

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF CALABAR
A REPORT ON A ONE DAY WORKSHOP FOR STAFF IN ALL CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS

Theme: The Insurgence of Child Abuse and Trafficking in the Modern Society: Causes, Consequences and Remediation.

Venue: Holy Child Secondary School, Calabar

Date: Friday, 29th October 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Schools Board with the approval of His Grace, Most Rev. Joseph E. Ekuwem organized a-one-day workshop with the above theme for all categories of staff in all Catholic Schools in Calabar Archdiocese.

Opening:

The staff workshop was preceded by the celebration of the Holy Mass by 8:30am. The Chief Celebrant of the Mass was the Archbishop's representative, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Joseph Agbor. Other co-celebrants were Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Okochi and Very Rev. Fr. Dominic Umo. Some staff came together and formed the choir that sang very well at Mass.

The Mass ended at 10.30am. The hightable was immediately constituted with the invited dignitaries and speakers on various sub topics of the theme. The attendance was overwhelming as several Board Members, Principals, Heads of Schools, Teachers and Non-Teaching staff attended Mass.

Plenary Session:

All participants registered for the workshop and received workshop folder with relevant contents.

The Archbishop's representative declared the workshop open. Thereafter, Very Rev. Fr. Dominic Umo, the Executive Secretary Catholic

Schools Board, Calabar, delivered his welcome address and gave an overview of the workshop. This was closely followed by an address from Very Rev. Fr. Augustine Okochi, Education Secretary, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja. He talked on: protecting children and Vulnerable Persons Against Abuses in Catholic Schools. Fr. Okochi stressed that "to the Catholic Church, the protection of children and vulnerable adults is a sacred duty".

The pace having been set, the keynote address was then delivered by Prof. Mrs. Louisa Uwatt. She spoke extensively on the theme of the workshop. She ended up by encouraging all to fight the menace of Child Abuse and make the world a better place and safe haven to groom and nurture children.

Rev. Sr. Gladys Dimaku MMM talked on Child Abuse: Its impacts on the Child's Overall Development. Here, she highlighted the different types of abuse and the impact on the child particularly the vulnerable children. She advised persons to record information accurately and immediately report to relevant personnel for appropriate action.

The next sub-theme, "Trends and Development in Modern Child Trafficking" was delivered by Lady Dr. Rose Udonwa. In her address, she x-rayed reasons for child abuse and trafficking and decried the action as "the gravest violation of human rights in the world today".

At 1.30pm the workshop rose up for a health break. All participants were served lunch with water and malt drink. By 2.30pm, the afternoon session of the workshop began.

Rev. Sr. Mary-Juliana Ada HHCJ sent in her paper on "School Discipline and Child Abuse" (The Thin Line). Sr. Ada's discourse extensively analysed different forms of discipline and the effects on the child. She concluded by saying that "the extent to which disciplinary measures are taken and the result of such measures are the major distinguishing factors between discipline and child abuse".

Interactive/Business Session

The Co-ordinator of the workshop, Prof. Mrs. Louisa Uwatt, working in one accord with the facilitator, Lady Charity Ottoho, had the participants split into four groups for the interactive session. Some participants asked questions for clarifications on issues raised in the topics discussed. At the end of the interactive session, a communiqué was raised.

The Communiqué

The participants resolved that:

1. The workshop on Child Abuse was necessary and appropriately organized.
2. Child Abuse should be abolished in all Catholic Schools and by extension to all public government Schools
3. Any staff involved in any form of Child Abuse should immediately be made to face the Disciplinary Committee of the School.
4. Proper and thorough investigation should be carried out. If the staff is found guilty, he/she should be appropriately dealt with irrespective of the personality involved.
5. Public enlightenment should be carried out by the government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on the causes, consequences and remediation of Child Abuse and Trafficking in the society.
6. Functional Counseling Units should be established in all Catholic Schools. Trained and qualified personnel should be employed to educate all and sundry on the ills of Child Abuse.
7. All Catholic Schools should have Moral Education on the Time Table. Qualified staff should be employed to teach Moral Education.
8. Parents should be educated on the proper care of their child/ward. Parents should take responsibility.

9. It should be noted that security and Child Abuse/Trafficking prevention is a collective effort of everyone as stakeholders in child's welfare.
10. Stigmatization of victims of any form of abuse should be discouraged in schools and the society.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the workshop was judged highly rewarding. Teachers, Caregivers and Administrative Staff were enjoined to feel the pangs of the evil of child abuse and trafficking. All staff should determine to improve and work assiduously towards removing the pains and the shame victims of child abuse experience, change the narratives about them and give them cause to rebuild confidence and self-concept.

The workshop was therefore timely and the objectives realized for positive manifestation whereby we "say something and do something positive when we see something".

Arc. Joseph Essessien
Acting Board Chairman

Mrs. Immaculata B. Ndem
Board Secretary

Very Rev. Fr. Dominic Umo
Executive Secretary