

Retired police officer in whose home three children were discovered dead tells his story

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...All I want is to bury my daughter, justice belongs to God — Victim's mother

By Ikechukwu Odu

A retired police officer, Fabian Ogbu, in whose home three children were discovered dead at Itchi, in Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area of Enugu State, has explained how the confession of the only survivor saved him from what would have been a mother-of-all crimes.

The remains of Chibugo Eze, Ebuka Ene (four years), and another four-year-old Chinyere Eze, who accompanied a 12-year-old Mmasichukwu Ugwuoke, to fetch water at a commercial borehole owned by the retired

police officer, were found in a Toyota Camry parked in the officer's compound on Monday, November 23, 2020.

Among the four children who went in search of water with Mmasichukwu, only Kingsley Eze, returned home alive.

However, when Vanguard visited the home of the retired police officer, he explained how Mmasichukwu, allegedly locked up with herself, the four children in the Toyota Camry car which had not been in use for over three years, leaving the three hapless ones to die mysteriously.

He further explained that his entire household were not at home when the incident took place as they left at about 8am for Sunday service at a Deeper Life Bible Church in the community, adding that some villagers who knew he wouldn't be at home when Mmasichukwu and the four other children were heading for his house at about 9 am on that day, warned them to go back but they insisted that they would wait until they returned from their Sunday service.

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Explaining how he was vindicated, he said "we returned from church at about 1pm and met the mother of one the deceased. She told me that she was looking for her child who came to fetch water with other children in my borehole. Pointing at a wheelbarrow with two rubber cans, she told me that they were the ones who brought it to fetch water at about 9 am. I asked her to fetch water and return home because I thought that the children abandoned their task and were playing somewhere. However, when the children didn't return, she came back and demanded explanation of their whereabouts from me.

"It was at that point that we started searching for the children. We ransacked everywhere, engaging the services of local security guards. We extended our search to border villages of Unadu and Nkalagu Obukpa. We searched till night fall without success.

"The people who gathered in my compound were more than 300. Some went to the extent of using kola nut to cast aspersions on whoever was holding the children captive. This continued until the following Monday morning when another villager came to fetch water and heard someone calling her name. We traced the voice and found the children in my car. To our greatest surprise, three of them were already dead.

"We started interrogating Mmasichukwu who narrated how the children died. She told us how they died in anguish and how she ordered them to lie on the floor of the car whenever anybody got close to them.

After removing their dead bodies, I reported the matter to our traditional ruler before going to the police where I was detained behind the counter.

"At first, Mmasichukwu told us that three hooded men wearing red clothes locked them up in my car but when the DPO of Igbo-Eze South police division and the local government chairman, Peter Andy Omeje were about to transfer the case to the Commissioner of Police in Enugu, she recanted her statement, saying that she was the one who locked them there.

"The DPO insisted that the matter must be taken to the Criminal Investigation Department, CID, Enugu. It was there that she repeated that she was the one who took them in the car to play. At that juncture, the police asked the parents of those children their intentions about the case and they declared that they wanted to claim the remains of their children for burial. So, acting on the strength of that confessional statement, the police freed me at Enugu.

"However, our traditional ruler insisted that I must pay the hospital and mortuary bills which amounted to about N125,000.

"Mmasichukwu is possessed by some unclean spirits. It is a known fact in this vicinity as no school accepted her for admission because she might initiate other pupils into her confraternity. The parents have been taking her to prayer houses for exorcism."

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When Vanguard visited Mmasichukwu's home, her guardians prevented her from making any further statement on the incident.

Her uncle, John Eze, whose four-year old daughter, Chinyere Eze, died in the incident explained that she had been making contradictory statements which had left them confused as to what caused the tragedy.

"At first Mmasichukwu told us that hoodlums locked them in the car and ran away. At other time, she said she was the one who locked them there. She also said that she is possessed, that some members of her confraternity forced her to do what she did. We are confused because we don't know which of her statements to take.

"I believe she is into witchcraft. No hoodlum would have locked them in that car, they would have taken them away instead. No part of the deceased was equally severed to suggest that any form of ritual practice was performed on them.

"Some irate members of the community wanted to kill her but we stopped them because we want to take her to prayer houses for exorcism," he said.

Also, at Nkalagu Obukpa, in Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area, Chinenye Ene, who equally lost a four-year old daughter identified as Ebuka Ene, in the incident told Vanguard that she was no longer interested in making any case with anybody, adding that she only needed the remains of her daughter for interment. She equally said that justice belongs to God.

It was gathered that the five children were members of an extended family who gathered at Nkalagu Obukpa during the burial of a relative and were asked to go in search of water for domestic chores.