

ALA-NSO: "HOLY GROUND"

THE SSB CENTER

On November 16, 2023, the Society of St. Bartimaeus formally dedicated and opened the Village Center, known by the local villagers as Ala-Nso, meaning "Holy Ground". This was a major milestone in a three-year long journey.



Our spiritual advisor, Fr. Martin Ibeh, went to Nigeria to celebrate this significant event. The ceremony marked a new phase of our mission, moving from planning to execution. An exuberant crowd of villagers celebrated the event, that included blessing of the land and the building, the unveiling of the large crucifix, the blessing of Our Lady's statue of Perpetual Help, an inaugural Mass, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament as well as a banquet of local food. The villagers, attired in colorful dresses with matching head wraps, expressed their gratitude and joy with dancing to the cultural lively rhythms and traditional drumbeats.

Fr. Martin's dance stole the show! When there is real peace in the soul, the heart can't but leap with joy.

"But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish." ~Psalm 19:18.



Photo above: Life-size Our Lady of Perpetual Help statue, blessed by Father Martin, stands at the entrance to the SSB Village Center



Photo above: Nigerian children sing and praise the Lord with Father Martin Ibeh on his November pilgrimage home.

Photo on left: Villagers give thanks as Father Martin Ibeh blesses the grounds of the SSB Center known to the Nigerian people as Ala-Nso "Holy Ground".



COME AND SEE

Early in 2023, Father Martin spoke with Foundress Mother Augustina Omenaogu Oyanne of the "Missionary Sisters of Mary Our Mother and Refuge" about the Village Center and the great need for staff to do the work of serving the poor. Mother Superior said, "let me come and see." While on site, she without hesitation embraced the opportunity to staff the Center. She immediately assigned Sisters John Vianney Nwonye (a trained nurse) and Mary Emmanuel Ugwu to operate the center for the SSB.

Having a trained nurse allows the SSB to engage in a medical mission to serve those who would otherwise not have access to medical services.



GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PEOPLE

The need for basic medical care in the village is of paramount importance. Poor villagers flock to the center daily as it has become a sanctuary for comfort and care since they have no access to healthcare elsewhere. Villagers with severe disabilities and some frail elderly patients have been admitted in the center for treatment and rehabilitation.

Photos below: The workings of the Holy Spirit are clear as God works through Sister John Vianney Nwonye, a trained nurse, to provide care.





Captivated by the Cross

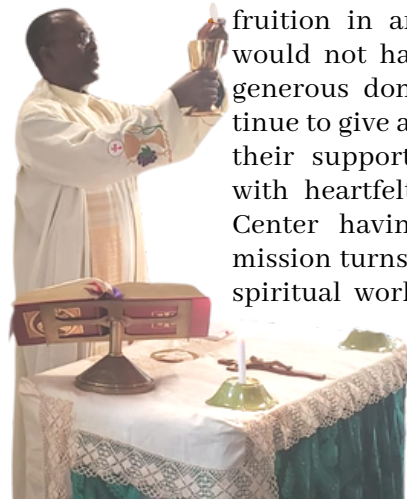
The SSB erected a large crucifix in the middle of the Center. On the eve of the dedication, two little girls were accompanied by their sister to the facility to get water to drink. The girls, aged two and three, had never before seen such a big crucifix. From the expression on their faces, they seemed to think that the man hanging and bleeding from the cross was real. For over five minutes, the two sisters stood motionless staring at the crucifix. When Fr. Martin approached them, the younger one cried, pleading for Jesus to be taken down from the cross. While we know we cannot do this, we can comfort our Lord by reaching out to help someone in need.



A TRUE MIRACLE & BLESSING

We are grateful to God for making the SSB mission to build and open Ala-Nso come to fruition in an amazingly short time. This would not have been possible without our generous donors and volunteers who continue to give and show us their love and offer their support. We return your generosity with heartfelt joy and gratitude. With the Center having now been built, the SSB mission turns to advancing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy as we are called to serve the needs of the poor. As such, the task the Lord gave us has only just begun.

BY FR. MARTIN IBEH



A NEW DAY, A NEW MONTH, A NEW BABY & NEW BEGINNINGS

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE AT THE SSB CENTER

Ugonso: "Holy Eagle": A young pregnant woman who was present during the dedication chose to give birth to her son at the SSB facility. On the evening of November 31, 2023, she went into labor and eventually gave birth to a baby boy on the morning of December 1, 2023 at the SSB center. The SSB community was delighted to welcome into the world the baby whom Fr. Martin named "Ugonso," (meaning Holy Eagle).



Father Martin blessing expectant mother, her delivery, and new life. The arrival of this new infant in the Center aptly set the tone for Christmas, when we all receive the greatest news of all time: "And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger" (Luke 2:12). Ugonso is a sign that the God of life is with us in our ministry of mercy. Linda Inglima, president of SSB, described the good news as, "A new day, a new month, a new baby and new beginnings!"

GOD WRITES *Straight* WITH CROOKED LINES

WITNESSING THE WORKINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN NIGERIA AT THE SSB CENTER

While the mission of the SSB continues to focus on the needs of the blind and visually challenged, God brought us Sister John Vianney Nwonye to address His first priority, the health and healing of the villagers. To meet this challenge, the SSB is committed to equipping our new healthcare clinic. A priority is to provide funds or medical equipment: diagnostic ultrasound, glaucoma screening device, drip stand, oxygen, medications, blood pressure monitoring instruments, dissecting forceps, surgical gloves, wheelchairs, etc.

We have a mission within a mission.

Please, continue to support us.

We will continue to hold you up in our prayers. We, the SSB team, pray that the dawn of this new year may bring you and your family an abundance of blessings. *Happy New Year!*



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