

REV. PROFESSOR HYACINTH EME ICHOKU: A PRIEST AND A SCHOLAR

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Abstract

This Festschrift was conceived to honour Rev. Fr. Professor Hyacinth Eme Ichoku, an Eminent Economist and Scholar, a Humane and Compassionate Priest and a Development Icon Per Excellence. The study examines the concise Biographical notes on the Honoree. The inquiry begins from his early academic training which started with degrees in Philosophy and Divinity. His thirst for interdisciplinary scholarship directs the work to look at Rev. Fr. Prof. H. E. Ichoku as a Priest, Economist and a Scholar of global status. The discussion reveals his Works and Contributions to Knowledge, his Publications mirroring down to his articles, Journals and Monographs. Furthermore, the research focuses on his Membership of many Professional Bodies which leads to his calling by the Catholic Bishops' Conference to serve as the Vice Chancellor of Veritas University. However, on the whole, the positive impact of his administrative acumen as a Humane and Compassionate Priest demonstrated in the building of New Cafeteria which houses the Zero Hunger Kitchen (ZHK) that provides succour to the indigent and needy students of the university. His cordial relationship with the host Communities of Zuma II and Gaba I & II through the provisions of social amenities and utilities including Security Provisions is also in focus. Furthermore, using oral and

written sources and applying the narrative and analytical tool, the study concludes by highlighting the Development strides encapsulated in both the Social and Spiritual Developments of the Veritas University Family.

Keywords: Eminent Economist, Scholar, Humane and Compassionate, Development Icon, Zero Hunger

Introduction

When I was approached to be one of the editors of this Festschrift in honour of Rev. Fr. Professor Hyacinth Eme Ichoku (The Honoree), I was taken aback because the personality in question is a distinguished and eminent economist, a scholar of international repute, a humane and compassionate priest and in fact, a development icon. To say the least, Prof. Hyacinth is like the proverbial parable of the six blind men and the elephant where each blind man feels a different part of the elephant's body and disagreeing on their findings, their collective wisdom however, leads to the truth, namely, different perspectives leading to distinct points of view.

And now, to you my dear Fr. Professor and Vice Chancellor, in this discussion, I would like to salute your achievements and accomplishments in the world of academia which are well documented. You are reputed as a prolific scholar by all and sundry. It's now in the glare of the public that people (all people around you, not just my humble self) have alluded to your compassionate nature. You are a very disciplined, dynamic and selfless administrator, a dedicated, austere, frugal and loyal priest. These testimonies aptly reflect your most frequent slogan which I have come to believe is your motto or philosophy of life: "...to defer the pleasures of today for a greater tomorrow." This is without prejudice to the philosophy that underlies your academic and practical work which I now quote: "that academic research should influence public finance practice and practice in turn should inform my academic work. I aim to bring my academic and research experiences to influence public decision-making through the collection, rigorous analysis and clear

presentation of reliable information for evidence-based policy”.

Analyzing your philosophy of life critically, one can easily point to specific instances when you have demonstrated fidelity to the above attributes, which has been testified by many of your mentees. To begin with, just a few days before this write-up, your staff members at Veritas University celebrated your birthday on the 6th of January 2023 with the most elegant, eloquent and kindest of words that one could ever express. These spontaneous testimonies of profound sentiments from your staff were triggered by the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the university, Ms. Evelyn Obekpa, who first wrote the following touching words:

YOU ARE, she says: “...

A strategist of incomparable pedigree
A pacesetter, trailblazer, pathfinder, goal-getter
An Iroko tree with branches large enough
for births of all kinds to patch on
A shepherd who trades off his pleasure for
the cause of his flocks
A quintessential leader, an astute
administrator, highly discipline and
resourceful academic of international
repute
A priest that neither human nor angel can
describe the immeasurable power of his
roles in imparting spiritual and moral
soundness
As you mark another milestone in your
life, may God open up another Vista for
greater exploits and continuous
contributions to the cause of humanity...".
publicrelations@veritas.edu.ng,
06/01/2023)

Yes indeed! Anyone who knows you closely will agree with

Evelyn, that she is very much on point to have expressed the aforementioned attributes about you. Glow with pride my father and Vice Chancellor for the blessings and favours of God are upon you and your many apostolates that He has bestowed on you to execute for the betterment of His people and to the glory of His name.

Biographical Notes On The Honoree

Rev Fr. Professor Hyacinth Eme Ichoku is a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Awka, Anambra State and a Professor of Development Microeconomics with primary interest in Health Economics. Until his appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of Veritas University Abuja in 2018, he was a Professor at the Department of Economics at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) where he taught Microeconomics, Econometrics and Public Finance. He has had intensive and diverse range of experience in the last 20 years teaching, researching, publishing, and consulting on public finance and health sector specific financing issues in Nigeria as evidenced in the details below. His academic training started with degrees in Philosophy and Divinity in 1984 and 1988, respectively. But since obtaining his first degree in Economics in 1998 he has focused mainly on economics with special interest in applied development microeconomics and Health Economics in which he obtained a Master's and PhD degrees from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in 2000 and 2006, respectively. He has taught and published widely in top international journals in the field of health economics and development microeconomics.

He has also won several research grants from national and international organizations including the Poverty and Policy Research Network, Supported by IDRC Canada, Nigerian Communication Commission, African Economic Research Consortium, World Health Organization - Geneva, WHO-AFRO - Brazzaville, National Research Foundation - South Africa, among others. My academic training has had interface with intensive consulting experience with several international

organizations including the World Bank, USAID, DFID, EU, WHO-AFRO, IDRC, Results for Development (USA), among others.

His Consultancy Services

His consultancy services have covered issues ranging from Public Expenditure Reviews, Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) to Medium Terms Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Health Sector Strategic Planning. These activities have involved close interaction and partnerships with public finance managers, ministries of finance, health, budget offices, Boards of internal revenue, and planning and research departments among others. A philosophy that underlies my academic and practical work is that academic research should influence public finance practice and practice in turn should inform my academic work. I aim to bring my academic and research experiences to influence public decision-making through the collection, rigorous analysis and clear presentation of reliable information for evidence-based policy.

Between 2003 and 2012 he combined intensive classroom teaching and extensive research for which he was awarded several international research grants including research grants from IDRC Canada, World Health Organization (WHO), National Research Foundation of South Africa, and African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) Nairobi which sponsored his PhD field research. He also published over 40 papers in international peer reviewed journals in the fields of health economics and general development microeconomics. For his contributions to his field of research interest he was promoted to the rank of Professor by the UNN Governing Council with effect from 2012.

Rev Professor Ichoku has had a wide range of field experience from consultancies undertaken for several international organizations including World Bank, USAID, DFID, EU, WHO, IDRC, Results for Development (USA), Apt Associates among others.

He has served as PhD Examiner to University of Cape Town (South Africa), North West University (South Africa), University of Lagos, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Awka) among others. He led an international accreditation team to University of Technology Namibia, and was a member of international accreditation to St Augustine College, Johannesburg.

Apart from his regular teaching and research Rev Prof Ichoku also served the University of Nigeria Nsukka in several capacities and chaired over 10 Committees of the University. He was the Director of Academic Planning of the University from 2011 to 2014 and the Director of Institute of Maritime Studies from 2014 to 2018. It was while still serving in this capacity that he was appointed the Vice-Chancellor of Veritas University in September 2018.

His Work Ethics

One of the most remarkable aspects of the honoree, Rev. Fr. Prof. H. E. Ichoku, is his work ethics. Having worked with him for the past four years, I have seen how fast his mind works and how much he pushes himself to work. There is no stopping or slowing down for him, and there is no keeping up with him either. In terms of research output and the ability to work across a broad range of disciplines, he is unique and inspirational.

My Higgi (Kamwe) people have a saying that: “when a man goes hunting and kills a lion, he is a great hunter, if he kills two, he is extraordinary and if he kills three then he is a witch” (Moonlight Oral Folklores of the Higgi/Kamwe People). Truly, when our people cannot unravel a mystique immediately, they attribute it to some supernatural force. So also in the case of Fr. Ichoku, one hardly blames anyone who sees him from afar and assumes that some otherworldly voice sits in the corner of his office and directs his works because the amount of time it takes to do what the honoree does requires almost superhuman abilities. There is no time one would visit his office that he is not attending to multiple tasks simultaneously, perusing through the heaps of

memos on his table and talking on serious subjects without leaving any gap. How he manages to put so many publications together without yielding the efforts necessary to nurture the demands of the office of the Vice Chancellor remains a mystery to many and it is worth studying.

A Team Leader *Per Excellence*

Fr. Ichoku's work ethics culminates in his constant push for team work where he sees the best in his colleagues and workers, thereby, harvesting their talents and gifts for the common good. This fact is demonstrated in his assemblage of the former Vice Chancellors and Director –Generals in order to form a formidable congregation of scholars of international repute to drive the dreams of our Founding Fathers of Veritas University. The litany of the former Vice Chancellors and Director –Generals reads like this:

Prof. Mike Kwanashie (Former Vice Chancellor of Veritas University, Abuja)

Prof. Mike Umale Adiku (Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Abuja)

Prof. Simon Koma Okwute (Pioneer Vice Chancellor of Kogi State University, Anyigba)

Prof. Osuagwu Linus (Former Vice Chancellor Eastern Palm University, Ogboko, Imo State)

Prof. Ignatius Animawo (Former Vice Chancellor Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma)

Prof. Epiphany Azinge, OON, SAN (Former Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies)

The aforementioned gives -deep insights into the work ethics of Fr. Ichoku anchored on team work and collective leadership. Being my Vice Chancellor, spiritual father and mentor, I see the words of the Apostle Paul play out in him, as indeed Fr. Ichoku has become all things to all people so that by all means possible he might save them, (1 Corinthians 9:22). Yes! His talents include

this ability to be at home with diverse people and relate to them in a convivial and humane manner. For a man of his status and caliber who has risen to the peak of his academic career as Vice Chancellor, he could very well risk not taking on such an arduous responsibility of relating with all and sundry irrespective of class and creed, yet he does.

Those of us who are his mentees can also testify to how much he has used his personal and institutional resources to help our feet get grounded in the soil of the academy. He has been a father figure to his staff and generations of Veritas students and, I believe, students of many other universities who drink from his fountain of knowledge too.

His Research/Scholarly Activities Books

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2. Ataguba, A. J., Ichoku, H.E., and Fonta, W.M (2008), *Estimating the Willingness to Pay for Community Healthcare Insurance in Rural Nigeria*, PEP Working Paper No 2008-10, <http://www.pep-net.org/NEW-PEP/Group/papers/wp.htm>
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- (1) Ichoku H.E. (2011) Mobilizing Additional Resources for Health to Expand Access to the Poor and attain Universal Coverage, Paper presented at the three-day international seminar organized by the National Health Insurance Scheme (Nigeria) and National Primary Health Care Development Authority (Nigeria) on: Improving Financial Access to Health Services for the Poor- Calabar, Nigeria, November 1-3, 2011
- (2) Ichoku H.E. (2011) Africanizing the Social Determinants of Health: Embedded Structural Inequalities and Current Health Outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa, A paper present at the 8th iHEA Conference, Toronto July 10-13, 2011
- (3) Ichoku H.E. (2009) Alternatives to Privatization and Commercialization in the West African Health Sector" Paper presented at the Municipal Services Project (MSP) conference, University of Greenwich, London, June 15-16, 2009
- (4) Ichoku H.E. (2009) Social engagement, social consciousness, and social responsibility the limits and possibilities, A Paper presented the 10th Anniversary Celebration of St Augustine's Collage, Johannesburg South Africa, July 14 - 16, 2009
- (5) Ataguba J. Ichoku, HE & Okorafor O, (2009) Child Health in Nigeria: empirical investigation of determinants" Paper presented at the First Conference of African Health Economics and Policy Association, Accra, Ghana, March 9-12, 2009
- (6) Ichoku H.E. Fonta F. and Ogujiuba K. (2007) Fairness of out-of-pocket payments: Empirical evidence from Nigeria" Paper delivered at the meeting of the Society for the study of Economic Inequality" - Berlin Academy of Sciences - Berlin, July 12-15, 2007
- (7) Ichoku H.E and Fonta W.M. (2007) "Equity effects of direct health care financing under alternative decomposition frameworks" Paper presented at the 7th Conference of International Health Economists Association (iHEA), Copenhagen Business School,

- Copenhagen, July 7-11, 2007
- (8) The redistributive and impoverishing effects of healthcare financing in Enugu State - Paper delivered at the Enugu Policy Forum (facilitated by the African Institute for Applied Economics) Feb. 28, 2006
 - (9) The Income Redistributive Effects of healthcare Financing in Nigeria - A research report prepared for Poverty and Economic Policy Group - Canada (84 pages)
 - (10) Ichoku H.E (2003) "Recent Developments in the Framework for Poverty Analysis" A seminar paper presented at the Institute for Applied Economics AIAE) October 22, 2003

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- (1) Jones M, Bentham J, Ichoku H.E. Wheeler M. and Ayala F. (2012) Financial Access (FINACCESS) Design Mission to develop a comprehensive design for DFID intervention in the Health Sector of northern states, (Report submitted to DFID)
- (2) Ichoku H.E. and Achor Nkeiru (2012) Public Investment Management Analysis for Imo State (Report Submitted to the World Bank)
- (3) Ichoku H.E (2011) Nigeria: Political Economy and Institutional Governance of the Erosion and Watershed Management System for NEWMAP (Report submitted to the World Bank)
- (4) Ichoku H.E. (2010) Design of Performance based Financing (PBF) for Health Sectors in Katsina and Yobe State, (Report submitted Save the Children UK,
- (5) Singleton G., Ichoku H.E., Surridge M.,(2010)Health services for the very poor: options for implementing free MCH policy in DRF sites (Report to Partnership for Reviving Routine Immunization in Northern Nigeria PRRINN/DFID)
- (6) Ichoku, H (2008) Public Expenditure Review for the Health Sector: Anambra State: (Report Prepared for EU-SRIP)

- (7) Nwoko C and Ichoku H.E. (2008) Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Report for Anambra State Report prepared for European SRIP/European Union and The World Bank.
- (8) Onwujekwe O, Ichoku H. and Nielsen L.C.(2008) "Medium Term Sector Strategy for the Federal Ministry of Health" Report submitted to PATHS/DFID - Abuja
- (9) Barker C, M. Yakubu, H. Ichoku, and Amahson S. (2008) Kano State Health Sector Strategic Plan Report submitted to PATHS/DFID
- (10) Maugham S, Ichoku H.E, Badawi A (2007) "Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Report Jigawa State, Nigeria" Report submitted to SLGP/DFID
- (11) Maugham S, Ichoku H.E., Badawai A, (2007) Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Report for Kano State" Report submitted to SLGP/DFID
- (12) Ichoku, H.E., with Fonta, W.M., (2006) Kaduna State Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Performance Report; Technical Report submitted to The World Bank Country Office Asokoro, Abuja
- (13) Ichoku H.E (2002) *Public Expenditure Analysis for Akwa Ibom State Government* - (Report submitted to the World Bank)

Research Grants Won And Consultancy Services Rendered

Rev. Fr. Professor Hyacinth Eme Ichoku has over the years won several research grants from national and international organizations including the Poverty and Policy Research Network, Supported by IDRC Canada, Nigerian Communication Commission, African Economic Research Consortium, World Health Organization - Geneva, WHO-AFRO - Brazaville, National Research Foundation - South Africa. His academic training has had interface with intensive consulting experience with several international organizations including the World Bank, USAID, DFID, EU, WHO-AFRO, IDRC, among others. The consultancy services have covered issues ranging from Public Expenditure Review, Public

Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) to Medium Terms Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and Health Sector Strategic Planning. These activities have involved close interaction and partnerships with public finance managers, ministries of finance, health, budget offices, Boards of internal revenue, and planning and research departments among others.

His Working Experience

1. Director Institute of Maritime Studies, University of Nigeria, Nov 6, 2014 2018
2. Ag Director Academic Planning, University of Nigeria, Nsukka July 2011 – 2014
3. Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 2001 till date
4. National Research Foundation Post-Doctoral Research on Health and Wealth with Prof D McIntyre (PI) – Health Economics Unit, University of Cape Town (2009)
5. Financial Administrator: Catholic Institute for West Africa, Port Harcourt – Nigeria (1989 – 1993)
6. Chairman, Project Implementation Committee for Proposed Peter University (Achina-Onneh), Anambra State
7. Chairman Awka Diocesan Health Scheme
8. Chairman: Awka Diocesan Pension Scheme
9. Founding Secretary, Uzundu Micro Finance Bank, Awka, Anambra state
10. Member Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria Finance Council
11. Member Board of Salus Trust Ltd (Health Management Organization)
12. Member Awka Diocesan Finance Council
13. Member Awka Diocesan Synod Preparatory Commission (2017)
14. Bursar, Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt (1989-1992)
15. Vice-Chancellor, Veritas University, Abuja (2018 Till date)

List Of Developments Recorded Under Him Thus Far

Just as captured in the Gospel of John 21:25, "...there are so many things that have been done and if every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would have no room for them..." In the same way, the long list of developments carried out under the leadership and direction of Fr. Ichoku would be difficult to list them within the realm of this write-up; however, these few are recorded just to highlight what this development icon represents.

Admissions

From just over 1200 students in 2018 when he took over the mantle of leadership in Veritas University in September 2018, now have over 5000 undergraduate students as at December 10th 2022. This academic year we were overwhelmed with admission requests that we had to shut down admissions because we had to limit ourselves to the number we could accommodate, as the university operates full residential policy.

Commencement of New Programmes

It is pleasant to note that in March of last year, the National Universities Commission (NUC) approved the commencement of four new undergraduate academic programmes for us, namely; Pharmacy, Nursing and Medical Laboratory Science, and Software Engineering. Our thanks go to the Executive Secretary of NUC, Professor Rasheed Abubakar, for his benign disposition towards the development of private universities in Nigeria which has enabled us obtain approvals for these programmes. With the 2022/2023 academic year currently running, we have been able to admit fresh students into these new programmes and we look forward to making them part of our flagship programmes.

JUPEB/IJMB

Under the able leadership of Prof. Ichoku, Veritas University was certified to run the Interim Joint Universities Preliminary Programme (IJMB) and Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB) from the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020

academic sessions respectively. JUPEB and IJMB are National Examination bodies saddled with the responsibility of conducting examinations for students, who have undergone approved subject combinations and are seeking Direct Entry admissions into Nigerian and partnering foreign tertiary institutions.

What is the difference between JUPEB and IJMB?

Moderation/Regulation: IJMB is under the control of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria while JUPEB is being moderated by the University of Lagos, however both certificates can be used for any of its affiliated universities.

Veritas University has assumed leadership roles with JUPEB as some of our Tutors have been officially inducted as Assessors and Markers of the national examinations. Few days ago, Veritas University has been selected to set Test Items (TI) in four different subject areas of JUPEB in preparation for the 2023 JUPEB national examinations taking place in July/August 2023.

Accreditation of Academic Programmes

Veritas University currently offers over fifty-six (56) undergraduate and graduate programmes across eight (8) Faculties which include: Faculty of Education, Humanities, Natural and Applied Sciences, Management Sciences, Social Sciences, Law, Engineering and Faculty of Health Sciences. All our programmes are currently accredited by the NUC. However, some are due for re-accreditation and have just recently undergone reaccreditation exercise by the National Universities Commission (NUC). WE are hopeful that within the first quarter of 2023, all these programmes would be fully reaccredited by the NUC. To achieve this, our laboratories for the science programmes were upgraded with new equipment for clinical studies. We also updated our library collections of the various programmes that faced accreditation. All these have come at no easy cost, but in line with the vision of our Founding Fathers, we are committed to making Veritas University a centre of quality education, and to that, all our academic programmes are fully accredited.

Our Students Continue to Excel: Among other accomplishments during the 2021/2022 session, our Debating Team for all Nigerian Universities won the Uyo Debate Championship. They beat many other universities including universities of Lagos, Calabar, Ilorin and Federal University of Technology Owerri, among others to emerge top. They have just returned from Nairobi last month where they went to represent Nigerian Universities at the All-Africa Universities Championship in Nairobi this December. In April and June of this year 2023 they will also represent Nigeria in the World Universities Debate Championship to be held in New York (USA), Madrid (Spain) and Kampala (Uganda) respectively.

Infrastructural Developments

· New Hostels

With our growing student population, we have had to double our efforts in building new hostels for our new and existing students. In the course of 2022, we have built a new 506 bed capacity hostel to accommodate more students. We are also building a 410 bed capacity hostel for female students through Building and Transfer and a 210 bed capacity male hostels have just been completed in anticipation of increased enrolment for the next academic session. All these developments were possible only thanks to Fr. ICHOKU

· Completion of the Chike Idigbe Law Faculty

We are happy to announce that the Chike Idigbe Law Faculty has been completed and the faculty has moved into this new building. What is left now is the landscaping. The Idigbe family is proposing to use this Faculty Building to mark the posthumous 100th Birthday Anniversary of Justice Chike Idigbe in the first quarter of next year. We cannot thank Sir Anthony Idigbe (SAN) who has supported this project from inception to this stage. May God continue to prosper him and his family.

- **Faculty of Health Sciences Building**

The construction of the Faculty of Health Sciences building is in progress and is nearing completion. The edifice which is a two-story building with over 24 laboratories and classrooms and 23 offices is expected to be completed by first quarter of 2023. At this point we want to thank in a special way the Honourable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Muhammadu Bello for approving our MOU with three Hospitals in the FCT where our students of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Medical Laboratory Science can have their practical experience. We also thank the Chief Medical Director, Prof Bissallah Ekele and his management team at the Abuja University Teaching Hospital for approving an MOU with the Teaching Hospital for our students of Health Sciences and Pharmacy to use their facilities for their practical experience.

- **Engineering and Innovation Building**

We are pleased to also report that we are set to commence the construction of our Engineering and Innovation Centre. This project which is being sponsored by a kind and generous benefactor of the University is expected to accommodate students of our Engineering and Computer Science programmes. As originally envisioned, we intend to make the Center an innovation hub where our students will be exposed to innovative ideas.

- **Upgrade of the University Clinic**

The University is in the process of receiving two containers of medical equipment and supplies from Project CURE, an American based medical Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). The donation of these equipment is as a result of our engagement with Project CURE to assist us in upgrading our medical facilities. The donated items which have a value of N150 million will help to boost and upgrade the capacity of our University Clinic as well as improve the training of our students in the Nursing and Medical Lab Science programmes.

· **The Chaplain's House**

On the spiritual side, we commenced the construction of the residence for the University Chaplain last year and it is with immense joy that we report the completion of this project which is a 4-bedroom duplex. It has since been occupied. The project was handled internally by our Works Department at a cost of about N55million. We want to thank the Knights of St Mulumba for their support in the building of this house for our dear priests, namely, the University Chaplain, the Dean of Students Affairs and others whose presence on campus is crucial for the welfare of the students.

· **The E-Library**

We want to express our gratitude to the Papal Knights who came to our aid to fund the building of the university E-Library. The building has finally been completed and our library which was previously housed on the top floor of Block D has now been relocated to the E-Library building to provide more space for academic classrooms and other activities.

· **New Cafeteria and Students Welfare**

We have completed the building of the students' cafeteria consisting of five shops to replace the make shift stalls on the road to the male hostels. One of the shops has been assigned to the Students Welfare Committee to operate and provide affordable meals to our students. This was also done as a means of controlling the pricing of food on campus and we are pleased to report that so far, the Committee is doing well as they enjoy good patronage from the students. We have the word of Fr. Ichoku that in the future, we hope to replicate the same structures at the female hostel in order to avoid a reoccurrence of fire hazards.

· **Assistance to our Host Communities**

Veritas University is fully aware of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to our host communities. We have provided these communities with boreholes, constructed overhead tanks and provided generators for pumping of water.

This we did to alleviate the problem of search for water in these communities. We have also provided them with electric transformer to ensure electricity supply, and granted scholarships to several students in these communities to study tuition free in Veritas University. Above all we fund the military and police patrol in these communities to provide them with security and also ensure a security buffer zone for the University.

· **Security Challenges**

As we are all aware, the year 2022 has been a tough year for Nigeria in terms of the internal security of the country. As a private university operating in Nigeria, we have had to be on our toes in ensuring the safety of our students and staff. Management has therefore, had to divert some of the university's scarce resources to provide adequate security in and around the campus. This year alone, we have spent nothing less than N70million to provide logistics for our security architecture which comprises of men of the Nigeria Army, the Nigerian Police, the DSS, Hunters, Armed Guards, and other security operatives. On a sad note, in the course of the year 2022, we lost Captain Samuel of the 7 Brigade Battalion during a clearance exercise of terrorists by the Nigeria Army in some remote communities on the Abuja-Kaduna state boarder. Captain Samuel was a dedicated officer who had so much love and the interest for the safety of Veritas University. We remain saddened by his demise and we pray the good Lord to continue to grant his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, eternal rest in peace. Amen.

· **Naming of Some Structures in the University**

The administrative Board of the CBCN has graciously approved the naming of some structures in the University. Apart from the naming of our Faculty of Law Building after Justice Chike Idigbe, a former Judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria and former Chief Judge of the Midwestern Region, the following names have now been approved for the following structures:

- i. Academic Block A is now known as John Cardinal Onaiyekan Building for his contributions as one of the founding fathers of Veritas University.
- ii. Academic Block B is henceforth to be known as John the Baptist Building in recognition of the contributions of the Knights of St John International.
- iii. Academic Block C has been named Archbishop Felix Alaba Job Building. This is in recognition for his contributions as one of the Founding Fathers of our university.
- iv. Academic Block D has been named after Archbishop Anthony Obinna. This is in recognition for his contributions as one of the Founding Fathers of our university.
- v. The Chapel has also been named after Fr. Abraham Ojefua Chapel, in recognition of the efforts of the Knights of St. Mulumba in building and donating that chapel to the university.

Conclusion

As I mentioned at the beginning of this work, my desire to make this modest contribution in this *Festschrift* is to first and foremost, honour a highly respected academic and a humble priest. This piece of work therefore, is dedicated to the remarkable career of Rev. Fr. Professor Hyacinth Eme Ichoku and the role he has played in mentoring us, his staff and students. Fr. Ichoku's accomplishments are legendary especially here in Veritas University community and indeed, everywhere he has worked as can be seen from his vast working experience captured above. To be candid, if we think about the impact Fr. Ichoku has made in our individual lives as gathered from the testimonies of those he has touched their lives, then it will be proper to say our professional lives would not be the same without the lessons and the approaches to decision making that we learned from him.