

# ST. JOSEPH MAJOR SEMINARY

GSM: 08034321186  
E-mail: stjoseph\_1k76@yahoo.com



P.M.B. 1039, IKOT EKPENE  
AKWA IBOM STATE,  
NIGERIA.

Our Ref:.....

Your Ref:.....

Date:.....

## HOMILY AT THE FUNERAL OF LATE REV. FR. PAUL HARDY (1937–2025)

**THEME:** "REJOICE AND BE GLAD, FOR YOUR REWARD WILL BE GREAT IN HEAVEN"

### INTRODUCTION

We are gathered here in Queen of Apostles Seminary Chapel today, the 17th of May, 2025, to pay our respects to Late Rev. Fr. Paul Hardy—a Great Missionary, a priest, and a renowned scientist of great repute. We are grateful for his committed and dedicated life of service. This very chapel, where he often celebrated the Eucharist for young Priestly candidates, now witnesses our farewell to an extraordinary man whose life touched so many.

### CELEBRATING A LIFE OF SERVICE

Rev. Fr. Paul Hardy, who lived to the age of 88, was a remarkable missionary priest, educator, scientist, and builder. His life was a testimony of faith and intellect, with profound contributions to the Church, education, and community development across Nigeria—including Ikot Ekpene Diocese, Bomadi Apostolic Vicariate, Lagos Archdiocese, and beyond. Ultimately, he returned to his homeland, Ireland, but his legacy continues to inspire generations.

### TESTIMONIES TO A LIFE WELL-LIVED

- For Dr. Emmanuel Ekuwem: Fr. Hardy was a beacon of inspiration in science and technology, igniting curiosity in his students. Known for his simplicity and selflessness, he was a rare figure—a Catholic priest who excelled in the sciences. His teachings were rooted in both the physical and spiritual realms, and he demonstrated an unwavering love for the poor.
- For Mr. Francis Ekutt: A man of extraordinary vigor, Fr. Hardy approached everything—walking, talking, worshiping, and celebrating the Holy Mass—with unparalleled energy. His humility and generosity were matched by his dedication as an educator and pastor embodying Shakespeare's words, "His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"
- As opined by Monsignor Inyangetor: Fr. Hardy was a grassroots pastor, deeply committed to his flock. He worked tirelessly in his parish, St. Michael Catholic Church, Midim, Abak, combining pastoral responsibilities with the education of seminarians. His kindness shone especially brightly in his care for the elderly, often fetching water for them during dry seasons—true acts of humility and love. The Parish Church he built is very significant, solid to withstand the test of time. The stones/pebbles for the building



were washed with water to remove dust, impurities and factors that could lead to the cracking of the building's floors or pillars, before they were used for building.

## **CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS IN EDUCATION**

Fr. Hardy's journey as an educator was marked by both challenges and extraordinary successes. Due to his distinct intonation, many students initially found it difficult to understand his teaching and were reluctant to attend his classes. However, for those who persevered and grasped his teachings, the rewards were immense. His students excelled in his subjects and thrived in fields of Science and Technology, advancing to higher institutions and universities. Fr. Hardy's dedication to education left an indelible impact on these students, shaping their futures and contributions to society.

## **MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

**A Scientist and Educator:** Fr. Hardy designed and built cutting-edge science laboratories at Q.A.S Afaha Obong, Abak, which gained recognition as the best in the state and enabled WAEC accreditation in 1972. His dedication to education extended beyond his parish work, as he mentored young seminarians in both spiritual and academic pursuits. He lived keen to his passion as a scientist and named all the trees in the seminary according to their botanical names. Furthermore, he personally equipped the Biology, Chemistry, and Physics laboratories, collaborating with a trained assistant to ensure the highest standards. Today, Rev. Fr. Paul Hardy's influence extends far beyond just his students; it encompasses a wide array of individuals who have benefited from his teachings, mentorship, and guidance. Among his former students are Bishops, Priests, Politicians, Government Ministers, Scientists, Engineers, Medical Professionals, Nurses, Technologists, Architects, Lawyers, and Lecturers. Additionally, many Teachers, Academics, and other esteemed members of society owe their success in part to his dedication and influence. Beyond the classroom, numerous beneficiaries of his selfless service and community-building efforts have risen to become reputable elites, contributing meaningfully to society in various capacities. His legacy is etched not only in the achievements of individuals but in the transformative impact he had on communities at large.

**A Builder of the Church:** Beyond education, Fr. Hardy physically contributed to the construction of St. Michael Church, Midim, working hand-in-hand with local artisans. He also sourced funds and imported stained glass from Ireland, well designed for the beautification of the Church with the symbol of the Evangelists to the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These contributions significantly reduced the financial burden on parishioners. Though not a professional architect, his work as the original builder and sponsor of the church remains a testament to his vision and devotion.

## **A Coincidence of Faith and Legacy**

It is both poignant and symbolic that Fr. Hardy was born in 1937, the same year the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) were founded, and that he passed away on their foundation day, April 4th, 2025. This beautiful coincidence underscores the divine providence that framed his life of service.

## **Readings for the Sermon**

- First Reading: Daniel 12:1-3
- Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63:2-9 ("My soul is thirsty for you, O Lord my God.")





Second Reading: Romans 8:31–39 ("Nothing can really come between us and the love of Christ.")

Acclamation: John 3:16 ("God loved the world so much, He gave His only Son.")

Gospel: Matthew 5:1–12 ("Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in Heaven.")

Carefully analyzing the readings of today's Homily, evidence of Rev. Fr. Paul Hardy's exemplary life aligns beautifully with the profound messages found in the readings provided, offering timeless lessons on commitment and dedication to service of God and humanity, let us dive briefly into these lessons.

- **In the First Reading (Daniel 12:1–3):** This passage speaks of those who are wise and lead many to righteousness, shining like the stars forever. Fr. Hardy embodied this wisdom through his tireless dedication to education and his pastoral care. By nurturing seminarians and encouraging scientific exploration, he led countless individuals toward knowledge and faith. His life reminds us that our actions can illuminate the path for others, creating lasting impact.
- **In the Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 63:2–9):** The psalmist's yearning for God resonates with Fr. Hardy's spiritual devotion. Despite his demanding duties as a scientist, educator, and builder, his thirst for God remained central to his life. He celebrated the Eucharist with young Priestly Candidates and served his parishioners with humility, showing that true commitment to service begins with a deep connection to God.
- **Moreso, in the Second Reading (Romans 8:31–39):** This reading proclaims that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Fr. Hardy's unwavering commitment to his vocation exemplified this message. He balanced pastoral work with education and community building, overcoming challenges with steadfast faith. His life teaches us that dedication to God and service transcends obstacles, ensuring our work is rooted in love and purpose.
- **From the Gospel (Matthew 5:1–12):** The Beatitudes celebrate those who are humble, merciful, and pure-hearted—qualities Fr. Hardy lived out daily. His humility in fetching water for the elderly, his mercy in uplifting the poor, and his dedication to building both lives and churches reflect the spirit of these teachings. The Beatitudes inspire us to emulate Fr. Hardy's commitment to embodying Christ-like virtues in our own lives.

in reflecting on Fr. Hardy's life and these readings, we are reminded that a life of faith, hard work, and unwavering dedication to service leaves an indelible mark not only on our communities but also on the hearts of those we touch. His legacy challenges us to embrace our responsibilities with passion, perseverance, and a thirst for God's love.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Rev. Fr. Paul Hardy exemplified humility, service, intellect, and profound spirituality. His remarkable ability to balance pastoral duties with the education of seminarians, alongside his unwavering dedication to the Church and scientific advancement, remains a beacon of inspiration for all. In a time when responsibility is often met with indifference, Fr. Hardy's steadfast commitment to his calling was unmatched and continues to set a high standard to this day. His life challenges the new generation to embrace dedication and hard work as the true keys to leaving lasting legacies. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace. Amen.

**Very. Rev. Fr. Dr. Francis Akpan**