

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF FR. TANSI LAY CISTERCIANS, OUR LADY OF MOUNT CALVARY CISTERCIAN ABBEY, AWHUM, ENUGU NIGERIA, W/AFRICA.

Email: laycistercianawhum@yahoo.com

All which makes it possible to incarnate the Lay Cistercian Life in the world.

INTRODUCTION- The journey so far from our start to the present stage has met with lots of encounter and experiences. As something that resembles gold- digging, it has not been smooth all through. One does not expect success on a platter of gold as its difficult times made the entire process worthy.

ORIGIN – To get started on an innovation that never existed calls for much thoughtfulness. Our pioneers led by Mrs Veronica Umegakwe in 1995, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, requested to the then Abbot – General Dom Bernado Olivera, OCSO during his pastoral visit to Nigeria in the presence of Dom Anthony Onuoha, the then superior of Awhum Monastery in 1995, that an association of this nature to be allowed for the then Fr. Tansi Solidarity Movement of Nigeria members desiring and willing. This was met with a holistic affirmation in response.

ORGANISATION – Our pioneers had to do much consultation, prayers for guidance of the Holy Spirit and various forms of sacrifices. Such initial approach metamorphosed into enviable height by subsequent administrations. We remain grateful to all who were instrumental to this upliftment especially Dom Anthony Onuoha OCSO former superior who gave us the initial formation and guidance.

DIFFICULTY – One among the difficulties we face is POVERTY. With crumbling economic situation and dwindling unsatisfactory approach to the yearnings of the masses by our political leaders, uncertainty prevails in members’ zeal to financial contributions.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES- If the understanding of people living as a community is not humanly smooth, then uniting those from separate homes calls for greater effort. However, with the benefits derived from letio divina, counseling and prayer, we have continued to forge ahead.

BENEFITS – It is a thing of joy and fulfillment for ordinary lay and unworthy creatures like us to be favoured in sharing the Cistercian charism by the order.

EVOLUTION – As a new movement in the Cistercian order, individual monks and nuns had diverse views as regards our yearnings and aspirations. We doff our cap to our chaplain and then superior of our monastery Dom Anthony Onuoha, OCSO under whose tenure in 1995, we kicked off. He made lots of clarification to enlighten the entirety of his community and others.

BEREAVEMENT – Our group has from inception suffered the demise of some members ranging from postulants, Novices, simple professed and a finally professed – Mary Therese Onwuzegha who died in office as secretary. Such were sad and sorrowful moments of grief. As we recount our light (easy) experiences, these dark (difficult) times remain indelible. We do not rely in committing their souls to God together with late Dom Bertrand M. C. Okoh our inspirer and former superior of our monastery.

CHALLENGES As an adult organisation with members drawn up from varying age bracket, some fall sick and get bed-ridden due to prolonged ailment. The resources to support projects and activities are not easy to come by as most members are pressed downwards by family worries. From our academic

backgrounds, we pass through unprecedented upheavals to ensure that the shallow literate are accommodated with the highly literate members. Enforcement of rules on members who already had different spiritual set – up, has given the coordinator and our leadership council members much concern. We remain focused in finding remedies to these which now count as achievements.

GROWTH – The numerical strength striving from eleven to thirty – Six is a clear indication that this movement has come to stay. Our formation and discipline has remained commendable due to the administrative skill and valuable input of our present indomitable coordinator- Bro. Hyacinth Mary Onyebu. Within his tenure, we have recorded numerous undeniable and wholesome touches in attaining our desired goal. May God continue to replenish his resources in this herculean task.

ACCEPTANCE/APPROVAL

Belonging to the Cistercian community was not by chance. It was a gradual issue that involved some misunderstandings at a stage before the unanimous approval and Acceptance both by our monastery, general chapter of the Cistercian order and Steering Committee of the International Association of Lay Cistercian

GRATITUDE – We are grateful to Almighty God through the intercession of our Blessed mother Virgin Mary. We appreciate our hero Blessed Fr. Cyprian Michael Tansi, Dom Bernado olivera, OCSO and the present Abbot – General Dom Eamon Fitz Gerald. To the past leadership of our monastery and the present Sole Administrator Dom Lawrence Okechukwu Ezeilo OCSO we say thank you and God bless.

Bro. Christopher Mary Onwuzegha
(Secretary, Lay Cistercian, Awhum Monastery)

Bro. Hyacinth Mary Onyebu
(Coordinator)