecil Okpala
Ondo Diocese – Rev. Fr Clement Akinseloyin
Ex-officio member – Rev. Fr. Kingsley Anagolu

Rev. Fr Wilfred Agubuchie was then appointed to chair the Committee. The Narac secretary, Fr. Kingsley Anagolu, who commissioned the committee, was to join the committee as an ex-officio member. The committee is to present the association with a reconstructed constitution by the 2019 Annual get-together of the Association.

Rev. Fr Josephat Ndubuisi Obodo thanked the committee members for accepting the task, indicating his confidence in their capabilities.

LUNCH AND REFRESHMENT

A lunch-break was given for members to take lunch and to refresh.

ELECTION OF NEW EXECUTIVES

Announcing that the tenure of the current executives of the association should expire at the end of the day's meeting, the president requested that new executives be elected. His request was met with series of arguments both in support and in opposition. The major argument in support was that, following the constitution, it was necessary for new executives to be elected before the end of the meeting. A contrary argument held that, since the constitution was still under review, the current executives should continue until a new constitution was in place. It was put to vote. Three persons moved for immediate election of new executives while twenty-eight voted against immediate election. Following the development, it was agreed that the election be held in 2019, even if the review of the constitution was not yet completed.

OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS

1. **The Musical Chairs:** Among ten members who participated in the competition – 5 Sisters, 3 Priests and 2 Post-theology seminarians - Cornelius Agbo emerged as the winner.
2. **Dancing Competition:** The participants included:
 - I. Sr Stellina Okpalaku
 - II. Sr Lovelyn Osuagwu
 - III. Sr Nnachetam Nnadiokere
 - IV. Cornelius Agbo
 - V. Valentine Ede
 - VI. Fr Polycarp Okafor

The panel of judges was constituted by Frs. Wilfred Agubuchie, Victor Anoka and Sr. Henrietta Ozurumba. The parameters for judgement included dancing steps and body movement, synchrony and cheerfulness.

Cornelius Agbo won the first prize with 85% while Valentine Ede won the second with 83.6%.

3. **The Blind Pick:** The fun of the entertainment phase continued with the blind-pick game. A bag of written instructions was passed around as the music played. The member who was with the bag when the music halted was required to make a blind pick from the bag and to carry out whatever instruction he/she picked. However, he/she had the option of paying 5 Euro, if he/she wished not to fulfil the instruction. That game crowned the fun enjoyed at the meeting as members picked such instructions like: 'request a dance with someone of your choice,' 'slap the president,' and so on.

FINANCIAL REPORT

In his financial report, the financial secretary, Rev. Fr Thaddaeus Eze, stated as follows:

Balance brought forward from 2017 meeting	3,959 Euro
Income (2018: Reg of new members – 40 Euro; Annual Dues – 400 Euro)	440
Expenditure	2,981.75
Balance as at 02.04.2018	1,417.33

ANNOUNCEMENT

After arguments that heralded the announcement that Enugu Diocese should host the 2019 get-together, the president conceded the suggestions of members to attempt to engage other congregations or dioceses or possibly individuals who had not yet hosted the meeting previously, in order to give the association more imprint of national character. Enugu Diocese however accepted to host the meeting only after such attempt was met with no fruitful result. Members would therefore be informed of the venue of 2019 get-together in due cause.

VOTE OF THANKS/CLOSING REMARKS

While Rev. Fr. Magnus Ifedikwa thanked the hosting Diocese, Nsukka for the wonderful organisation of the venue and the sumptuous and variegated dishes as well as variety of drinks provided for the get-together, Fr. Ndubisi Obodo thanked the various individuals who made remarkable contributions in making the get-together a huge success and a fun. On that note, he appreciated the sacrifice of the executives in planning and executing the meeting. The master of ceremony, Fr. Anthony Ezekwu and all the members who participated actively were also appreciated. Finally, Fr. Ndubisi Obodo noted the commendable act of helping other members to attend our annual gathering. Such symbiotic support, he thought, was very encouraging. He admonished members to always present one another in good and positive way, whenever they had the opportunity to do so. In that regard, he thanked Fr. Anoka for painting a positive picture of our brother, Fr Sylvester Ozioko, while responding to his parish priest.

CLOSING PRAYER

The meeting came to an end at 6.55 P.M. with a closing prayer led by Sr. Nkenna Nwangwu, and the blessing given by all the priests present.