

Thank You Fr. Michael Hussey, O.M.I

We enjoyed your presence to the people of the parishes of St. Lawrence-Lawrenceville, St. Joseph-Olney, Holy Cross-Wendelin, St. Joseph-Stringtown. We wish you blessings as you take on sacramental duties at St. Michael, Sigel, St. Mary, Neoga and St. Mary, Green Creek. "You'll Come Back Now!"

Welcome Fr. Felix Chukwuma

Father Felix Chukwuma is a priest of the Archdiocese of Onitsha, Nigeria, on loan by His Excellency, the Most Rev. Dr. Valerian Okeke to serve as a fidei donum missionary in the Diocese of Belleville.

Father Chukwuma was born on Oct. 6, 1971, to Stephen and Eunice Chukwuma of Okpaliko Village, Eziowelle, Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. He is the second son and the third of the six children of his parents. Coming from a good and practicing Catholic family, he followed his older siblings and neighbors to the Block Rosary Crusade and at the age of eight (just after his first Holy Communion), became a member of the Mass Servers Association and the Legion of Mary Religious Society.

At the age of 10, the future Father Chukwuma attended the ordination of his uncle, the Most Rev. Father (later Archbishop) Valerian Okeke. The ordination liturgy with its beautiful music and praise of Jesus Christ, the High Priest, made a deep impression on him.

Gradually, he discerned a desire to become a priest. Thus, after his elementary school, he entered St. Paul (Minor) Seminary, Ukpok in 1983 and completed it at All Hallows' Seminary, Onitsha in 1990. This was followed by a pastoral year.

He entered the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu-Nigeria where he studied Mass Communication and obtained an Ordinary National Diploma, which he later upgraded to Higher National Diploma, through Don Scotus School of Journalism, an affiliate of Enugu State University of Technology, Nigeria.

In 1995, he re-entered Seminary formation. After a spiritual year of training at St. Pius X Spiritual Year Seminary, Akwa-Ukwu, he was sent to Bigard Memorial (Major) Seminary, Enugu-Nigeria (1996-2000), where he obtained a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy. In 2001-2005, he completed theological studies at Blessed Iwene Tansi Major Seminary, Onitsha-Nigeria, and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology.

On July 16, 2005, he was ordained to the priesthood of Jesus Christ by Archbishop Okeke. After his ordination, he served as a Parish Vicar at St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Parish, Enekwasumpu, Archdiocese of Onitsha, from July 2005 to January 2008 and also at St. John

the Baptist Catholic Parish, Odoakpu-Onisha, from Jan. 15, 2008, to Sept. 19, 2008. From Sept. 20, 2008, to Oct. 15, 2014, he served as the Pastor at St. Martin of Tours Catholic Parish, Abatete, Archdiocese of Onitsha.

Father Chukwuma's younger sister is Sister Maria Chibuanurim Chukwuma of the Daughters of Divine Love. She is engaged in pastoral ministry at St. John the Evangelist Parish in the Archdiocese of Newark. He is very close to his parents and family members. Though he misses them and they miss him, they are united in faith and by their prayers for one another.

He is grateful for the opportunity to be a missionary priest and to serve in the United States just as missionaries from the United States have served in Nigeria. He is grateful to Bishop Edward K. Braxton for inviting him to the Diocese of Belleville, and he appreciates the warm welcome he has received from Father Von C. Deeke, the Bishop's Liaison for International Priests, and from the priests and people of the Diocese. This experience reminds him that the Catholic Church, the People of God, make up one family of faith.

Since his seminary days, Father Chukwuma has as his motto: To make ready for the Lord a people prepared (Lk. 1:17). These words describe the zeal with which he undertakes his ministry. For relaxation, he enjoys reading, keeping up with the news, and listening to good music. His friends speak of him as kind, responsible and jovial.

Beginning in July 2015, Father Chukwuma served as administrator of St. Mary Parish in Valmeyer and chaplain at Gibault Catholic High School in Waterloo until his appointment in July 2021 to team ministry in solidum with the Very Reverend Mark D. Stec, V.F. at St. Joseph Parish in Olney, St. Joseph Parish in Stringtown, Holy Cross Parish in Wendelin, and St. Lawrence Parish in Lawrenceville, with residence at St. Lawrence Rectory.