

## HOW CATECHIST, WIFE PERISHED IN AUTO CRASH



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Less than one month after an altar boy at the Queen of Peace Parish Catholic Church, Oboama, Ezinihitte Local Government Area of Imo State died in a motor accident, another round of tragedy has hit the same parish. This time, the parish Catechist, Mr. Cyril Oguh and his wife, Mrs. Comfort Oguh, a retired teacher, all perished in an auto-crash at Chokoneze area on the Okpuala-Mbaise road.

The couple could not reach the venue of the meeting they were rushing to attend when the crash involving a Volkswagen bus marked NKR51XA and the lady's motor-cycles on which they were riding occurred on Sunday, February 9th, 2014. Mr. Cyril Oguh and his wife, Comfort left behind seven children – four boys and three girls.

The Catechist, a retired civil servant from the National Bureau of Statistics, Owerri, reportedly died on the spot after the bus allegedly hit them from the rear while the driver was attempting to overtake a vehicle. But the main rider of the motor-cycle, Mrs. Comfort, was said to have bled profusely from both her mouth and nose. She was rushed to a private hospital at Mbaise and later she was moved to another hospital at Umuahia, Abia State capital. And from Umuahia, she was transferred to the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH), Ituku-Ozalla, in Enugu state. Sadly, her condition never improved and she passed on one week after the incident. She was 69 years while the husband was 76.

Our reporter, who visited the family of the deceased at Nru village of Oboama autonomous community, was informed that one shocking thing about the tragedy was that the second son of the family, Mr. Tochukwu Oguh was involved in a another crash that almost claimed his life while returning from his station at Ahiazu, Mbaise. Tochukwu is a teacher at Christ the King Church (CKC), Obobia in Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of the state. He sustained injury on his right foot. That was one week before husband and wife got involved in similar incident but could not survive like their son.

"I was involved in a motor accident on my way back from my station one week before the accident that claimed our parents. Although I sustained injuries, I am alright now," Tochukwu told Sunday Trust as he ran his fingers over the injuries.

Recalling how his parents lost their lives, Tochukwu further narrated: "They were going to a meeting at Chokoneze Mbaise. The bus was overtaking and eventually hit them from the back. My father died on the spot while my mother was rushed to hospital but she passed on at the UNTH exactly one week after the accident.

He recalled that he was with both parents the Sunday the incident happened, having returned from his station to spend the weekend with them. After the usual weekend interaction, Tochukwu travelled back to his station only to hear of the shocking news about the disaster that befell the family.

"My mum was a very vocal woman, always ready to speak her view on any issue," Tochukwu said. He saw the tragedy as one of those things that happen in one's life.

Madam Comfort was described as "a struggling woman", who opened a private Nursery /Primary school – Onyekachi Nursery/Primary School, according to the first son of the family, Mr. Chimezie Oguh, 29. He said his mother retired from Group School, Ezuhu Nguru in 2006 while his father retired in 2003 from the National Bureau of Statistics, Owerri.

"They loved themselves. Our parents were peaceful. They used to tell me how life is, and how to be a man. They

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were good in advising people and making things easy for people," said Chimezie, a father of two kids.

He described his father and mother as "total parents" who loved him so much apparently because he is the first son. He recalled that his parents never allowed him to fall into trouble because they were fond of giving him useful advice.

On how they were going to bear the loss of both parents, Chimezie, who said he is a building contractor said: "I pray God will lead me to withstand the shocking situation."

The tragedy that befell Mr. Cy as he was fondly called by some parishioners at Queen of Peace Parish Church Oboama, reminded one of similar incident that occurred in the 1980s when a rich man called Okeozu and his wife, from Amaumara autonomous community, Ezinihitte Mbaise were also killed in a motor accident involving a truck and the motor-cycle on which they rode at the time of the incident. Also, the incident reminded one of the accident that claimed the life of a husband and his wife along Emekuku-Owerri road. The man was a driver to one of the prominent traditional rulers in Mbaise. The couple was travelling from Owerri to Mbaise alongside other passengers when the bus in-which they were travelling, got involved in an accident with a tipper loaded with blocks.

The police at Itu Police Station in Ezinihitte Local Government Area, where the matter was reported confirmed the incident and said the investigation is ongoing. The police said since lives were lost, the investigation should be quite painstaking to ensure that no stone is left unturned.

When our reporter visited the station, the battered lady's motorcycle on which husband and wife rode to their death was seen kept on the side of the bus that caused their death.

The Parish Priest, Rev. Fr. Dr. Leonard Ugbor said he saw the catechist removing his catechist cassock after mass on that fateful Sunday. He said it never occurred to him that he was seeing him for the last time.

Fr. Ugbor said he had already communicated to the Catechist Association about the death of their member but that the burial date has not been fixed

"He had very good hand writing. He did statistics. He retired from the civil service. He would outline his presentations to me in a very orderly way. He was loyal to constituted authorities and he was always in morning masses," said the priest.

Fr. Ugbor described the late catechist as an articulate and respectful man who was always responding to emergency situations in the parish whenever he called on him.

"I was appointed parish priest in 2010. I met him; he worked here all the time on office days – Tuesdays and Fridays. He was always here unless for some emergency, he would excuse himself. At times I would call him to join me during home visitation of the sick people. He was respectful towards me and I believe towards others. In times of emergency, he would always show up when I needed some documents," he said.

He explained that though the late Oguh was the parish catechist, there was a time he was pressured by some people to replace him but he heisted because he felt there was no need for his removal at the time.

"He was attending the 7am mass. He used to lead in the Prayer for the Faithful until his sight began to fail him and I had to bring in somebody to assist him," the priest said.

Commenting on the death of the catechist and his wife, the traditional ruler of Oboama autonomous community where the deceased hailed from, Eze Julius Amaefule, described it as unfortunate. He said it was very sad that the catechist who served God and humanity died alongside the wife in such a horrible situation.

Eze Amaefule advised the children to trust in God in this period of tribulation and temptation, saying that they should live peacefully with their relations now that they are orphans. He said God had destined the couple to die the way they did or else they wouldn't have died in the crash.

"God brought them and He has taken them," the royal father said. "There's no death without God's hand in it; if God did not destine them to die that way, they wouldn't have died that way," he added.

At the time of filling in this report, the driver of the bus that caused the death of the couple was still in police detention at Itu police station. However, Sunday Trust was informed that the relations of the driver and the deceased have been holding series of meetings on how to bury the dead.