



Society of St. Vincent de Paul Our Lady of the Atonement Catholic Church

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"No work of charity is foreign to the Society."

Unexpected Charity, Faith, and Friendship: Bearing Witness to Christ's Compassion and Love

Five months ago an Atonement parishioner asked our St. Vincent de Paul Society if we could help a brave, faith-filled 33 weeks pregnant Nigerian woman who came alone to San Antonio to seek the best medical care available for her unborn child with severe heart defects. She only asked that someone take her to doctor appointments. But, she also needed emotional and spiritual support from our Catholic community. Precious was an Anglican convert to Catholicism.

We called together our Vincentian volunteers. We took Precious Nwafor to doctor appointments and to the hospital for monitoring. There was more devastating news. Her little girl's condition was extremely critical requiring an emergency C-section. We prayed rosaries and Divine Mercy chaplets with her. Precious' husband Ken and Ebube ("God's Power") their 3 year old son were also keeping prayerful vigil in Nigeria. With a Vincentian beside her, Precious gave birth to Emilia and the doctors rushed her into the ICU. We rejoiced with news of her delivery. But, little Emilia's condition was even more grave. She required surgery but was too weak.

Precious needed to stay close to the hospital. A parishioner suggested the Ronald McDonald House and they had an opening. We all took turns visiting Precious, taking her to see Emilia, and praying that God would strengthen her and help her parents trust in God's will. We watched Precious tenderly and lovingly comfort her baby. The prayers she spoke came from deep in her soul.

It was a roller coaster of emotions for the Nwafor family. There were hopeful days and dark days. Emilia fought courageously for every breath she took. On the 6th day of her life, doctors told Precious that Emilia was not going to make it. She knew Emilia must be baptized. Unable to find a priest and with only minutes left, she spotted one of our Vincentians entering the hospital. By the grace of God that Vincentian was able to baptize Emilia into the Catholic faith. *(continued on next page)*



Ken, Ebube, & Precious



6 day old Emilia



Nigerian Unity
Statute



Vincentians, family members, and the Nwafor family

Unexpected Charity, (continued from page 1)

Emilia was placed into Precious' arms for the first time... free from tubes and monitors. Quietly she passed into the loving arms of Our Lord. There is nothing like the inconsolable grief of a mother who has lost her child...we felt her sorrow, but did not know how to comfort her.

Precious stayed at the home of a Vincentian while Ken made travel preparations to come to San Antonio. Other Vincentians went to the airport with Precious to pick up Ken and Ebube. The family was at last together again. Ken was an inspiration to all of us in his faith and trust in God's will. It was no coincidence that the parish they belong to in Nigeria is Catholic Church of Divine Mercy.

Next came the difficult task of making funeral arrangements. They were not able to bring Emilia back to Nigeria. Parishioners donated a plot at Holy Cross Cemetery. Father Phillips celebrated the funeral mass. An Atonement Academy student was the altar server. Another young parishioner helped out with Ebube during the mass. Father Moore said grave site prayers. OLA ladies group prepared a luncheon. Another parishioner took pictures and a video of the funeral services and presented them as a memorial to the Nwafor family.

Upon their return to Nigeria, Ken and Precious wanted to thank all those who helped them through this difficult time. They shipped to us numerous "Unity Statutes" as a remembrance of what we experienced together. (See picture on page 1.) Here is their message to us:

The unity statue is symbolic of unity in Nigeria. It is a very special piece most visitors to Nigeria crave to go back with. It is made out of ebony wood.

It is symbolic of the three major tribes in Nigeria (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa) whose unity of purpose keeps Nigeria together. This same unity is seen in the celebration of mass and indeed in every facet of the Nigerian society.

In extension, it also symbolizes people from across the globe coming together in unity to share love, devoid of where they come from, or ethnic inclination, but recognizing that we were all put in different places on the globe by the Almighty God, the author of love.

Please extend our love to everyone.

Precious, Ken and Ebube

We continue to correspond with the Nwafor family. Our lives have been forever changed by the presence of this one small, precious child who brought together - by the power of God - people from two different continents, unknown to each other, and allowed them to experience through charity, love, and friendship the unfathomable love and mercy of God.

2015 Atonement SVDP Financial Update

During 2015 - we sent **\$26,400** to SVDP Conferences serving the poor in these communities:

International Twinning – SVDP conferences:

Jifna, Palestine & Njeru Town, Uganda

Local & Area Twinning SVDP conferences:

St. Agnes, St. Alphonsus, Christ the King, St. Ann, Little Flower, Sacred Heart (Von Ormy, TX), St. John Bosco (Natalia, TX)

(We now contribute \$750 every three months to each of the above nine SVDP conferences)

During 2015 - we sent **\$4,430** to SVDP conferences in our district to help specific families in need of help.

During 2015 - we distributed over **\$9,307** to aid our own OLA families and those in our geographic area.

During 2015 – we contributed **\$1,000** to the **SVDP International Disaster Relief Fund** providing food, water, shelter and educational assistance in countries such as Mozambique, Uganda, Dominican Republic, Togo, Syria and the Philippines. We contributed **\$500** to aid earthquake victims in **Nepal**. We gave **\$1,000** to St. Mary's SVDP in **Wimberley, TX** to help victims of the tragic spring floods.

We are most grateful to our parishioners at Our Lady of the Atonement for your continued support of the monthly Black Bag collections.

ANGEL TREE



Please stop by the Angel Tree on Sunday, Nov 22nd & Nov 29th and select an angel. A collection box will be located in the narthex. (Last day to drop off gifts is noon Sunday Dec 6th.)

Update: COAT, SWEATER, & MEN'S SHOE DRIVE

Thank You Our Lady of the Atonement Parishioners. Through your tremendous generosity we were able to give the donations to the following SVDP conferences: St. Ann, Christ the King, St. John Bosco (Natalia), & Sacred Heart (Von Ormy). This was our biggest haul to date!

If you or someone you know is in need of assistance or a home visit, please call us at 695-2944 ... you can be assured of respect, compassion, and confidentiality.