

# SOCIETY OF ST. BARTIMAEUS

SOCIETY OF ST. BARTIMAEUS, INC. is a 501c3 nonprofit charity organization working to establish support systems for underserved people with disabilities in Nigeria. We believe in the value of every life and celebrate God's creation communicating love and worth to each human heart. We are building meaningful & sustainable centers to assist those in need and provide life-giving relationships that will glorify God.

## *Our Vision*

In Nigeria, the impoverished blind feel abandoned, without access to their basic needs. Some of the poor frail elderly have no family or friends to care for them; they are left to bear their pains alone, to weep alone, leaving this life lonely and hungry. There are no public assistance programs or services established in that region to respond to these vital needs. We, the Bartimites, envision a community-based support systems that will awaken in them hope and courage to live a more joyful and fulfilling life.

## *Our Mission*

Christ calls us to take care of the poor (cf. Mat 25:44-45). Society of St. Bartimaeus is established to accomplish this by providing a housing facility, food, clothing, medicine, and education for the impoverished blind, the elderly, and those who are isolated, starving, and living in slums of Nigeria. SSB accompanies them in their struggles, helping them find purpose and meaning in life.

*Lord, I need You!*

*Lord, I need you every moment of my life.*

*I need your Breath of life.*

*I need a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit.*

*Open the eyes of my heart that I may see you;*

*in seeing you, that I may know you;*

*in knowing you, that I may love you;*

*in loving you, that I may serve you;*

*in serving you, that I may live for you;*

*in living for you, that I may die in you;*

*in dying in you, that I may enter*

*into life without dying.*

† Prayer by Fr. Martin Livinus Ibeh



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**Join Us as we are called together to  
Blossom, Shine Forth and Bear  
fruits of pure love & self-emptying  
to the Glory of God.**

-Father Martin L. Ibeh

# SOCIETY OF ST. BARTIMAEUS



*...That I May See. -Mark 10:51*

OPEN THE EYES  
OF MY  
*Heart*  
*To See*  
GOD'S PEOPLE IN NEED



[www.stbartimaeus.org](http://www.stbartimaeus.org)



## A LOOK INTO OUR STORY

In 1999, Martin L. Ibeh, was training to become a teacher in Southern part of Nigeria. One morning, while on the way to school, Martin ran into a seven year old boy called Lewechi; he was born blind. His poor mother always brought him to the roadside to beg, leaving him by himself throughout the day. When he's hungry, Lewechi would eat whatever food item he received. When no one gave him anything, he had to starve for that day. He had no companion, no friend, no access to education. No one took him to Church. He seemed to have nothing to live for; it was a great pain for him spending most of his life alone in a world that reduced him to beggary.

That evening, thoughts of Lewechi's condition couldn't get off Martin's mind, bringing back memories of his (Martin's) sister, Lilian, who is blind. She was infected with rubella when she was an infant. Rubella got into her eyes, and before their parents realized it, it had robbed her of her sight. Sorrowfully, Martin spent that night fighting back tears as he mulled over the plight of so many youths living with a visual impairment, who are in the same unpleasant situation as Lilian & Lewechi, and those living with serious physical disabilities around the country. Some of them stay indoors by themselves all day long, feeling abandoned, without access to their basic needs. The government does not have any programs and services to help them. Some of the rich seem to see them and look away. One could imagine what it is like living without friends, without support, without anyone to show them the face of love. This can be more distressing for a person who cannot see.

*Who would be their eyes, their companion, their friend, their comfort and hope?*

God is calling someone to be there for them, to lead them through the way, to awaken consolation and joy in their hearts. We can't hear and understand what the Lord wants us to do for Him until we stay still and listen to His gentle voice speaking in the silence of our hearts.

*"Behold, I come to do Your Will."*

*- Hebrews 10:9*

*After his priestly ordination in 2018, Fr. Martin kept hearing the whispering of the Holy Spirit within him.*

He felt the Lord calling him to make His comforting presence visible among the very poor who are in distressed conditions, *to be His eyes to the blind, feet to the crippled, and voice to the voiceless.*

Fr. Martin couldn't silence this "still small voice," for it was like a **fire blazing deep inside his heart**. After spending quality time praying and discerning a way forward, Fr. Martin contacted a very spirit-filled religious sister: Rev. Sr. MaryAnn Chimarama Odidika asking her to help oversee the development of the community in Nigeria. She generously accepted to take up this responsibility. In 2019, Father Martin started the *Society of St. Bartimaeus*, a community of prayer and accompaniment for those like Lewechi and Lilian who are blind and for those who are lonely living with severe physical disabilities.



## The Joy of Chimezie

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.  
*-Romans 8:28*



Chimezie, 20, was born blind. Soon after he was born, Chimezie's poor widowed mother looked at his eyes and was shocked to find that his eyes didn't form well.

Chimezie likes music, and is confident that his physical blindness will not prevent him from pursuing his dream to become a successful musician. Asked what he would want God to do for him...Chimezie said,

*"I wish the Lord would open my eyes, even for a second, to see the splendor and beauty of God's creation.."*

