

Δο ✕ Oyo ✕ Sokoto ✕ Abeokuta ✕ Abuja ✕

✕ On ✕ Minna ✕ Makurdi ✕ Lokoja ✕ Kano ✕ Kafanchan

Ahiara ✕ Awka ✕ Bauchi ✕ Benin ✕ Eriti ✕ Ibadan ✕ Idas

RENEW International

Two Decades of Service to the Church in Nigeria 1987-2007



Synopsis and Final Report
Sr Maureen Colleary, FSP
July 2007

✕ Kaduna ✕ Jos ✕ Isese-Uko ✕ Ijebu-Ode ✕

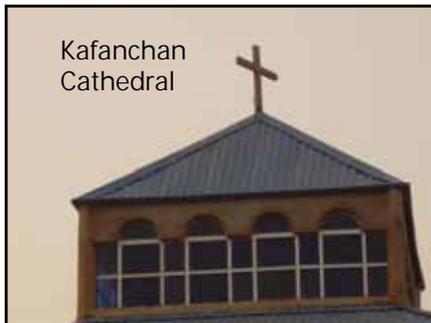
RENEW in NIGERIA

According to the earliest “RENEW” bishops in Nigeria, the work there began in 1987 with initial visits to interested Bishops. RENEW’s archived materials begin in 1990 with reports of the Initial Trainings. Although RENEW International has served in twenty-one Nigerian dioceses, this report is a synopsis of the twenty year history with a specific focus on those four dioceses that continue to experience substantive successful efforts, including the last visit made to Nigeria June 4-19, 2007.

RENEW Staff Members who served in Nigeria, 1987-2007

Rev. Thomas Kleissler
Rev. Barry Wymes
Rev. Norman Simmons
Rev. Jerry McCrane, MM
Rev. Dominic Fuccile
Rev. Jack Farley
Sr. Cecilia King
Sr. Pat Crowley

Sr. Kathy Warren
Sr. Cheryl Erb
Sr. Beth Taylor
Sr. Maureen Colleary
Michael Brough
Antony Visocchi
Stephane Kalongi
Simeon Adagba



Catholicism is
120 years old
in Nigeria



The RENEW Prayer continues to be prayed at every Mass in every parish everyday in the Dioceses of Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Kafanchan and Bauchi.

Diocese of Ijebu-Ode June 6-8, 2007

This visit included:

Meeting with Bishop Fasina
Season V SCL Preparation

Meeting with Bishop Fasina

The diocese did RENEW twice. The first time from 1990-1994 was a positive experience. It brought priests, religious and laity together and strengthened the faith of the people. There were 168 small groups throughout the dioceses then. But not all priests were interested in RENEW. Consequently, some parishes did not have the experience of RENEW at all. But RENEW's potential as a unique tool for evangelization and unification led Bishop Fasina to invite RENEW back to his diocese a second time from 2003-2007. This second round of RENEW was positive with struggles due to changes in leadership on the DRT Coordinator level. Nevertheless, many groups have never stopped meeting during these years. This visit was to provide the final training of their second round. The diocese has increased from 11 parishes when RENEW first started to 23 currently. A number of these new parishes are direct results of RENEW SCC's growing and taking on their new status as parish. Bishop Fasina has recently appointed Rev. Martin Ogunbanwo as the new RENEW Director. He is eager to keep Ijebu-Ode on the RENEW map! Bishop Fasina is planning a new Pastoral Center which would encompass new ground for the diocese and new insight and new vision. His aim

is one of generating the faith—how can the Church meet the needs of the times with all of its new challenges? He feels the RENEW answers many needs and cuts across many different groups including those in the rural areas and those in the towns. Bishop Fasina is a strong supporter of the process and encourages all the priests to embrace RENEW.

Season V SCL Preparation

Attendance: 67 people

17 parishes were represented out of 23 (torrential rains the night before did not allow at least one parish to travel due to flooded roads)

15 priests

"RENEW has taught us that to live and grow in Christ and to bring Christ to others is the collective responsibility of all members of the Church."

Most Rev. Albert Fasina, Bishop,
Diocese of Ijebu-Ode

Evaluation of Season IV:

Some highlights of their reports include:

- As RENEW has progressed, many members have come back to regularize their marriages
- Infant baptism is on the increase
- Previously luke-warm/non-active congregations are now active and participate consciously in the liturgy
- The action responses are becoming more evident; people are becoming more comfortable with proclaiming the Good News in the marketplace and at the workplace

- More Church societies have been formed that are ministry-oriented
- An increase in volunteers i.e. catechists and evangelizers
- Lectors, catechism teachers and choir members prepare better for Sunday liturgy
- An increase was noted in the number of members in the parishes as well as the outstations
- More communities are involved in visiting the sick and being more aware of the welfare of their members
- Priests felt there was more commitment on the part of parishioners to building up the Body of Christ

Some challenges:

- Some groups experienced low/erratic attendance due to work pressures and forgetfulness
- Some facilitators did not feel properly trained
- There is a need to train youth leaders to insure an effective experience
- There is need for more and better publicity and invitational strategies



L to R: Fr. Martin Ogunbanwa, Director of RENEW, Sr. Maureen Colleary and Bishop Albert Fasina in Ijebu-Ode

Both the founding bishop of the Diocese of Ijebu-Ode, Anthony Sanusi, and his successor, Albert Fasina are converts from Islam. They were raised by Muslim parents and came to the faith through missionary schools.

The meeting continued:

1. An experience of faith sharing with a feedback session
2. Input on Evangelization and explanation of the six weeks' themes
3. Small group work on Leadership Skills and the Catholic Bible with presentations to the large group
4. Closing Prayer and Blessing with holy water
5. Benediction
6. Closing remarks and presentation of gifts by Bishop Fasina and Fr. Martin

Bishop Fasina's concluding remarks included that RENEW has given the diocese many gifts among them perseverance and openness to new experiences. For twenty years, their attention has been genuine and faithful. RENEW's faith and the faith of the people of Ijebu-Ode allows us to continue to walk and seek the face of God.



Archdiocese of Ibadan June 8-10, 2007

“There are many activities organized by the Archdiocese and in parishes to assist us in internalizing the Gospel message. The RENEW process is a means of evangelization. It is designed to bring transformation into the lives of the faithful. It is meant to make disciples for Christ... The Archdiocese has also invested in the formation of lay agents of evangelization. The RENEW School of Evangelization trains catechists and youth leaders to this end.”

The Church in Ibadan: Founded and Gifted to Evangelize, # 25 & 40

Post Synodal Letter, Most Rev. Felix Alaba Job, Archbishop of Ibadan
April 2006

On June 8th, Rev. Peter Otubusin, original RENEW Director for the Archdiocese, called together some RENEW leaders to meet with me. Present were three priests including Fr. Fintan Daly, SMA, also an original DRT member; Sr. Mary Assumpta Taiwo, SSMA, current Director of the RENEW School of Evangelization, and seven lay leaders.

Some feedback from our sharing included:

- Five parishes were represented in this group and RENEW SCCs are still going strong in all of them
- Faith Sharing is being incorporated into the church societies/organizations meeting structure
- There has been a marked increase in Mass attendance and hence in financial giving

- Many youth SCCs are engaged in faith sharing
- Most parishes run an annual 3 day Invitational Outreach which includes Mass, talks, time for confessions, prayer and faith sharing experiences, testimonies and concludes with an all-night vigil

Some on-going issues:

- There is a constant need for new resources
- Commitment of the priests is seen as imperative but not always evident
- Time issue is becoming more of a challenge as people’s lives are getting busier

“RENEW cannot die in Ibadan!”

Rev. Peter Otubusin, first RENEW Director, Archdiocese of Ibadan

RENEW has been a blessing for the diocese. It has brought the laity together and there was a greater commitment to the faith. It also united the diocese. Faith-sharing in small groups went beyond parishes to the university. The diocese also helped finance the RENEW process through several initiatives: assigning the collection of the first Sunday of the month for RENEW, priests were encouraged to give 5% of their June balance to the program, etc. The process led to the creation of the RENEW School of Evangelization.

RENEW School for Evangelization

Sr. Mary Assumpta Taiwo, SSMA has been the Director for 4 years. The school was initiated in 2002. The underlying belief of the school is that small faith sharing communities offer the greatest hope for evangelization. Some 20 to 25 laymen and women go through the program each year. Training is given in leadership skills, basic ecclesiology, Scripture, pastoral care of small communities, understanding of faith sharing, and techniques in evangelization. Additional training has also been offered in catechetical instruction and the involvement of youth leaders.



Sr. Maureen Colleary and
Sr. Mary Assumpta Taiwo, SSMA,
Director of Ibadan's
RENEW School for Evangelization

Archbishop Felix Job
of the Archdiocese of Ibadan has
mandated that all church organizations
and societies incorporate time
for faith sharing as an
integral part of their meetings.



Rev. Msgr. Silva
of the Archdiocese of Ibadan
has incorporated the
three cycles of Sunday faith sharing
into one book which is being used
in his diocese as well as
the Diocese of Kafanchan.

Diocese of Bauchi June 13-18, 2007

This visit included:

Meeting with Bishop Moore
On-going Animation Session in Bauchi
Season V SCL Preparation in Gombe
Visit to St. John's Cathedral Remedial
School

Meeting with Bishop Moore

RENEW began in the Diocese of Bauchi in May 2001. Due to the expansiveness of the diocese (it encompasses two states: Bauchi and Gombe) the decision was taken to undertake RENEW initially in Bauchi town at St. John's Cathedral. They completed the five seasons successfully in December 2005. Since then, they have kept SCCs alive using *PRAYERTIME*. In June 2004, we initiated the process at St. James' Parish in Gombe town (the next largest parish after the Cathedral) which is two hours one way from Bauchi. We just completed their Season V training during this visit. Bishop Moore has been pleased with the response in both parishes. The reality of doing a true diocesan outreach would be difficult given the distances between parishes, financial burdens and the ever present fuel crisis. The teams that have been trained could share their knowledge and enable SCCs to begin in other parishes in the diocese. This would take both a financial and a time commitment. The distances between parishes is great and the travel very difficult.

"RENEW made Jesus come alive in the daily comings and goings of the people of the Diocese of Bauchi—for some, they have seen Him now for the first time."

Most Rev. John Moore, SMA

On-going Animation Session in Bauchi

Attendance: 6 people

Members of St. John's PRT met and we did a preparation session on the Impact book, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*. Since St. John's has completed the RENEW process, I asked for some feedback on their experience:

- "As a catechist, I deal with Scripture but only in my RENEW group do I feel the Scripture truly touching my life."
- "I see my life changing gradually since beginning RENEW—every week engaging in the action response has produced significant change in enabling me to come out of myself."
- "RENEW has empowered me to share my life experiences with other people."
- "Listening to others' stories has increased my faith and hope."
- "Being in a RENEW community has helped me find solutions to some family problems."
- "As a parish, we are changed on the society/organization level—some now do faith sharing as part of their agenda."
- "Our liturgical experience is much more family-oriented and sharing during the week enhances the meaning of the Scripture on Sunday."
- "I have more courage to relate to my brothers and sisters who are on the margins of society."

- “I feel now that the Scriptures are really meant to touch my life.”

Some other areas where RENEW has made a mark:

- A Marriage course has been introduced and faith sharing is now a part of their formation—this course will touch up to 60 couples per year
- The youth (about 40) meet every Sunday to hear a talk and to do faith sharing
- There are at least four other faith sharing groups who are meeting regularly

Season V SCL Preparation in Gombe

Attendance: 7 PRT members

Evaluation of Season IV:

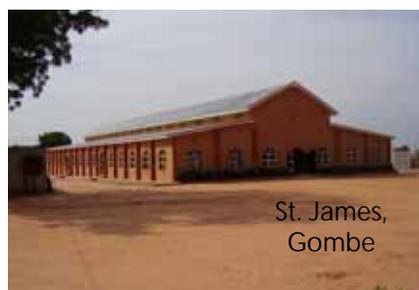
Some highlights of their reports include:

- Six groups met faithfully during Lent and four continue to meet
- Action responses seemed to focus on visiting the lapsed Catholics; reaching out to those who are going to the ever increasing Protestant churches
- Invitation was made to all before and during the season; also an outreach was made to married couples in the church who seem to lack investment in the community
- Pray the RENEW Prayer every day
- The PRT visited 5 family groups to make a personal invitation and to witness to them the care and concern of the parish community
- They enjoyed the theme of *Discipleship* and felt impelled to bring Christ to others through their actions

The meeting continued:

1. An experience of faith sharing with a feedback session
2. Input on Evangelization and explanation of the six weeks’ themes
3. Small group work on Leadership Skills and the Catholic Bible with presentations to the large group
4. Closing Prayer and Blessing with holy water

There was very good sharing on the topic of Evangelization. Through the telling of their own stories, they realized how important it is to name your own experience of evangelization. All of these folks came to the faith by way of the presence of missionaries either in schools or as one woman shared, the Rev. Fr. was at the market every week sharing and witnessing God’s love to the people. She was 15 when she heard him for the first time and that marked the beginning of her conversion process.



St. James,
Gombe



Small Community at St. James

Visit to St. John's Cathedral Remedial School

A donation recently made to RENEW was applied to the on-going development of St. John's Cathedral Remedial School in Bauchi. I made a visit so as to be able to share some details with the donor. The boarding school, under the direct attention of Bishop Moore, opened on the Cathedral grounds in 1997. Many children from outlying villages and outstations in the diocese are given the opportunity to attend secondary school with some added help provided here at St. John's. Examinations are given in the village primary schools to determine qualification. There are 25 children admitted per year. Currently, 95% go on to secondary school and many go further to university.

The schedule for a typical day:

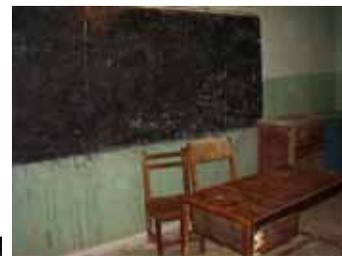
7:30—12:30	Classes
1:00	Lunch
3:00—4:30	Reading/Tutoring
4:30—6:00	Recreation
6:00	Dinner
7:00—9:00	Study time
9:00	Prayer/Rosary

On Saturday evening, they do faith sharing on the Sunday gospel.

The tuition per year including room and board is N 2,000 which is approximately \$20.00. Many of the students are orphans and cannot pay even that. The diocese subsidizes the school. Students travel home only for the holidays. The Head Teacher, Cecilia Polit, (also a PRT member at St. John's) was very grateful for the donation, which will go a long way in supporting the life of these students.



Scenes from St. John's Remedial School, Bauchi



Diocese of Kafanchan June 10-13, 2007

This visit included:

Meeting with Bishop Bagobiri

Presentation to the Sisters of the
Beatitudes

Attendance at a DRT/PRT Meeting

Meeting with Bishop Bagobiri

RENEW has been coming to Kafanchan since 1999. Bishop Bagobiri, as a priest of the Diocese of Jos and on loan to the Diocese of Kano, had served as the Director of RENEW in Kano from 1993 to 1995. When he was named Bishop of the new diocese, Kafanchan, he immediately made RENEW a diocesan priority. The process has gone well here under the leadership of Fr. Timothy Dogo who is once again directing RENEW for the diocese. They will begin a second round this October. In the eight years I have visited Kafanchan, great changes have taken place in the diocese. The following have been or are nearly completed:

- Bishop's House and Chapel
- Sister's House and Chapel
- Chapel for the Minor Seminary
- Residence for Spiritual Year Seminarians
- Conference and Pastoral Center w/60+ bedrooms

Bishop Bagobiri has promised to do his utmost to keep the flames of RENEW alive in Kafanchan. He has embraced RENEW and SCCs and they are at the heart of the Kafanchan Diocesan Pastoral Plan. To this end he has founded a religious

congregation called the Sisters of the Beatitudes, whose charism is to promote the reign of God by living and helping others to live the Beatitudes. Therefore, they are focused in promoting faith sharing in Small Christian Communities.

"I do not have to be convinced about RENEW—it is integral to the way we pray with the Scriptures."

Most Rev. Joseph Bagobiri, Bishop,
Diocese of Kafanchan



Presentation to the Sisters of the Beatitudes

I spent a day with the Sisters of the Beatitudes at the request of Bishop Bagobiri to go over some RENEW fundamentals. There are 12 young women in formation with two formators who are members of the Nigerian congregation, Holy Family Sisters of the Needy.



Items covered during the presentation included:

- Basic RENEW presentation
- Faith Sharing—explanation, experience and feedback
- Social Inquiry Process
- 5 Elements of SCC
- The Beatitudes—theology and sharing experience

“The DRT (Diocesan RENEW Team) is asked to renew themselves first and the people seeing these fruits will soon follow.”

Rev. Timothy Dogo,
RENEW Director,
Diocese of Kafanchan



“We are embracing RENEW.”

Sung in unison by a women's
RENEW SCC at St. Joseph's, Kagora,
Diocese of Kafanchan

Attendance at a DRT/PRT Meeting

There were over 60 present. We began in six small groups with faith sharing on the Body and Blood of Christ. Each of the four deaneries were present and gave reports from their individual meetings all held during the second half of May. They are preparing now to begin Season I in October. The number of parishes has increased from 24 in 1999 to 32 at present with several more in the pipeline. The faith-sharing materials are being adapted again and translated into Hausa. Seasons I and II will be ready by October. The reports included how the membership of the PRTs is being completed and the goal

is to have 100% of the parishes participating; the first round of RENEW garnered 85% participation. Fr. Timothy has scheduled an overnight training of the PRT members for July 28-29. Some of their challenges include:

- Desire for more involvement on the part of all the priests
- Financing PRTs for travel, accommodation and printing materials
- Meeting in the rainy season; travel can be quite difficult

All the mission schools are being visited for the purpose of inviting and planning that all children will be taught the essentials of faith sharing.

Overview of 20 Years in Nigeria Some Conclusions

As is evidenced from this report, RENEW has made an indelible mark on the Church in Nigeria. The learnings of the past years are many:

- The people long for renewal in their lives and their communities and the vehicle of SCCs and faith sharing is clearly their preferred way of achieving this.



Michael Brough presenting at Holy Family Parish, Archdiocese of Abuja

- The success of the process is entirely dependent upon the commitment level of the Bishop.
- The commitment level of the priests will follow that of the Bishop, and the enthusiasm of the lay people is visible motivated by the response of the priests.



Faith sharing in the Diocese of Ijebu-Ode



Simeon Adagba, Sr. Maureen Colleary and Bishop John Moore, SMA

- The role of the Director of RENEW needs to be filled by a committed priest (an important cultural symbol) who can garner the enthusiasm and energy on the part of the other priests and lay people.
- Training of the DRT and the PRTs needs to be thorough and on-going. People flock to trainings in large numbers, but what is needed is **consistency** and **commitment**.
- Materials need to be simple, few and inexpensive to reproduce locally. The inculturation that was done usually needed revision; always need less words.



RENEW posters used in presentations

- “Small” Christian Communities may be misleading in terminology – culturally, nothing is accomplished by just a few—it takes many. So, too, with prayer—so instruction about the understanding of faith sharing to be done in smaller groups within the large group is important.



PRT members from St. John's Cathedral Parish in Bauchi



Sr. Maureen meeting with some young women in the Diocese of Ahiara

- Most SCCs meet on the Church grounds not in private homes—fear of breakaway churches forming is evident with the increase of many Protestant evangelical churches in Nigeria.
- Timing of “seasons” needs to reflect economic issues within the community, i.e. the harvest festivals occur in October—these are major fund raising events for the parishes and involve many volunteers and organizations.

- The vision of RENEW is foundational to a new way of being parish—that we are a community of many communities. This vision needs to become part of the fabric of societies and church organizations within the parishes—it is imperative to understand them and the role they play in the community and to work with them. In the Church in Nigeria, these groups have a strong presence and in them one will find many leaders of the parishes. They need to be invited to faith sharing and action, that these elements can be incorporated within their present structures—RENEW is not another pious organization.

Simeon Adagba presenting in the Diocese of Ijebu-Ode



Michael Brough & Sr. Maureen Colleary with DRT in the Diocese of Abeokuta

- Music and singing is integral to any community event; so the faith sharing groups would have no cultural credibility without plenty of song.

Simon, member of the PRT in Gombe, has attended all 7 presentations and still wears his original name tag!



Faith sharing in Ijebu-Ode



- Cultural sensitivity to the need or preference for faith sharing groups to be single gender.
- The role of women in faith sharing groups can be a prophetic one; many more women have taken on leadership responsibilities in the SCCs which then better equip them for leadership roles in the wider community.



Sr. Maureen with Poor Clare Sisters Bonaventure, Priscilla and Francesca in Ijebu-Ode

- For the most part, training in English was not a problem but sensitivity is needed, when/where necessary, to compliment the presentations with a translator for local languages.
- Communication between the DRT and RENEW and between the DRT and the PRTs is so important but, at times, can be so frustrating. Culturally, planning too far ahead is a fruitless endeavor as they operate much more on a day to day schedule.
- Hospitality has been a positive experience, I have always been made to feel very welcome wherever I visited and people have gone out of their way to make sure I was able to eat and rest well.
- A debt of gratitude is owed to the SMA (Society for the Missions of Africa) in Nigeria. From the very beginning, RENEW staff were welcomed by Fr. Fintan Daly in Ibadan up until the present time, the SMA's have been supportive and most hospitable.



Bishop John Moore, SMA and St. John's parishioner



Nigeria's natural beauties



On a Personal Note:

I am very appreciative to RENEW International for the amazing opportunity to have worked in Nigeria for the past eight years. Nigeria can be a difficult, frustrating and dangerous country but the people of Nigeria are truly inspiring. I have witnessed their deep faith, indomitable spirit and limitless patience and I have been changed. The hard-

working bishops, dedicated priests, sisters and lay leaders and especially the joy-filled, light-hearted children have made an indelible mark on my heart. I count myself very privileged to have many dear friends in Nigeria and I will miss them all! The journey has been rich and the People of God in Nigeria, through their poverty, have filled me and for that I will always be grateful.

