

Nigeria



The Federal Republic of Nigeria is located in western Africa. Its name comes from the Niger River, which flows from its northern border and empties into the Gulf of Guinea in the south. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with over 203,450,000 people. In area, it is twice the size of the state of California, but has five times the number of people living there. Nigeria's capital city is Abuja.



Nigeria's land starts with coastal lowlands which merge into hills and plateaus. There are mountains in the southeast and plains in the north.

English is the official language of Nigeria but there are also 500 native dialects spoken.

A little over half of all Nigerians are Muslim,

about 11% are Catholic and another 36% practice other Christian faiths. Life expectancy at birth in 2018 was 59.3 years.

Most children leave school after just eight or nine years. Only 60% of the population over 15 years old know how to read and write. It is estimated that over 70% of Nigerians live below their own country's poverty line. A third of all children are underweight.

Medical care is hard to access in Nigeria—there is only one doctor for every 3,000 people. This contributes to Nigeria being eighth in the world in infant mortality, fourth for maternal mortality, and first in the world for death from HIV/AIDS.

A terrorist group called Boko Haram—whose name means “Western education is forbidden” - is active in the country, trying to impose strict Islamic law. They use violence and mass kidnappings to threaten and frighten people. They reject Western education, clothing, and science. They forbid voting. Their violent policies have forced over two million people to flee their homes in fear. Many countries have sent help to Nigeria to try to defeat the terrorists.

MCA in Nigeria

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) plays a large part in the faith formation of the Catholic children of Nigeria. Nigerian children know it as the Holy Childhood Association or HCA. Children join MCA/HCA not only to learn more about their faith but also to pray and sacrifice so that other children around the world will have the same opportunities to learn how to be young missionaries. Many take part in regular competitions between parishes where they sing songs, recite their catechism, and put on small plays based on the Bible. Being a member of MCA/HCA is like being a member of a fun club!

At Saint Paul Parish in Benin City, the young missionaries recently came together and used their time and talents. They raised funds for the missions by hosting a music festival



One young MCA/HCA member in particular is being recognized at Saint Paul's as well as across Nigeria as a model of missionary virtue and holiness. Her name is Vivian Ogu.

Vivian Ogu was born on April 1, 1995. She was the second of the four children in her family. Vivian loved school and was very active at Saint Paul's. Because she loved to sing, Vivian joined the choir. When she was not quite a teenager, the parish was in need of a new director for their children's choir.

Vivian stepped in and taught the young ones their music and even directed them at some Masses! She was a natural born leader.

Vivian was also the President of the Holy Childhood Association at Saint Paul's and firmly embraced our motto of "Children Helping Children". She was elected to the post when she was just nine years old but no one doubted her dedication.

Soon she was organizing not only projects for the missions for her fellow members but also programs for them to help their local brothers and sisters.



Vivian (above, left) organized the children to visit local orphanages for play dates. She started a fund to pay for the medical bills of poor children at a local hospital.

Vivian was an inspirational speaker on subjects of faith and was a mentor to many children. When she was thirteen, she started writing a commentary on the Gospel of Matthew for children. It would remain unfinished.

On November 15, 2009, Vivian was taken from her house during a robbery and killed when she refused to submit to her captors' threats of violence. Her courageous faith at a young age has inspired her diocese to promote her cause for sainthood.

At last report, the MCA/HCA members of The Archdiocese of Benin City received \$28,000 for classroom construction. Nigerian MCA/HCA members sacrificed \$79,066.53 for their counterparts in the missions worldwide.