

KNOW YOUR NEW PASTOR!

My name is Rev. Fr. Emmanuel UC Izuka. I was born & raised in Nigeria to late Ignatius & late Rose Izuka. I am the 4th son & the 6th child of the 6 children born by my parents. I am the baby of the family. Born on April 11, 1969 my mom told me that I was baptized only one week after my birth. It was during the heat of the horrible 30 months Nigerian & Biafra war (1967 to 1970). My mom was afraid that my dad may be forcefully recruited into the army & that he may not come home again so she ensured that the Priest baptized me only one week after I was born. There is a five years gap between me & my immediate older brother. It was as if my parents were done with child bearing when eventually I was conceived. But being conceived at the heat of the war that ravaged my country, it was hard to believe how almost every adult male in our neighborhood was recruited & taken into the army but my dad was not. A good number of our neighbors reported to the task force that were recruiting people that a certain man (my dad) has not been recruited & the army will storm our house often times in a rage to recruit him but as soon as they set their eyes on my pregnant mother, they will offer apologies & walk away. And so when finally I was born, my parents gave me the name Emmanuel—God is with us. They also gave me my middle name—*"Uchennagaeme"*—God's Will & not our wills always prevail. In my culture, parents give names to the children after taking into consideration circumstances/events surrounding their birth. My parents believed it was the spirit of God in their unborn baby that kept them together during that time of turmoil.

When I was 8 years old, I received my first Holy Communion & was confirmed same day. Soon after that I joined the Altar Servers & started serving at Mass with some of my friends. After Mass I will come home & in the evening I will gather all the children in our neighborhood & preside at Mass like the priest does on the altar while they offer responses & songs. So even at that early age, everybody in our neighborhood was already calling me a priest. After graduating from the elementary/primary school I went into the seminary in October 1982 at the age of 13 to begin my seminary formation for the priesthood. We were about 360 children who were admitted that day. By June 1988 we were only 65 who graduated from high school. The rest either left on their own or were expelled from school by the authorities.

By October 1988, I was admitted into the University. The famous St Joseph Major Seminary an Affiliate Institute of the Urban University Rome where I graduated in June 1992 with a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy (*Magna cum laude*) & a Diploma in Latin. The Bishop assigned me & my colleagues to teach for one year in the minor seminary in my diocese from October 1992 to June 1993. By October 1993, I was again admitted into St Joseph Major Seminary for another four years of theological studies. By June 1996, I obtained my Bachelor's degree in Theology (*Magna cum laude*) & by June 1997 a Master's degree in Theology was conferred on me. Fortunately in a class of about 360 students only eleven were ordained priests on August 23, 1997.

My father was a school Principal & retired in 1982 after many years of fruitful service. My mom was a classroom teacher. She retired from teaching in 1983. Few months after her retirement, she became very sick. Her diagnosis showed she had cancer. So my mother was very sick all through my years in the seminary. We almost lost her in 1995 but thank God she survived after series of sickness. From then on, my mother like Simeon in the bible prayed just to see her baby son be ordained a priest. And she did. After my ordination in August 1997, she danced like she had never done in years. She prayed to be taken by God so she can go rest in peace. She lived on for about four years & then died on August 15, 2001 on the Solemnity of the Assumption.

Immediately following my priestly ordination in 1997, I served as an associate pastor in two different parishes and was eventually made a pastor in a parish of about 1,800 families. I served in this parish from December 1999 till August 2008 when I left for the United States. I arrived in Lubbock Texas & a month after I went to Minneapolis where I did 4 units program in Clinical Pastoral Education in my desire to be a chaplain in the hospital or prison. I concluded the program in June 2009 & went back to Texas. The weather in Minneapolis was too cold for me. Then in September 2009 I was accepted to serve in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe by Archbishop Emeritus Michael J. Sheehan. I was immediately assigned to St Jude Thaddeus Parish Albuquerque as an associate Pastor where I served for about 10 months & was later made the Pastor of St. Joseph Church in Springer & missions & Immaculate Conception Church Cimarron & missions in the Moreno Valley.

I served for 7 years there & while there I went back to school at Highlands University New Mexico where I obtained my second Master's degree in Guidance & Counseling with concentration on School Counseling. I graduated in May 2014. I also obtained my United States Citizenship in September 2015. With a dedicated team of Staff, Council Members & Building Committee Members, we accomplished a whole lot in Springer & Cimarron & capped it all with the completion of the building & dedication of the Holy Angels church in Angel Fire. If you happen to be in that area, stop by & take a look at the beautiful church in the Moreno Valley.

After serving for seven years in St Joseph Church Springer and Immaculate Conception Cimarron and missions, Archbishop John Wester appointed me to serve at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church Peralta and mission. And here I am. I humbly ask for your patience and understanding. I humbly ask for your support and encouragement as together with the staff and various Councils and Committees, we seek to serve you well. Above all I humbly ask for your prayers that God's Holy Spirit will always flourish in my life and heart as I seek to serve you with the best of my abilities. May the Blessed Virgin Mary the Patroness of our Parish continue to intercede for us and may all do always bring greater glory and honor to God and as well bring about salvation of our souls.