A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY (ANALYSIS) OF MARRIAGE AND
DIVORCE AMONG *IGBO* CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS (NIGERIA).

BY

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A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY (ANALYSIS) OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE AMONG *IGBO* CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS (NIGERIA).

DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this Thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Joachim Ifezuo Oforchukwu
June 2010.

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Many prominent scholars contributed to the success of this thesis. The idea to conduct a research study on marriage and divorce was first nurtured as a graduate student in the University of Akron. While I came to the end of this research, I had the problem of choosing the research title that would incorporate the entire chapters. Professor Samuel Kunhiyop was instrumental in choosing the title of this thesis. Professor Samuel, as my supervisor, helped to change the nature of this thesis. I benefited immensely from his advice, critique, suggestions, and knowledge. Professor Kunhiyop, I am grateful for your inspiration.

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ABSTRACT

The question of "marriage and divorce" is one of the toughest issues that faces the *Igbo* church in the 21st century. Unfortunately, not all Christian couples continue to the injunction, "What God has joined together, let no one put asunder" (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; I Cor. 7:10-11). Some Christian couples believe that it is biblically permissible to marry and divorce when a couple becomes incompatible at any stage in their married life (Arnold 2001:183-190).

Today, the rate of marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christian couples is alarming. Divorce among this population has reached such a crescendo that the Igbo Church leadership must become actively involved in serious research and good policies that will reduce this alarming problem. It is time that the *Igbo* Church re-evaluates and re-assess its doctrine in order to salvage the marriages of countless *Igbo* Christians. The challenge for *Igbo* Church leaders is to make Christ available to all *Igbo* Christians in their marital life.

This study employed in-depth interviews of a select group to answer its research questions. The researcher interviewed participants drawn from married couples, divorcees, and children from broken families in order to ascertain the possible causes of marriage and divorce in the *Igbo* Catholic Christian community.

The research revealed that childlessness, adultery, quarrels, and inadequate financial support could disintegrate Christian couples. The work also revealed that there were fewer divorces in earlier societies than in modern society. Christ's teaching on marriage and divorce is unquestionable, and therefore is used as a model. Christ disapproved of – some would even say forbid – divorce. The researcher challenged the *Igbo* Church leaders to do more than just administer the sacraments. The time has come for the *Igbo* Church leaders to re-evaluate its teaching techniques. The research findings demonstrated that love has the ability to strengthen and unite all Christian families. When love, peace, and joy prevail in *Igbo* Christian marriages, the number of divorces would be reduced.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Marriage and divorce may well be one of the major problems facing the *Igbo* Church today. Ordinarily, an ideal marriage will remain united, undivided, and unbroken. This is the plan written by the mind of the Creator when He gave Eve to Adam as his permanent partner in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:24). Also, St. Paul expressed the same view, when he recalled Christ's prohibition of divorce:

> To those, now married, however, I give this command (though it is not mine, it is the Lord's): a wife must not separate from her husband. If she does separate, she must either remain single or become reconciled to him again. Similarly, a husband must not divorce his wife. (1 Cor. 7: 10-11)

This passage demonstrates that divorce is undesirable, and should not be permitted in the Christian communities. All efforts must be made to encourage couples to stay together or get back together, even when they have separated. However, the intention of this study is not to provide a solution to the social problems caused by marriage and divorce. Rather, the purpose of this study is to place the problem of marriage and divorce in a proper context with respect to the *Igbo* Catholic Christian community.

The Christian marriage is not just a mere marriage. Christian marriage is unique, and has been instituted by Christ as a Sacrament. Therefore, this indicates that any Christian marriage, including those of the *Igbo* Christians, should reflect the mind of Christ. Above all, Christian marriage is indissoluble, and is guided by conjugal love. For this reason, it is important for yet-to-be *Igbo* Christian spouses to be fully and adequately instructed to the teachings of the Church.

Married Christian couples publicly agreed before the church to remain husband and wife for better or for worse, to remain faithful, and above all to love each other as Christ loves His Church. In marriage, two partners become one flesh, a concept that is predicated by love. The couples ought to love each other in Christ-like love. This love is boundless; it was for the love Christ had for the world that He was able to die for our sins. Christ remains the head of the Church, and He loves the church unconditionally. In

a similar manner, the husband is considered the head of the family, and should love his wife and family unconditionally. However, the husband should not lord his headship over the wife, but must love and provide for the family. The husband should be prepared to give his entire life for his wife and children. He should work for them. However, this type of self-sacrifice can only be possible where conjugal love exists and prevails.

The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 considers the meaning of both marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christians. Research efforts were made to give a full historical background to the study. The *Igbo* people are known to be spiritual, honest, respectful, and hard-working individuals.

Chapter 2 examined the typology of marriage in *Igbo* society. This chapter explored the worldview of marriage among the *Igbo* people. Marriage is considered to be sacred among the *Igbo* people. Character formation is taken very seriously in the lives of *Igbo* people. Even prior to the advent of Christianity in *Igbo* society, marriage was considered a lifelong commitment, a commitment that only death could end.

Chapter 3 focused specifically on the nature of marriage and causes and effects of marriage and divorce in contemporary *Igbo* society. Chapter 3 investigated the different reasons for divorce among the population. The research findings revealed that childlessness, infidelity, quarrels and alcoholism contributed to the disintegration of family life. This study also revealed that financial difficulties and immaturity could lead to marriage dissolution among *Igbo* Christians. Further, this chapter compared and contrasted the level of marriage and divorce in early and modern societies, noting that the rate of divorce in the latter is much higher.

Chapter 4 presented the interpretation of the study. This chapter presented the opinions, views and arguments of all the participants. The methodology used in the study was a qualitative phenomenological design.

Chapter 5 focused solely on the biblical views of marriage and divorce. It is pertinent to review the Old Testament idea of marriage and divorce, because it provided an understanding of the New Testament's teaching on marriage and divorce. Today, Christ remains the model and teacher on marriage and divorce. He expressed a negative opinion toward marriage and divorce. The teachings of the Church, the views of the Theologians, and the views of Canonists were discussed in this chapter.

Finally, chapter 6 concluded the research study. The researcher assessed the findings of the study and produced some policy suggestions and recommendations. These suggestions focused on how to reduce the rate of divorce among the *Igbo* Catholic Christians. *Igbo* couples are challenged to build their marriages based on love. Love allows a spouse the ability to forgive the faults of the other partner. Only through the act of loving each other can *Igbo* Christian couples achieve a strong, lasting relationship. Also, sex education has the ability to help illuminate the issue of sex for *Igbo* married couples. Sex education would prepare *Igbo* married couples for a mature sexual life.

There is no doubt that divorce directly conflicts with the teaching of the church. As a result, the Church has discriminated against individuals who have been divorced. Unfortunately, some *Igbo* Christians have been divorced. This represents a pastoral problem for the Church. The intention of this research study is to find a solution that would more successfully allow *Igbo* men and women to be integrated into the Christian faith, an integration that allows and welcomes both divorced and faithful *Igbo* Christians to the table of God.

1.1   BACKGROUND

The origin of the *Igbo* people is uncertain (Ibegbu 1982:1). There have been some analyses of *Igbo* origin. These analyses contained both documented and undocumented accounts. The study collated by Uzoma Onyemaechi about *Igbo* People in University of Michigan, argued that Igbo civilization evolved from the Nok, Ife, and Benin civilizations (Boughton & Mason, 1999). However, this account is absolutely contrary to popular *Igbo* belief. Okigbo (1986) asserted that most Igbo people believe that the *Igbo* people transited from the Phoenician settlements in the Maghreb i.e. the classic transition from Stone to Iron Age came to Nok culture from Meroe.

The *Igbo* people can be found in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The *Igbo* people are deeply rooted in spirituality. Traditional *Igbo* religion has had an enormous influence on the character of the *Igbo* people. An *Igbo* child is taught to be honest, caring, respectful, duty-conscious, and to know God.

Igbo society is largely Christian. Christianity first came to the *Igbo* community in 1846 (Amucheazi 1986:6). The Christian message came to the *Igbo* people through both the Protestant and Holy Ghost Missionaries. Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who was a Protestant missionary (Amucheazi 1986:6), made a great impact in evangelizing the people of Onitsha. Under the leadership of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, the Christian Missionary Society established schools, where girls were taught family values and religion.

The arrival of the Holy Ghost Congregation in 1885 in *Igbo* land increased the speed of evangelization. The Holy Ghost Congregation belonged to the Catholic Religious Order. The *Igbo* people welcomed the missionaries with open hearts, which contributed to the huge success of evangelization in the area. The early missionaries opened schools, where Christian religion was taught to children. The 1940s witnessed the strong growth of evangelization in *Igbo* land. During this period, Bishop Shanahan made it a point of duty to evangelize as many *Igbo* people as possible (Obi et al. 1985:106-130). Within the next few decades of evangelization, churches were established in Onitsha, Uli, Ihiala, Emekuku, and Okija.

However, these religious values changed immediately at the end of the Nigerian-Biafra War in 1970. The government took over all the schools belonging to the missionaries and private entrepreneurs. Orewa (2002:21) observed that religious instruction has not been reintroduced to Nigerian schools since the government takeover. The lack of religious instruction promotes immorality. Nigerian men and women now feel that they have been liberated from religious indoctrination. This has produced negative consequences for the *Igbo* people, likely contributing to the growing number of divorces among *Igbo* Christian families.

There have been numerous studies conducted that have analyzed marriage and divorce in *Igbo* society and Africa in general. For example, a study by Kunhiyop (2008:190) compared and contrasted global views of marriage. According to Kunhiyop (2008:190), the African conception of marriage is quite distinct from the Western notion of marriage. Research has suggested that this general observation holds true for the *Igbo* people as well. Kisembo et al. (1977:57-61) examined divorce and remarriage in African Christian perspective. Their own study was approached from a Roman Catholic

viewpoint. Ibegbu (1982:3) argued that marriage in *Igbo* land is communitarian in nature, in contrast to the individualistic of marriage among Europeans. Similarly, a study by Onyeocha (1983:43) extensively discussed communitarian marriage in *Igbo* land. The communal nature of *Igbo* marriage undoubtedly has changed conceptions of divorce and has possibly reduced divorce rates; this will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.

It is difficult to collect statistics on marriage and divorce in the African context. For example, in their study, Kisembo et al. (1977:56) argued that it was difficult to collect reliable statistics on marriage and divorce in Africa. Unfortunately, there are no recorded figures of marriage and divorce rates in the *Igbo* land of Nigeria. The absence of figures has made it difficult to know the actual number of marriage and divorces among *Igbo* Christians. However, according to the World Almanac (MacLeod 2002:9), one out of every two marriages usually ends in divorce. There is no statistical evidence to indicate that this number is any higher or lower for *Igbo* Christians. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that the rate is increasing, and it is posing a great threat to the social and moral fiber of the *Igbo* Christian community.

Based on the aforementioned realities, the need to investigate marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Christians is crucial. To achieve this goal, this study would consider biblical, exegetical, and theological investigations of marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians.

1.2   THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main problem to be appraised concerns marriage and divorce in the light of biblical revelation as it relates to *Igbo* Catholic Christians in Nigeria. Aspects of *Igbo* society need to be better integrated into the Christian faith. After converting to Christianity, *Igbo* Christians still carry many of their traditional ideas, customs, and cultural values, particularly with respect to marriage and divorce. The researcher believes that problems with respect to marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christians deserve proper examination.

The principles expressed in Matthew 19:1-12 should guide an examination of *Igbo* Christian marriages. In this text, Jesus reminds the Church that marriage is called into being by God and given great purpose and meaning (Martin 2004:9). Jesus quotes Genesis to inform us that marriage is a divine institution and has a permanent status. Therefore, due to the divine nature of marriage, divorce represents an offense against God. Divorce clearly contradicts the teachings of the Bible. Jesus emphatically holds that God created them male and female, and that a man shall leave his father and mother and be attached to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh (Genesis 1:27).

1.3 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to analyze marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians in order to assess how the *Igbo* Church can respond to this problem. There are several secondary objectives of the study once an understanding of how the Igbo can address the problem of marriage and divorce:

1. The message of Christ should be read afresh as good news; it should be a message that is liberating.
2. This study aims to adapt the message of Jesus Christ in order to liberate and include *Igbo* Christians who have been divorced.
3. In order to achieve Church liberation, Church teachings need to be sensitive to the *Igbo* worldview.

1.4 PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to investigate marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians. This study gives an overview of marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Christian community. This study also examines marriage and divorce in early *Igbo* society, which indicates that the rate of divorce was particularly low compared to today. The purpose of this study is to understand this discrepancy. Another purpose of this study would be to encourage the Church to reconcile their teaching with the real life situation of *Igbo* Catholic Christians. The application of the Biblical teachings on marriage and divorce to *Igbo* Christians would be crucial for this research study.

1.5 THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (1960-1975)

The Vatican II is important in our understanding of the Biblical, theological, pastoral, canonical, and cultural implications of the Church's teaching on marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians. The Second Vatican Council provided the Catholic Church with rich teaching that will guide the *Igbo* Catholic Church in its dealing with *Igbo* Christians. Describing the importance of the Vatican II, Ogbenna (2006:1) noted,

> One of the significant achievements of the Second Vatican Council was providing us with a sound theology of religious life. The nature and purpose of consecrated life in general, enunciated in the Concilia documents, Lumen gentium and Perfectae caritatis, have guided every meaningful discussion on the subject in years following the Council.

The Catholic Church was blessed with the bold action of Pope John XXIII when he announced his intention to call an ecumenical council. The decisions of the Vatican II would have far-reaching effects for Christians all over the world, *Igbo* Christians included. The decisions, suggestions, and policies of the Second Vatican Council would appropriately be applied to this research study as it affects the *Igbo* Christians.

1.6 BIBLICAL IMPLICATIONS

Scripture was central in the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. The teaching of the Vatican II is primarily based on the Bible. *Dei Verbum* (The Word of God) and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (On the Liturgy) would be used in this study to highlight and explain issues related to marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christians. The Second Vatican Council emphasized the role of Scripture and preaching in the Church.

One of the objectives of this study is to examine the Biblical basis for marriage and divorce in the light of Vatican II. Genesis 2:24, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, and Matthew 19:1-12 are unarguably the most relevant Biblical texts on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. One of the objectives of this study is to explore what God intended to

accomplish in Jewish law and society. The exploration of these biblical texts would help us to apply these biblical passages to the specific case of *Igbo* Catholic Christians.

1.7   THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Vatican II recognized the theology of the Sacraments in the lives of Christians. The Vatican II teaches that Christ is always present in the Sacraments. Marriage, as this study will conclude in later chapters, is a Sacrament. The Vatican II uses the term "marriage covenant" in place of the traditional term "contract" to describe the marriage bond of Christians.

Theology deals with God. Christian theology, on the other hand, is discourse about the Christian faith. For the purposes of this study, it is important to explore the views of prominent theologians on marriage and divorce. The intent is to compare and contrast the teachings of the Bible and theologians on marriage and divorce. The teaching of the Bible and prominent theologians should sufficiently address the needs of *Igbo* Christians with regard to marriage and divorce.

There are some theological implications that would result if Christianity turns a deaf ear to the yearning of *Igbo* Catholics who are hungering for Christ's Word. First, Christianity would remain shallow in *Igbo* culture. According to the Leader (1978:1),

> Certainly Christianity will ever remain shallow in Africa unless there is a place in the universal Church for African Theology, which caters for the genuine needs, culture and traditions of Africans, a theology capable of handling problems peculiar to Africans.

The recommendations of the Leader are in compliance with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Second, the Christian faith must inculturate indigenous people's traditions and culture. Integrating the regional culture of the people would make the Christian doctrine meaningful and acceptable for potential receivers of the faith. Pope Paul VI (1964:908) underscored this position when he said, "The Christian life must be adapted to the mentality and character of each culture." Also, Ibegbu (1982:186) was correct when he observed,

If the Christian faith is to be incarnate in our culture and thereby made acceptable to our people, there is exigency for a dialogue between the *Igbo* culture and the deposit of the revelation of Christian faith. A dialogue which will be productive of African theology capable of taking proper care of the problems of African Christians.

The Vatican II placed much importance on the ecclesial dimension of marriage. Marriage must be celebrated in a community of the faithful. Christian marriage, which is contracted between a Christian husband and wife, is akin to the relationship between Christ and the Church. Therefore, marriage must be celebrated in a Christian community, where a minister can witness the exchange of vows.

1.8   CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

The Vatican II was clear about the Church's position on non-Christian religions. Following Vatican II, the Church fashioned pragmatic positions that recognized non-Christian cultures. In order for Christianity to respond to the needs of Igbo society, the Church must appreciate and respect *Igbo* culture and traditions. According to McBrian (1996:383).

Without prejudice to the uniqueness and truth of Christian faith another view affirms the intrinsic religious value of the other great world and insists, beyond the preceding position, on the necessity and worthwhileness of dialogue with them. These other religions are not only to tolerated or even respected, they to be perceived as having something to teach us, not only about themselves but about God, about life, even about Christ. They are not simply deficient expressions of Christianity.

In light of the directions of the Vatican II, it would be critical to investigate the cultural implications of marriage and divorce in this study. As we investigate marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Catholic Christians, distinct cultural elements are bound to emerge.

1.9   PASTORAL IMPLICATION

The Vatican II has challenged the Church to fashion out pastoral principles that would apply the principles of Christianity to *Igbo* culture. The Church must be in a position to administer Christ's Word to the *Igbo* people in their own culture. If the Word of God is not preached and administered in the *Igbo* culture, Christ's Word would neither be effective nor pragmatic for the *Igbo* Christians. The Church must cater for the needs of the *Igbo* Christians. The Church must feed (John 21:17) the spirits of the *Igbo* Christians. The Vatican II (1975:10) emphasized this position, declaring,

> If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among these groups in the same way that Christ by His incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom He lived.

The pastoral problem experience by *Igbo* Christians is due to the fact that the Church in *Igbo* society has not fully accepted the traditions of *Igbo* society. If the culture and traditions of *Igbo* society are inculturated into Christianity, then the problems experienced by *Igbo* Christians would be reduced. The Church (Ibegbu 1982:xi:) must step in and do all it can to implant itself among the *Igbo* Christians so that the Christian faith may reflect and respond to their culture and be acceptable by Igbo society at large.

On a personal note, I have been a priest for 20 years. I have served *Igbo* Christian families for over a decade as a priest. The *Igbo* people are spiritual by nature. The people have embraced Christianity as a way of serving God. Unfortunately, Christianity has not fully accepted some *Igbo* Christian families due to their marriage histories. There has been discrimination against divorcees. But in the *Igbo* traditional religion, every member is fully incorporated. However, in this study, therefore, I am motivated to examine how to reconcile Catholic divorcees among the *Igbo* Christians.

1.10   CANONICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Vatican II made pragmatic provisions for the Code of Canon Law to enhance the welfare of Christian couples who are facing problems in their married lives. The Vatican II recognized that many married couples face problems. These Canonical

provisions were aimed at alleviating the problems of Christian couples in their Christian faith. The Canon Law gave the Pontiff the prerogative to judge and grant annulment when necessary. According to Canon 1141 (1983), "Theologians and Canonists hold that the Roman Pontiff can grant not only annulments but in certain circumstances divorces of valid marriage(s) with the right to remarry." The problem in *Igbo* society is that the Church is very slow in looking into the people's marital problems in order to apply Canon 1141 to alleviate the burdens of *Igbo* Catholic Christians. Part of the purpose of this research study is to encourage the *Igbo* Catholic Church to apply Canon 1141 to *Igbo* Christians when required.

The researcher would also explore the views of some Canonists on the issue of marriage and divorce. This would help establish some Church norms to guide the potential integration of divorcees into the Catholic Church. In addition, this study would examine the reasons why divorce is unusually common among the *Igbo* Christian elite. The literature review confirmed the different causes of divorce in the *Igbo* environment. This helped the researcher to recommend meaningful and genuine policies in order to reduce the rate of marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christian families.

Finally, this study would generate a rich set of suggestions that might be appropriate for any part of Nigerian church. The findings of this study would be used to create a model for *Igbo* Church policy. These Church policies and norms would seek to reduce the high rate of divorce among *Igbo* Christian families.

1.11 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Mouton (2001:55) described a research design as a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends to conduct his or her study. The research design is a fundamental part of any research study, especially those with an empirical component.

This is a literary study, which would explore biblical, exegetical, and theological components. The researcher would explore key Scriptural texts and scholarly materials. In order to accomplish these objectives, the researcher would utilize biblical, exegetical and exegetical sources as well as other journals and articles that are relevant to the

subject under investigation. In addition, other important tools that would help in this research would include critical and expository commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and Lexical and other scholarly works on marriage and divorce.

Marriage and divorce are not only conceptual issues that can be dealt with at the theoretical level, but they are also a highly pragmatic subject. Consequently, this study would aim to investigate the phenomenon of marriage and divorce through an empirical lens. To this end, the researcher used intensive interviews and focus group discussions to garner information.

1.12   DATA COLLECTION PLAN

The data collection section specifies how the process by which the data were collected (Newman et al. (1997:47). The site for the study is the *Igbo* region of Nigeria. The participants in the study included married partners, divorcees, and children from divorcees. The socioeconomic level of the participants would be moderate to poverty level, which may influence that population's divorce rate. Participants would be both male and female.

1.13   GAINING ACCESS TO THE POPULATION

Creswell (1998:110-111) discussed different ways of gaining access to participants in qualitative research. Before starting this study, permission was sought from the human subjects review board. In the letter, the researcher stated the purpose of the study, and why it would be necessary to involve the participants in the study. The researcher also obtained permission from the participants in Igbo land where the study was conducted.

The researcher explained the project in detail to the participants. The participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and they might withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, they could refuse to complete the form. They could also refuse to be interviewed. More importantly, they would know that no personally-identifying information would be used, and no opinions would be attributed to them as individuals without their consent. The details of the study and its significance were explained to the participants.

1.14 INSTRUMENTS

The instruments section provides information about the instrument (questionnaire, interviews, survey, etc.) (Newman et al. 1997:44). An in-depth interview was the primary instrument to collect data in this research study. This method gave the researcher the opportunity to meet the interviewees, both as individuals and as a group.

Creswell (1998:6, 14) encouraged researchers to explore a face-to-face method of interviewing participants. One-on one interview was beneficial for this study. This interview format encouraged the participants to express and share their views about the research questions. One major weakness of one-on-one interviewing was that some of the interviewees might feel intimidated, especially those who are less articulate and/or shy. Such setbacks could constitute a challenge for the interviewer.

1.15 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Newman et al. (1997:46-49) discussed the different methods of analyzing data. In analyzing the data collected on this study, the researcher used some of the methods Creswell (1998:190) has suggested. The data analysis plan often has several components. The process of data analysis involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell 1998:190). The researcher would have to decide which of the collected data has meaning and which would be irrelevant to the study.

Creswell (2003:190) asserted that data analysis is an ongoing process that involves continual reflection about the data, Further, Creswell noted that data analysis involves transcribing interviews, scanning material, typing up fieldstones, and sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information. A major challenge for the researcher was to reconcile the data collected from the literature review with the original data collected for the study. The literature review might say something different from the interview data.

The data was analyzed using a descriptive method; this method allowed the researcher to state the interview responses as he received them from the respondents.

Creswell (2003:192) argued that one useful method is using a coding process to generate a description of the setting or people, as well as categories or themes for analysis. Description involves a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting (Creswell 2003:193). This analysis was useful for this study. Miles and Huberman (1994:110) addressed the role of creating a data display and suggested that narrative text has been the most frequent form of display for qualitative data. The results were presented in descriptive and narrative form (Creswell 1998:194).

Multiple sources of information were used in gathering the data. The researcher did not limit his sources to one participant. Rather, the investigator interviewed 8 participants (4 males and 4 females) on the topic of marriage and divorce. Creswell (1998:221) observed that in triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, interrogators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence. In analyzing the different sources, it helped the researcher to examine marriage and divorce among different *Igbo* Christians, both groups and individuals. The researcher also used the assertion method to analyze the data (Creswell 1998:63). This method helped the investigator to provide interpretation of the lessons learned from the data collected.

The research questions for this study include:

RQ1: What are the cultural and Church effects of divorce among the *Igbo* people?

RQ2: How will the Church pastorally and theologically respond to the *Igbo* problem of divorce among its members?

RQ3: How do you feel about the rate of divorce among *Igbo* Christians?

RQ4: Do you have any concerns for divorced *Igbo* families?

RQ5: What challenges do you think the *Igbo* Church leadership is facing with respect to the high rate of divorce among its members?

RQ6: In your opinion, what do you think are the causes of divorce among *Igbo* Christian families?

RQ7: In your opinion, what are the effects of divorce among *Igbo* Christians?

RQ8: In your opinion, what steps should be taken to reduce divorce among *Igbo* Christians?

RQ9: In your opinion, why do you think divorce is considered common among the *Igbo* Christian elite?

These research questions helped to resolve the issues raised in the study by using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. These research designs allowed the participants to express their views, feelings, beliefs, and opinions on the issue under investigation.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IN *IGBO* SOCIETY

2.1   INTRODUCTION

A review of literature would provide the reader with an overview of the definition of the culture, the historical and current situation of *Igbo* society, in terms of the demographics, education, religion, social, and political organizations. The overall objective of the study was to investigate on marriage and divorce among Igbo Christians. This is carried out by getting a good knowledge about their marriage structure, forms of marriage, linkage between children and family and other religious beliefs about marriage observed by the *Igbo* society. The review also took note about marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* people. The chapter concluded with a reflection derived from the analysis of the literature review of these key areas investigated about marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Catholic society.

2.2   A PROPER DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Like so many societies in the world *Igbo* society is one that is rooted in age-old traditions, but how can one distinguish between one culture or another or even have anything to say about a particular culture or society without the proper lens to look through? In 1973 Clifford Geertz was attempting to tackle this very issue. It was one that had plagued social-anthropologists and theoreticians of religion. He was concerned that the tendency to fall back on the research and works of Durkheim, Weber, Freud and Malinowski hindered the field (p. 87). For Geertz, this was a serious problem and one that he hoped to supersede or fix by providing his own unique and more simple definition of religion as a *cultural system.* He defined this system as follows:

An historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. Further that it acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations. (p. 89)

He felt that this definition was superior because it possessed, "neither multiple referents nor, so far as I can see, any unusual ambiguity" (p. 89). This last point is of great importance because Geertz was not relying on those "multiple referents" in order to make his definition complete. It does not specifically rely on any definition Weber or Malinowski had previously used. To further explain why Geertz's ambition is so important consider what he said after the definition. His view also showed that cultural beliefs and values do not change so easily.

In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life. (p. 90)

To put this more simply the group's characteristic spirit or culture is made easy to accept because it represents a way to adapt to the world that a group considers itself part of. Further it is emotionally able to persuade people that the beliefs help to make a culture or society the correct or right way the society should function within the world.

2.3 *IGBO* WORLDVIEW

In order to accurately describe the *Igbo* worldview, it is important to choose appropriate sources. It is crucial to note the perspective of the sources used. Victor (1965) and Elizabeth (1976) have explained about the early sources on Africans and the *Igbo* people. One critic, Abanuka (2004: vii), opined, "one wonders whether…works [of foreigners] could be considered as sensitive and objective." Not only did these early sources present a skewed perspective on *Igbo* culture, but it also forced early Igbo

writers to respond to the prejudices of European writers in an attempt to demonstrate that European culture was not superior to *Igbo* culture. Further, these early *Igbo* writers overly emphasized how the *Igbo* tradition conflicted with European culture. As a result, it is important to present an array of sources in order to present a balanced depiction of the *Igbo* worldview.

It is this definition and idea of "world view" as used by *Igbo* writers that would inform this investigation of Igbo life, its various meanings, it's symbolic functions and how they inform *Igbo* living and especially the symbolic act of marriage and its contrasting symbol of divorce. Both these acts, marriage and divorce, play a profound role in how the *Igbo* not only interact with one another, but how the world at large is having a noticeable influence on the *Igbo* culture. It is through this definition that a proper picture of what the *Igbo* culture or, as will be used from now on, *worldview* will be filled in. At its most specific level this chapter aims to use an elucidation of *Igbo* culture in general to explain why marriage figures so strongly into the culture and how divorce is having such a detrimental impact on the institution of marriage and *Igbo* culture in general.

2.4   THE TRADITION OF ORAL TRANSMISSION

The *Igbo* oral tradition has asserted the connection between the Jewish and *Igbo* people. The *Igbo* oral tradition is a system by which information, tradition, beliefs, and customs are transmitted from parents to children or from generation to generation. The oral tradition is largely undocumented in scholarly work. However, this system has been essential to keeping *Igbo* beliefs and culture alive. There is no documentation to prove that the *Igbo* people originated from the Jewish people.

Though it has not been documented in published research, the *Igbo* oral traditional has linked the *Igbo* people to Jewish culture. For example, the traditional *Igbo* naming and circumcision ceremonies are similar to the Jewish traditions (Genesis 17:12). One striking peculiarity between the Jewish and *Igbo* circumcision ceremonies is that the male child in question is circumcised on the eighth day of life. The eight day of circumcision for the male children may have different meanings for the Israelites, as a

mark, indicating that the person has entered into the Old Covenant with God (Genesis 17).

2.5   DEMOGRAPHICS

Nigeria is a multiethnic and multilingual country (Hansford et al., 1976). Brann (1977) pointed out that three languages – Hausa, Yoruba, and *Igbo* – are being spoken by over 54% of the *Igbo* population. The *Igbo* people are mainly located in southeast Nigeria. According to Brann, the *Igbo* people make up about 17.6% of Nigeria's population. Unfortunately, this data was collected in 1963; more recent data has not been collected.

The *Igbo* people are found in the five states (please see figure 1 below), which comprise an informal *Igbo* region. These states are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo (Ebo 1993:17). The *Igbo* people are also found in some parts of Delta, Akwa Ibom, Rivers, Byelsa, and Yenoguo states. Today, the *Igbo* people can be found in every part of the world, often involved in education and trade (Oforchukwu and Njoku 2002:18).

Figure 1.

Besides being extensively involved in trade, most of the *Igbo* people in Nigeria are farmers (Oforchukwu and Njoku 2002:19). The earlier *Igbo* people were committed to growing crops for domestic use. They grew palm trees for cash crops, as well as cassava, coco yams, and native beans. Most agricultural goods have historically not been exported, but rather eaten locally. Farmers rely heavily on the help of the family members, as mechanized farming has not been popular. However, locally-grown agricultural goods have historically been enough to feed the *Igbo* population.

2.6   EDUCATION

The *Igbo* people have professed a strong belief that young people are the future of *Igbo* society. Due to this belief, the *Igbo* people focus heavily on training and educating young children so that they can contribute to society. In order to understand the current educational tradition in *Igbo* society and how it contributes to the *Igbo* worldview, it is important to consider the historical tradition of *Igbo* education. For the *Igbo* people, education served the primary purpose of transmitting traditions, cultures, beliefs, and customs from one generation to the next.

One of the characteristics of pre-colonial *Igbo* education is that it was informal in nature (Nzekwe 2007:24). A child in *Igbo* society was educated in the family, village, and community. *Igbo* society educated children on how to eat, socialize, and acquire decent human behaviour. Therefore, one of the primary purposes of *Igbo* education was to socialize children. Similarly, *Igbo* traditional education aimed to train children to be good, honest, humble, courageous, sociable, hardworking, trustworthy, and respectful (Oforchukwu and Njoku 2002:3).Traditional *Igbo* education emphasized the role of character formation.

Formal instruction focused on the *Igbo* oral tradition. The *Igbo* people commonly used proverbs as a means of conversation. Achebe (1994:7), in a fictional account that accurately depicts the *Igbo* cultural tradition, noted that among the *Igbo,* the art of conversation is regarded very highly. He described proverbs as the palm oil with which words are eaten. *Igbo* proverbs were used for different reasons. Oforchukwu and Njoku (2002:4) noted that the most important function of proverbs is to elucidate the meaning of obscure points in conversation and arguments. Therefore, for the *Igbo* people, any child who knew how to use *Igbo* proverbs was regarded as being intellectual. Following are the few examples for proverbs which are used in daily life of *Igbo* People (Ogbalu, Econ, & F.R.E.S, 1965):

1. Nwanyi umu iri o dighi ihe mere nabali o naghi ama.

Literally: When a woman has ten children, there is nothing that happens in the night that she does not know about.

2. E lelia nwa ite, o gbonyua oku.

Literally: If you neglect the pot, it boils over and extinguishes the fire. (A small thing can do a lot of damage.)

3. Ewu mmadu abuo nwere na-ehi ura nezi.

Literally: A goat owned by two people sleeps outside. (With joint ownership, each owner shunts his responsibility to the other, with the result that nothing gets accomplished.)

Further, in traditional *Igbo* society, hard work was appreciated. Laziness was despised and reproved. Abanuka (2004:74) argued that *Igbo* society, which valued and encouraged hard work and an enterprising spirit, despised the lazy and idle. Therefore, an *Igbo* man was educated to eschew laziness. For an *Igbo* man, the purpose of traditional education was functionalism.

Ultimately, the purpose of the *Igbo* traditional education, which was based upon oral education, was to encourage, promote, and preserve the cultural values of the people against corrupting external forces. *Igbo* education did not simply teach lessons to children. It promoted the cultural transmission of worldview.

2.7   RELIGION

The *Igbo* people are religious by nature. There have been claims that *Igbo* religion is polytheistic, while other scholars have claimed the *Igbo* to be pantheistic. To quickly define the two, pantheism is the notion that the universe is merely a manifestation of God or the gods while polytheism is the idea that there are multiple gods that have different functions within a given universe. Uchendu (1965:94) observed that the *Igbo* people have traditionally been polytheistic i.e. they worshipped many gods. Ejidike (1999) also noted that there are tendencies within *Igbo* culture to represent aspects of monotheistic (worshipping only their own one God) and polytheistic religion. Some other writers have maintained that the *Igbo* religion is pantheistic, incorporating a supreme god, deities associated with particular elements of the environment, and spiritual entities associated with local physical landmarks such as rock formations on rivers. Abanuka (2004:2) maintained that the *Igbo* people called God, the Supreme

Being, many different names, such as such names as Chukwu, Chineke, Ezechitoke, Osebuluwa, Obasi, Olisa, or Chi. Adama (1987:9) also noted that *Igbo* religious life was centred on the belief that in one Supreme Being called Chineke (God), Chi-Ukwu (the Supreme Being), and Chukwu (God). Though scholars have quarrelled over the nature of traditional *Igbo* religion, it is important to note that the research clearly reveals that there is a rich language for religious description in *Igbo* culture.

The *Igbo* people traditionally have not worshipped gods (Neither polytheistic nor pantheistic). In contrast, the *Igbo* people pray to their departed ancestors, who are accorded respect due to the role they played among the *Igbo* people. In *Igbo* society, it is part of the custom to revere the ancestors for what they stood among the people. Abanuka (2004:44) identified three types of ancestors, which include (a) those who lived a ripe old age; (b) those who died young, but carried out an extraordinary assignment; and (c) the anonymous ancestors. The anonymous ancestors have not made any distinguished mark on the community, but have not caused any great harm, either. The reverence of the ancestors has a moral undertone, as it challenges the living to work toward justice so that when they die, they too, would be revered.

It is in the nature of the *Igbo* people to respect life. Homicide and suicide were strictly abhorred in traditional religion. In the *Igbo* worldview, any person who killed his brother or sister was ostracized from Igbo society. Also, any person who took his or her life in *Igbo* land was not only buried by strangers, but risked not being given a befitting burial at all. For example, in a fictional account, Achebe told the fate of the gallant Okonkwo who committed suicide. As a result, his clansmen could not even touch his body. Achebe (1994:207) used his story to describe the *Igbo* worldview:

> Why can't you take him down yourselves? He asked. It is against our customs, said one of the men. It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers.

The *Igbo* people till today still abhor suicide, and it is considered to be a sin against the Earth, gods, and humanity.

The *Igbo* people strongly believe in life after death. For the *Igbo* people, living a good life, righteousness, uprightness, and honesty are rewarded in the afterlife. This belief is given concrete expression in the notion of reincarnation, called *ilo uwa* – literally a return to this worldly existence (Abanuka 2004:56). *Ilo uwa* is strictly reserved to *Igbo* people who have lived good moral life. Onwu (2002) also noted that the concept of reincarnation makes meaningful the *Igbo* belief of life after death. The belief that honoured ancestors are reincarnated in the form of a newborn child is a strong religious belief that represents the importance of respecting ancestors in the Igbo community.

Death has a special religious meaning in traditional *Igbo* religion. Death is seen as the end of earthly accomplishment, and is considered to be superior to man (Abanuka 2004:55-56). Man has no answer to death. In fact, many Igbo names are expressed in the superiority of death over man; for example, *onwuka* means "death is greater than me," and *onwukamike* means "death is superior to me." *Igbo* names also represent the supremacy and universality of death; the name *onwuzuruigbo* means "death is universal" and *onwuasoanya* means "death has no respecter of persons. From these expressions, it becomes obvious that death is not the end of man, but according to the belief in *Igbo* traditional religion, is a mutation from one form of existence (life) to another form (spirit) (Ogbukagu 1997:262).

Ultimately, as demonstrated with regard to gods, death, ancestors, and names, traditional *Igbo* religion strongly informs the *Igbo* worldview (Uchendu 1965:11-21). The following section considers another component of the *Igbo* worldview – social and political organizations.

2.8   SOCIAL TRADITION

The *Igbo* people have numerous social and political organizations and traditions that help to inform the *Igbo* worldview (Ogbukagu 1997:55-110). Social organizations dole out informal power to the *Igbo* people, while political organizations represent a formal political power structure. In sum, these organizations and traditions help to govern *Igbo* society (Agbo 1995:94-95). One such social tradition is *Ozo* title-taking. For Uchendu 1965:83), every *Igbo* respects an Ozo titled man, no matter what area he

comes from the Igbo land. People who are to achieve the title of *Ozo* are expected to protect the interest of widows, orphans, and the poor in the Igbo communities.

Abanuka (2004:86) noted that achieving the title of *Ozo* is a very prestigious achievement that is reserved for people of wealth, integrity, and impeccable character. Only those deemed to be morally upright can be admitted into the *Ozo* fold. Otuwurunne (1997:10-11) observed that one must be morally upright and honest before he is admitted into the society of the *Ozo* title holders. Abanuka (2004:86) noted that slaves (*ohu*) could not be raised to the rank of *Ozo*. Equally, women across Igbo land are never initiated into the *Ozo* fold.

Those with title of *Ozo* respect the title so much that it holds its members to a high standard; they do not protect members who morally err out of respect for the position. In all cases, the *Ozo* code of conduct is strictly followed. If any member violates any of the rules of the *Ozo* fold, the erring member is either sanctioned, or his title is revoked. For example, the former Senate president, Chief Adolphus Wabara's title was revoked for being involved in allegations of bribery. However, his title was eventually reinstated after continued exemplary public service (Nigerian Tribune Sunday 28, 2006). This anecdote demonstrates that the Igbo people do not hesitate to discipline any erring *Ozo* title holder.

Systems of social status are important to the *Igbo* people. Prior to colonial rule, these social organizations were formally integrated into the political system in the *Igbo* region. The pre-colonial *Igbo* political system was democratic in nature. There was no central system of government, meaning that all members of *Igbo* society had the opportunity to express opinions on political policy. Each *Igbo* village had its own form of government that made policy for the welfare of its citizens. Further, each village had a formal political structure, and was made wards and kindred. The wards are made up of close family members called *Umunna* (Agbo 1995:94). Individuals are part of the umunna (community). Onwu (2002:12) noted that the traditional *Igbo* had a deep sense of community. Also, the common or general sentiment of *umunna* (community) as observed by other Africans is captured by Mbiti (1969:108) when he says, "I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am." Another way of saying this is, "I am because we are related" (Kunhiyop 2008: 21). Ray (1976:132) noted that a person is

thought of all as a constituent of a particular community, for it is the community which defines who he is and who he can become.

The concept of *umunna* is important for the *Igbo* people. The towns were what the Europeans called villages (Ogbalu). Each village is made up of three kindreds. In each of the kindred's, we get *umunna*. An *umunna* was a collection of families which had a common descent (Ogbalu). They have a common ancestor which had the name of the *umunna*. The *umunna* had a common Obi (the larger living quarters of the head of the family). They have a common village square (amaego) where assemblies or cultural dances could be held). The *umunna* (community members) could not intermarry because of close affinity. The head (diokpara) of the family could offer prayers for the entire *umunna*. For Ogbukagu 1997:55-56), the *umunna* (the kindred men) constitutes the strongest and the most effective means of managing and controlling excesses in village democracy. According to Ogbukagu, one of the duties of the *umunna* is to ensure that prescriptions and proscriptions effected by the town on certain issues are religiously complied with by each kindred. In this way, smooth running of the affairs of umunna is assured. Most importantly, the umunna settles disputes, quarrels, and problems among themselves. The umunna condemn any abomination committed by any member of the umunna. In some cases, the umunna could sell any erring member as a slave to serve as a deterrent to others. There are some taboos that were avoided among the umunna.

Each family in the *Igbo* society has an elder or family head, called the *Okpara*. The family head held the *Ofo*, which held the family together. The *Ofo* is a symbol of justice. The *Okpara* performed duties for the family. Though the head of the family was not considered to be a king, he could settle matters for the family members. The family members could accept or reject the decision of the family head. In needed, the entire village could draft an appeal to the *Okpara*'s decision, which would be presented to the council of elders (Agbo 1995:94).

The council of elders made decisions for the village members. These council elders usually gathered at the Market Square or at *Ama-ego* (the village square). The elders often sent town criers to let the people of the town know about important gatherings. Attendance at these meetings was taken seriously; absenteeism was fined.

On political issues, the council members acted as the legislators, executives, and judiciary (Agbo 1995:94).

The Village Assembly represented the most democratic system of government in traditional *Igbo* society. Every man belonged to the Village Assembly, and exercised the right to speak or to vote for the good of the community. Each deliberation would take time; however, all members would be satisfied at the end of the meeting because everybody would be allowed to talk. One important function of the Village Assembly was that it acted as a check and balance to the decisions of the council members. The Village Assembly was the most influential political body in the village, and its decisions generally had to be respected (Ogbukagu 1997:55-87)).

As noted, social groups played an important role in traditional *Igbo* political culture. *Igbo* society recognized the role of elders, *Ozo* titleholders, *juju* priests, and diviners. These social groups helped to make decisions, as well as to execute and to interpret the laws of the land. In the traditional political structure in *Igbo* land, power was shared among the different social groups. This form of social collaboration among the *Igbo* people made political deliberations and decision-making easier, faster and more effective.

However, this system of formal and autonomous political control was discarded during the colonial period. During the colonial period, the *Igbo* regions became a colony of the British government (Agbo 1995:100). In 1928, the British officials introduced the system of indirect rule in the eastern states of Nigeria. The British officials incorporated indigenous chiefs and other British representatives in administering the people. The Governor-general of the region represented British interests. This system of government ruled over the *Igbo* people 1914 and 1945.

However, indirect rule failed among the *Igbo* people. The *Igbo* nation was known for it's republic and democratic system of government, and this conflicted with the subjugation of indirect colonial rule. For example, the British government imposed taxation on the I*gbos* following their annexation of *Igbo* land. The *Igbo* people abhorred this, and in 1929, the women in Aba rioted and led a protest against the British government (Agbo 1995:104). The British government realized that indirect rule was not suitable for the *Igbo* people, and subsequently introduced a modern local system of

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government that was more acceptable to the people. However, this newer system of semi-representative government still chafed at *Igbo* traditions, because it excluded the *Igbo* educated elite and used some *Igbo* chiefs as pawns to execute British policies. This conflict between British rule and *Igbo* political traditions continued until 1960, when Nigeria became free from British rule.

This section provided a summary of the history and nature of traditional *Igbo* political culture. It demonstrated how traditional *Igbo* political culture conflicted with British colonial rule, and how this history has informed the *Igbo* worldview. The following sections would consider marriage and divorce in Igbo culture.

2.9   MARRIAGE IN *IGBO* SOCIETY

Marriage has a special significance in *Igbo* society. Obi (1970) observed that marriage is a primary structure in *Igbo* social economy. *Igbo* marriage is traditionally patriarchal in nature. Obi defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman that lasts the duration of the man's life and the woman's life, as well as a social structure that promotes an association and agreement between two families. Mbachi (1979:14) refined this definition, noting that marriage is predicated on the mutual consent of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife.

The age of marriage in *Igbo* land differs from community to community. However, Obi (1970) indicated that the normal age is 25 to 28 for the man and 14 to 18 for the girl. It is common among the *Igbo* people for parents to arrange marriage for their children. The normal procedure is to allow the man to choose the girl he wishes to marry. In *Igbo* society, it is a privilege for parents to choose a wife for their son. Hypothetically, the son could reject his parents' choice; however, most often the son accepts the parents' choice because he trusts the wise judgment of the parents.

2.10   MONOGAMY, POLYGAMY AND OTHER FORMS OF MARRIAGE

Nearly every marriage in *Igbo* society begins as a monogamous relationship. In Igbo society, monogamy is the preferred and acceptable form of marriage. This is a form of marriage where by an *Igbo* man marries only one wife and takes no other sexual

partners. However, the issue of polygamy complicates the definition of marriage in *Igbo* society. Mbachi (1979:14) argued that in *Igbo* society, it is common for a man to marry more than one woman, and for all of them to live together as husband and wives. It is important to note exactly what is meant by the term "polygamy." Polygamy is defined as a form of marriage in which an individual has more than one spouse. More specifically, there are different forms of polygamy. Polyandry refers to a wife having more than one husband. Polyandry is not socially acceptable or practiced in *Igbo* society, so it will not be considered in this study. Polygyny refers a man having more than one wife at a time. Polygyny was encouraged in *Igbo* traditional marriage (Obi 1979). According to Obi (1970), polygyny was permitted among the *Igbo* people for the following reasons:

1. Among many peoples, a man must refrain from intercourse with a woman who is pregnant or nursing

2. Among the *Igbo* people, women age early and lose their attraction for men

3. Many men like change

4. Quite often, the barrenness of the first wife leads to taking a second, in conditions namely, where great value is placed on posterity.

For Madu (1978:5), polygyny could be practiced when an *Igbo* man did not get male issues from the first wife; he was moved to marry a second time. Nwonye (1978:24) also observed that the absence of a male child in the family constitutes an indefatigable problem and forces the *Igbo* people concerned if they have the means to resort to polygyny. Polygyny is adopted for economic and social reasons among the Igbo people. For the purposes of this study, polygamy will be used as shorthand to refer to polygyny.

It is being debated whether polygamy is the ideal type of marriage in *Igbo* society. Obi (1970) noted that polygamy among the *Igbo* people has traditionally been encouraged and fully supported. Similarly, Basden (1966:49) suggested that polygamy among the *Igbo* tribes is the recognized rule. However, Ibegbu (1982:28) strongly maintained that polygamy is not an ideal type of marriage among the *Igbo* race. In

contrast, Uchendu (1965:49) argued that polygamy, as practiced in *Igbo* society, represents an ideal form of marriage.

For this study, it is important to note that polygamy, as practiced in *Igbo* society, conflicts with the Christian religion. However, polygamy has long been practiced in *Igbo* society prior to the introduction of Christianity in the 19th century. As a result, many feel that polygamy is a component of traditional *Igbo* culture. This creates a conflict between *Igbo* culture and Christianity, which will be described in greater depth later in this study.

Besides monogamy and polygamy, other forms of marriage are practiced in *Igbo* society. What is known as woman-to-woman marriage is also practised in *Igbo* society. Woman-to-woman marriage should not be misconstrued as lesbianism or gay marriage. Rather, woman-to-woman marriage is a situation in which a woman, mostly one of the husband's wives pays the bride price for another woman for the purpose of begetting children for the family (Akpamgbo, 1977:87). In the institution of woman-to-woman marriage, the female husband marries another woman and assumes control over her and her offspring (Cadigan, 1998:1).In the majority cases, the original wife is sterile, which prompts her to pay the bride price of another woman. When woman-to-woman is practiced, it is the woman who paid for the bride price that determines the man to procreate for the family. In some cases, the woman married into the family could determine who might be the father of her children. For Ibegbu (1982:104), what may generate this type of marriage is either childlessness or lack of male children. Woman-to-woman marriage is very rare, yet it speaks volumes about *Igbo*'s society's perspective on producing children and maintaining the family name, issues that would be discussed in the following section.

2.11 CHILDREN AND FAMILY LINEAGE

In *Igbo* society, *Igbo* people marry in order to produce children. Without children, *Igbo* marriage would be deemed useless. Madu (1978:62-63) succinctly stated, "That begetting children is the primary purpose why the *Igbos* in general enter into marriage contract." Any marriage in *Igbo* society without children has not achieved its accepted

aim, purpose, and end. However, an *Igbo* marriage is deemed a success when it is blessed with children. Parents are happy when a child arrives; otherwise, society would start questioning that marriage.

Producing children is important for both men and women. A woman cannot be considered a mother without a child of her own. Basden (1966:68) noted the importance of children to Igbo women when he wrote, "To be childless is the greatest calamity that can befall a woman." For an *Igbo* man, producing children, especially male children, is important to continue the family lineage; otherwise, the family would become extinct. Achebe (1972:18) provided a perspective on this issue:

> It is a sign of ancestral favour to have many children, the ancestor's name is perpetuated and the father of the family is sure to live on and to get a most decent burial, his passport to the paradise of ancestors.

No *Igbo* man would like his family name to become extinct. This is why *Igbo* people give names to their children such as *Ahamefuna*, which means "May my name not extinct." This name signifies a man's desire to continue his family's name through procreation. Ibegbu (1982:14) argued that the ultimate end of *Igbo* traditional marriage is to ensure personal immortality.

When a male child is not born in the family, it concerns family members because of the important role male children play in *Igbo* society. The desire to produce a male child promotes other, less traditional forms of marriage. According to Ibegbu (1982:18), "The *Igbo* have great love for children and this can explain in some cases the existence of polygamy in *Igbo* land. They have family units which together form the extended family system." In order to beget a male child for the family, a father could even ask his daughter to procreate for the family. However, the tenets of Christianity would admonish a father asking a daughter to procreate for the family in *Igbo* land is extremely criticized by Christianity. However, this is part of the *Igbo* cultural tradition. This represents another tension between the *Igbo* conception of marriage and the Christian conception of marriage.

2.12 DIVINITY OF MARRIAGE

Traditional *Igbo* marriage and Christian marriage have some factors in common. In *Igbo* society, it is widely believed that *ilu nwanyi* (marriage) is both natural and divinely instituted, as it is in Christianity. *Ilu nwanyi* (marriage) in *Igbo* society is considered sacred. It is ordained by *Chukwu* (God). According to Ibegbu (1982:5), "The *Igbo* people marry and procreate because God, the Author of marriage has commanded them to do so – *Chukwu si anyi mubawa* (God has asked us to increase and multiply)." Here, there is a similarity with the Christian idea of marriage. The Igbo idea of marriage coincides with the Biblical notion of marriage institution (Genesis 1:28). The *Igbo* myth emphasizes the divine origin of marriage, while the Christian institution strongly emphasizes what the Bible said, "Increase and multiply" (Genesis 1:28).

Because marriage is considered to be divine among the *Igbo* people, failure to marry is to disrespect Chukwu (God), and considered a serious offense among the *Igbo* people. According to Mbiti (1975:98), "anybody who, under normal conditions refuses to get married is committing a major offense in the eyes of society and people will be against him." Ultimately, it is a sacred duty for *Igbo* sons and daughters to marry. If any *Igbo* son who has reached the age of marriage fails to marry, it quickly becomes a concern for the entire family. There are a number of things a man's family members could do to get him a wife. For example, the family members could pool their resources to pay for the wife's bride price, if money were his problem. No man would want such a measure to be meted against him, however, this is a simply way of telling those who have reached the age of marriage to find a wife to avoid disgrace.

Ultimately, marriage (ilu nwunye) in *Igbo* tradition is life's highest vocation (Nwoye 1978:1). According to Mbiti (1969:133),

> Marriage is a focus of existence, a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator, a duty, a requirement from the corporate society, a rhythm of life in which, under normal circumstances, everyone must participate or else the person concerned has rejected society and society rejects him in return.

This quote demonstrates the primacy of marriage in *Igbo* life, and its important role in *Igbo* culture. In this manner, traditional *Igbo* marriage and Christian marriage have much in common.

2.13 COMMUNITY-ORIENTATION

However, there are dissimilarities between traditional *Igbo* marriage and Christian marriage that do not necessarily clash. A unique aspect of *Ilu nwanyi* (marriage) in *Igbo* traditional society is that it is a community affair. A wife in *Igbo* land does not only belong to the husband, but also to the entire family, kindred, and community members. According to Ibegbu (1982:26), "In *Igbo* land, marriage is not only an affair between the two partners, man and woman; it is an affair of the families of patrilineage (*umunna*) of both parties." In this manner, the *Igbo* marriage dramatically differs from the European or American idea of marriage. In Europe or America, marriage is an individual affair. It does not necessarily involve the community. However, in *Igbo* society, for marriage to be truly considered a traditional Igbo marriage, community members are involved.

The concept of community (*umunna*) is pervasive in *Igbo* society, as well as Africa as a whole. Though it has not been stated explicitly, *umunna* is a critical concept that informs the *Igbo* worldview. It has manifested in numerous components of the Igbo worldview discussed in this chapter – in education, religion, and in social and political traditions. A full investigation of *umunna* has been treated early in this study. However, the influence of *umunna* can clearly be seen in the conception of *Igbo* traditional marriage.

Communal marriage has numerous merits. First, it gets everybody involved during the marriage period. For example, there must be an intermediary who is actively involved both before and after the marriage ceremonies. In *Igbo* society, the intermediary person is called *Onye aka ebe*. His duties range from errands to dispute settler (Ibegbu 1982:27). Further supporting the concept of community marriage, Onyeocha (1983:42) noted, "The communitarian aspect of marriage made it hard for the man arbitrarily to turn away his wife."

However, the communitarian nature of *Igbo* marriage also has its downside. In *Igbo* society, the extended family system has a special place among the *Igbo* people. The extended family system could be abused. Many *Igbo* people consider the resources of the extended family as a right rather than a privilege. For example, a family member could enter into the house of another family member unannounced. Most often, if care is not taken, it could lead to misunderstanding among the extended family. However, these tensions can be resolved through common sense and mutual respect.

2.14 DOWRY

In traditional Igbo marriage, dowries are taken very seriously. In this study, the term "dowry" is used interchangeably with "bride price." Paying a bride price is practiced throughout *Igbo* society. The bride price is a token of appreciation given to the family, generally by the prospective husband of his family, before a daughter is allowed to follow her suitor or fiancé. Bride price is an exceedingly important tradition. If a bride price has not been paid, then the marriage would be deemed illegitimate, irrespective of how many years the couple has lived together, or how many children they have begotten. As Nzekwe (2007:25) stated,

> This is significant when a woman lives with a man who has not paid the woman's dowry. Any children born during the cohabitation are often not considered the man's children until the dowry and subsequent rituals are performed, it does not matter how long the cohabitation lasted.

The harshness of these penalties demonstrates the importance placed upon the dowry in *Igbo* society. Also, the bride price (bride wealth) has the ability to keep marriage stable. In their study, Kisembo et al. (1977:67) noted the importance of bride wealth in Africa. According to Kisembo et al. (1977:67), bride wealth was insisted upon, and in most places introduced where it has not existed before. This shows that dowry plays a special role in African marriage.

There is no stipulated amount for the bride price in *Igbo* society. The amount differs from community to community; however, the purpose of the bride price remains consistent across *Igbo* society. A dowry is always given to the father of the daughter, or

to another elder in the community. Usually, the two families or communities might bargain over the bride price. At the end, a stipulated amount would be reached.

The dowry serves several purposes in Igbo society. Enumerating these purposes provides insight on the *Igbo* worldview and its perspective on marriage. One purpose of the dowry is to regulate the rate of divorce and abandonment in *Igbo* land. If a husband is forced to pay an economic sum to marry a wife, then he has greater incentive to stay with her and not remarry. The bride price is also a social signifier; it gives the man the authority to marry and procreate with the wife. Further, the dowry helps to formally seal the marriage of the two partners in *Igbo* society; as a custom, the payment of the bride price represents a formal transaction that gives legal, economic, and social legitimacy to a relationship. In this respect the bride price allows for a male child produced by the marriage to be recognized as his father's heir, so that he can inherit his father's land, money, and property.

An *Igbo* man attaches much importance to family inheritance. In any traditional Igbo marriage, children are born in part so that they can inherit their father's property. If a married couple is not blessed with children, it means that when the father dies, members of his extended family would inherit his property. In his study, Ibegbu (1982:16) stated,

> One of the reasons why the *Igbos* marry is to beget children who will inherit their father's property when he dies. However, for the *Igbos,* it is the prerogative of the male issue to inherit his father's property at the death of the father.

This clearly demonstrates the importance of inheritance with respect to marriage and children.

This section considered the role of marriage and its influence on the *Igbo* worldview. It considered numerous components of *Igbo* marriage, and assessed their cultural importance. These factors included the various forms of marriage accepted in *Igbo* society, the issues of children and family lineage, the divinity of marriage, the community-oriented nature of marriage, and the dowry and inheritance. Considering these topics promote a more comprehensive understanding of marriage in *Igbo* society and how it contributes to the *Igbo* worldview. The following section would consider divorce in *Igbo* society.

2.15 DIVORCE IN *IGBO* SOCIETY

Divorce is a growing ill in *Igbo* society. Grath (1981:928) defined divorce as "the legal or customary decree that a marriage is dissolved." Divorce is described as the separation of married people. Mbiti (1977: 145) also argued that:

Divorce is a delicate accident in marital relationships. What constitutes a divorce must be viewed against the fact that marriage is a process. In many societies, that process is complete only when the first child is born, or when all the marriage presents have been paid or even when one's first children are married… Once the full contract of marriage has been executed, it is extremely hard to dissolve it.

However, this study implicitly rejects this definition of divorce. As will be demonstrates, despite the fact that *Igbo* society has a very clearly defined conception of the marriage contract, an increasing number of divorces are plaguing Igbo society. Further, both of these definitions neglect to acknowledge the ethical, religious, and social components of divorce.

Traditionally in *Igbo* society, marriage was considered a lifelong contract. Elias (1962:292) argued that under the ancient customary law, marriage was indissoluble, as it was looked upon as a permanent, social, and spiritual bond between a man and his wife, as well as on one hand and their respective families on the other. Marriage was almost universally stable, and divorce was rare. As a result, divorce did not play a significant role in traditional *Igbo* society. Onyeocha (1983:42) observed that the communitarian aspect of marriage made it hard for the man arbitrarily to turn away his wife. In the early *Igbo* society, the community usually settled quarrels and disputes, which precluded divorce in most cases. A husband's family members were required to hear about his decision for divorce and judge the case on its merit, weighing all the consequences of the outcome. As a result, it was not easy for a man to divorce his wife during the early *Igbo* period. Further, Ifemesia (1979:70) explained that disputes were usually settled after all sides had been heard and all questions had been asked. Members of the council then went into consultation, during which the council ironed out differences of opinion, reached a decision, apportioned blame, and agreed upon a

punishment. However, if the community assessed the case and subsequently recognized that the marriage was beyond repair, then it might permit divorce to take place. If divorce was allowed in traditional *Igbo* society, it generally was on the grounds of adultery, which is considered a sin against God, nature, and society. Ultimately, no matter the outcome, marriage is not one man's business in *Igbo* society.

Due to the importance of producing children in *Igbo* society, sterility is an issue that may promote divorce. Ifemesia (1979:61) noted that if a married couple realized that the wife was sterile or the husband was impotent, then strains and stresses could develop in the marriage. These strains could have prompted a divorce. However, it is important to note that sterility did not provide justifiable grounds for divorce in *Igbo* society. Rather, sterility more often prompted a husband to seek a second wife (Ifemesia 1979:61). As noted earlier in this chapter, sometimes the first wife herself took the initiative in procuring a second wife for her husband.

Ultimately, divorce was seldom permitted in early *Igbo* society, and the rate of divorce was generally very low, though the specific percentage varied from community to community. The following chapters would more closely examine the role of divorce in modern society. Ultimately, this examination reveals that divorce is largely a modern phenomenon for *Igbo* society, as there were few divorces among married couples in traditional *Igbo* society. As a result, it is important to study this phenomenon and identify its causes and potential solutions.

2.16 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the existing literature that has considered the traditional Igbo worldview, as well as marriage and divorce in *Igbo* culture.

Ultimately, numerous factors contribute to the *Igbo* worldview. The historical background of *Igbo* society is ambiguous, but informs current conceptions of cultural brotherhood, particularly with the Jewish people. Igbo culture is widespread, though most *Igbo* people have traditionally been farmers, a vocation that has informed cultural practices and preferences.

The *Igbo* people also have a strong appreciation for education, particularly for practical social application in the form of the *Igbo* oral tradition. The *Igbo* oral tradition informs the manner by which the *Igbo* people discern their reality and communicate with each other. Religion is another factor that colours the *Igbo* people's worldview. The *Igbo* people have always been religious; unfortunately, some aspects of that religious tradition conflict with Christian teachings. This tension is an important theme in current Igbo culture.

The socio-political organizations provide formal and informal social and political power to individuals in Igbo society. Socio-political life hinges on the notion of community. However, *Igbo* political traditions were challenged by the British colonization. This tension, as well, has coloured the *Igbo* worldview.

This chapter also considered how marriage interrelated with the *Igbo* worldview. As noted, marriage has always enjoyed a special significance in *Igbo* society. This chapter considered numerous components of traditional Igbo marriage. Both monogamy and polygamy have a strong cultural precedent in *Igbo* society. However, no matter the form of marriage, its goal is to produce children and carry on the family name. Further, this chapter emphasized that traditional *Igbo* society perceived marriage to be divine in its nature, which mirrors the Christian perspective. Further, this chapter emphasized two unique aspects of traditional *Igbo* marriage – first, it is community-oriented, and second, it places extreme emphasis on the dowry. This chapter provided an inclusive look at traditional *Igbo* marriage.

Finally, the chapter presented the traditional *Igbo* perspective on divorce. In the past, divorce was strongly discouraged. As a result, there were few divorces in traditional *Igbo* culture, which marks a strong contrast with modern Igbo society. However, as the subsequent research in this research study will point out, divorce is no longer such an uncommon aspect of *Igbo* life even if it has been historically discouraged within the context of the religious and cultural well-being of the *umunna* as well as the smaller and larger units of *Igbo* society.

CHAPTER 3:

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE AMONG *IGBO* CHRISTIANS

In chapter 2, among other issues, we examined *ilu nwunyi* (marriage) in *Igbo* society. We also explored divorce among the early *Igbo* people. Marriage in *Igbo* society is sacred and divinely instituted. An *Igbo* man has an obligation to marry; otherwise, there would be no one to perpetuate the family lineage. From our research study, we aptly discovered that divorce among the early *Igbo* society was very low. However, this section would take a different dimension. This section would examine marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Christians. Who is an *Igbo* Christian? How did Christianity come to the *Igbo* land? What is Christian marriage? What are the characteristics of Christian marriage? What is divorce? What are the causes of divorce among the *Igbo* Christians? Answers to these questions would be provided in this section.

3.1   EARLY *IGBO* CHRISTIANS

The religion of the early *Igbo* people differs in name, scope, and mode of operation. The early *Igbo* man worships a deity called Chukwu. Chukwu could also be called Chineke. The ancestors played a central role in the lives of *Igbo* people. The *Igbo* people were deeply spiritual (Oforchukwu and Njoku 2002:4). The spiritual nature of an *Igbo* man helped him to adapt comfortably to the new Christian religion. How did an *Igbo* man who worshipped the god called Chukwu become a Christian? For example, my father was one of the first generation of *Igbo* Christians. He was converted to the new faith in the early 19th century. When I asked him who was a Christian, he observed that there are two types of Christians among the *Igbo* people. First, there were those who were converted into the faith by the early missionaries. Second, there were those who were born into the faith. According to Chief Oforchukwu,

Before the advent of the Christian religion in *Igbo* land, we were not Christians. We knew about the god called Chukwu. Our people worshipped the gods. We

also venerated the ancestors. But when the early missionaries came, some of us were converted into the Christian religion. There are also other type of Christians, those who were born into the faith.

Chinua Achebe is one of the early *Igbo* writers who gave an account of how missionaries came to *Igbo* society. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe (1994:144-145) narrated how the missionaries came to the seven villages of umuofia. When the early missionaries came, they preached to the people of Mbata. The missionary had an *Igbo* interpreter. He told the people about the new God who created the heaven and earth. He also told them that they worshiped a false god. If they did not repent and accept the new God, they all would suffer grievously in hell. According to Achebe (1994:145),

> He told them about this new God, the Creator of all the world and all the men and women. He told them that they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone. A deep murmur went through the crowd when he said this. He told them that the true God lived on high and that all men when they died went before Him for judgement.

The early *Igbo* Christian converts made a lot of sacrifices. However, it is good to point here that the early *Igbo* Christians accepted the new Christian religion because they were deeply religious before the advent of Christianity in *Igbo* land. They were also brave. It was not easy to become a Christian when the white men brought Christianity to the people. This meant abandoning the *Igbo* religion. To abandon the *Igbo* religion attracted punishments from their *Igbo* brothers and sisters. They were ostracized from the community. When one of the early converts into Christianity killed the python, all the Christians in the community were ostracized. According to Achebe (1994:159),

> We should do something. But let us ostracize these men. We would then not be held accountable for their abominations. Everybody in the assembly spoke, and in the end it was decided to ostracize the Christians. That night a bell man went through the length and breadth of Mbanta proclaiming that all the adherents of the new faith were thenceforth excluded from the life and privileges of the clan.

The new converts were made to take up a new name. It was the custom of the Christians to take a Christian name. This reminds us that even in the Bible, there is the tradition of a change of name. Peter, when he became the leader of the Apostles,

adopted a new name for his new role (John 1:42). Thus, a new name in the Bible means to take up a new identity (Genesis 17:5). The *Igbo* people who accepted the new religion also took Christian names. Okonkwo's son, Nwonye took the new Christian name of Isaac (Achebe 1994:182).

Apart from the new converts who become Christians, there is another category of Christian – those who were born into Christianity, of which many are children. The children who have been born into Christianity were the children of the early converts. When the early converts gave birth, their children automatically became Christians. These were the first generation of Christians in the *Igbo* communities. Achebe (1994:159) was correct when he observed, "The Christians had grown in number and were now a small community of men, women and children, self-assured and confident." The early *Igbo* Christians were either the early converts or the children who were born into the faith. In this manner, Christianity spread across the *Igbo* communities. To this day, the Christian faith is growing in strength. The *Igbo* society is predominantly Christians. Today, the number of non-Christians is relatively minimal. It is estimated that the *Igbo* Christians comprise the biggest group in Africa.

As noted, *Igbo* Christians – the early converts and those born into the faith – could renounce their faith. First, the early converts had the potential to fall back to their original traditional religion. Some of the early *Igbo* converts were not happy to become Christian outcasts. Facing renunciation, some renounced their new religion. As Achebe explained in his novel (1994:155-157),

> These outcasts, or osu, seeing that the new religion welcomed twins and such abominations, thought that it was possible that they would also be received. And so one Sunday two of them went into the church. There was an immediate stir, but so great was the work the new religion had done among the converts that they did not immediately leave the church when the outcasts came in. Those who found themselves nearest to them merely moved to another seat. It was a miracle. But it only lasted till the end of the service. The whole church raised a protest and was about to drive these people out... Then I shall go to the clan, said the convert, and he went.

Apart from this reason, it was also common for the new converts to fall back to the practice of *Igbo* traditional religion. Some of them could not strictly observe the rules of the new religion, and these people were the first to fall back to *Igbo* traditional religion.

John Munonye, one of the *Igbo* writers of the twentieth century, agreed with Achebe's observation. However, John Munonye believed that the dialectical environment between the *Igbo* tradition and Western religion could be both a positive light and outcome for the common *Igbo*. According to John Munonye, the *Igbo* people had no option but to accommodate itself between tradition and the new religion. The idea of accommodation and reconciliation was depicted in Munonye's novel called, *Bridge to a Wedding* (1978). There were other *Igbo* writers who believed that there was tension and conflicts between the *Igbo* traditional religion and Christianity. These *Igbo* authors include Cyprian Ekwensu (2003), Flora Nwankpa (1980), F. C. Ogbalu (1995), and Victor C. Uchendu (1977). According to these *Igbo* early writers, the result of the *Igbo* clash with Christianity is the reorientation of *Igbo* culture, loss of *Igbo* cultural identity, and disintegration of *Igbo* people.

Also, those born into the faith often remained members until they grew up. Fortunately, there is religious freedom among the *Igbo* people. It was difficult for anybody to renounce their religion, but as time went on, especially, after the Nigerian-Biafran war, some of the *Igbo* Christians started changing from one religion to another. It becomes open that some *Igbo* Christians could be converted to Islam and vice verse. It even became possible for a Catholic to marry from a different denomination.

3.2   THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN *IGBO* SOCIETY

Evangelization in *Igbo* society is unique in many ways. The circumstances that brought Christianity to *Igbo* land were providential. The Holy Ghost Fathers or Missionaries who settled in Onitsha had no intention to stay. But after days of waiting and reciting prayers, they decided to stay in Onitsha. According to Obi (1985:14),

> Therefore, the Holy Ghost Missionaries chose Onitsha as their headquarters, for the same reasons which the Royal Niger Company and the C.M.S before them had decided to make Onitsha their base for operation. Besides, the late Bishop

John Cross Anyaogu disclosed that these missionaries bent on going to Lokoja waited at Onitsha for a boat that would take them and their trunks up river to Lokoja. They prayed and waited in vain. No boat came. Then they concluded that Divine Providence wanted them to remain at Onitsha, and so at Onitsha they settled.

This view was supported by Adigwe (1996: 61) in his extensive study. In his analysis on how the Holy Ghost Missionaries came to settle in Onitsha, Adigwe reported,

After waiting for days, the Holy Ghost Missionaries began a Novena Prayer and decided that if no boat came before a chosen date, they would stay on at Onitsha. As fate would have it, that date came and passed, and no boat came from Brass. They then decided to stay at Onitsha. It was really Providential; they never had the intention of making Onitsha their central station.

Before the arrival of the Holy Ghost Missionaries in 1885, there was already the presence of other Europeans and Missionaries in Onitsha. The interests of these Europeans were both for missionary activities and trade. As Obi (1985:16) pointed out,

There was already a prominent European presence in the area (Onitsha), and for another, it would seem that the Europeans in the Lower Niger, whether missionary or trade, Christian or non-Christian, at least in the early stages got on well together.

There were other missionaries besides the Holy Ghost Missionaries. The first Christian Missionary Church arrived to the eastern part of Nigeria in 1846 (Oforchukwu 2006:47). The Christian Missionary Society was another entity that brought evangelization to the *Igbo* people. The arrival of these early missionaries was historic in the life of the people. Bishop Ajayi Crowther made an especially impressive impact on the *Igbo* people.

The king of Onitsha was friendly to the early missionaries. He cooperated and made the missionary activities of these men of God easy. With the cooperation of the king, the missionaries acquired land for their missionary work. With an understanding, the land that was acquired by Bishop Crowther was given to the Holy Ghost Missionaries. According to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost (1996:21-22),

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Shortly afterwards they discovered that this very piece of land had been promised four years previously to the Anglican prelate, the great Bishop Crowther. Father Lutz went to interview the Bishop. The latter proved himself as noble as his reputation. He told the father he did not need the land and would be very pleased to see it in the possession of Catholic Missionaries.

Education played a vital role in *Igbo* evangelization. Both the Catholics and Protestant missionaries utilized education to reach out to the *Igbo* people. Education and religion (Achebe 1994:182) went hand in hand. With education, the missionaries targeted the young children who would be instrumental in the spreading of Christianity in *Igbo* land. According to Oforchukwu (2006:46-47),

> The Catholic Church adopted the school system as its chief strategy of evangelizing the *Ibo* people. For the early missionaries, education and evangelization went together. From the start the missionaries regarded the opening of schools as an essential tool for the work of evangelization. It was through the education of the young children that the seed of Christianity would be planted.

Opening schools in *Igbo* land strongly benefited Igbo evangelization. The children embraced education. Their education also helped to stop slavery among the *Igbo* people. The Holy Ghost Congregation observed (1996:70),

> We can now see the results the schools have brought. Because of them, the children are no longer forced to sacrifice to idols, or to take part in immodest dances, or to assist at diabolical rites. Pagan parents allow their children full liberty to practise the Christian religions. The very slave-dealers are afraid of them, because they can speak a little English. This in itself will prevent their being stolen as slaves, and will save their families.

The early missionaries in *Igbo* society concentrated mainly on the hinterlands. The missionaries' concentration on this area of *Igbo* land is crucial for many reasons. First, evangelization in the hinterland helped to eradicate many terrible social ills, such as slavery, in *Igbo* society. Since the arrival of Europeans on *Igbo* land, slavery was common. Further, numerous oracles in *Igbo* land prevented genuine evangelization

among the *Igbo* people. The evils committed by these oracles were widely noted. According to Obi (1985:72),

> Not only the missionaries but the generality of the Igbo people dreaded acts of wickedness perpetuated in the name of this juju. The term pilgrimage should not be applied to this inhuman and immoral practice. It was an obvious hindrance to the evangelization of *Igbo* hinterland.

However, with the relentless efforts of the missionaries and the British government, the Arochukwu Oracle was destroyed. Further, the Awka Oracle was also totally exterminated. As Obi (1985:73) indicated, "During the dry season in 1904, the Awka Oracle, Agbala was destroyed in a similar British expedition to the satisfaction of the various missionary groups." The destruction of the Arochukwu Oracle and others promoted evangelization in Igbo land. Their destruction subdued the power of evil in the local community and accelerated the pace of evangelization of the inner sections of *Igbo* land (Obi 1985:73).

The Holy Ghost Missionaries made progress in their evangelization. At this time, some slaves, outcasts, and slave dealers were converted. Evangelization in *Igbo* land reached its peak with the conversion of Okolo Okosi, who later became the king of Onitsha. According to Obi (1985:77), "Father Lejeune saw the conversion of Okolo Okosi and his election as King of Onitsha as an event of capital importance for the success of evangelization." The conversion of the king of Onitsha was significant. First, it meant that his subjects were likely to be converted into Christianity as well. Further, a wider swathe of society would have easier access to the Christian religion. As recognition, the King received a gift of the Statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the Pope Leo XIII (Obi 1985:78).

Bishop Shanahan later directed the church in *Igbo* land. His presence changed the pattern of evangelization in *Igbo* society (Oforchukwu 2006:47). The arrival of Shanahan made an impact in establishing more schools and churches in the hinterlands of the *Igbo* people. The missionary was everything – educator, evangelizer, and more. Oforchukwu (2006:49) observed, "At this period, the missionary was the teacher, educator, principal and evangelizer. He was the manager of schools. He was also the disciplinarian." Supporting this view, Ayandele (1966) noted, "Shanahan was perhaps

the greatest evangelizer/educator the *Igbo* people have ever known." Okoye (1971) also observed, "Shanahan evolved a policy of conversion through the schools."

Other Christian Denominations helped to evangelize the *Igbo* people. Prominent among these missionaries was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, an ex-slave. Bishop Crowther was a member of the Christian Missionary Society (C.M.S). Onitsha benefited from the evangelization of Bishop Crowther (Oforchukwu 2006:47). Fafunwa (1974) also attested that Crowther established church and school in Onitsha for the girls between six and 10 years old. Bishop Crowther's presence among the *Igbo* people was important. First, the bishop taught the girls about education, family responsibilities, and morals.

Magesa (2004:252) identified how the Church could inculturate rich African traditional values into the message of Christ. Magesa's inculturation is in the spirit of the Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Morden World. Pius XII articulated the principles that should guide the Church toward local culture in its missionary apostolate. According to Pius XII (1951: 8), "Let not the Gospel, being introduced into any new land, destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just, or beautiful."

3.3   PROBLEMS OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN *IGBO* LAND

Evangelization in *Igbo* land was not easy. The missionaries labored under extreme difficulties. The missionaries spoke English, while the Igbo people spoke their native dialect, known as *Ibo.* No doubt, communication posed serious problems for the missionaries. They depended on the Igbo interpreters. Most often, the interpreters' translation was far from what the missionaries intended to say. Language, as a barrier, worked against Christianity in Igbo land. Because the missionaries could not speak *Igbo* language, this made them view the *Igbo* culture negatively. As Achebe (194:176) noted, the white man asserted that *Igbo* customs are bad.

Further, the weather was unfriendly to the missionaries. Most of the foreign missionaries could not stand the harsh weather (Oforchukwu and Njoku 2002:6). For

the missionaries, the prevalent mosquitoes also posed major problems. The Holy Ghost Congregation (1996:26) observed,

> Although father Lutz became very influential in Onitsha and the nearby towns, he did not live long enough to see the Church firmly established. Perhaps it would be more true to say that the companions who came out to help did not live long enough. Only one survived the rigours of the climate for more than five years. The others succumbed in a year or two generally. Most of them died from yellow fever and sleeping sickness, two diseases against which no remedy was then known. But a few died from common malaria.

Fafunwa (1974) observed that Bishop Crowther, who was the only African among the missionaries, survived malaria.

Of all these problems that worked against the spreading of Christianity among the *Igbo* people, perhaps language was the most significant. Because the missionaries did not understand the *Igbo* language, it affected the opinions of the missionaries toward the *Igbo* people. The language barrier prevented the missionaries from seeing anything good about *Igbo* culture. The negative perspective of the missionaries, affected the lives of married Igbo Christians. On the part of the missionaries, they could not transfer the *Igbo* culture into Christian rites and practices.

Evangelization in *Igbo* land positively impacted the lives of the people. The pragmatic results among the people could not be denied. The missionaries emphasized high moral principles. The *Igbos*, before the advent of Christianity, also had a religion that emphasized high moral principles. This made it easier for the people to accept the Christian religion.

The missionaries also performed more humanitarian works. Christians and non-Christians alike felt the results of these humanitarian works. The missionaries fed the hungry. They clothed the naked. They housed the strangers. They took care of the sick people among the *Igbo* people. These acts of charity were acts emphasized by Christ (Matthew 25:25-46). The missionaries also promoted other developments in *Igbo* land. They built schools, churches, bridges, roads, and other innumerable projects in *Igbo* land. These projects, acts of hospitality, and provisions of food no doubt endeared them to the Igbo Christians.

The next section would focus on marriage among the *Igbo* Christians. The Church Fathers, Codes of Canon law, and theologians would help us to fully understand the concept of Christian marriage. We should apply these conceptual frames to the *Igbo* Christians.

3.4 CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

3.4.1 *Christian Marriage Defined*

The focus of this section is the discourse on Christian marriage according to the Roman Catholic Dogma. What is Christian marriage? What are the ends of Christian marriage? What are the notions of Christian marriage? These questions would be central in this discussion. The Old Canon 1013 defined Christian marriage as having both primary and secondary ends. According to Canon 1013, the primary purpose of marriage is procreation and the education of children. The second end of marriage, which has been dropped, is the mutual support and allaying of concupiscence. The Vatican II (1960-1975) replaced the old definition of marriage. In the New Canon, there are no primary and secondary ends in the New Canon. According to the New Canon 243, marriage is defined as an "intimate partnership of the whole of life between a man and a woman which by its very nature is ordered to the procreation and education of children." On its own side, Vatican II confirmed the marriage definition in Canon 243. According to the Council Fathers (Vat. II 1975:No. 48), "By its very nature, the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory."

These definitions are important for numerous reasons. First, it brings out the theology of marriage. Second, it shows that Christian marriage is anchored on married love and indissolubility. Third, it shows that procreation is necessary, but not the primary end of Christian marriage. According to the Council Fathers (Vat. II, The Church in the Modern World 1975:No. 954),

> Marriage is to be sure is not instituted solely for procreation, rather its very nature as an unbreakable compact between persons, and the welfare of children, both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be embodied in rightly ordered manner, that it grows and ripens. Therefore marriage persists as a whole manner

and communion of life and maintains its value and indissolubility, even when despite the often intense desire of the couple offspring is lacking.

From the Council Fathers' definition of a Christian marriage, we see both differences and similarities between Christian and *Igbo* marriages. For an *Igbo* man, love is not the primary purpose of ilu nwanyi, but offspring, who will perpetuate the family lineage. In contrast, love is primary and important for Christian marriages. The similarity, however, is that the relationship is between a man and a woman. Differences between Christian marriage and *Igbo* traditional marriage explained the pastoral problems that the church encountered with regard to marriage among the Igbo Christians. The question, however, remains: what can the Church do pastorally to help an *Igbo* man whose marriage is not blessed with children?

The Vatican II is the mouthpiece of the Roman Catholic Church. In order to answer this question, it is critical to look into the teaching of the Vatican II on Christian marriage. The church teaches that any Christian marriage is a covenant, vocation, as well as a sacrament.

3.4.2 Christian Marriage as a Covenant

The church teaches that the Christian marriage is a covenant, and is better described as a covenant than a contract. There is no doubt that there is an element of contract in marriage. God is the author of marriage. It has its beginning and basis from the scriptures. God used symbols and images to indicate his relationship with his chosen people, the Israelites. These symbolisms are usually seen from the great prophets of Hosea, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. These prophets demonstrated that God insisted on the quality of the marriage covenant.

This type of relationship was represented by the relationship between God and the Israelites, His chosen people, as well as between Hosea and his wife. Thus, God is looked upon as the husband and bridegroom of Israel. God was always faithful to His covenant with the Israelites, even though they were disobedient and unfaithful to Him.

The question, then, is how is Christian marriage a covenant? Marriage was transformed by what it is today by Christ. Christian marriage is a representation of the

union between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. The word covenant indicates the union between Christ and the Church, of which Christian marriage is a symbol. Christ is a symbol of love. According to scripture, He loves the world so much that He died and rose in order to purify her with His own blood.

The church teaches that Christian spouses should imitate Christ. Sprinkle (1997:9) outlined some features of marriage as a covenant. He argued that marriage as a covenant involved certain responsibilities on both parties – both husband and wife. Stott (1973:5) believed that the marriage covenant would have the following characteristics: marital love, living together as a single household, faithfulness to the marriage bed, provision for the wife by the husband, and obedience to the husband by the wife. Therefore, the church teaches that marriage must mirror the relationship between Christ and the Church. Marriage will be a union of trust and love. A husband and wife should love one another unconditionally, just as Christ loves His church. In this way, the love in Christian marriage mirrors the love of Christ, who enriches and nourishes the couples. Christian marriage, therefore, is seen more as a covenant than a contract because it is based on love, trust, and fidelity. Moreover, a violation of the marriage covenant was considered as a very serious matter (Sprinkle 1997:53).

3.4.3 Christian Marriage as a Vocation

The church teaches that Christian marriage is also a vocation. This is based on the fact that not everyone embraces marriage, and can only be embraced by the few for whom it is meant. This in essence means that not everybody in the Christian fold is bound to marry. Matthew observes that some men are incapable of sexual activity from birth, some have been deliberately made so, and there are some who have freely renounced sex for the sake of God's reign (Matt. 19:11-12). This passage shows that Christian marriage is a vocation that is established by Christ.

The conception of Christian marriage as a vocation is unique. It is a vocation of lifestyle. No couple has the right to discontinue the Christian marriage relationship. Further, Christian couples seek and obtain the necessary grace to sustain them in their married life. Christian partners must always pray for grace and love in their marriage. They will bear witness to Christ in their married life. Their salvation stems from this

grace. Partners in Christian marriage must be their partner's keeper, whether for better or for worse. They must remain faithful to each other. This is a promise the couples made to God on the day of their Christian wedding. This promise cannot be compromised by either of the partners. The couples should pray for the grace to enable them to be faithful in their union. They should also pray for peace as well as be ready to sacrifice for the sake of the other partner, and for Christ's sake.

3.4.4 Christian Marriage as a Sacrament

The Church also teaches that the Christian marriage is a sacrament. In the Old Testament, God established marriage. However, in the New Testament, this relationship takes a different dimension and meaning through Christ. He makes it a sacrament, which infers grace. Therefore, marriage is also a way of attaining salvation. Pope Leo XIII argued that marriage is a sacrament because it is a holy sign, which gives grace and presents an image of the mystical nuptials between Christ and the Church.

The perspective of Christian matrimony as a sacrament is significant to Christians. Christ stands as a symbol of unity and love among Christian couples. He is always present in Christian families. Christ loves his Church. Likewise, married couples represent Christ here on earth. They must love their partners. Christ's love for His church made Him die for her. Similarly, Christian couples must imitate Christ. They should love their partners as they love themselves.

Marriage as a Sacrament unites two different people into husband and wife. They now become a unified and indivisible bond. This can only be possible where there is love, unity, and respect. Love is the key to the partners' success in their married life. As a result, a Christian husband should be ready to love his wife unconditionally for the sake of Christ. He will be ready to deny himself some comforts for the sake of the wife. On the other hand, a Christian wife must respect their husband because he protects her.

Because the Christian relationship has been deemed a sacrament, it is important that couples must marry before a minister. The minister represents Christ. He is the

official representative of God and the Church. It is Christ who gives this power and authority to his ministers. It is the duty of these ministers (Oforchukwu 2000:6-7) to inform Christian couples that marriage is a sacrament, which confers grace. The couples should know the sacredness of marriage before they finally embrace it.

3.4.5 Christian Marriage as a Sacred Institution

Christian marriage is also considered a sacred institution. Earlier analysis noted that *Igbo* marriage was sacred, which means that *Igbo* marriage shares a sacred mystery with Christian marriage. Christian marriage is sacred because it exhibits a religious character. Further, it also carries the image of mystery. Mba (1980:6) observed that the ancients acknowledged that marriage came from God and was not merely something of human origin.

The value of marriage goes beyond the desires of any group, individual, or even race. The Bible asserts that Christian marriage is sacred. Matthew 19:5 says, "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh." Christian marriage is ordained by God. It is a mystery because we cannot fully understand how two people would become one flesh. We cannot grasp this because our ways are not God's ways and our thoughts are not his thoughts. Further asserting the sacredness of Christian marriage, Ibegbu (1982:136) said, "Since marriage is connected with the deep human mystery of life and birth, consequently, marriage has been regarded by men as something uniquely sacred."

Finally, not all people undertake marriage. Rather, marriage is reserved for some people. Marriage and sexuality should be handled with care. It has a divine origin. It is not of human making. God is the author of marriage. Ibegbu (1982:137) argued that because of its divine origin and its sacred purpose, "marriage as such has a certain dignity and excellence.

3.5 DIVORCE

3.1.1 The Church's Teaching on Divorce

Lehmkuhl (1909:6) summed up the Catholic doctrine in the following prepositions:

a. In Christian marriage, which implies the restoration, by Christ himself, of marriage to its original indissolubility, there can never be an absolute divorce, at least after the marriage has been consummated.

b. Non-Christian marriage can be dissolved by absolute divorce under certain circumstances in favour of the Faith.

c. Christian marriage before consummation can be dissolved by solemn profession in a religious order, or by an act of papal authority.

d. Separation from bed and board is allowed for various causes, especially in the case of adultery or lapse into infidelity or heresy on the part of husband or wife.

In Canon Law, certain technical terms are used. These terms include legitimate, ratum, and consumamtum. According to John Hardon's Modern Catholic Dictionary, legitimate marriage is defined as a true natural marriage between two parties, neither of whom is baptized person with one who is not baptized. In this case, even the baptized party does not receive the sacrament. The marital bond is said to be a natural one.

Marriage between baptized persons are said to be ratum tantum if they are not yet consummated. They are then called ratum et consummatum if the parties have performed between themselves and in a human manner the conjugal act which in itself is apt for the generation of children. After such a one act, the marriage is considered consummated, with all the juridical effects attributed to such a consummated union.

It is imperative that marriage be contracted for life or for an indefinite period. Nevertheless, every society (either ancient or modern) has provisions for dealing with situations in which marriage fails and the couples cannot tolerate living together. However, these provisions do not necessarily allow divorce to take place.

The Church, right from the apostolic time, has never ceased from following the footsteps of Christ in matters regarding to divorce. The Church sees it as a duty to teach and uphold the truth of revelation as she receives it directly from Christ. It is in this way

that we see Paul reiterating the basic teaching of the Church on the question of the indissolubility and unity of marriage. Paul himself was one of the spokespersons of the church. Paul, like Christ, condemned divorce as immoral. He advised the Corinthian couples "For the married I have something to say and this is not from me, but from the lord: a wife must not leave her husband or if she does leave him, she must either remain unmarried or else make it up with her husband – nor must a husband send his wife away" (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

From the Apostolic time down the ages, both the Catholic Church and other denominations have taught and maintained that divorce is not permitted among Christian spouses. As it is said, two individuals become one flesh. Christian marriage reflects the living union between Christ and his Church. Couples must be faithful to each other.

Moreover, the Church fathers have been faithful to Christ's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. Only death can break the marriage bond or union between a man and a woman. Dekek (1971:150) stated that in the West, from the second to the tenth century, the Fathers, Roman Pontiffs, Church Councils, and Synods made no compromise with secular law and practice. Their teaching was practically unanimous: no divorce and no remarriage. Christian marriage can be dissolved only by death. It is clear that divorce is never permitted in the Christian tradition. Strictly speaking, the Church has followed the precepts laid down by Christ himself. The Church considers Christian marriage as sacred, and therefore there is no power on earth to dissolve the marriage bond. Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter, On Christian Marriage, remarked that it should be known that no power can dissolve the bond of Christian marriage when it has been ratified and consummated. Those husbands and wives who attempt to dissolve the marriage or remarry prior to the death of the partner are guilty of a manifest crime. Furthermore, Pope Pius XI, as the Vicar of Christ, affirmed the stability of marriage. No one shall separate what God has joined together, and whoever sends his wife away and remarries commits adultery. According to Pope Pius XI, Christ himself stressed the indissolubility and firmness of the marriage bond when he stated (Mark 10:9-11) "what God has joined together let no man put asunder, and every one that put away his wife and married another committed adultery."

The Second Vatican Council is another mouthpiece of the Church. Its stand on divorce is also clear. The aim of matrimony is not only the begetting of children. Married people must love themselves as Christ does his Church. Marriage is contracted for life. The Council Fathers reminded Christian spouses that even in cases where there are no children; marriage still retains its sacred character, preserving its value and indissolubility. It is obvious that the Church continues to teach the people of God what she receives from Christ as authentic on the statement of divorce. Christ is against divorce. The Church equally condemns divorce in its totality.

3.6   CAUSES OF DIVORCE FOR *IGBO* CHRISTIANS

During the early *Igbo* era, the rate of divorce was very minimal. Husbands and wives knew that marriage was contracted to keep the family genealogy going. Moreover, both husbands and wives knew their roles in the family. More importantly, in *Igbo* land, marriage was never regarded as an individual affair. The family members had much influence on what went on in the family. However, these trends changed immediately after the Nigerian-Biafra war, when people became increasingly individualistic and took the laws into their own hands. This was the time that family values started eroding, which eventually resulted in an increase of divorce in the contemporary society.

Husbands and wives in the early periods knew that marriage was sacred, indissoluble, and stable. Christ said, "What God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6). Oforchukwu (2000:9) observed that no couples have the right to discontinue the Christian relationship. During the nuptial exchange of vows, couples promise each other to remain in marriage for better or worse, until death do them apart. In the *Igbo* traditional society, marriage used to be for life. Today, things have changed, and marriage, an institution that used to be stable, is no longer steady.

Oforchukwu (2000:9) observed that married partners are often faced with problems that might dissolve their relationship. Oforchukwu urged couples to be careful when this became the situation in partners' relationship. Unfortunately, life has changed since the end of Nigerian-Biafra War in 1970. These changes are obvious in social,

educational, political, religious, and economic aspects of Igbo existence. Our people who travel abroad have seriously been influenced by cross-culturalization, which has affected the attitudes of our people with regard to marriage and divorce. There have been numerous causes to these shifting mores regarding divorce, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.6.1 Childlessness

In *Igbo* culture, any marriage that is not blessed with children is not yet considered to have achieved its aim (Oforchukwu 2000:16-17). This was also the case in the First Book of Samuel, where Hannah was taunted for being childless. This book explains, "Her rival would taunt her to annoy her because Yahweh had made her barren. And this went on year after year, every time they went to the temple of Yahweh she used to taunt her. And so Hannah wept and would not eat" (1 Sam. 1:6-7). This passage suggested the real mood of any woman who is not blessed with children in any society. Hannah, like any other childless woman, is always in a sad mood. The Jews, as well as the Nigerians (Africans), value children in any wedlock. This is why any man or woman who has no child is not yet considered to be a fulfilling wife.

Infertility in marriage is considered something bad in marriage, because without children, the name of the family will disappear like the smoke of fire. Marriage is therefore contracted in order to keep the family line going. Arguing the importance of procreation in marriage, Mbiti (1980:26) wrote:

> Therefore it is a duty, religious and ontological for everyone to get married, and if a man has no children or only daughters he finds another wife so that through her, children may be born who would survive him and keep him on personal immortality. Procreation is the absolute way of insuring that a person is not cut off from personal immortality.

The *Igbo* people recognize marriage as achieving its primary purpose only in the production of offspring. It is unfortunate that it is the woman who is blamed for childlessness. As a result, the wife is scorned, rejected, and unloved by some members in the family. Sarai, the childless wife of Abraham, experienced dejection in her married life simply because she was barren. The Book of Genesis reported:

And once she (the slave-girl) knew she had conceived; her mistress counted for nothing in her eyes. Then Sarai said to Abraham, may this insult to me come home to you! It was I who put my slave girl into your arms but now she knows that she has conceived, I cannot count for nothing in her eyes. (Gen. 4- 5)

Similarly, Mbiti (1990:107) wrote:

Marriage is not fully recognized or consummated until the wife has given birth. First pregnancy becomes, therefore the final seal of marriage the sign of complete integration of the woman into her husband's family and kingship circle. Unhappy is the woman who failed to get children for, whatever qualities she might possess, her failure to bear children is worse than committing genocide: she has become the dead end of human life, not only for the genealogical line but also for herself.

Childlessness is unacceptable to a society that values children. It is presumed that when the partners in a marriage die off childless, there will be nobody to remember them. Their line of genealogy will disappear. Mbiti (1990:107) supported this argument by saying that when she (the woman) dies, "there will be nobody of her own immediate blood to remember her, to keep her in the state of personal immortality, she will simply be forgotten." This shows that any marriage that has been blessed with children has special place in the *Igbo* society. Marriage is considered to have achieved its role in *Igbo* society only when it is productive and fruitful. Any marriage that is not fruitful in the physical sense in *Igbo* society has failed both society and the couples.

3.6.2 Adultery

In any society (whether early or modern), adultery represents a vexing problem in marriages. Adultery is defined by moral theologians as the "act of sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman not his wife or between a married woman and a man not her husband" (Miller 1981:151). One of the essential features of adultery is that one of the parties involved must be married. However, when both adulterers are married, the guilt becomes compounded.

Adultery is considered a serious crime in Nigerian society. It is such a serious crime that even the Mosaic Law forbids it. The Law also prescribes penalties against those committing adultery. In the covenant, he made with the Israelites; Yahweh included adultery among the sins that must be avoided. The Book of Exodus stated that followers of God must not commit adultery.

Couples must avoid committing the sin of adultery. It is a sad truth that some families have failed due to adultery. Adultery represents a sin against God, justice, man, and nature. In short, the adulterer has fooled himself or herself. The victim of this injustice is the innocent member of the couple, whose marital rights have been violated by the other party. Couples must make efforts to be faithful to one another. This will then help them to consolidate their relationship.

Kennedy (1974:80) believed that the present conditions of our society offer little encouragement for faithful couples. He argued that the present world is a changing society. According to Kennedy (1974:80), recently, on the radio and television, and in articles and books, "there is increasing emphasis on the enticing aspects of infidelity. Nollywood, the most watched movie industry in Africa has also contributed to this problem. Even in some cases, infidelity is praised and rewarded. This attitude weakens and discourages an honest spouse who wants to be faithful to his or her commitments. Presently, the non-hero, the adulterer, we have found reason to praise them all of late." It is not easy for one to remain faithful to one's spouse when the world is applauding faithless spouses.

As a result, adultery may lead to divorce of a valid marriage among *Igbo* Christians when the couples do not accept the situation. The Catholic Canon Law stipulates clearly that if one is guilty of adultery, the other party has the right to a permanent separation. The innocent spouse is not obliged to readmit the adulterous spouse to the community of married life. All the same, the Catholic Canon Law teaches that it will benefit the innocent partner to forgive the guilty and adulterous partner when he or she repents, on the ground for keeping the family intact. Thus, Canon 1152 states: "It is earnestly recommended that a spouse motivated by Christian charity and solicitous for the good of the family should not refuse to pardon an adulterous partner and should not sunder the conjugal life."

3.6.3 Quarrelling

In *Igbo* society, some couples have failed to achieve the ideal marriage, meaning that some couples do not live in harmony with one another. Such couples need to be pitied, because they are missing the blessings and joys of married couples. Some couples may also conflict with one another, such that it does not encourage good relationship in the family.

Quarrels, strife, rifts, and disharmony are incompatible with peace and may lead to friction between husband and wife. Quarrelling is unhealthy in a relationship and poses a big problem for married life. At times, it is natural for couples to have misunderstandings, but the couple should not allow these disputes to be prolonged. In family life, incompatibility, hot temper, poverty, or negligence may be the root cause of quarrels. Further, many husbands and wives might engage in the misguided pursuit of wealth. Money is a motivating force in the *Igbo* society. It has incredible power. Couples must be careful with money; otherwise, money will hold the sole power to either unify or divide the couple. Money may arouse contempt in the family.

No one can deny the influence that money commands in *Igbo* society. Couples should be warned against the greedy pursuit of money. Of course, money can be a faithful servant for partners who are wise, but can be the opposite for those who are selfish. Peterson (1973:3) argued that money, like fire, can be a faithful servant but a tyrannical master. According to Peterson, we must either master our money or be forever intimidated and dominated by it in such a way that making peace with money is not easy.

3.6.4 Alcoholism

Some husbands, as well as wives, are addicts to alcohol. They expend much of their time, resources and energy on drink. They spend less time to train and direct their children. As a result, husbands leave their domestic affairs to their wives or vice versa who have little or no money for this purpose. Husbands and wives should guard against this, because excessive drink is detrimental to the maintenance of the family. Alcohol has ruined some homes in the Nigerian families.

An alcoholic husband, for example, can hardly make a reasonable and constructive decision regarding the running of his family. He is only interested in

spending his money on drink. The effects of alcohol are harmful. When a man gets drunk, he neglects the affairs of his house. He will no longer support his family as he ought, and he may even beat his wife. In the face of alcohol abuse, the family falls into danger. Something has to be done in such situations; otherwise, alcohol may lead to marriage disintegration.

3.6.5 Adverse Influences

Modern society is dynamic. Most *Igbo* families are highly influenced by social activities, mass communication techniques, and community friends. These factors could pose dangers to some homes. The home should protect its intimate life against the undue influence of friends and neighbors. Couples should not allow anyone who does not belong to the family circle to exert excessive influence on the family, or feel the right to influence family affairs, or be too familiar with the family. Some friends may be wolves in sheep's clothing; they may be pretending to be friends but in actual fact, they have some ulterior motives. At times, familiarity breeds contempt. When there is too much familiarity between a spouse and a friend, the friend may become a threat to family solidarity. The female children may be a temptation to a male family friend. Further, prolonged contact in an atmosphere that stimulates the senses may become dangerous for the husband or the wife. In most cases, before married couples realize what is going on, it has become too late. Couples are advised to avoid any rift that may bring disunity and quarrel in their relationship. This will help to reduce the rate of divorce, which is increasing at an incredibly rate in *Igbo* society.

3.6.6 Financial Difficulties

Money is very powerful in *Igbo* society and the love of it is said to be the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Mba (1986:5) observed that money can often be a troublemaker. Couples should be very careful in dealing with money. Working can be encouraging for couples. Only through work can an individual fully realize himself or herself. Working will also allow both partners to be independent of the other. Therefore, neither member of the marriage will see the other as a parasite in their union. Couples should also devise a means to manage their money. They should not be too

extravagant; otherwise, this may affect their marriage. It might be wise for couples to reach a compromise on how to spend and deal with their financial undertakings. Financial difficulty is today considered as one of the leading causes of divorce among the *Igbo* Christian families (Oforchukwu 2000:10).

Lack of money has an effect on marriage among the *Igbo* Christians. Lack of money has led to crisis in *Igbo* relationships. It has destroyed many *Igbo* Christian families. It is rather improper to talk about the rate of divorce among the *Igbo* Christian families without relating it to other variables. Poverty is largely responsible for the explosive rate of divorce among the *Igbo* couples. *Igbo* poverty stems from widespread unemployment. Many able couples are not properly employed in the labor force, which results in many broken families, due to the fact that unemployed couples cannot support their families.

3.6.7 Immature Marriage

The age at which many modern *Igbo* couples marry has seriously been questioned. In the *Igbo* traditional society, couples married at matured age. Age greater than eighteen is considered to be matured age. However, this trend has changed dramatically in the modern Igbo society. Many broken families have been associated with the immaturity and youthfulness of the married couple who get married in their teens (13-17). Marrying too young is destructive and has a tremendous impact in a relationship. Some youths are not experienced enough to face the realities of life. As a result, it is no wonder that the rate of divorce linked to youthful marriage is high. Rhyme (1964:70) argued that the biggest factor in marital disharmony is immaturity.

3.6.8 Mixed Marriage

Our society is such that encourages freedom in her constitutional enactments. For example, freedom of choice, freedom of worship, and freedom of association exist in the Nigerian constitution. In view of this, every individual feels that he/she is free to exercise this freedom. Unfortunately, cultural and religious differences make this practice unworkable.. Nigeria has about over 250 ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has a different culture and religious practice. Traditional *Igbo* couples used to be cautious on

ethnic differences when choosing to get married. Unfortunately, contemporary Nigerian families do not pay much attention to this phenomenon. Among the *Igbo* people, mixed marriages and social stigma have been problematic in many relationships. This has a dramatic effect on Christian marriage, and has contributed to the dissolution of most marriages among the *Igbo* Christian families.

Mixed marriage refers to both cultural and religious differences among a couple. Further, a marriage between a Catholic and a Christian of another denomination also represents a mixed marriage (Doyle 1983:42). Mixed marriage has long been frowned upon; cultural and religious differences have been considered an impediment. This impediment renders the marriage illicit rather than invalid. Today, the attitudes of the *Igbo* people have changed following the Second Vatican Council. The church realizes that people socialize and interact with baptized Christians of other denomination. In essence, the Church has condoned mixed marriage.

In spite of this, it has been noted that mixed marriages have been problematic in some Christian families. However, some mixed marriages have been very successful among *Igbo* couples. Mixed marriages could work where there is love and sacrifice among the parties.

Despite the decline of restrictions to mixed marriage, the church is still very slow in permitting mixed marriages because of the problems they create in Christian marriage. It has been discovered that mixed marriage generally do not thrive, and therefore could lead to divorce. Also, some scholars believe that mixed marriage leads to the perversion of faith. For example, in any mixed marriage, the children born in the union may not get the proper Catholic or non-Catholic doctrines. This might pose a serious threat to the religious faith of the people. However, there is no doubt that mixed marriage could work where there is mutual understanding, self-sacrifice, love, self-giving and maturity among the patties. The church is prepared to grant dispensation for mixed marriage where there is need.

3.6.9 *In-Laws*

In-laws play a vital role in Christian families. In *Igbo* society, the in-laws are considered part of the family. A married daughter's parents should be able to visit their daughter's house at will. The husband is encouraged to establish a friendly relationship with his in-laws. It is expected that this healthy relationship will help to improve their relationship.

It is true that partners should endeavour to cultivate a cordial relationship with their in-laws, and this should be done in such a way that the feelings of both parties are not hurt, but respected. However, it should be noted that some in-laws have helped to disintegrate some Christian families. This should be avoided. Also, married couples should avoid over-dependence on the parents. They should try to live independent life. They should be able to get a job of their own. They should also make effort to live in their own houses or apartments. This, no doubt, will help them to live happily in their Christian families.

3.7   EFFECTS OF DIVORCE IN THE *IGBO* CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A review of literature demonstrated that divorce was rare in early *Igbo* communities. However, it is exceptionally common in contemporary *Igbo* communities. Even though divorce was much less common in the early period, its effects were considered to be enormous. This could be seen in the area of ethics, morality, and social-orientation. Hardon (2004:3) observed that the effects of divorce on society are drastic.

Hardon (2004:3) argued that the children of divorced parents suffer the worst effects of divorce. Divorce leads to the messy dissolution of families, which hurts children. In this situation, sons are likely to stay with their father, and daughters are more likely to stay with their mother. The aim of marriage – the creation of a family – is therefore defeated by divorce. Bascon and Hersksvits (1970:194) argued that the implication of this tendency is that in father-child relationship assumes a greater emphasis in society than the mother-child relationship. According to these researchers,

this implication is reinforced by the pattern of custody in the wake of divorce, where sons are likely to remain with their father, and the daughters with their mother.

Similarly, the effects of parental misjudgements descend heavily on the children. For this reason, divorce is harmful and challenges the very notion of marriage. The training of children solely rests on the parents and should be performed jointly. However, in a divorced family, this cannot be the case, which has numerous consequences for children. Children may not receive necessary and adequate training and education. Hardon (2004:5) noted that children need both parents because each plays a complementary role in the children's life. The children of divorced parents often attempt to adjust and adapt to the new situation in which they find themselves; these children run the risk of discontinuity in their emotional and intellectual development (Hardon 2004:5).

It has been found that children from divorced families do not feel secure. Hardon (2004:4) confirmed that the children of divorced parents are insecure. Unfortunately, these children carry these distorted feelings to married life; as a result, marital instability becomes hereditary.

The family is the bedrock of the community. Families are of paramount importance to the Nigerian society, because they are considered to be the basic unit of society. The future of *Igbo* society depends very much on successful parenting and marriages. Parents must raise children according to prevailing societal norms and ways of life. On the other hand, in a family in which the parents have decided to divorce each other, the children suffer.

In most cases, the children of divorced families do not acquire adequate and sound life training. When they grow up, some of them may become societal detriments. The children of divorced parents may be morally defective, failing to fear neither God nor man. Hardon (2004:4) observed that the immediate consequence of divorce is often a moral and social aberration. Some divorced offspring are lawless. Hardon (2004:4) argued that the greatest cause of juvenile crime was a broke home. Lawless communities disturb the peace of Igbo society. As a result, life becomes unsafe for the people.

Further, in a united home, the parent-child relationship takes a certain form. A child is a gift from the giver of life – God. As a result, parents are happy when their relationship produces a child. The life is an indication of their love. This will help them to establish a permanent bond of affection between parents and children. However, in a divorced family, unity is lacking. The children lack parental love and affection. This will also affect the behavior of the children when they grow up. Their relationships to other people may be affected.

It is a joint responsibility of parents to train and discipline their children. Parents should be mindful to care for and love their children. A relationship between a parent and child is reciprocal. As it is the duty of parents to provide for the needs of their children, so also are children duty bound to look after their parents in their old age. But when the marriage bond is dissolved, this service will be lacking. As a result, parents will not be taken care of in their old age by their grown-up children, because they were rejected and neglected as children.

It is not only the children who suffer the effects of divorce. It has been found that parents also suffer from the injury done by divorce. In the *Igbo* society, divorce is regarded as a stigma. It may be difficult for both husband and wife to cope from the emotional and psychological effects of divorce. Hardon (2004:5) observed that both husband and wife may be crushed by a sense of shame, fear, and hatred. Therefore, it becomes difficult for them to live a secured and meaningful life. Sometimes, divorced parents may go to the extreme and seek an unfulfilling life through drink and sex.

Women suffer especially when divorce becomes inevitable. It is difficult for them to get financial support. Hardon (2004:5) observed that a divorced wife may depend on relatives or else be forced to lower her standard of living. More seriously, the woman may not get a job to support herself and her children. Again, the church never permits divorce and cannot allow it except on certain grounds. The church is concerned with the preservation of faith, unity, and love. However, in divorced families, faith and love are unfortunately jeopardized.

3.8   CHALLENGES FOR THE *IGBO* CHURCH

Jesus challenged his contemporaries on marriage and divorce. He held a radical view, which contrasted with prior perspectives on marriage. Moses permitted divorce when the man was no longer interested in the woman (Deut. 24:1). Jesus opposed Mosaic privilege when he asserted that what "God has joined together, no human being must separate" (Matt. 19:6). Jesus therefore regarded marriage as indissoluble (Mark 10:11-12). The apostle Paul and the fathers of the church have asserted their own opinions and views on Christian marriage and divorce. They followed the footsteps of Jesus, who assumed the role of authoritative interpreter of marriage and divorce.

The challenge that faces the *Igbo* church is what role it should play in today's alarming rate of divorce among its Christian members. The Igbo church has a role to play in teaching its members about the meaning of marriage. The church must assume the role to teach the people about the doctrine of the church on marriage and divorce. Unfortunately, some churches do not prepare their adherents properly about marriage. If people were properly instructed in the doctrine, the rate of divorce would be reduced. The church leaders must emphasize in their teaching that marriage is sacred, and therefore efforts should be made to preserve its indissolubility. It is the duty of the *Igbo* church to make it clear that marriage is a contract that will not be broken by any partner. As a result, there should be nothing that will separate married couples, except death.

The church leadership in *Igbo* should have the courage to tell people the truth about marriage and divorce. The church should tell married couples to work on their marriage commitment. As it stands, it seems that some people do not know that broken families should not remarry. This is why the *Igbo* church should tell the people the truth about marriage, even though sometimes it is bitter to tell people the truth. It is noted with dismay that some church leaders in Nigeria do not preach against divorce. Church leaders should emphasize the benefits of marriage and the perils of divorce because it will reduce the rate of divorce within the *Igbo* Christian community.

Today, *Igbo* church leaders have been challenged to adequately instruct the people on marriage. The church today is no longer paying much attention to courses, either formal or informal, in "marriage instruction," "sex education," and "marriage

counselling." Teaching on these issues allows church leaders an opportunity to teach the faithful the truth about divorce. The church leaders should not compromise their teaching. The *Igbo* church leaders might set up a committee to advice people who have marriage problems. Marriage counselling is important. In the *Igbo* church, both men and women should be educated to respect and accommodate one another as their helping mates. It is a pity that marriage counselling is lacking in most of the *Igbo* Christian communities. It is clear that if men and women were properly instructed about the magnitude of the marriage vows they take, cases of divorce will be reduced within the *Igbo* Christian community. Church leaders, therefore, have a big role to play to safeguard marriage in *Igbo* Christian society.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE AMONG *IGBO* CHRISTIANS

4.1 ANALYSIS OF ORAL INTERVIEWS

4.1.1. Introduction

This section presents the purpose of the qualitative study which is to understand the opinions on marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christian families. The qualitative research explored the reasons for marriage and divorce among *Igbo* families. This section dealt with methods of collecting data, description of the study area, study population and data collection instrument. It also gave a description of the views and arguments of all the participants.

4.1.2 Geographical Location of the Study

The study was carried out in the five states namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. These states were selected because of the fact that all of five states are predominantly inhabited by the *Igbo* people.

4.1.3 Research Design

The research methodology used was a qualitative phenomenological design which is the appropriate for an exploratory study (Russell & Stone, 2002). "Phenomenology enables researchers to examine every day human experience in close detailed ways" (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004:56). The study used a modified van Kaam phenomenological method described by Moustakas (1994) based upon the responses to semi-structured questions recorded and professionally transcribed to capture the views and opinions of selected samples. Berg (2004) argued that qualitative research

provides a good framework to understand social and psychological phenomena of social settings of individuals which proves to be the need in the study to understand individual opinion on marriage and divorce on *Igbo* society.

The research method allowed the participants to express their views without any boundaries on Igbo marriage, divorce and its effect on individuals and society.

4.1.4 Population

The population for the study is drawn from Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo which are states where *Igbo* people dominate the state. The participants were drawn from both males and females who are married, divorced and children of divorced parents. To enable a clear understanding on reasons for marriage and divorce and effects of divorce on individuals and children of divorced parents, the participants included all three categories i.e. married, divorced and children of divorced parents.

4.1.5 Sample Size

In this study, the sample size included eight participants out of which four are males and four are females of aged between twenty and fifty. Three participants are married, three participants are divorced and two children of divorced parents who were included in the study for better understanding of the views and arguments of each strata of the population. The participants were those who voluntarily participated in the study after hearing about the explanation of the study done by the researcher. Researcher received the consent of the participants to make direct quotation of their opinions when need be.

4.1.6 Sampling Procedure

Neuman (2003) stated that samples of potential participants represent the population of interest. The study employed purposeful sampling. This was because the population is scattered in various parts of the five states that make the *Igbo* Christian families. And Purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases for in depth study (Patton, 1990). The target population selected were either married, divorced or children

of divorced parents; thus making a whole picture of target population. The participant sample was identified by the researcher based on his understanding of the participant profile and willingness of the participants to agree to engage in the research study reflecting a snowballing technique for establishing a valid sample frame.

4.1.7 Method of Inquiry

Semi-structured interviews are used as research instrument. The interviews were conducted among the purposive samples selected from each of the represented population domains. All the interviews were conducted on meeting the participants in person to ensure accuracy of the participant responses. Kvale defined a qualitative interview as, "An interview, whose purpose is to gather description of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to the interpretation of meaning of the described phenomena" (1983:174). Cassell & Symon adds by saying "The qualitative research interview is ideally suited to examining topics in which different levels of meaning need to be explored" (2004:21). The answers were recorded and transcribed to understand various view points and arguments explored by the participants.

4.1.8 Instrument Selection

Semi-structured interviews make the instrument along with researcher who is the primary instrument in qualitative research. All interviews were conducted in person by the researcher. Each participant provided with a complete understanding of the purpose of the study and their consent was taken to represent their original views in the study. Data from the transcribed interviews was coded to reduce attributions to component elements of causes and outcomes of marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Families.

4.1.9 Data Analysis

Moustakas (1994) explained a modification in the van Kaam (1959) method of analysis. The steps for analysing qualitative research (semi-structured interviews) include (Moustakas, 1994:120-122):

1. Listing and preliminary grouping of every relevant experience.

2. Reduction and elimination of extraneous data to capture essential constituents of the phenomenon.

3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents to identify core themes of the experience.

4. Final identification and verification against the complete record of the research participant to ensure explicit relevancy and compatibility.

5. Construct for each co-researcher and individualized textural description of the experience based upon the verbatim transcripts using relevant and valid invariant constituents and themes.

6. Construct for each co-researcher and an individual structural description of the experience based upon individual textural description and imaginative variation.

7. Construct for each participant a textural-structural description of the meaning and essence of the experiences.'

"Each individual textural-structural description would be used to develop a composite description of meaning and essence of the experience representing the whole group" (Moustakas, 1994:121)

4.2   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

Research Question 1: How do you feel about the rate of divorce among the Igbo Christians?

Rate of Divorce among the Igbo Christians

1 person, 12.5%

7 persons, 87.5%

- Felt sad about divorce rate
- Divorce rate is normal
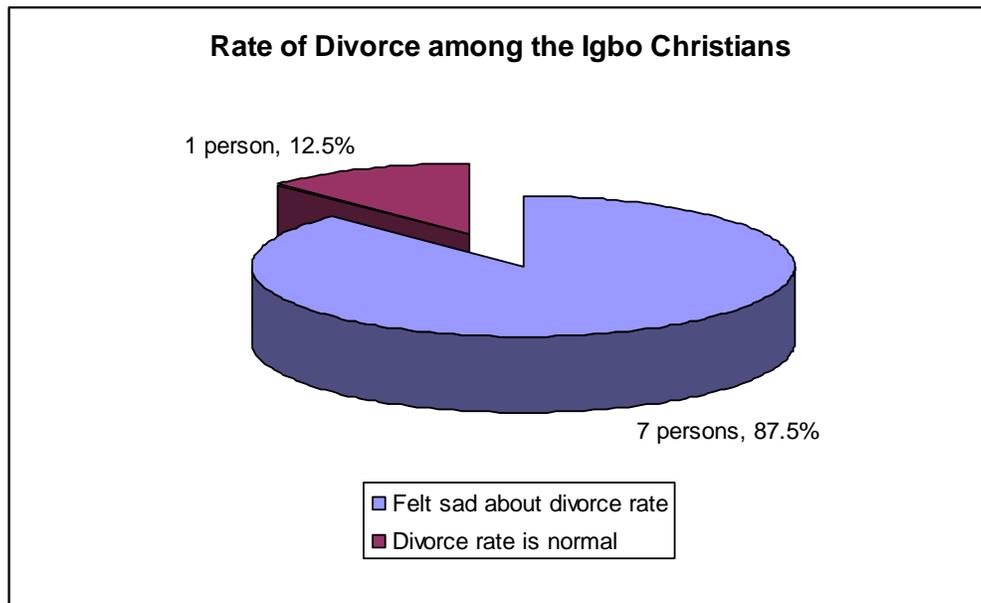
According to the survey, the plotted graph explains that among the 8 samples, most of the respondents were worried about the rate at which the divorce is growing among *Igbo* catholic families. Only one of the respondents felt that the rate is not high compared to other countries (USA, UK and Britain). Some of the respondents who felt sad about the divorce rate felt that there are two major reasons for this increase in divorce rate. Firstly, the increased awareness among girls which leads them to live independently, and also results in increased boldness. This is not the case in past when women used to stay at home to look after the children. This growing boldness is giving them enough courage to come out of marriages where there are problems. They also feel that education to the women is one of the criteria for such mind set of such women. Secondly, there is also a thought that influence of the White people is boosting the rate of divorce among *Igbo* people who are living in US. The effect on society is one of the main reasons for the respondents' worry on increased divorce rate.

Research Question 2: Do you have any concerns for the divorced families?

Concerns for the divorced families

0 person, 0%

Yes
No

8 persons , 100%
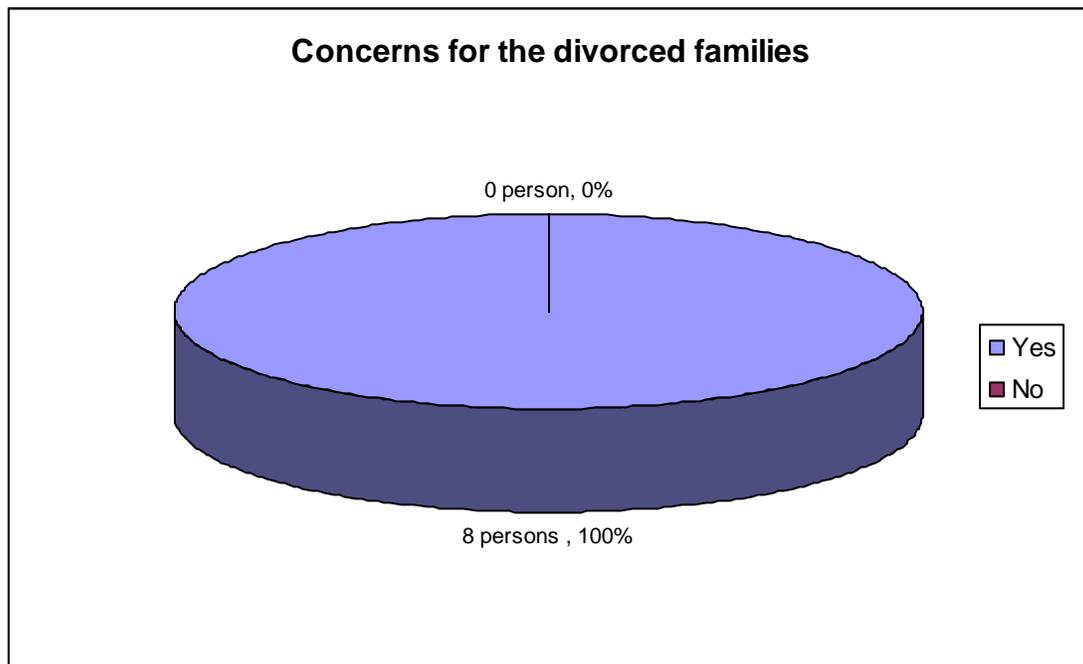
All the respondents answered that they are really concerned when they were asked whether they have any concern for the divorced families. More than 50% of the respondents (5 out of 8 samples) felt that the main concern is the children of the divorced families. The respondents also felt that divorce would affect the children of its families in their lives and in their behaviour towards the society. The adverse effect could push the children of divorced families towards less interest in studies and/or robbery, etc. They also felt that the influence of the divorced homes may cultivate bad characters among the children like speaking lies, lack of love towards their partners when the time of their marriage etc. 25% of respondents (2 out of 8 samples) also said that their concern is that the divorced families could affect the culture of the *Igbo* society and *Igbo* church.

Research Question 3: What challenge do you think is facing the church about the high rate of divorce?

Challenges Facing the Igbo Church

Category	Persons	Percentage
Preaching the truth about marriage	7 persons	87.5%
churches preaching against divorce/Effects of Divorce	6 persons	75.0%
To Educate people about faith	5 persons	62.5%
Guide the couples that not to rush for marriage	4 persons	50.0%
Act as body to resolve problems	2 persons	25.0%
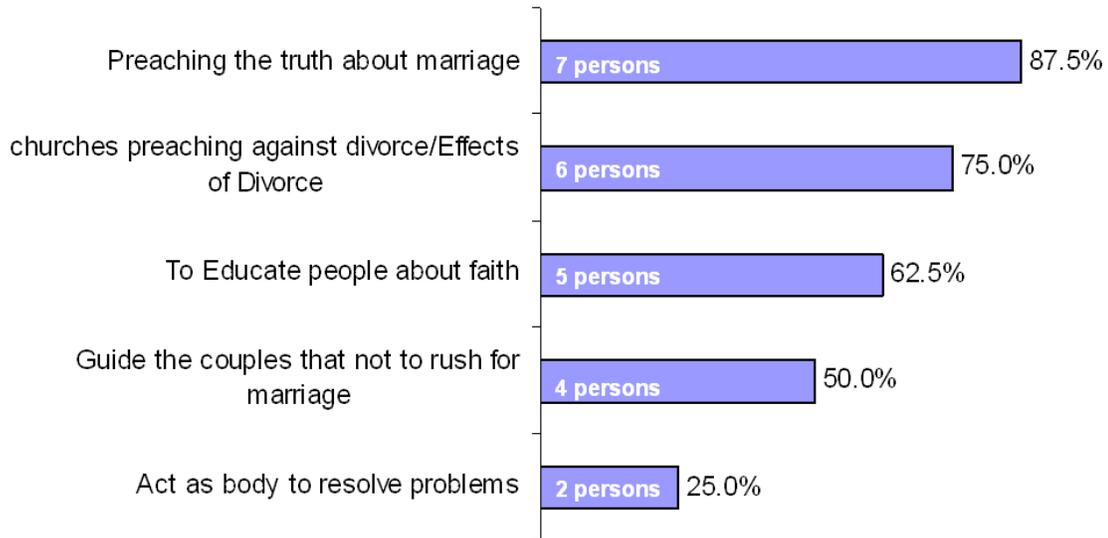
The response to the question that what are all the challenges faced by the Church about high rate of divorce invited various answers among the respondents. For better understanding, the responses were quantified and plotted in the above graph. Being in *Igbo* society, they are very much concerned about the Churches and its culture. Everyone felt that Church is the most possible way. As shown in the above graph, 7 out of 8 respondents (87.5%) felt that the church should preach the truth about the marriage while 75% of the respondents (6 persons) said that the church should go one step ahead by preaching the ill effects of divorce. 62.5% of respondents indicated that Churches are responsible to educate the people about faith in marriage and thus explaining that marriage is indissoluble; also 50% of them (4 out of 8 samples) felt that churches should not encourage fast weddings. They felt that Church should educate them before they undergo marriage. There is a small group of 25% who said that church should act as a problem solving body for any family which would reduce the divorce rate.

Research Question 4: In your opinion, what do you think are the causes of marriage and divorce among the Igbo Christian families?

Causes of divorce among the Igbo Christian families

Cause	Persons	Percentage
Less Money to run family	4 persons	50.0%
Negative enlightment/No respect for couples	4 persons	50.0%
High Education	3 persons	37.5%
Not having children	3 persons	37.5%
Early Marriage	3 persons	37.5%
Contact with outside world (Especially US)	2 persons	25.0%
Man's Ego	2 persons	25.0%
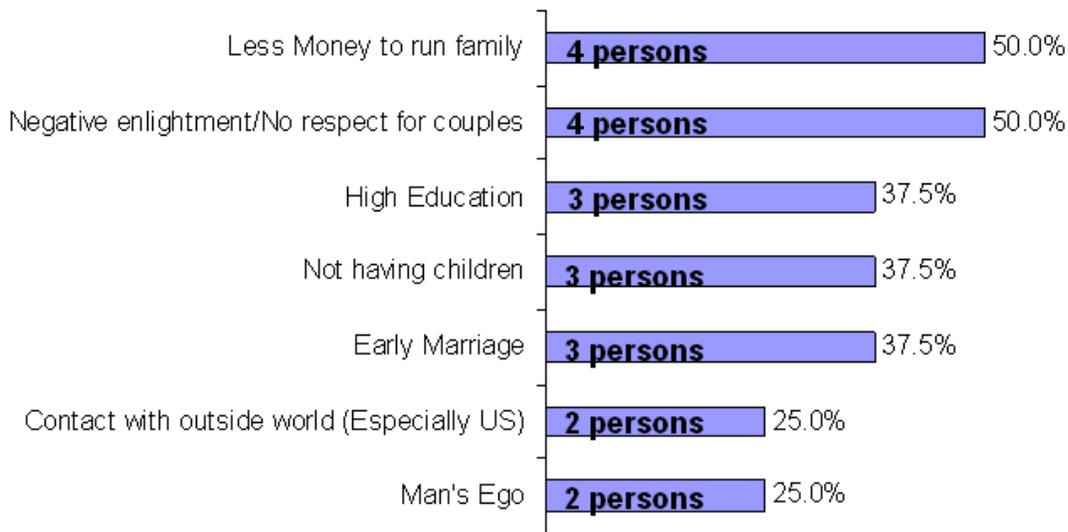
This question gave the general opinion about the thoughts of the *Igbo* people with regard to the causes for marriage and divorce. The above graph illustrated the main causes of marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Catholic families. Not having enough money to run family and lack of love/respect among couples tops the reasons for divorce among *Igbo* Christian families with 50% of respondents (4 samples out of 8) agreeing to it. 37.5% of the respondents also quoted higher education is one of the reasons for men to leave his family. It is also a cause for ego. Igbo society attached more importance to children. So not having children in a family also could lead to divorce. Early marriage or lack of knowledge about marriage also leads to divorce according to 3 respondents (37.5%). Another 25% felt that Man's ego is not allowing women to partake in any family concerns which might lead to divorce especially when women get outside world contact which increases the confidence level of women to leave the egoistic man.

Research Question 5: In your opinion, what are the effects of marriage and divorce in the Igbo church?

This question was asked among the respondents to record the adverse effects that will be created because of high rate divorces in *Igbo* church.

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There were only three main effects which came out of all respondents. The adverse effects on children top the list with 80% (more than 6 samples out of 8) of them agreeing to it. The adverse effects on Igbo community/society follows it with 6 respondents (75%) agreeing to it. They also stated that it affects the *Igbo* church. The last one was that even the parents of divorced families are getting affected with 50% of the respondents stating it.

Research Question 6: In your opinion, what steps will be taken to reduce divorce among the Igbo Christians?
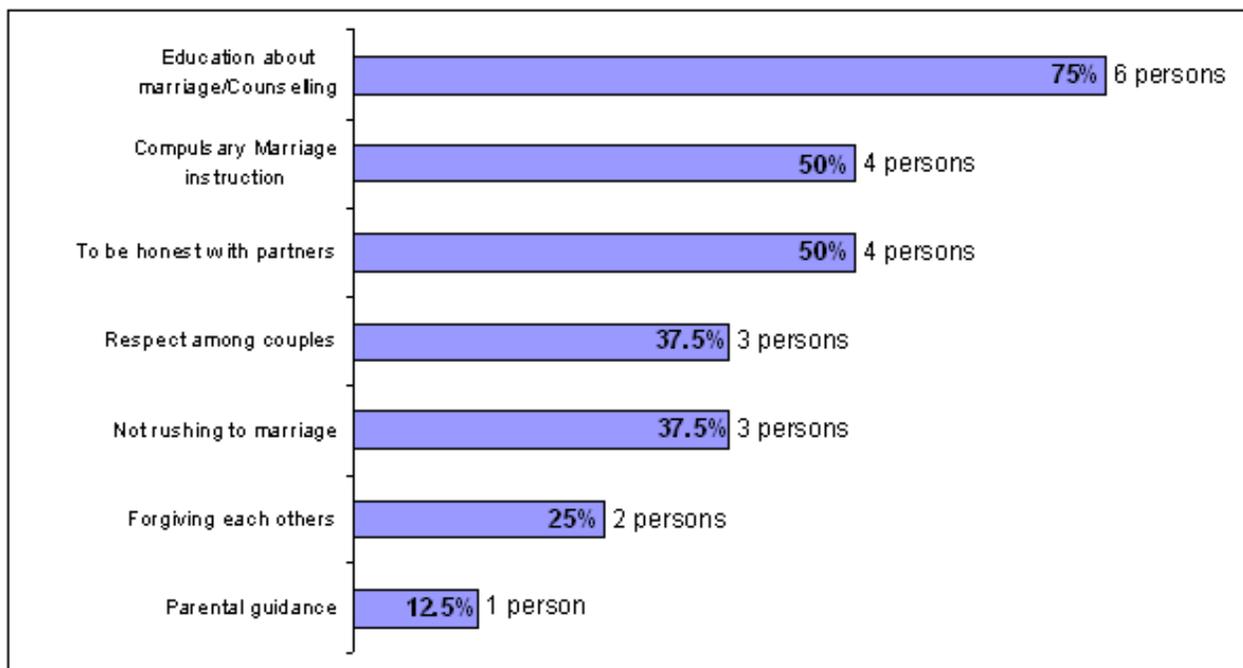
Respondents were asked to give out possible ways to reduce divorce among the *Igbo* Christians. 6 samples (75% of respondents) voted to have strong counselling or education about marriage from *Igbo* Churches. They felt that references to the Bible verses which quotes about the marriage and divorce has to be explained to them and emphasized. 50% of them (4 samples of 8) thought making marriage instruction

compulsory would reduce the divorce as the couples will be educated about the insolubility of marriage. They also felt that mutual understanding and faith among partners will boost the relationship which intern would reduce the divorce rate. Avoiding early marriage and proper respect among couples also could reduce divorce cases according to 37.5% of respondents. One of the respondents also felt that fidelity must be encouraged among couples to avoid divorce. Another respondent felt that women should be allowed to express their feelings about the marriage before they get married.

Research Question 7: In your opinion, why do you think that divorce is considered common among the Igbo Christian elite?

Reasons for Divorce became common in Igbo Communities

Category	Persons	Percent
Contact with outside world	6 persons	75%
Awareness of individual rights to women	6 persons	75%
Increased freedom among men and women	6 persons	75%
Lack of money	4 persons	50%
More Education	4 persons	50%
Inexpressive behavior of churches/christian communities towards divorce	2 persons	25%
Not know ign the magnitude of oath they take	2 persons	25%

The question tried to analyze the root cause of marriage and divorce becoming prevalent in Igbo communities. The exposure to the outside world, friends and colleagues, profession are the main reasons for such cases. Growing awareness of individual rights which again through contact with outside world tops the list of causes quoted by 6 respondents (75% of the samples). The respondents felt that men or women, who start to feel their rights, feel that they have freedom to do whatever they

like. Increased freedom among men and women also is in the top list with 75% of them agreeing to it.

4 Respondents (50% sample) also said that inability to run family due to insufficient funds also becoming another reason for divorces among *Igbo* society. Men/Women pursuing higher education are giving awareness about individual rights to both men and women which again leads to divorce. They also felt that such education creates ego among them which leads up to divorce. 25% of the respondents (2 samples) also feel that inexpressive behaviour of churches towards divorce also leads to growth of divorce cases. One of the respondents also felt that infidelity and abstinence is also a factor which initiates the divorce among the married couples. Some respondents felt that lack of finance, love and respect drives towards divorce.

4.3   SUMMARY

Chapter 3 examined marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christians. It started by looking into how an *Igbo* man became a Christian. Before the advent of Christianity, the *Igbo* people worshiped deities. But when Christianity was brought to Igbo people, some *Igbo* people accepted the new Christian faith. There are two categories of Christians among the *Igbo* people – those who were converted into the faith, and those who were born into it. These two types of Christians comprised the first generation of *Igbo* Christians.

This chapter also traced how evangelization came to *Igbo* community. Numerous missionaries helped to bring Christianity to the Igbo people. Both the Holy Ghost Congregation and the Christian Missionary Society played prominent roles in *Igbo* evangelization. The *Igbo* chief and community received the missionaries cordially. The people extended *Igbo* hospitality to the missionaries, which contributed to make their work effective.

The missionaries introduced effective strategies that promoted *Igbo* evangelization. Education was one of the strategies used for conversion. The *Igbo* people accepted education as a means to raise its status. Education and religion went

hand in hand. The missionaries went into the hinterlands, where many *Igbo* people were converted.

The work of evangelization was not an easy task. The missionaries faced hardships that worked against evangelization. As foreigners, the missionaries suffered from malaria, food poisoning, harsh weather, and linguistic difficulties. These hardships worked against I*gbo* evangelization.

In spite of these problems, *Igbo* society benefited from the evangelization efforts of the missionaries. Both the Christians and non-Christians benefited from the humanitarians of the missionaries. They fed the hungry. They attended to the sick. The *Igbo* people were happy with the missionaries.

The chapter also explored the meaning of Christian marriage. From the Vatican II point of view, Christian marriage is sacred, natural, a sacrament, a vocation, and a mystery. Marriage is for life, but there are situations where divorce has taken place. Based on the review of literature, divorce is caused by childlessness, poverty, adultery, and negative influences from peer groups.

Divorce has affected the *Igbo* Christian communities. It is the children who suffer most when their parents separate. Divorce also affects the Christian community and society. The current rate of divorce poses a significant challenge to *Igbo* Christians.

The interviews supported the findings of the literature review with respect to marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christians. The participants expressed that the influence of some Nigerian people who have travelled outside the community has contributed to the present rate of divorce. Some of the participants pointed to misunderstanding and a lack of trust as problems in married life.

The participants also offered some strategies that will help to control the rate of divorce today within Nigerian Christian communities. Sex education and genuine love among married couples are factors that can reduce divorce among the Igbo Christian elite.

However, the church leadership in *Igbo* land has been challenged to re-examine and reassess its teaching techniques. The participants believed that the church must teach the people the truth about marriage and divorce. The church leadership must not avoid this responsibility. Also, the indissolubility of marriage must be stressed and

emphasized via a series of seminars and workshops. Such efforts will help to create awareness about the true effects of marriage and divorce.

CHAPTER 5:

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF MARRIGE AND DIVORCE

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter considered marriage and divorce among *Igbo* Christians. The literature review demonstrated that Christian marriage is a sacrament, sacred, natural and a vocation. The chapter also explored the various causes of divorce among Christian couples.   The interviews in chapter 4 supported the findings of literature review with respect to marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Christians.

This chapter would survey major Biblical texts on marriage and focusing more on divorce, beginning with the Old Testament followed by the New Testament.   Some of the Biblical texts this chapter examined included the following:

From the Old Testament Passages:

a. Genesis 1:27-28

b. Genesis 2:24

c. Genesis 21: 1-4

d. Deuteronomy 21: 10-14

e. Leviticus 21:7, 21:16

f.   Leviticus 22:13

g. Ezra 9:10

h. Jeremiah 3:14

i.   Hosea 2:2

From the New Testament passages:

a. Matthew 5:32

b. Matthew 19:1-12

c. Mark 10:9

d. Luke 16:18

e. Ephesians 5:21-23

f. 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

However, it would be noted that some of these biblical texts would be discussed exhaustively. Real exegesis would be done on texts such as: Gen 1:27-28, Deut. 21:10-14, Ezra 9:10, Amos 1:23:5, Matt 5:32, Matt. 19:1-12, and Eph. 5:21-23.

Chapter 5 would also discuss about the teaching of the Church fathers on divorce. Jesus is the model teacher on marriage and divorce. Finally, this chapter 5 would discuss about the views of the theologians as well as the church canonists on marriage and divorce

5.2   MARRIAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament provides numerous early perspectives on marriage. Genesis 1:27-28 provides a full account of marriage as designed and instituted by God. Marriage is instituted for man's good. The author of Genesis noted that God made man in the image of Himself. According to Genesis 1:27-28,

> God created man in the image of Himself, in the image of God He created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them saying, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it."

From this Biblical passage, we can deduce that God is the author of marriage. Marriage is instituted for a purpose – to create a human companion. Also, this Biblical text tells us that God desires that humanity should increase and multiply, as well as populate the world. God's commands to humanity - be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth – show that God has blessed all marriages. In the beginning, marriage is created to be blessed with

children. Unfortunately, some marriages have been unfruitful as a result of the fall of man (Genesis 3:5). The fall of man thwarted God's plan (Genesis 3:5), marriage included.

Chapter 2:18-24 of Genesis explains why God created woman. God has seen that it was not good for man to be alone. The creation of woman was for the purpose of helping man to establish a family. Through the presence of the woman, man would establish a marriage relationship (Bergant 1988:41). From the biblical text, we also deduced that man and woman should consider themselves equal. It is through man's ribs that the woman was created. This tells us that man and woman should be one flesh, they are not two. For man said, "This at last is flesh from my flesh." As the Bible demonstrates, Christian marriage is nourished by love. Further, Christian marriage is indissoluble; this truth is deduced from this Biblical text.

Macleod (2002:12) argued that Genesis 2:24 is the foundation of marriage. He maintained that this verse says three things that are important to marriage. First, it asserts that man would attach himself to his wife. As Macleod observed, "Before marriage, the man's obligations are to his parents, but now, they are to his wife." They would become *one flesh* is important in marriage relationship. It clearly suggests that God intended to establish one form of marriage, which is monogamy. The expression "one flesh signifies the sexual union that consummates marriage. The wife is appreciated and valued. God contrived marriage as the fundamental factor of all human society. Sexual intimacy, loving care and public exchange of vows constitute the essential elements of the marriage covenant (Laney, 1981). According to Macleod (2002:13),

> Such a union symbolizes the complete identification of two people with one community of interests and pursuits. The expression says nothing about the bearing of children. The wife is valued for herself alone. What is being expressed is the solidarity of the relationship. It is an intimate, personal, spiritual, and physical union.
>
> Macleod's view is in line with the teaching of the Church. The Church emphasizes the role of love in any Christian marriage. The researcher also agrees with this view which recognizes love as the ultimate in marriage. St. Paul

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also argues that there are three things that matter, i.e., faith, hope, and love.

However, according to Paul, the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Second, it shows that marriage should be permanent. The man "shall cleave to his wife" is important because it demonstrates that marriage should be forever, and nothing shall separate the couples, but death. The Hebrew word is translated "to cleave." To cleave means to stick, or to glue together. In marriage, the husband and wife are glued together. This suggests permanence. It is like the covenant God made with the Israelites. Marriage, in this sense, is a covenant.

Marriage in Genesis is intended to be between one man and one woman – in another word, monogamy (Genesis 1:27-28). The author of Genesis noted that the intention of God about marriage is clear in Genesis 2:24. Genesis 2:24 shows that permanent union is the biblical ideal for marriage. However, other Biblical texts describe marriage as between a man and many wives. Most often, polygamous marriages occurred for different reasons. For example, it could occur when the first marriage was not blessed with children. Jewish law permitted the wife to arrange a maid for the husband. Abraham was allowed to marry Hagar, Sarah's maid (Genesis 16:1-2). Also, Jacob was permitted by law to marry Bilhah, Rachael's sister (Genesis 30:1-3).

The description of polygamy in the Old Testament demonstrates that the Jewish people and the early *Igbo* people had similar marriage customs. It is evident that polygamy was part of the legal customs of the Jewish people, as practiced by its neighboring Mesopotamia. Bergant (1988:56) noted that Sarai's proposal that Abraham impregnate her servant, Hagar (Genesis 16:2) was part of Mesopotamian customs. According to Bergant, the children of the concubine were considered the legal offspring of the wife, just as Sarai stated, "Perhaps I shall have sons through her" (Genesis 16:2). Polygamy in this regard was considered acceptable among the Jewish people.

The Book of Hosea is also important in marriage discussion. The first three chapters of Hosea focus on Hosea's marriage (Hosea 1:2-3:5). His wife was unfaithful to him. However, Hosea loved her. The marriage of Hosea could be applied to God. In spite the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel, God still loves them. God has been seen as the spouse of Israel. Hosea's book is theologically rich on marriage. God is loving,

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patient, merciful, and just (Hosea 2:21-22). This text should be an example for dealing with marriage. God overlooks the sins of Israel.

5.3   MARRIAGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Old Testament texts contained both monogamous and polygamous marriages. God is the author of marriage. God established marriage among the Jewish people for a purpose. From the fall of man, humanity lost the friendship of God, which affected God's original plan with regard to marriage. God did not leave man alone; rather, he made a promise to restore the dignity of marriage through his son, Jesus Christ.

References to marriage in New Testament abound. This shows the importance of marriage in the New Testament. As God's son, Jesus would clarify the meaning of marriage in God's mind because Jesus has come to fulfill the law of God, and more importantly, he is the way, life, and truth (John 14:6).

The first mention of marriage in the New Testament references the Wedding at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-12). Jesus was invited to the wedding and attended the wedding ceremony in Cana. It is important to note that the mother of Jesus was physically present. Her presence and request would bring significance to the marriage ceremony. The couples were in trouble because the wine was running out. Jesus granted the request of his mother by changing the water into wine.

There are numerous potential lessons from this wedding ceremony, where Jesus performed his first miracle of wine. It could be that Jesus was establishing a theology of marriage. This is however, disputable. Some scholars argued that it was not really Jesus' intention to establish a theology of marriage at this particular time. Ibegbu (1982:126) argued that Jesus did not capitalize on the wedding event to furnish us with his theology on marriage. Rather, he maintained that Jesus spoke eloquently on marriage, but did not provide his theology. Flanagan (1982:12), in contrast, maintained that Jesus established the sign theology. Flanagan argued that Jesus' Miracle demonstrated that we are now in a new era, a new dispensation. Flanagan (1982:12)

contended that what changed in this incident was not simply water, but water for Old Testament ceremonial washings. The changing of water into wine signifies the arrival through Jesus of the new messianic age. Supporting this view, Saint Paul stated, "The old things have passed away, behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

There is also another implication to Jesus' attendance at the wedding ceremony. Jesus could have decided not to attend the wedding ceremony. However, his presence suggests his theology of marriage. By participating actively in the marriage ceremony, Jesus indirectly approves of marriage in the New Testament. According to Ibegbu (1982: 126-127),

> Not with words did he teach his theology on marriage but with his presence which is both significant and active. Significant because by gracing the occasion with his presence, it means that he approved of marriage. And active because not only that he was present but went out of his way to work his first miracle at the request of his mother, by changing water into wine to save the bride and the bridegroom from embarrassment.

Saint Paul provided pragmatic teaching on marriage. Ephesians 5:21-23 contains Paul's theology on marriage. His teaching on marriage in this text is Christological. Paul compares marriage to Christ's love for the Church. Saint Paul says,

> Wives should regard their husband as they regard the Lord…husbands should love their wives just as Christ loves the Church and sacrifices himself for her to make her holy…Each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself and let every wife respect her husband.

This text is important in Christian marriage. First, it shows the ecclesiastical significance of Christ's self-sacrifice (Karris 1988:1196). The husband is hereby challenged to do all within his power to sacrifice for the wife. The most endearing sacrifice the man will make is to love and provide for his wife. This is the type of love Christ had for his church. In any Christian marriage, love is not an option, but a requirement. Women, on the other hand, were challenged to respect their husbands. Respect is crucial in any Christian relationship. Some wives, due to their economic status, have failed to respect their husbands. Paul was correct when he admonished wives to respect their husbands.

However, respect is reciprocal, as seen in Eph. 5:21. Husbands are bound by love to show respect to their wives.

5.4   DIVORCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The creator intended for the marriage relationship to be permanent, lasting until death (Gen. 2:23-24). In the beginning, marriage was contracted for life. Yet, as society developed, what used to be stable became unstable; for this reason, Moses allowed divorce on certain grounds. Divorce in the Old Testament was permitted due to man's stubbornness. In Matthew 19: 7-8, Christ said, "It was because you were so unteachable that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but it was not like this from the beginning."

Genesis 21: 8-14 gives another example of where God permitted divorce. Gergant (1992:60) observed that Sarah demanded that Abraham should expel Hagar and her son from the family fold. The Yahwist tradition dictated that Abraham was unwilling to heed to the request of Sarah, but only did so when God directed him to listen to Sarah's voice. The biblical interpretation maintains that to "send away" implies that God directed Abraham to divorce Hagar because Sarah feared that Isaac's future inheritance would be threatened by Ishmael's presence in the home. It seems strange that God would require Abraham to commit evil if divorce is a sin. However, this time becomes an opportunity to fulfil the promise God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:7). Sprinkle (1997:8) observed that a family quarrel becomes the occasion by which God can assert His sovereign purpose. This is also another view of this text. Kunhiyop believed that the marriage of Hagar to Abraham was wrong as it contradicted God's intention of marriage. According to this view, if Hagar as the second wife had insisted that Sarah should be sent away, God would not have allowed it.

Understanding divorce in the Old Testament is necessary for us to understand divorce in the New Testament. Macleod (2002:13) argued that the Old Testament had not legislation instituting divorce. Some Old Testament verses indicated that divorce was already practiced among the people of Israel. According to Macleod, when Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, divorce was common in the heathen nations.

The role of women in Hebrew culture is obscure. More importantly, it should be noted that women in early Hebrew culture were considered to be men's property. Women's position was one of inferiority, which has made it possible for the husband to divorce his wife under certain circumstances. A man could divorce his wife by simply saying orally before witnesses, "She is no longer my wife, and I am no longer her husband."

Moses did not legalize divorce among the people of Israel, but he tried to control the rate of divorce among his people. This elucidates that before Moses was born, divorce had become part of the Jewish culture. He only allowed it due to the people's stubbornness. According to Macleod (2002:13),

> Under divine inspiration Moses imposed restrictions on divorce that tended to prevent its being treated lightly or rashly. He did not institute or command divorce, therefore, but allowed it due to human sin and he restricted it to guard against frivolous decisions.

The Old Testament account indicated that it was the husband's act to send his wife away. The woman, on the other hand, had no right to divorce her husband under any conditions. Orr (1915) argued that it is not always easy for the man to divorce his wife without going through the Hebrew legal process. These legal processes made the divorce process difficult. All the same, separation was lawful in the Hebrew tradition.

The Hebrew man could divorce his wife for the reason of indecency (Deut. 24:1-4). Bergant (1992:221) observed that this text did not legislate about divorce, but only accepted it as a matter of custom. However, Sprinkle (1997:8) argued that the giving of a certificate of divorce implied a legal permission for divorce, as well as the permission for the woman to remarry. According to Sprinkle (1997:8), there appeared to be no need for divorce unless it was to allow a wife who had not committed adultery to remarry. Sprinkle (1997:8) argued that Moses might have allowed divorce for the Hebrews on the grounds of indecency. In this case, the husband must give his wife a certificate of divorce, which is an official document of divorce. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 does not deal with divorce in a general sense. Rather, it considers divorce as a special case. According to Macleod (2002:13), this passage prohibits a man from remarrying his

divorced wife after she has married a second time and her second husband has also divorced her.

Carl Laney observed that the fall of man affected God's standard of one man married to one woman (Genesis 2:24, 4:19). According to Carl Laney, by the time of Moses, divorce had become a custom even among the Israelites (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Deuteronomy 24 is crucial in understanding the background for the Pharisees' comments on divorce when they questioned Jesus (Laney: 1992). Carl Laney believed that the book of Deuteronomy gives a restatement of the Mosaic covenant for the benefit of the second generation of Israelites in the wilderness (1992:3).

Laney (1992:3) observed that Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 treated divorce as something that already existed among the Jewish people. For Carl Laney, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 described simply "if...then" situation. But it is clear that divorce is neither commanded nor commended. In his study, Carl Laney concluded that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 did not institute divorce. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 understood in this context, merely means that the passage recognized divorce as taking place, not necessarily approved by God.

Similarly, Sprinkle (1997:8) argued that Deuteronomy 22:13-19 gives the impression that divorce is acceptable. Bergant (1992:219) observed that these verses relate to a dissatisfied husband challenging the virtue of his new wife. It should be noted that society protected the rights of a Jewish wife against such accusations; if the accusation was proven wrong, the man would have to pay a hundred shekels to the father of the bride as a penalty. In addition, Sprinkle (1997:8) noted that the man who falsely accused his wife of not being a virgin would lose all rights to a divorce.

There are places in the Old Testament where God (Sprinkle 1997:8) seems to have required divorce to take place. In Deuteronomy 21:10-14, God commands divorce. This passage describes a situation where marriage with a female prisoner of war is permitted. Jewish law stipulated that if the man is not pleased with the prisoner, he must let her go wherever she wishes. Sprinkle (1997:8) noted that the expression "let her go wherever she wishes" implies divorce. Some biblical commentators, such as Sprinkle, argued that the Jewish man who is unwilling to treat the prisoner as his wife, God commands that he could divorce her. In this way, divorce has precedent in the Jewish tradition.

Further, Ezra 9-10 described how Ezra, a priest and scribe of God, asked the Jewish people to divorce their foreign wives. Ezra had led a small group of Jews from Babylonian exile to Jerusalem. He noticed that many Jews had entered into interfaith marriages with women from pagan countries. Mosaic Law forbade such marriages to prevent the Israelites from worshiping other gods besides Yahweh, the true God. Many biblical experts criticized the action of Ezra as being racist. Eichhorst (2002:35) argued that Ezra's call to dissolve intermarried couples was without question both severe and uncompromising. Some biblical scholars believed that Ezra's decision was a questionable one. By the time Ezra acted, intermarriage had become common in Jewish practice and culture. For example Psalm 45:12-16 celebrates the union of an Israelite king with an Egyptian princess. However, Sprinkle (1997:9) asserted that Ezra was an expert in the Law of Moses; Ezra expressed his understanding as the will of God, and asked the Jews to divorce their foreign wives.

In spite of the fact that God allowed divorce, God also condemned divorce in the Old Testament. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:10-16) and therefore would not allow it to take place among the people of the covenant. Malachi carried out his protest against the spiritual corruption of the Jewish people between the first and second governorships of Nehemiah in Jerusalem. The prophet spoke against the Jewish people's disunity, mixed marriages, and divorces (2:10-16). Two phrases - "one" and "act treacherously" (בָּגַד, – are important to understanding Malachi's prophesy. The Jewish people acted faithlessly against God. They broke God's covenant by defecting into paganism. They married wives from other nations. They also divorced their wives to marry others. These acts are sins against Yahweh, and as a consequence for this sin, that God turned deaf ears to their prayers.

Some scholars believe that this text (Malachi 2:10-16) does not contradict the passages where God allowed divorce to take place. Bergant (1992:628-629) argued that according to the model of God, who is one, the married couples should be faithful to their union as one. Sprinkle (1997:10) observed that we cannot conclude from this text that God opposes divorce in every circumstance. In my own mind, I think that divorce is considered to be an offense to God. Yahweh hates divorce and therefore speaks out against it (Malachi 2:15-16).

God also directed Jewish priests to desist from marrying divorced women and widows. Leviticus 21:7, 21:14, and 22:13 required that priests marry only virgins. Sprinkle (1997:9) argued that these passages pertain to matters of ceremonial uncleanness. The priests should not defile themselves by marrying divorced women.

There are some passages from the Old Testament in which the Hebrew prophets portrayed their God (Yahweh) as being involved in divorce (Jeremiah 3:8). In these passages, the language used is to describe a breach in God's covenant. God has been depicted as one who keeps to His covenant relationship with Israel. These prophets regarded Yahweh as the father and king of Israel, who is therefore entitled to their perfect obedience and loyalty. Moreover, the prophets depicted God as a husband married to Israel. Jeremiah exhorted to Israel, "Return, O backsliding children, said Yahweh, for I am a husband unto you" (Jeremiah 3:14). Isaiah also noted the Lord's anger against Israel, and therefore presented them with a certificate of divorce. The certificate here is a symbol of divorce; God has taken Zion as His wife, but due to her infidelity has divorced her.

The prophet Hosea also threatened Israel with divorce. Hosea used the experience of his own marriage as an analogy for Yahweh's experience with the people of Israel. Gomer, the wife of Hosea, had been unfaithful to her husband. Hosea says, "Plead with your mother, plead, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband" (Hosea 2:2). The consensus of exegesis (Sprinkle 1997:18) is that Gomer symbolizes Israel. As Hosea threatened Gomer with a divorce threat, so also did God threaten His people of Israel.

Jeremiah also described how unfaithful the people of Israel were to their husband, Yahweh. Jeremiah says, "I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of her adulteries" (Jeremiah 3:8). Jeremiah was emphatic in his denunciation of the people of Israel, whom Yahweh divorced due to their infidelity. Sprinkle (1997:9) observed that Israel was sent away for her infidelity to God. Gergant (1992:460) noted that Israel, in her infidelity, had sinned with many lovers. Jeremiah's point was that God had rejected Israel for being unfaithful to Him.

In conclusion, from the Old Testament analysis, it is clear that divorce is only permitted in matters of indecency (Deut. 24: 1). Divorce is only allowed in the sense

that it is not specifically prohibited by the Jewish law. Laney argued that there was a something of a stigma attached to a divorced woman. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 therefore did not institute divorce.

5.5 DIVORCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Divorce was permitted in the Jewish tradition long before the advent of Christ. Old Testament reports many individuals involved in adultery such as Gilead, the father of Jephthah (Judgement 11:1), or Eli's sons Hophni and Phineas (1 Samuel 2:22). In addition to this, the book of Genesis displays many occasions of near adultery including Abimelech with Sarah (Genesis 20:2-18), Abimelech with Rebekah (Genesis 26:7-9), and Joseph with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-12). This explains that, in the Old Testament, the husband had the prerogative of dismissing his wife for various reasons, among which adultery was principal. When the husband was dissatisfied with his wife, he simply gave her a public note of dismissal. This statement of divorce permitted the right to remarry.

In the New Testament, Jesus is our model and teacher. He provides the way to which every Christian must adhere. He comes to fulfil the Laws and the prophecies of the Old Testament. However, Jesus does not hesitate to repeal any law that is not in keeping with his mission. Thus, Jesus breaks from Old Testament law on divorce.

Matthew 19:1-12 is crucial in the marriage-divorce debates in the New Testament. The Book of Matthew informs readers that Jesus left Galilee for the Judean territory. Galilee is a place of revelation (see Matthew 4:12-17), while Judea is a place of rejection and death. It was in the Judean region that the Pharisees tested Jesus on the issues of marriage and divorce. According to Matthew 19:3, the Pharisees (Matthew asked, "Is it permitted for a man to dismiss his wife down to every cause?" The reason for asking this question is not readily apparent. However, biblical scholars have theorized that that Pharisees wanted to expose Jesus before the people. According to Martin (2004:6),

> In order to do this, they had to unveil inconsistencies and invalidate His influence before the people. They had to show the people, in public, that His doctrine was in opposition to the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees, and they had to

shame Him, knowing that once a leader is disparaged, and people begin to laugh
at him; He is stripped of his power.

The phrase "for any cause," refers to the Jewish debate about the grounds for divorce. They were referring to Deuteronomy 24:1, where Moses allowed the Jewish men to divorce their wives because of indecency. During the time of Christ, there were two schools namely Hillel and Shammai that had different interpretations on divorce. Shammai restricted divorce to the case of adultery on the woman's part, while Hillel allowed a woman to be divorced if she was a bad cook or not beautiful (Karris 1988:889). Therefore, it was assumed that divorce was permitted among the Jewish people. Jesus' answer on marriage and divorce was revealing and emphatic (Matthew 19:4-9). His response invokes the book of Genesis. Marriage is a divine institution. It is indissoluble and no human agent could end such a union. Genesis reveals God's original plan for marriage. According to Genesis 5:2, "But God created them male and female. On account of this a man shall leave father and mother and be attached to his wife, and the two shall be in one flesh." Jesus responded to the Pharisees by saying, "What therefore God did join together, let not man divide" (Mark 10:9). With this answer, Jesus reveals that marriage is for a purpose in God's plan. Jesus assumes the role of authoritative interpreter of the law. As such, Jesus forbids divorce absolutely. God filled marriage with meaning. God has spoken (Martin 2004:9).

Jesus then remarks, "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another is guilty of adultery, and the man who marries a woman divorced by her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). In this way, Jesus condemns divorce. His answer to the question of indissolubility of marriage is brief, simple, and straightforward. He made it clear that the marriage contract is for life.

Though most exegetes and Biblical scholars accept that Christ makes no exceptions in His teaching on divorce, the difficulty of the writing can present some difficulties. It is this difficulty in writing that makes biblical scholars assert that divorce may be allowed on certain grounds. St. Matthew writes,

It has also been said: anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you: everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication

makes her an adulteress and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Matt. 5:32)

Divorce could be allowed if fornication is involved. John Martin (2004:52) argued that fornication is the sin of the flesh. For John Martin, in fornication, flesh is joined to flesh in debasement, in prevision, and of all that is holy and righteous. In 1Corienthians 7:1-5, St. Paul admonishes, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman, but because of the fornications let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

In spite of this, the teaching of Jesus Christ on the question of divorce is clear. He forbids divorce even though it has been permitted in the earlier days. He justifies his position for two reasons. First, divorce is not present in the beginning of creation and, second, those whom God joins together man must not separate. Gratsch (1979:360) argued that Jesus rejected the practice of divorce by affirming God's plan of indissoluble marriage. According to Gratsch, in quoting the Jewish source in Genesis, Jesus appeals to the unity of two in one flesh. Mba (1980:17) also argued that marriage requires the partners to commit themselves to each other as persons, for better or for worse until they are parted by death.

Marriage is a covenant of love. Two individuals are now united into one couple. Though difficult in practice, the grace of God promotes its success. Love is the secret of its realization. Married couples must love and accept one another as Christ does his church. The second Vatican Council (1965:No. 48) understood this when it stated, "As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union as well as the good of the children, imposes total fidelity on the spouses and argues for an unbreakable oneness between them." In the teaching of Christ, the marriage-relationship takes on a new meaning. Christ Christianizes marriage. Now, marriage is a means of conferring grace. Mba (1980:8) observed that Christ raises marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, and instructs the church that marriage is a means of achieving holiness of life and eternal beatitude. Therefore, Christ is seen as a symbol of love, peace, unity, and grace among Christian families. Christ loved the world so much that he dies for it. He paid the debt of the human race with his precious blood. Thus, his love for us is inexhaustible, infinite, and unconditional. The church is the bride of Christ.

Accordingly, husbands and wives shall see themselves as Christ's ambassadors in this world. Their marriage should mirror the relationship between Christ and the church. Christ loves and cares for the church. Likewise, husbands ought to love and direct their wives in a way that is befitting. St. Paul understands this when he advises,

> Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy…In the same way, husbands must love their own bodies, for a man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it, and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because it is his body and we are his living parts. (Eph.5:25-30)

The scriptural passage from 1 Corinthians 7 ""Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife" echoes Christ's perspective on matrimony. Marriage is a sacrament. Christ loves his church. Likewise, Christian partners shall love one another. Their love shall not know any bounds. A man will not divorce his wife and vice versa. It is only in this way that husband and wife are no longer two but one flesh. Thus, Christ pronounces the indissolubility and unity of the marriage bond. Though challenging, with love, it is possible. Marriage no doubt unites man to God. Married couples will attain salvation through this vocation. Marriage is a vocation because not everybody is destined to marry.

Christ's attitude toward marriage is clear. He does not approve of the dissolution of a marriage. Though the Mosaic Law permitted divorce for certain grounds, Christ forbids it in the new law. Christ, in so doing, is only recalling marriage to its original state of indissolubility. Marriage must be between one man and one woman, and no human power can dissolve the marriage bond.

5.6   THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON DIVORCE

The church, right from the apostolic time, has never ceased from following the footsteps of Christ in matters regarding to divorce. The church sees it as a duty to teach and uphold the truth of revelation as the church receives it directly from Christ. In this way, Paul reiterated the basic teaching of the church on the question of the indissolubility and unity of marriage. Paul himself is one of the mouthpieces of the church. Paul, like Christ, condemns divorce as immoral. He advises Corinthian couples: "For the married I have something to say and this is not from me, but from the lord: a wife must not leave her husband or if she does leave him, she must either remain unmarried or else make it up with her husband- nor must a husband send his wife away" (1 Cor. 7: 10- 11).

From the Apostolic time down the ages, the church taught and maintained that divorce is not permitted among Christian spouses. Two individuals become one flesh. Christian marriage reflects the living union between Christ and his church. Couples must be faithful to each other.

Moreover, the Church fathers have been faithful to Christ's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. Only death can break the marriage union between a man and a woman. Dekek (1971:150) stated that in the West from the second to the 10th century, the Fathers, Roman Pontiffs, Church Councils, and Synods made no compromise with secular law and practice. Their teaching was practically consentient: no divorce or remarriage. Christian marriage can be dissolved only by death. It is clear that divorce is never permitted in the Christian religion. Strictly speaking, the Church has been following the precepts laid down by Christ himself. The Church considers Christian marriage as sacred and therefore there is no power on earth to dissolve the marriage bond. Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter, *On Christian Marriage*, remarked that it should be known that no power can dissolve the bond of Christian marriage when it has been ratified and consummated. As a result, husbands and wives who have divorced and plan to remarry are guilty of a manifest crime. Further, Pope Pius XI, as the Vicar of Christ, affirmed the stability of marriage. No one shall separate what God has joined together, and whoever sends his wife away and remarries commits adultery. According

to Pope Pius XI, Christ himself stressed the indissolubility and firmness of the marriage bond, as discussed in the previous section.

The Second Vatican Council is important for the Church. Its stance on divorce is clear. The Council Fathers shed light on the question of the Christian marriage bond. The aim of matrimony is not only the begetting of children. Married people must love each other as Christ does his Church. Marriage is contracted for life. The Council Fathers reminded Christian spouses that even when marriage does not produce children, marriage still retains its character and preserves its values and indissolubility. It is obvious that the Church continues to teach its followers authentic statements from Christ with regard to divorce. Christ is against divorce. The Church equally condemns divorce in its totality. The church teaches that every Christian marriage is a covenant, vocation, and sacrament.

5.7   THEOLOGIANS AND CANONISTS ON DIVORCE

Theologians and Canonists have been commenting upon and interpreting the teachings of Jesus Christ on divorce. Jesus indicated that marriage is a relationship in which a man and a woman are attached together, and the only thing that can separate them is death. Orr (1915, Pg-866), an outstanding theologian, argued, "Divorce is the rupture of a tie meant by God to be indissoluble." Other notable theologians believe that some marriages could be annulled by the Roman Pontiff. According to Dekek (1971:150):

> Theologians and Canonists hold that the Roman Pontiff can grant not only annulments but in certain circumstances divorces or valid marriage(s) with the right to remarry. He can dissolve not only valid non-consummated marriages at least one of the parties is not validly baptized… The only marriage that the Pope cannot dissolve, they argue, is a valid consummated marriage between two baptized persons, whether contracted in or outside the Church.

This argument is clear. No human power has the power to dissolve any consummated marriage. A ratified and consummated marriage can never be dissolved. Its dissolubility is even beyond the power of the supreme Pontiff. As a result, marriage represents a

form of completion and therefore is irreversible. It represents the indefectible union of Christ and His church. Death is the only power that can dissolve such a marriage. Canon 1141 argues that a marriage that is ratified and consummated cannot be dissolved by any cause other than death.

In spite of this position, there are some Catholic theologians who differed on this teaching. In his book entitled, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, Laurenti Magesa took a different view in the issue of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Magesa noted in his study that divorce is more rampant among Christians. Magesa concluded that Christians are aware of what is required of them in terms of moral living, but what is proclaimed by the church is not necessarily what they practice (2004:61). According to Laurenti Magesa, divorce could be permitted as a result of sexual dissatisfaction, domestic violence, barrenness, unemployment and poverty (2004:60).

The Canonists argued that the only marriage bond that can be dissolved is that which has not been consummated. Mba (1980:19) stated that a valid Christian marriage in which the parties have not become one flesh by marital relation, or one that does not represent the mystery of Christ's union with His church, does not enjoy indissolubility as far as the Church is concerned. The Pope, who is the Vicar of Christ, can dissolve such a marriage bond because he acquires his power from Christ Himself. He can do this for the good of souls by papal dispensation. Cannon 1142 also states that a non-consummated marriage between baptized persons or between a baptized party and an unbaptized person can be dissolved by the Roman Pontiff for the same reason, and at the request of both parties or of either party, even if one member is unwilling.

St. Paul also recalls Christ's prohibition of divorce. However, Paul does allow divorce in special circumstances, the departure of a non-Christian partner in order to avoid conflict over faith, and a peaceful life. This is referred to as the Pauline Privilege (Cannon 1143).

Jesus condemned divorce because what God joins together, no man shall separate. The Church Fathers reiterate this point from time to time because Christ has raised marriage to a sacrament. From Hermas and St. Justin Martyr, all agreed that marriage is for life. Hermas (150:5) taught that the husband should not put his adulterous wife away. According to Hermas, if the husband does put his wife away, for

the sake of her repentance, the husband should not remarry. Similarly, St. Justin Martyr (176:4) taught that he who marries any woman that has been put away by another man commits adultery.

Following the steps of these theologians, Athenagoras (177:6) proclaimed that whoever puts his wife and remarries commits adultery. Similarly, based on the teaching of Scriptures, Clement of Alexander (217:4) stated, "You shall not put away your wife except for fornication, and considers as adultery a remarriage while the other of the separated persons survives."

There are some theologians who have maintained this position. They have argued that death is the only power that can separate married couples. Tertullian (1951:88) argued that He alone (Christ) may separate husband and wife who has been united in marriage, and He will separate them, not by the harsh method of divorce, which He censures and outlaws, but by the destiny of death.

The marriage-relationship is indissoluble. St. Thomas Aquinas (1957:No. 6) also taught the same doctrine. His argument stems from the premise that marriage is a sacrament. As a sacrament, it symbolizes the union of Christ and his church. St. Thomas (1957: Art. 2) maintained that matrimony, as a sacrament of the Church, is a union of one man to one woman. This union must be held indivisibly and faithfully, and the man and woman are bound to one another. Thus, marriage is indivisible in itself in so far as it is a sacrament of the union of Christ and the church. As a sacrament, it also provides grace to the partners. This grace will encourage couples to love, respect, and cooperate with one another. Both will be ready to share their joys, sorrows, and disappointments together. The sacrament of matrimony assists to unite two spouses into one. St. Thomas (1948:Art. 2) argued that indissolubility stems from marriage's nature as a sacrament. Hence, from the moment marriage was made a sacrament of the Church, and as long as it remains such, it cannot be a matter of dispensation. It is interesting to remark that both the theologians and Canonists have uncompromising views on Christian marriage. God made only one man and one woman in the beginning. Death, then, is the only power that can dissolve this human relationship, which symbolizes Christ and his church. A man must be content with one marriage because whoever sends his wife away is a cloaked adulterer.

Some radical theologians and liberal Canonists teach that divorce could be allowed for certain reasons. These theologians have led some Christians to believe that it is permissible to divorce under certain circumstances. Indeed, there are some Scriptural passages that these liberals interpret to imply that divorce may be allowed. Warren (1995:6) argued that these interpretations are erroneous because Christ's stand on the issue of divorce is clear. Warren (1995:6) observed when a couple joins as one flesh before God, it signifies that they are no longer independent individuals, but rather an inseparable union. Couples are joined together in the marriage covenant. For hundreds of years, church leaders have taught that spouses are joined together for better or for worse, for rich or for poor, in sickness and in health, until death separates them. This is rooted in the word of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. Warren (1995:6) noted that God intended the marriage covenant to be the picture of His faithfulness. It signifies the intimate relationship between Christ and His church. The church is subject to Christ, the head, so also wife should be subject to her husband. In turn, the husband must sacrifice, love, and provide for his wife unconditionally. Under these conditions, divorce is never allowed on any grounds. This is a command from the Lord, and not just words. This is the stand and teaching of the Church.

5.8   BIBLICAL IMPLICATIONS

The church does not live on its own, but on the Word of God. Understanding Vatican II is important for us to grasp the Word of God. The Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Verbum*, tells us that, "Hearing the Word of God with reverence, and proclaiming it with faith, the Sacred Synod …" (1965, b.1). With these words, the Council Fathers explained that the church is "a community that listens to, and proclaims the Word of God" (Benedict XVI, 2005). Christ is present in the Sacred Scriptures. The Constitution says that the Church venerates the Scriptures as she venerates the body of Christ (cf. Dei Verbum n. 21). In view of this, Saint Jerome stated, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ (cf. Dei Verbum n.25).

Let us take the wedding feast at Cana as a traditional example. The marriage at Cana is presented in the well-known biblical account of John 2:1-11.   John 2:1-11

reports that, Jesus and his disciples, as well as his mother, attended the wedding in Cana. The Bible states that, in the process, the hosts ran out of wine. Jesus' mother however, approached Jesus and told him, "They have no more wine". Then, Jesus' mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:3-5). Jesus later ordered the servants to fill the empty containers with water. He, also, asked the servants to take the water to the chief waiter. John concludes his account by saying, "This was the first miracle of Jesus and it was performed to reveal his glory, and his disciples put faith in him." (John 2:11).

Here, we are interested in the implications that the wedding at Cana had on the *Igbo* Catholic families. Imagine how wonderful the wedding feast was! The music, the dancing, the food, wine, and even stories told about the presence of Jesus and his mother, Mary. The role Mary played is significant. *Igbo* women play an important role in the wedding of their children. It is the function of *Igbo* women to prepare their children for marriage. *Igbo* women, also, are known for their intercessory role. Women know their children. They also trust their children. Just as Mary knew the abilities and talents of Jesus and helped him to develop them, this is also what the Igbo women do. They know the abilities of their children. They encourage them as they grow to develop their own full potentials. The story of the wedding at Cana, even today, has had considerable importance in the development of our current day *Igbo* Christian weddings. Mary brings the needs of the wedding couple to Christ, just as the *Igbo* women, who are close to their children, also bring their children's need to the attention of Jesus.

5.9   THELOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is important to consider the general theological implications of the Vatican II. Vatican II marked the first time the Church examined its status and opened itself to a changing world. The Vatican II represents a starting point and model for the *Igbo* Church. Elected in 1959, Pope John XXIII saw the need to update the Church for modern society. In his opening speech, Pope John XXIII (1966, pg-26) said, "The church should never depart from the sacred treasure of truth inherited from the Fathers.

But at the same time, she must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and the new forms of life introduced into the modern world."

With the Vatican II, a new theology emerged in the church. This theology must not depart from the sacred treasure of truth inherited from the Fathers. However, the modern theology must pay attention to the current needs of the Church. It must adjust, adapt, and incultruate itself to the needs of the Church in *Igbo* land. Due to this need, Pope John XXIII opened the doors to let in fresh air for the Church in the modern world. The Council Fathers defined the "Church" as the people of God. If the Church is the people of God, the Church's teachings must be relevant to these people.

In the first miracle of Jesus, he changed water into wine (John 2:1-12). In doing so, Jesus developed the theology of marriage through sign and miracle. Jesus' presence at the wedding ceremony also speaks about His perspective on marriage. He noted that marriage is of divine origin (Genesis 1:26-31). The importance of Jesus' presence at the wedding feast is crucial for us today. Jesus represents the new law. John indicated the need for Jesus to pass from the old to the new order. In the new dispensation, Jesus gave the apostles the power to bind and loose (Matthew 18:18). This power was given to Peter (19:19), which also extended to the later disciples. It is in view of this that the Council Fathers have the authority to call for change in theology. Inculturation is the basis and foundation of theology, a view underscored by the pontifical Biblical Commission (1994:143):

> The theological foundation of inculturation is the conviction of faith that the Word of God transcends the cultures in which it has found expression and has the capability of being spread in other cultures, in such ways as to be able to reach all human beings in the cultural context in which they live.

5.10 CANONICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is important to consider the role of canon law in the life of Christians in general, as well as to consider the implications of canon for the *Igbo* Church. The church needs the Code of Canon Law. Pope John Paul II observed that the Code of Canon is absolutely necessary for the Church, because the church is established in the form of a

social and visible unit. Therefore, it needs rules so that its hierarchical and organic structure may be visible (Apostolic Constitution Sacre Disciplinae Leges 1983).

The Vatican II was instituted to renew the church to respond more effectively to the modern world. Pope John Paul II indicated the need for the Council to apply its teachings to the life of every individual and the whole Church (Tertio Millenio Adveniente 1994:n. 20). Blessed Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) called the Church to serve both the Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

The Church needs the Code of Canon law for unity, orderliness, and peace. Any society without laws will breed chaos and disorder. God gave Moses the Decalogue to guide the people of God. The church in the New Testament also needed laws for the people of God. Through baptism, Catholics belong to the Church, with its rights and privileges. The Catholic member of the Church has the rights to the Sacraments. The ministers on the other hand, have an obligation to administer these Sacraments to the people of God. Some of these rights of the Christians are being denied to the Igbo Christians. Even where *Igbo* Christians have married more than one wife, there is a potential way to readmit them into the Sacraments.

The Christian church was founded by Peter. Jesus told Peter,

And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:18).

Peter is the prince who was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. The keys to the kingdom of heaven given to Peter have canonical implications. Harrington (1991:71) observed that the content of the power may involve laying down rules and giving exemptions, imposing or lifting excommunications, forgiving or not forgiving sins, or even performing exorcisms. It is evident that the power given to Peter extends to the present Pope, Bishops, and priests. God has given us the legislative power to the making and unmaking of laws and regulations for the good of the people of God. This is where the Code of Canon Law is important for the Vatican II. John XXIII reminds us that the Gospel has not changed, but what has changed is our understanding and

application of these rules to the modern world. The Church must recognize signs of times, and see that Canon law is necessary for *Igbo* Christians.

The Canon Law is intrinsic to the Catholic Church and ignorance of the Code is ignorance of one's rights and obligations as a Catholic. The *Igbo* Church should recognize the importance of the keys given to Peter, which also extend to the *Igbo* Church itself. As a result, the Church has the ability to lift the bans imposed upon *Igbo* Christians who have been denied the Sacraments. Like Jesus, the Church lives in one time and place, in a particular society, in a specific culture. And again, like Jesus, the Church proclaims conversion to the Gospel to particular culture (Mark 1:15). As the body of Christ (LG 7) and Sacrament of intimate union with God (LG 1), the church remains the history, agent, and guarantor for a true culmination of the inculturation process. While theology is faith seeking understanding, canon law is faith seeking practice.

5.11 PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

Pope John XXIII called for the inauguration of the Vatican II. He saw the necessity to renew the face of the Church to accommodate the needs of the people of God in the modern world. The impulse for renewal is captured in the Italian word *aggiornamento*, which can be translated to mean *bringing up to date*. Those who wanted change thought that the Church had become irrelevant to the concerns of the modern world. The *aggiornamento* demanded a pragmatic policy that actively renewed the face of the Church. The immediate aim of the Pope, no doubt, was to reinvigorate the Church and to promote within her an *aggiornamento*.

The Vatican II provides an important model for considering the pastoral needs of the *Igbo* Christians. It is crucial to reiterate that *Igbo* Christians are also members of the wider world. *Igbo* Christians are part of the church. The Lumen Gentium (LG) defined the church as the people of God, *Igbo* Christians included. Though the *Igbo* Christians are faced with some pastoral problems, these problems could be resolved if the church in *Igbo* land applies the principles set forth by the Vatican II. First, *Igbo* Christians who marry more than one wife are denied the Sacraments. Second, those who divorce their

wives will also be denied the Sacraments. The church in *Igbo* land has not fully incorporated the teachings of the Vatican II to resolve the problems the *Igbo* Christians encounter in their everyday lives as they commune with God. This means, according to the Vatican II, that the Church in *Igbo* land is out of touch to reality. Thus, the *Igbo* church has become irrelevant to the people's problems. We have to apply the teaching of the Gospel to *Igbo* Catholic Christians. The Gospel has not changed, but what has changed is the time. This is what Pope John XXIII had in mind when he said,"It is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better…the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look for ahead" (Vatican Archive 1988).

We are bound to utilize the opportunity given to us by the Vatican II to improve the image of the Church before the *Igbo* Catholic Christians. Presently, the Church has ignored the yearnings of the *Igbo* Catholics. We have to take our bearing from the Vatican II. According to Pope John Paul II,

> What a treasure there is, dear brothers and sisters, in the guidelines offered to us by the Second Vatican Council…I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century' there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning. (Tertio Millenio Adveniente 1994:n. 57).

With this in mind, it is critical to determine how divorced Igbo Christians can be accommodated in the Christian fold using the principles of Vatican II. One way to apply the Vatican II principles is to listen to *Igbo* Christians when they have pastoral problems. The *Igbo* Christian community must challenge prejudices against the Igbo culture and traditions. The *Igbo* culture and tradition are not as bad as the early European missionaries asserted. Further, the Church must be open and accommodating to traditional *Igbo* religion. There is need for the Church to have a genuine dialogue with Igbo Catholic Christians. As Pope John Paul II stated,

> No Council (Vatican II) has ever spoken so clearly about the Christian Unity, about dialogue with non-Christian religions…about the dignity of each person's conscience, about the principles of religious liberty, about the different cultural traditions within which the Church carries out her missionary mandate…" (Tertio Millenio Adveniente 1994:n. 19).

The general pastoral solution is that the *Igbo* Church must pay attention to the concerns of *Igbo* Christians. Those who have married more than one wife should be readmitted into the Church's Sacraments. The Sacraments must not be denied to them. Let us follow the example of Jesus, who ate and drank with sinners and tax collectors (Luke 15:1-3). The mission of Jesus is to show mercy to sinners (Luke 15:11-32). *Igbo* Christians value the Eucharist, Sacrament of Reconciliation, and burial rites. These sacraments are crucial for the Igbo people. To deny them these sacraments means that the Church has demeaned their spiritual lives. The *Igbo* church must not deny the *Igbo* Christians the sacraments that are very dear to them.

5.12 CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

The pastoral problems faced by *Igbo* Christians stem from their cultural heritage. *Igbo* culture is perceived to be opposed to Christian ethics, morals, and teaching. As the literature review demonstrated, polygamy and divorce are unacceptable to Christian teachings. An *Igbo* Christian is not fully integrated into the Church when he marries more than one wife. How does the Church accommodate him? Most often, he is denied the Sacraments, which are dear to him. He is regarded as a fallen or lapsed Christian.

The Church must incorporate *Igbo* culture into Christian culture. Inculturation of the Church's worship will be acceptable if the Christian liturgy would be relevant to an *Igbo* Christian. The *Igbo* Church would have to translate the liturgical rites into *Igbo* language. Further, there are *Igbo* festivals and ceremonies that must be incorporated into Christian liturgy. The *Igbo* Church has not been inculturated; the liturgical rites are Western, and therefore are foreign to *Igbo* Christians. The Igbo Church must imitate other African churches, which take inculturation seriously for the benefit of the people of God. Rigid rules that are common in *Igbo* churches must be addressed. In view of this, the Asian Bishops warned,

> In order to promote the inculturation process the universal church has to be more open and ready to change its own pattern of thinking, and allow local churches the freedom to think and act in response to concrete life situations, guided by the Spirit and led by the local hierarchy. Rigid rules and regulations, in discord with

local conditions, will put restrictions on the interest of inculturation and will hamper the result of inculturation (Tan, 61-62)

The church leadership believes that to be a Catholic is to retain the Roman liturgy. This is untrue. We must appreciate liturgical and cultural diversity. Jesus used a language His people understood. He used the images of sheep, goats, lambs, and coins to explain His message. The *Igbo* Church must acknowledge that it is Catholics. This is crucial. However, it should understand that *Igbo* Christians comprise the *Igbo* Church, not Roman Christians. We must allow a local liturgy to emerge from the *Igbo* culture and language. After all, the Holy See approved the Zairean Rite to enhance its liturgy. The Zairean Christians feel at home with such a Rite. The Zairean Bishops worked hard. It demands a serious and genuine scholarship. The *Igbo* Church must wake up from its slumber and work in order to be relevant to *Igbo* Christians.

The church liturgy should not be alien to *Igbo* Christians. Presently, the official liturgy does not touch the hearts of *Igbo* Christians. Liturgy must be grounded on the people's customs, language, and traditions. It must be welcoming to the people. For Christianity to be meaningful and nourishing, *Igbo* Christians must feel at home with the liturgy. An *Igbo* Christian who is denied any of the Sacraments will not feel at home with the liturgy. The liturgical celebration will not touch his heart and will remain meaningless to him. It means that the local church needs the authority and freedom to inculturate the liturgy by adapting to the *Igbo* culture. The Second Vatican Council has given the *Igbo* Church permission to achieve this goal by opening the door to *Igbo* liturgical celebrations. It is not that the Gospel has changed, but the Church has begun to understand it better. It must listen to the signs of times.

The *Igbo* Church must enter into dialogue with Lutherans, Anglicans, Protestants, and other Christians. The *Igbo* Church must invite the *Igbo* traditional experts for table dialogue. In this dialogue, the intention is not to convert, but to listen. We must not compromise our beliefs and liturgical traditions. Such an exchange of ideas would be enriching. The different denominations must work toward unity. Jesus prayed for peace and unity for His followers. As a church, must not shy away from the opportunity to exchange ideas. Each culture has its liturgical and human values. This is articulated by Michael Amaladoss (1999, pg-186),

With regard to other religions I think that we should explore the possibilities of common prayers and celebrations rather than participating in each other's official ritual. In our dialogue with people who follow ideologies rather than religions, we may have to evolve secular celebrations that focus on basic human values.

The *Igbo* church must listen to the teaching of the Vatican II on incultguration. The Second Vatican council called inculturation the law of all evangelization (GS 44). Inculturation is a process, and we must bear this in mind. According to Vatican II (GS 58, 44),

The history of evangelization has been and continues to be a process

of cultural adaption, of communion with various cultural modes, a living exchange…between the church and the diverse cultures of people.

Therefore, based on the Vatican II, the *Igbo* Church must adapt the Gospel to *Igbo* culture. The *Igbo* Church should develop the ability to express Christ's message in its own way. In his encyclical Redemptoris Missio (1990), John Paul II emphasized the urgent necessity of inculturation of the faith as a serious and urgent duty, especially today in *Igbo* land.

5.13 SUMMARY

This chapter explored the issues of marriage and divorce from a biblical and theological perspective. In general terms, the Old Testament asserted that divorce was applied in some circumscribed situations. However, Jesus in the New Testament asserted marriage to be a sacrament, and implied his disapproval with divorce. The chapter also considered the perspectives of theologians and canonists on divorce. The chapter applied these findings to the specific situation of the *Igbo* Christian community, in which many individuals have been divorced or have been remarried. It is important to note that *Igbo* Christians, who are divorced for one reason or the other, should not be regarded as second class citizens. The divorcee being created in God's image and likeness could play an active role in the Church of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter concluded this research study, and provided a summary and conclusion. This conclusion was based on the literature review as well as data collected from the participants of the study. The interview data was particularly helpful in providing recommendations that would help to improve marriage and minimize divorce in the *Igbo* Catholic community. These recommendations, if followed, would help to resolve numerous marriage problems faced by *Igbo* Catholics

The study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological research design. The research study was carried out through intensive interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher interviewed 8 participants from the *Igbo* region of Nigeria. The participants were drawn from married couples, divorcees, and adults whose parents had been divorced.

The problem is that when an *Igbo* man is converted to Christianity, he carries his culture, traditions, *Igbo* marriage beliefs, and way of life into his new religion. Unfortunately, sometimes these traditions conflict with the Church, particularly in issues of marriage and childbearing. The Church had already condemned *Igbo* traditions and customs as being idolatrous and uncivilized. Christianity does not allow polygamy. Further, Christianity preaches the indissolubility of Christian marriage. It is critical for the Church to assess how to successfully integrate *Igbo* traditions into Christianity without undermining the Christian faith.

This study had the primary goal of reawakening interest about the problem of marriage and divorce in *Igbo* society. This is the aim of this research – to create awareness, and to let people know about the problem of marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* people. The research findings indicated that in *Igbo* Christian society, marriage is regarded as sacred. Findings from the research also noted that the marriage contract is for life. The man or the woman is obliged to keep his or her marriage bond intact. Unfortunately, not all the *Igbo* Christians would be able to keep the law of the church, because some have already been divorced. As a result, they are regarded as lapsed

Christians. It is important for the Church to examine how it could readmit these individuals back into the fold. This represents a significant pastoral problem facing the *Igbo* Church.

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6.1   WAYS TO IMPROVE MARRIAGE AMONG *IGBO* CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS

From the review of literature, and the responses, opinions, views, and observations of the participants in the study, it becomes clear that the Church must heed policy suggestions to reduce the present rate of divorce within the *Igbo* Christian community. It has been stressed that divorce is unhealthy for the *Igbo* people. The effects of divorce extend to all levels in Igbo people's lives. The *Igbo* Church leaders are obliged to do something more than just administering the Sacraments. The present Catholic Church policy on divorce could be reviewed to allow a more realistic policy that would emphasize the importance of indissolubility. The *Igbo* Catholic Church should therefore pay attention to the following principles which will help to guard against marriage and divorce. However, the researcher does not claim that these are the only ways to reduce the problem of marriage and divorce in the *Igbo* Catholic community.

6.1   The Igbo Umunna (Community) Concept

The concept of umunna (community) is phenomenal for the *Igbo* people. It is important to note that other ethnic groups in Africa have also a strong sense of umunna (community). For example, in his own writing, Mbiti (1982) noted that it is the community that defines and determines what individuals should become. The southern African concept of community (Ubuntu) is equivalent to Umunna among the *Igbo* people. In *Igbo* community, the umunna could not intermarry because of close affinity. The head (diokpara) of the family had the *ofo*, and could offer prayers for the entire umunna. Ogbukagu (1997) observed that the umunna settles disputes, quarrels, and problems among themselves. The *Igbo* umunna is equivalent to *Igbo* Christian umunna (community) and will play important role in minimizing marriage problems among the

Igbo Christians. The research findings identified the role Igbo umunna played in resolving problems among themselves. The researcher believed that if the idea of *Igbo* umunna is Christianized, it will help to promote peace and harmony in *Igbo* Christian marriage and relationships.

The Biblical passages that speak about family guidance, resolution and admonitions abound. Matthew 7:24-27 says that the wise man not only hears what God's word says, but also does it. Ephesians 5:22-24 advices the wife to submit to her husband as to the Lord. The couple that has never experienced family conflicts does not exist. The umunna has a special method of resolving family conflicts among *Igbo* couples. The purpose of this study is to find pragmatic ways to incorporate the Umunna ideal of resolving family problems into *Igbo* Christian community.

Iroegbu (2005) observed that umunna is a collective word formed from "umu" and "nna", which means children of one father or ancestral consanguine, bloodline or root. Umunna is a culture-specific name that the *Igbo* use to refer to a village or community of *Igbo* people (Iroegbu, 2005). Mbiti (1982:108-109) argued that the community must make, create or produce the individual because the individual depends on the corporate group. In his own research, Kunhiyop (2008:22) believed that whatever the community says is binding on the individual. In *Igbo* traditional set up, what the family members say is binding on the individuals. This is seen primarily when there are any family settlements.

The research findings clearly indicated that Ilu nwanyi (marriage) is a family affair among the *Igbo* people. Individualism as seen in the Western culture is absent in the *Igbo* family system. Individualism has contributed to create problems in Western marriages. In the *Igbo* traditional system, children and wife belong to the entire community. The community therefore has the right to intervene when necessary to settle disputes in Igbo families. This system has helped to restore peace, harmony, and reconciliation among the *Igbo* people. The intent of this study is to encourage and incorporate Igbo system of settling family disputes into the *Igbo* Catholic Church. If this is done, the *Igbo* Catholic church will reap the ideal of umunna concept which will go a long way to improve marriage and reduce the rate of divorce problems among the *Igbo* Catholic members.

6.2   The Umunna and Igba Ndu Ritual (Covenanting)

The *Igbo* people understand that squabbles, quarrels, misunderstanding and disputes could arise among immediate family members, friends, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, kindred, village, and community. There are different types of igba ndu in Igbo community. For example, igba ndu could be between two different neighbouring communities, an individual and a deity, an individual and community, disputes between friends, disputes between business partners, and igba ndu among couples to heal strained relationship. Here, the focus of igba ndu is on marriage resolution. When marriage is ridden with crises, the umunna plays a vital role in resolving the family problems. Most often, when life is threatened, the *Igbo* community has a way of resolving the issues. This is where the umunna comes in to administer igba ndu (covenanting).

What is igba ndu ritual? Igba ndu means covenanting or to bond life. The igba ndu ritual becomes necessary to heal relationship between couples who have engaged in disputes that could not be settled by the partners. The igba ndu could be done by the chief priest or the eldest in the community. The igba ndu is usually administered in the presence of umunna.

There are certain objects that are used for igba ndu. Objects such as izu, kola nut (oji), edo, blood, and ofo staff are used. These objects are used in Isu-Njaba community. The chief priest or the eldest in the community could dip the oji (kola nut) into the couple's blood. The couple are asked to eat it after certain incantations. The partners are asked not to harm each other in any way. If any of the partners breaks the igba ndu (covenant), he or she is visited with endless problems. The intent of the covenant is to dispel fear and to restore faith, confidence, and self-belief among the couples. Igba ndu has been used to keep marriage intact among the *Igbo* people.

The igba ndu could be Christianized and used by the *Igbo* Catholics. The majority of the *Igbo* couples are now Christians. Igba ndu is also popular among the *Igbo* people. As a Catholic priest, I have used igba ndu several times to restore faith, confidence, loyalty, and harmony among *Igbo* couples. The igba ndu I performed followed the following format: sign of the cross, blessing of holy water, scriptural readings (Matthew 5:33-37, Acts 5:1-10), homily -where the terms of igba ndu were

explained, administering igba ndu to individual couples, sprinkling of holy water, prayer of the faithful, and closing prayers. In the blessing of holy water, the Catholic Church has a beautiful prayer for blessing of water. In the homily, I explained the purpose of igba ndu to the couples. In my homily, I told the couples that igba ndu is serious in *Igbo* community. It is important for the couples to know that igba ndu carries a serious consequence if violated by any of the married partners. Igba ndu has been able to keep married couples together which has contributed to reduce divorce in *Igbo* community.

6.3   Extended Family System

In *Igbo* communities, extended family is made up of the couple's parents, siblings, and relatives. Extended family system is still very strong among the *Igbo* people. It has its blessings and its pitfalls. The study indicates that family members could contribute to the rate of divorce in *Igbo* society. Based on this, the researcher recommends extended family members to stop intruding into the affairs of their sons and daughters. Troubles at times could be caused by any member of the extended family members.

For the good of married couples, it is important that a home must be self-contained. There is no way any person from outside the family can or should take the position of one of its members. Each member of the family is irreplaceable. As a result, each family member had a specific role and duty to play. Genesis 2:24 is categorical, stating, "One must leave his father and mother and join himself to his wife." Mba (1980:8-9) also stated that one must avoid emotional immaturity and overdependence on one's parents, which could be to the detriment of one's marriage and family life. Such dependency can ruin an otherwise promising marriage. Of course, parents should help their children financially or advise them when things are getting out of hand. But parents should not interfere with the affairs of young couples. This will help partners to live in harmony, peace, and trust in such a way that it will help them to build their own homes. However, when the parents-in-law fail to co-operate with their sons-in-law, they jeopardize the happy married life of their daughters. Emile-Joseph De Smedt (1964:13-14) tackled this issue specifically:

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If young couples live with their parents-in-law, they rarely find true family happiness. They are always to some extent under constraint… They cannot feel really independent and at home… They get into the habit of living outside the home, they feel children are a nuisance, and materialistic ideas take root and end by destroying their conjugal life.

The study also identified that parents should allow their married sons and daughters to pursue their own tastes and happiness. Parents should avoid being too paternalistic or maternalistic, because this attitude can endanger the marriage-relationship. Kore (2002:85) also observed that the relationship between the couple and extended family members can either enrich or endanger their married life. Only by remaining autonomous will couples avoid coming into conflict with their parents. In his own study, Kore (2002:85) also argued that a couple should have freedom and independence from their relations and friends. Parents should not be seen as obstacles or enemies in the family. This does not mean that couples would not anything to do with their family members and friends. Based on this, Kore (2002:85) advised couples to welcome godly advice from clan members. It is expected and encouraged that parents should relate very cordially with their sons-in-law, but without living with them.

6.4   Igbo Catholic Church and Childless Couples

Childlessness is the state of being childless. In some cultures, childlessness is considered as a curse. In *Igbo* communities, it is a stigma for a woman to be childless. However, the *Igbo* couples should understand that it is God that gives a child. The researcher believes that childless couples must be respected, honoured, and encouraged in their plight. They should not be despised by the *Igbo* community.

The problem of infertility is not easy for *Igbo* childless couples to manage. The question then is, "What is the Church doing to help the childless couples?" Childless is not by choice. It should be seen as part of God's plan. St. Paul echoes this when he says, "In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:11-12). This reminds us that infertility is part of God's plan for his people. God has a

plan even for childless partners. The church must emphasize this plan God has for them. This will help to make these couples to see and accept whatever plan God has for them.

The Church must also pray for the childless couples. Prayers should be one of the ways to uplift the heart and soul of couples who have not children. Prayers must be part of their daily activities. Prayers should be able to comfort, sustain, and console those who suffer the pains of infertility in their marriage. As *Igbo* Catholics, prayers could be addressed through the patronage of St. Anne, the Patron Saint of childless couples. God gives a barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children (Psalm 113:9).

The childless couples must also find some members of the congregation who understand their plight and ask them to pray for them, as they too, will keep them in their prayers. This will bring comfort, encouragement, relieve and support for them.

The Church should also encourage childless couples to seek for medical treatment. After all the medical attention is sought for, and if they are still unable to get a child, they should be encouraged to adopt a child. Adoption is recognized by the Catholic Church, as a way to feel God's love. In his book entitled, "The Sacredness of Marriage and Family Life, Bishop Okoye advised childless couples to adopt children. According to Bishop Okoye (1972), "After all human efforts have been exhausted and yet the couples have no children, they should be encouraged to adopt children". Adoption should be seen as another means God can use to fulfil his plan for infertile partners.

6.5   Immaturity in Marriage

Today, some *Igbo* couples marry at a tender age. From the interview I had, some respondents attributed divorce to immaturity. Immaturity could make marriage a miserable relationship. Young people do not understand the meaning of marriage. Based on this, it would be better for an *Igbo* couples to marry when they would fully understand the challenges of married lives. The researcher therefore advocates twenty one as a mature age for marriage. The Church could refuse to marry couples who are

below the age of twenty one years. Marriage requires maturity. Maturity will help *Igbo* marriage to grow and succeed.

6.6   Finances

The result of the study indicates that marital disagreements could lead to divorce in *Igbo* community. Finances are an indicator that has brought disagreements among the couples. To be in safer side, both husband and wife should all work. Work is able to keep Christian families stable. The Church should make marriage instructions compulsory for *Igbo* couples. Marriage instruction should be taught by the priests. It is pathetic that some priests ask their catechists to instruct the yet-to-be couples. Emphasis should be made to some of the indicators of marriage dissolution.

The Catholic priests should expose the couples to the danger of money. It will be good for the couples to keep a joint account. The husbands would be able to explain the nature of finance to the family members. They will also expend based on the nature of their account. It will be wise for the *Igbo* couples to plan their family budget in a week or monthly basis. This will help them to avoid spending about their limits. If this method is adopted, it will help to safeguard marriage in *Igbo* community.

6.7   Love in Igbo Perspective

Love is viewed as one of the fundamental principles that will solve many of society's problems. The case of marriage and divorce no doubt is a problem that has confronted some *Igbo* Christian communities. The ill effects of divorce will be resolved only when husbands and wives learn to love in their married lives. Love is an art. It has to be learned and practiced. Where love exists, the possibility of divorce is reduced.

The *Igbo* Catholic Church leaders should recognize the role of love in Christian relationships. Love has the power to transform the lives of *Igbo* husbands and wives. This will help *Igbo* married couples to recognize that they are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Love will be able to transform the *Igbo* couple's hatred or disagreement into harmony. Love will help Igbo couples to endure difficulties in their relationship. Love will help *Igbo* married couples to maintain peace and order in the family. Paul echoed this when he said that "love is patient and kind, love is not jealous

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or boastful, it is not arrogant or rude, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor. 13: 4-7).

Igbo husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 29). On the other hand, *Igbo* wives should love their husbands (Titus 2: 4). Jesus' love for the Church illustrates the type of love *Igbo* husbands should have for their wives. The *Igbo* husbands should be interested in the wellbeing of their wives. This would help to promote genuine love among the *Igbo* Catholic partners.

Love should prevail in couples' married lives. The *Igbo* Catholic leaders should take time to inculcate this idea in all *Igbo* Christian believers. Love will make the *Igbo* married partners live in harmony when things are good, as well as when things are poor. This will help to improve *Igbo* couple's married relationship. Love will help *Igbo* partners to recognize that what God joins together, no man will separate (Matt. 19:6). Teaching love will reduce the rate of divorce in the *Igbo* community. When there is no conflict among the married couples, peace, unity, and love will prevail. St. Paul affirmed this when he recognized the greatness of love. He argued that there are "three things that last, faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13: 13).

Love is a virtue that should be acquired by all *Igbo* married couples. Love inspires Christian couples to be faithful and forgiving. It is self-giving and self-sacrificing. With love, an *Igbo* husband will know that his wife is not perfect, but treats her as she is. An *Igbo* wife should act similarly. Mba (1985:21) argued that conjugal love is divine and leads the spouses to a free and mutual gift of themselves to each other. According to Mba, this type of love shows itself in action and affection; it pervades the whole of the married couple's lives. Love grows better and greater by its generous and gentle activity. This model shows that the husband-wife relationship is one that lasts forever, and provides an environment of peace, joy, and stability. This relationship does not succumb to adultery or promote anything that may destroy the couple's marriage.

Also, marriage is a covenant of love. This type of love existed between God and the Israelites, Hosea and his wife, Gomer, and Christ and the church. St. Paul, an apostle of Christ, maintained that this type of love is a criterion for Christian spouses. The *Igbo* married couple should love each other unconditionally. Christ is always present in Christian families, because marriage is a Sacrament. When couples realize

that Christ is the source of their love, Christ loves and nourishes them. Christian love cannot be achieved without adequate effort made by *Igbo* Christian couples.

Marriage and love are two-way streets that go hand-in-hand. Of course, marriage is meaningless without love. Many married adults do not realize the importance of love in their relationship. For such people, love is secondary in marriage. In *Igbo* society, a lack of love has been identified as one of the reasons that marriage disintegrates. Also, it is a pity that some *Igbo* Christian couples do not enter into a relationship for love.

Today, some *Igbo* Christian couples confuse sex with love. They think that love is achieved by having sexual intimacy. In fact, some Christian couples even encourage premarital sexual relationships. Most often, some women believe that they must be submissive to men's insatiable desires. This is incorrect; every person has the right to say "no" to premarital sex with respect and love. Some women do not want to hurt men, or fear they might lose their friendship. In any case, any marriage that involves premarital sex does not survive most of the time. It seems likely that those who are involved with premarital sex may end up marrying for sex, instead of for love.

Love is the architect of marriage. Love, like any profession, is an art. Marriage has the potential for growth and development. Marriage partners should seek to have a sense of sharing in their relationship, which will help Christian couples reach their marital goals. Real love involves the art of giving and receiving. True love is only possible when partners inhibit their self-interest. The art of giving makes marriage effective. By giving, married partners are able to transcend themselves. They will be enriched by their spirit of giving. For example, Juliet realized the importance of giving in a loving relationship; she tells Romeo, the one she loves, "My bounty is boundless as the sea, my love as deep, the more I give thee, the more I have, for both are infinite" (Ingledew 1965:67).

It is astonishing that most *Igbo* Christian partners are unwilling to love. A refusal to love destroys a relationship. Marriage and love are like old roads; if they are not walked upon, they become unkempt. Unless *Igbo* husbands and wives are willing to love unconditionally, their marriage will not be fulfilled. Egocentricity must be avoided, as it is destructive in marriage. A partner must ask himself, "Am I the type who always

expects to receive without giving?" Questions like this one will allow couples to reduce their individual narcissism and enrich their married life.

Communication will be crucial in *Igbo* Christian relationships. It puts love into practice. Communication can take a variety of forms. Gestures, touching, glancing, and kissing are among such instances of communication. The *Igbo* married partners will learn to appreciate their bodily love. The *Igbo* married couples should be encouraged to appreciate bodily communication. *Igbo* couples should not be afraid to practice it, provided they do it with respect and mutual understanding. The consummation of physical love is achieved in the complete merging of man and woman in the sexual act. Sex should be encouraged in the *Igbo* Christian marriage because it allows Christian couples to deepen their relationship.

Love is often tested during a crisis. Joys, success, sorrows, pain, misery, and poverty ought to be shared together by *Igbo* partners. However, too many *Igbo* couples become frustrated during difficult times. The purpose of *Igbo* marriage is to unite two *Igbo* partners into one. In this way, the Igbo married couple becomes a single entity that shares all things in common including both joys and sorrows. This is what it means to love because love is blind, as some will say. This should be an indispensable lesson for *Igbo* Christian couples to recognize in their married life.

6.8   Sex Education In Igbo Context

The role of sex education in *Igbo* Christian society cannot be over-emphasized. The *Igbo* church leaders should consider making sex education compulsory to its Christian members. Some Igbo Christian members are ignorant of sex, which probably explains why some people misuse it. The *Igbo* Christian youths and couples should be asked to go through sex education.

Sex education will allow young couples to handle sexual issues, including physical, psychological, and religious problems arising from sex. Sex education promotes a developmental process that helps to prepare an immature *Igbo* person for mature sexual life. It also deals with the immediate physical, psychological, and religious problems that arise from sexual changes during puberty and adolescence.

It is recommended that the Church incorporates sex education as part of its doctrine. The *Igbo* Christian couples should have a better understanding of sex to avoid seeing sex as a threat or challenge. It is the duty of the *Igbo* Church leaders to teach *Igbo* Christians that sex should only occur within marriage. Through sex education, *Igbo* couples will learn to be faithful to one another, and cases of adultery will be reduced. Further, sex education should begin with the family. Parents have the duty to teach their children of the appropriate role of sex. Sex is sacred and should be treated accordingly. St. Paul urged us to desist from indulging in vices that are incompatible with being a Christian (Eph. 5:5).

6.9   Giving, Self-Sacrifice, and Self-Denial

Marriage is a venture. As a result, it is important that *Igbo* Christian couples build their relationship on a foundation of love. The Igbo married couples should know that the spirit of giving, self-sacrifice, and self-denial are important for their relationship to succeed. Fromm (1974) noted that the active character of love is one of giving, not receiving.

What does it mean to give in *Igbo* Christian marriage?   The *Igbo* Christian couples are challenged to cultivate the spirit of giving in their married life. It is often not easy to give. However, all *Igbo* Christian couples should endeavour to find joy in giving. The Igbo partners should be prepared to deny themselves some pleasure for the good of the other party. It is always better for the *Igbo* partner to give than to receive. God so loved the world that He gave his only son (John3:16). Jesus loves the Church and gave His life for it (Ephesians 5:25). In the same way, an Igbo partner must emulate the biblical passages to love his or her partner. Love is embedded in the *Igbo* culture. *Igbo* hospitality demands that an *Igbo* partner must appreciate and love his or her partner.

In *Igbo* Christian families, a husband will be able to give joy, love, selfless service, and time to his wife. In doing this, their relationship will be improved. True love and the spirit of giving will enhance their relationship. In giving, the *Igbo* Christian spouse brings something to life in his or her partner. Giving to another inspires them to give as well. Both parties will share in the joy of what they have brought to life (Fromm, 1974). This spirit that is born in the act of giving and receiving invokes the power of

love. Love is able to produce more love. In the same way, giving inspires more giving. There will be a feeling of joy in the *Igbo* couple's married life, which is desperately needed among *Igbo* Christian families. When love exists in couple's life, the Igbo partners will be ready to give themselves to each other. There is no doubt that this sense of giving will enhance and sustain marriage across the *Igbo* Christian community.

6.10   Acceptance

Acceptance provides a basis for co-relationship and co-existence in family life. Family life begins with the ability of spouses to accept each other. It is important for *Igbo* partners to respect the identity of the other person. Each *Igbo* partner will be ready to accept the other, no matter the other's faults. When an *Igbo* partner has wronged the other, he or she must go to him or her and make it right (Matthew 5:23, 24). It is in the *Igbo* culture to accept apology when given. The purpose is to restore peace in the *Igbo* family.

Rejection is dangerous in *Igbo* married life. Therefore, Igbo partners must guard against rejecting each other. Rejection in a marriage promotes feelings of betrayal and disappointment. A partner will refuse to open up to his or her spouse out of fear of rejection. This behaviour is destructive in *Igbo* married life. *Igbo* couples should remember that on the day of they exchanged their vows, they promised to accept each other, for better or for worse until death separated them.

There is no doubt that many *Igbo* couples struggle to handle and manage married life. Many couples may have been married for years, yet still do not understand each other very well (Oforchukwu, 2000). It is important a spouse's knowledge of his or her partner is deeper than simply knowing the partner's name and interests. The *Igbo* married partners should know when the other partner is sad or happy. Further, an *Igbo* spouse should know the reasons contributing to his or her partner's mood. Certainly, *Igbo* couples must open up, accept each other, make resolutions, and love each other. Acceptance is one quality that should help to sustain Christian marriage among the *Igbo* people.

6.11   Forgiveness Incorporated into Igbo Worldview

Forgiveness is another important quality that promotes Christian marriage among the *Igbo* people. Marriage is ordained by God. Marriage is also sacred and indissoluble. Therefore, the *Igbo* Christian couples should be careful in their relationship. Though marriage on earth will never be perfected, it still demands a continual effort toward perfection. Further, this is not an effort that only one *Igbo* partner can undertake.

Peter told Simon to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). God is faithful to forgive us if we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). Love covers all sins (Proverbs 10:12). Forgiveness is needed in *Igbo* families. The *Igbo* culture has a way of reconciling erring members in the community. When a wife hurts the husband, she has to provide the husband with a chicken. In this case, the wife would prepare a rich meal cooked with the chicken. She would kneel down with the food and asks the husband for forgiveness. The husband would receive the food from the erring wife. This would end the trouble that has caused disunity among the *Igbo* couples. However, if it is found that it is the husband that is responsible for disunity in the family, the husband could also ask for forgiveness from the wife. But if the problem could not be settled between the husband and wife, the family members could be invited. In this case, the two partners would enter into *igba orikoo*. The oji *Igbo* (kola nut) is used for *igba orikoo*. The eldest of the family would administer the *igba orikoo*. The purpose is to restore peace and harmony between the Igbo husband and wife who has been estranged. After the *igba orikoo*, peace and forgiveness is restored among the *Igbo* partners. This *Igbo* traditional method of settling dispute (igba orikoo) could be introduced into the Catholic Church so that marriage problems among the *Igbo* Christians would be reduced.

It is also important that *Igbo* couples should jointly endeavour to build a good and solid family life. *Igbo* husband and wife must exist as one, and therefore they must make this effort together. No *Igbo* partner should see himself or herself as a perfect partner in marriage. Every partner has weaknesses and idiosyncrasies. A mature Christian couple does not expect perfection (Oforchukwu, 2000).

The *Igbo* Christian couples should learn how to forgive. Unless couples learn how to forgive in their married life, their relationship will suffer. The spirit of forgiveness

is a virtue that is needed in couples' lives. A couple should also learn to accommodate each other's unique qualities.

Peter, the Vicar of Christ, emphasized the value of forgiveness when he asked the Lord, "How often must I forgive him who sins against me? Seven times? (Matt. 18:21). Jesus immediately corrected Peter, and said, "No, not seven times, but I say, seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). Harrington (1983) argued that Christ was making the point in this passage that Christian couples should not set a limit on their forgiveness.

Forgiveness represents an abiding challenge for the *Igbo* Christian couples. It is important for *Igbo* partners to learn how to forgive one another. Contrary to one's inclination, a partner should not expect to have all their needs fulfilled in marriage. Rather, in a marriage, a partner should be more interested in meeting the needs of their counterpart. Love allows partners to forgive each other no matter the offence, while immaturity leads partners to never forgive each other (Oforchukwu, 2000).

It is important for all *Igbo* Christian couples to seek to improve their marriages. All sincere couples should want to improve their relationships. Therefore, it is imperative that married couples must trust each other, especially among *Igbo* couples. Mba (1986) argued that the actual self-giving is by its very nature so deep, so all-involving, that it essentially requires indissolubility. According to Mba (1986), the terms of self-giving are dictated by a trusting, winning, and faithful love. From these passages, Mba pointed out that faithfulness and trustfulness are essential qualities in marriage. The *Igbo* Christian couples will enjoy their relationship more if they take these points seriously. Christian marriages will likely be stable if they exhibit love, respect, patience, trust, and knowledge of one's partner. Above all, Igbo Catholic partners must learn how to forgive each another.

In *Igbo* community, marriage will be strong if the couples have stable economy. Money is important for the Igbo couples. Kore (2002:84) underscores the importance of money when he says, "A father should plan and seek God's will in order to ensure that his family will have enough money to live on". Mba (1988) also observed that money can talk and what more, it is also the trouble maker. Paul also observed that, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). The *Igbo* couples will enjoy their

marriage when they have enough money to keep them going. If this is the case, what then will *Igbo* couples do to have a strong family life? It will be encouraging for the Igbo couples to work. It is in work that they will realize themselves. Working will also make both partners be independent of the other. None of the couples therefore will see the other as a parasite in their marriage.

Igbo couples ought to be patient with their partners, even when he/she has no money to keep the family going. Igbo partners might be in abject poverty and yet make a good marriage because they know their goals. They would be convinced that the object of their relationship is to love. Patience and courage will help Igbo partners to achieve this objective end in their Christian marriage. Money is good, but it is only a means to an end. It cannot solve all couples problems. Based on this, the researcher asks, "Why do *Igbo* couples enter into marriage? Do you enter into relationship for money or for love? The answer should be for love. Love therefore, has the ability to maintain a strong marriage that will withstand the challenges, problems, crises, and difficulties in *Igbo* community. *Igbo* couples must build their marriage on Christ. Love therefore is the best antidote for divorce among the *Igbo* Christians.

6.12   *Dialogue Between the Church and Igbo Culture*

The researcher believes that the Church has the power to resolve some of the problems that *Igbo* Christians face in their marriages and religious faith. First, the Vatican Council has given the Church the tools to address this problem, in the form of "Aggiornomento." Ibegbu has asserted that the Church could resolve the problems if the spirit of the Vatican Council is followed. According to Ibegbu (1982:177),

> Or should Christianity, in the spirit of aggiornomento and adaptation coupled with the Council Fathers' emphasis on the necessity of the incarnation of the Church in the culture of the people work out a solution, which will not undermine the purity of the Christian faith.

Divorce is unhealthy for family, children, husbands, wives, the Church, and *Igbo* society. Because of this, it has become necessary for the Catholic Church and *Igbo* society to do something to reduce the present rate of divorce in the *Igbo* society. The Church and *Igbo* society should set up a standard to guide Igbo married couples. This

will surely reduce the rate of divorce among the Igbo people, as well as integrate lapsed *Igbo* Christians back into Christianity. Therefore, this study suggests numerous ways to reduce the rate of divorce among the *Igbo* Christians, which will be described in the following section.

Dialogue between the Catholic Church and *Igbo* culture is important to appreciate marriage and divorce among the *Igbo* Christians. However, fostering this dialogue is rarely considered. The *Igbo* traditional religion is not aggressive, and its members are generally friendly with Christianity. As a result, some Christian leaders have been hesitant to promote a dialogue with *Igbo* society which has prevented the Church from knowing what the *Igbo* Christians face from their marriage.

Acknowledging the importance of dialogue, Pope John Paul II called for the Synod of Bishops for Africa in 1994. He tasked the Bishops to have a meaningful dialogue with churches in Africa. Ikenga-Metuh (1989) defined dialogue as a "frank discussion between two or more parties, aimed at reaching a better understanding of each other's point of view, and working out a compromise acceptable to all sides." In dialogue, all parties involved must respect the feelings and faiths of other parties. There is need for openness; prejudice must be reduced. According to Ikenga-Metuh "The search for truth may be free; the person in dialogue seeks to eliminate every prejudice, intolerance and unnecessary misunderstanding."

Promoting a dialogue with traditional *Igbo* society is important for numerous reasons. First, *Igbo* converts to Christianity must adapt their worldview and culture, which are strongly influenced by the traditional religion. It is important for the Church to understand and acknowledge marriage in the Igbo tradition. *Igbo* Ilu nwanyi (marriage) will enrich the Catholic understanding of the values associated in *Igbo* culture. Second, *Igbo* culture and traditions are still very strong, and are practiced by many *Igbo* couples in the region. Third, an *Igbo* man is still an *Igbo* man after adopting Christianity; despite his change in religion, his culture remains. By promoting dialogue, both parties can see the values that are common to both Christianity and *Igbo* marriage. As a result, the Church can do a better job introducing *Igbo* marriage into full acceptance of the Christian faith.

Unfortunately, the dialogue will likely be very challenging. Prejudice might be the greatest hindrance to a meaningful dialogue between Christianity and *Igbo* traditional marriage. The *Igbo* traditional marriage has been derided as being pagan, evil, and idolatrous. However, in spite of these assumptions, efforts should be made in the 21st century to break the *Igbo* marriage barriers in order to serve all the people of God. The Synod has challenged the *Igbo* church to be more open to *Igbo* traditional marriage. To understand an *Igbo* Christian, he must be first recognized as an *Igbo*. His Christian faith would be more meaningful to him if the Church accepts him as he is.

6.13   Inculturation and Igbo Igba Nkwu

Inculturation is crucial if the Church aims to be relevant to the *Igbo* Christians. Inculturation is about helping the Church to be truly local by making the Gospel applicable to different cultures and lifestyles. This is especially true with respect to Igbo Christians. The Vatican II provided specific guidelines with respect to incultration. The Council Fathers of the Vatican II recognized the tensions between the reality of people's lives and the teachings of the Catholic liturgy. The Vatican II attempted to ease these tensions when the Council Fathers promulgated the constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Magesa 2004:42).

The process of inculturation would be uniquely appropriate for the *Igbo* Church because of its members share a homogenous language. The *Igbo* people speak one language that all *Igbo* Christians understand. As a result, Igbo people would be able to express their faith in their indigenous language in the liturgy. Inculturation is expressed in liturgy. According to Magesa (2004:40),

> With language, people are able to express their faith in a language they know well... Inculturation is expressed in the liturgy. Liturgy is one of the expressions of inculturation. For inculturation does not necessarily mean living in the old traditional ways. Inculturation is not digging out of the old ways and making them relevant in the present context. Rather it is about what people feel comfortable with at a given moment in history.

The *Igbo* Church could achieve its goals more easily if it employed its native language rather than Latin or English in the liturgy.

However, there are aspects of the *Igbo* culture that need to be altered. Fortunately, all cultures are dynamic. For example, the *Igbo* people are noted for its *ilu nwanyi*. *Ilu nwanyi* (marriage) is an *Igbo* tradition that could be incorporated into Christian culture. *Igbo* Christians celebrate *igba nkwu* and the wedding ceremony on different days. However, these two ceremonies could be performed on the same day. The researcher suggests that the *Igbo* traditional ceremony could be done in the home of the bride, where the wedding ceremony would also take place. The wedding ceremony could be done in the morning to allow the couple to participate fully in the *Igbo* traditional ceremony in the evening.

The igba nkwu and Catholic wedding could take the following format: the sign of the cross, introduction, rite of reception, rite of kola nut, presentation of wine to the in-laws, exchange of consent, exchange of rings, reception of the consent, glory, opening prayers (collect), liturgy of the Word, prayer of the faithful, offertory, the Our Father, nuptial blessing, closing rite, traditional dance, solemn blessing (As adapted from Chibuko (2003:47-62).

The incorporation of *Igbo* igba nkwu into the Catholic wedding has some valuable elements for the church, newly wedded couples, and *Igbo* community. The Catholic Church emphasizes that the couples to be would not live together until they are wedded in the Church. If they (couples to be) are found living together, the parents are usually prevented from receiving the Holy Communion for allowing their children to cohabit together. This new rite of allowing both igba nkwu and wedding to take place on the same day would prevent this mistake from happening (Chibuko, 2003). Also, if the igba nkwu and wedding are performed on the same day, it has the ability to protect the bride's rights. Most often, when igba nkwu is traditionally observed, it means that the couples have the right to live together. However, if in the process the bride is unable to take in, the groom could terminate the marriage. But if the igba nkwu and Catholic wedding are performed on the same day, it has the ability to prevent this (marriage) abuse (Chibuko, 2003). From this view point, it is important to note that not only would this practice incorporate *Igbo* igba nkwu (tradition) into Christianity, but it also would save time and money for the newly married couple.

Inculturation is making efforts to adapt the local customs to the Catholic liturgy. Inculturation also has the ability to refine, purify, and improve the local culture. In this case, igba nkwu if adapted, has the ability to make the *Igbo* Christians feel more *Igbo*, Catholic, and Christian. Inculturation is an essential part of the Church's future if its liturgy is to remain a credible force in shaping the Christian faith for people of all cultures. Luke stated, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything" (Acts 15:28-29). Indeed, "the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

6.14 *The Power to Bind and Loose in Igbo Context*

Jesus Christ knew that he would not stay with the Church forever, at least in physical terms. He prepared his exit in such a way that His followers could continue his ministry. He founded his Church on a solid foundation. He gave the apostles the power to bind and loose for the good of the people of God, "Jesus said them, peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Jesus breathed the Spirit to the apostles. It is remarkable that Jesus sent out the apostles for a missionary work. He sent a specific mission to his apostles. Jesus made his presence known to his apostles. It became the apostles' duty to bring Jesus to the people. Through the Holy Spirit, the apostles would become Jesus' sacraments, his living exegete (Flanagan 1989:89).

This is especially important with respect to the *Igbo* Christian community. The Scripture demonstrates that Jesus had the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12). Jesus told a man to cheer up because his sins are forgiven. Jesus bequeathed the power to forgive sins to the Church. According to Flanagan (1989:89), "Jesus speaks clearly of the community's share in Jesus' power to forgive sins, can be simply a reference to baptism, the traditional sacrament of forgiveness, or to the Church's continuously preaching of forgiveness of sins in Jesus." Jesus has given the apostles the legislative power to bind and loose, make and unmake, to forgive or not to forgive sins (Harrington 1983:71). This is a legislative power, and the apostles made use of it during the Council

of Jerusalem. Also, the Council Fathers used it when Pope John XXIII opened the Vatican II. The Church has the power to legislate rules and regulations that would guide the *Igbo* Christians in such a way that they could become fully integrated into the Christian liturgy. The Council Fathers (Ad Gentes Divinitas: n. 10) stated:

> If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men and women the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom he lived.

This is a challenge to the *Igbo* Church. There is need for the *Igbo* Church to work out pragmatic guidelines that would no longer alienate some *Igbo* Christians from participating from the Sacraments. The reception of the Sacraments is their right as Christians – not a privilege.

Jesus also promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the decisions of the Church. On the Pentecost day, the apostles received the Holy Spirit, which gave them extraordinary power to preach the gospel with courage. After the ascension of Jesus, He did not abandon his burgeoning Church like an orphan. He continued to act on earth through the aid of the Holy Spirit. According to Karris (1988:1036), "After his ascension into heaven, Jesus continues to act on earth through his disciples by giving them his Holy Spirit and enabling them to preach and heal in his name." It is clear that Jesus is present in the Church today through the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit varies. However, its primary duty is to sustain, guide, and direct the decisions of the apostles. God is present when Church members make any decision to move the Church forward.

The gift of the Holy Spirit was tested in the Council of Jerusalem, where some converted Judean Pharisees objected to the Antioch practice of baptizing uncircumcised pagans (Acts 15:1-21). The debate focused whether salvation could be achieved without circumcision. The apostles were able to fashion out a theological principle that would guide the church. Peter recounted how God gave the Spirit to the Gentiles through his apostolate. Therefore, the Gentiles are no longer unclean and unworthy to enter God's presence in worship, as some Jews felt (Karris 1988:1055). The conclusion of the salvation-circumcision debate was that Christians should not put up obstacles to Gentile conversions (Karris 1988:1056). They agreed on a compromise, which allowed

the Christian Jews to associate in table fellowship with non-Jewish Christians. The Holy Spirit informed this compromise.

How does the power to "bind and loose" relate to the *Igbo* Christians? In the creation account, God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:27). This account communicates an important truth about the identity of man and woman and the relationship between them (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009). In the second account of creation, the Bible says, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). So God then creates a helpmate who is suitable for him. This account shows that man and woman were destined to come together in the union of marriage. In the *Igbo* creative account, man and woman were created by Chukwu (supreme God). Chukwu asked man to populate the earth. This is why, ilu nwanyi is considered to be a sacred duty in *Igbo* communities. To fulfil this mandate, an *Igbo* man could marry more than one wife. But when Christianity came to Igbo society, the practice of polygamy was in conflict with the Christian message. Even today, some *Igbo* Christians are noted to marry more than one wife. The question that this study battles to answer is how to reconcile an *Igbo* Christian who has married more than one wife. Can he be admitted into the catholic fold? This is where the power to bind and loose could be meaningfully applied to an *Igbo* Christian with more than one wife. The fundamental aim of *Igbo* marriage is to bear children. Also, the Church teaches that marriage is both unitive and procreative, and that it is inseparably both (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009). An *Igbo* man frowns at divorce. This is why the Catholic Church in *Igbo* society should apply the power to bind and loose to an *Igbo* man who has more than one wife. If the power to bind and loose is applied, it will help to safeguard the *Igbo* marriage.

6.15 Incorporating the Igbo divorcees into the church

For pastoral reasons, what can the Church do to accommodate the *Igbo* divorcees in its fold? The Church preaches indissolubility of marriage. However, we have no perfect marriage on earth. If it happens that some *Igbo* partners are divorced, how can the *Igbo* Church incorporates them into its fold? First, it is clear that the divorcee is created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). Being created in the

image of God simply means that he/she bears God's characteristics. If this is true, it simply implies that he/she is not worthless in the Church of Christ. The *Igbo* Church then should see the divorcee as a person who should be respected and honour accorded to him/her. The *Igbo* divorcee should be seen as part and parcel of the *Igbo* Christian community. Secondly, the divorcee will be going to Mass and be allowed to participate in other Church activities. The divorcee should not be discriminated against. For before Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, free nor slave (Galatians 3:28).

The Church should look into the case of *Igbo* divorcees individually. Each case should be investigated and those that merit annulment will be encouraged to seek for Church annulment. Each Diocese in *Igbo* territory has its tribunal. The tribunal is composed of Catholic priests who are trained to handle marriage cases. After the Second Vatican Council, the *Igbo* dioceses have access to investigate marriage case and annul where deemed necessary. There is a special fee to be paid by the divorcees. Also, the divorcees are meant to fill certain forms. The process of annulment in the Catholic Church is usually long. This demands patience from the divorcees.

If the Church annuls any marriage, it allows the divorcee to remarry. This is why it is important for the partners in the Catholic Church to seek for annulment. If partners have married before in the Catholic Church, their first marriage must be declared null. However, for pastoral reasons, it is encouraged for the partners to seek for counselling. Counselling is important for partners to avoid the mistakes they made prior to their first marriage.

The researcher is calling on the *Igbo* dioceses to be serious in handling the divorcee's cases of annulment. To facilitate this process, each *Igbo* diocese could train more than three canonists whose duty will be to handle the marriage annulment. This process will help to afford each divorcee in the *Igbo* territory the opportunity to be heard. Annulment is the best means to fully accept the *Igbo* divorcees into the Catholic fold. If the annulment process goes through, it simply means that the divorcee will partake in the Eucharistic meal or banquet which is dear to each *Igbo* Catholic.

Unfortunate, the mistake of divorce is being felt by the children of the divorcees. It has been observed that some children from divorced parents are socially, psychologically, mentally and spiritually affected. However, the depth of effects depends

on the age of the children at the time their parents divorced. If the parents divorced when their children are still below two to three years old, the children could experience family crisis. The researcher is asking parents to put in shape programs that will assist their children to cope well before they attempt to divorce.

The researcher believes that the effects of divorce could be highly felt by children in the elementary or primary schools. In *Igbo* community, if parents are divorced, it means that the children in primary schools could be shared by the parents. If this happens, some children could relocate to a place they are not familiar with, whereby, affecting their education. The separation of their parents could also affect the children on how they relate to people. This could also affect them even as grown up children. These children could experience pain, frustrations, resentment, grief and/or anger. Attempts will be made to involve these children with social activities such as sports, Church programs, and other recreational resources. These programs will go a long way to strengthen their family lives.

In *Igbo* community, counselling is not common. However, parents and church must develop programs where psychologists and marriage therapists will help divorced children. Children could be encouraged to express their feelings, anger, and frustrations. The researcher believes that this will help the children to adjust and grow into productive adults.

6.16   *Suggestions for Future Research*

This study is by no means exhaustive. The researcher gathered and assessed literature, and interviewed numerous people who have been affected by divorce in order to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of marriage and divorce in the *Igbo* Christian community. However, there are numerous areas of interest that future researchers could explore.

For instance, future researchers could examine how money specifically affects the rate of divorce in the *Igbo* Christian community. Also, future research could also investigate the role of sex education in minimizing the rate of divorce among *Igbo* Christians; such a study could advise Church leaders on how to implement a successful

sex education program. Finally, a future study could be conducted that focuses on the high rate of divorce among the *Igbo* Christian elite. This study should examine the causes for the high rate of divorce among this specific population, and provide suggestions to assist the *Igbo* Christian elite in coping with marriage in the 21st century.

6.17   Conclusion

God instituted the marriage-relationship for life. No husband has the power to divorce his wife. Unfortunately, some Christian couples do not respect God's injunction. Some married couples are not patient with their partners, which may explain the increasing rate of divorce.

Couples today should bear in mind that married life is a process. It is never realized fully in the mortal life. In spite of problems experienced in marriage, couples should make an honest effort to accept each other with love and understanding. The Second Vatican Council urged married couples to remain faithful and committed, despite the profoundly changing conditions of modern society. Indeed, the true nature of marriage is eternal.

Married couples should realize that, unless they learn to love each other, they will continue to experience problems in their marriage. Love is the essential panacea for any difficulty that arises between married couples. Undoubtedly, a couple will experience misunderstandings and disagreements in a marriage. However, it is critical for married couples to tackle these problems in a constructive way. Love has the ability to change hatred into love. Paul urged husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church (Eph. 5:25-28). Paul counselled that he who loves his wife loves himself. Similarly, Oforchukwu (2000) stated that marriage and love are two-way streets that go hand-in-hand. In other words, marriage is meaningless without love. Therefore, married couples should promote the role of love in their relationships.

The *Igbo* Church should continue to inspire the true meaning of faith in its followers and teach *Igbo* Christians how to live good and worthy lives. The Church has encountered difficulties teaching about divorce. Indeed, it is not easy to follow Christ, but this struggle is a defining quality of being an Igbo Christian.

6.18 Summary

This chapter summarized the findings and conclusions of this study. The researcher analyzed the issues, appraised previous work, and proffered solutions that will help to reduce the present divorce rate among the *Igbo* Christian community. The *Igbo* Church leaders have been challenged to re-evaluate their method of evangelization in order to benefit the *Igbo* Christians improve their marriages. The *Igbo* Church leaders will have to emphasize marriage counselling, sex education, and the primacy of love.

The study also emphasized the role of giving, self-sacrifice, and self-denial. Couples must learn how to give in their relationship; the spirit of giving unites and inspires the couples. Further, couples must sacrifice for each other in order to promote a successful marriage.

Finally, the role of forgiveness is extremely important in married life. Couples must forgive one another in order to promote a stronger marriage. Ultimately, this study concluded that marriage is sacred and indivisible, and there are numerous steps that couples must take in order ensure that what God has joined together, no man shall separate.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

<div align="center">
South African Theological Seminary

PO Box 258

Rivonia

South Africa

2128

March 12, 2009
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Imo State Board of Education

Owerri

Imo State

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter and the accompanying interview questions are from Joachim I. Oforchukwu from Imo State (Nigeria) and is currently a student at South African Theological Seminary. The interview questions attached are designed toward gathering information for the completion of my Master's thesis.

I am writing to seek for permission to conduct interviews in the Secondary Schools in Imo State as well as other Schools in *Igbo* land. The topic for my thesis is A Biblical and Theological Study (Analysis) of Marriage and Divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians (Nigeria). I intend to interview eight people. The anonymity of the participants will be assured unless they otherwise give permission to reveal their identity.

This research is very important since it is going to serve as an historical document for posterity and contributing to elicit this theological policy, which has

generated a lot of controversy. The researcher hopes that suggestions in this research might help in future theological decisions in Nigeria.

I therefore pray that you give a positive consideration to my request.
Thanks for your usual cooperation.
Yours truly,

Joachim Oforchukwu.

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APPENDIX B

A COVER LETTER FOR THE INTERVIEW

This letter and the accompanying interview questions are from Joachim I. Oforchukwu from Nigeria and is currently a Master's student at South African Theological Seminary. The interview questions attached are part of a Case Study designed toward gathering information for the completion of my Master's thesis. Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge.

Also attached is the IRB (Institutional Review Board) letter from my University, which certifies that I must use your information from the Case Study anonymously unless you give me the permission to reveal your identity, in that case you will have to fill out a form which I will provide for that purpose. I am interested in examining: A Biblical and Theological study (Analysis) of Marriage and Divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians (Nigeria). This issue as you may know has been very controversial. It is therefore the intention of this researcher to investigate this problem, by representing the various perspectives. This research is very important since it is going to serve as an historical document for posterity and contributing to elicit this theological policy, which has generated a lot of controversy. The researcher hopes that suggestions in this research might help in future theological decisions in Nigeria.

I therefore request that you give complete answers to the questions. Your anonymity is assured unless you otherwise give the permission to reveal your identity.

Thanks for your usual co-operation.

Yours truly,

Joachim Oforchukwu

APPENDIX C

RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORMS

I _____ an interviewee for Joachim Oforchukwu who is interviewing me for a case study on:" A Biblical and Theological study (Analysis) of Marriage and Divorce among *Igbo* Catholic Christians (Nigeria), as part of his research for Master's thesis has my permission to use the information I have provided as checked in the boxes below.

I offer my permission to him this day the ---------------------day of April 2003.

Joachim Oforchukwu

------------------------------   ------------------------------

Interviewee   Researcher

Yes   No

x	

Permission to use information

☒

☐

Permission to use name

☒

☐

Permission to quote

Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about the rate of divorce among the *Igbo* Christians?

2. Do you have any concerns for the divorced families?

3. What challenge do you think is facing the church about the high rate of divorce in the *Igbo* society?

4. In your opinion, what do you think are the causes of divorce among the *Igbo* Christian families?

5. In your opinion, what are the effects of divorce in the *Igbo* church?

6. In your opinion, what steps should be taken to reduce divorce among the *Igbo* Christians?

7. In your opinion, why do you think that divorce is considered common among the *Igbo* Christian elite?