



Fr. Martin Ifeanyi Onuoha.

I was born on the 17th of July 1973, the third of nine children. **My ordination to the priesthood was on 4th August 2001**, after completing my undergraduate studies in Philosophy (1996) and in Theology (2001) with the Pontifical Urban University Rome (through Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, Nigeria), and also obtaining a Higher National Diploma in Mass Communication from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. **I served as assistant parish priest for three years in my home diocese of Ahiara**, in Imo State, Nigeria, and also as a parish priest for two years, before being sent for further studies in Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross Rome, Italy.

After my master's degree (Licentiate), I served for a short time in a parish in New York, as my bishop in Nigeria preferred that I pursue a doctorate degree in a parish setting, to forestall my turning out an abstract theologian, out of touch with pastoral realities. He was willing to have me do some mission work after my studies, since priests are not in short supply in the diocese. We have about five hundred indigenous priests (Diocesan and Religious) working in different parts of the world - my diocese is often called the *Ireland of Africa*.

It was during my time in New York that I encountered an English priest who relayed to me the pressing need for priests in the UK, as some dioceses were closing and selling some of their churches. It was such a shock to me, coming from a country where the Church is still young (just about a hundred years old) and vibrant, with many new parishes and dioceses being created, and magnificent churches rising. I had just fundraised and supervised the building of a presbytery and new Church before leaving my country. The question put to me was, "Why would you prefer to serve in the US, in a parish with six priests, while there are parishes without a single priest elsewhere?" I prayed about this and had a chat with my bishop, who himself studied in England. He was agreeable to a move to England. I told my English friend to contact the diocese and, if they wanted me, I would willingly come. They did and here I am!

There was indeed work to be done. **I arrived in November 2008, served first as assistant parish priest in St Joseph's Birkenhead till 2010**; as a supply priest in eight parishes around the diocese and as assistant parish priest in the parishes of St Werburgh and St Clare in Chester till 2011; as parish priest (parochial administrator) of St. Clare's, Chester till 2016; followed by Holy Angels, Hale Barns, from 2016 to 2020. **I arrived Stockport in October 2020 to look after the three parishes of Our Lady and Apostles, Edgeley, St Ambrose's, Adswold, and St. Vincent de Paul, Bramhall.**

I combine my parish pastoral duties with serving as a theology lecturer and member of the HIRS (Higher Institute of Religious Sciences) Council at Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, since completing my doctoral research in 2013.

It has been sometimes challenging, but an amazing experience altogether. I have met very lovely people and made many good friends. I am gradually getting used to life in England - not predicting/trusting the weather, fish and chips and fish pie (my favourite). I am glad to be here to serve God in his people in the best way I can.

God bless.