

# Nigeria



Photo credit: Misio Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is located in western Africa. Its name comes from the Niger River, which flows from its northern border and empties into the Gulf of Guinea in the south. In area, it is slightly more than twice the size of the state of California, but has almost six times the number of people.

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

English is the official language of Nigeria but there are also 500 native dialects spoken in the country. Life expectancy at birth in 2023 was 61.8 years, compared to 79.11 years in the United States for children born in the same year.

Most children leave school after just eight or nine years. Only 62% of the population over 15 years old know how to read and write.

There is a widespread lack of access to a regular supply of food in Nigeria due to ongoing civil conflicts in the northern areas and flooding in farming regions, both of which force prices to rise. Over 18 % of children under 5 are underweight.

With only one doctor for every 2,600 people, medical care is hard to access in Nigeria. This contributes to Nigeria being 15th in the world in infant mortality, 3rd for maternal mortality, and tied for 3rd in the world for death from HIV/AIDS.

*In Nigeria, our organization is called the Holy Childhood Association. Members gather regularly to pray together and to organize their giving. They sacrifice for our General Fund, as all members do, but also for their own neighbors who are in need of the basics in life. Aren't their uniforms great?*

## Info

**Population** 230,842,743

**Religion** 53.5% of the Nigerian people identify as Muslim  
10.6% call themselves Roman Catholic  
35.3% are other Christian denominations  
.6% are Animists or practice no religion

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and is composed of more than 250 ethnic groups.

\*CIA World Factbook

**Other data** There are 4,073 parishes that make up 50 dioceses and 9 Archdioceses.

The Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) plays a large part in the faith formation of the Catholic children of Nigeria. Nigerian children know it as the Holy Childhood Association or HCA. Children join MCA/HCA not only to learn more about their faith but also to pray and sacrifice so that other children around the world will have the same opportunities to learn how to be young missionaries.

Many take part in regular competitions between parishes where they sing songs, recite their catechism, and put on small plays based on the Bible. Being a member of MCA/HCA means being a member of a fun club!

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



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

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



Vivian (pictured, left) stepped in and taught the young ones their music and even directed them at some Masses! She was a natural born leader. Vivian was also the President of the Holy Childhood Association at Saint Paul's and firmly embraced our motto of "Children Helping Children". She was elected to the post when she was just nine years old but no one doubted her dedication.

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

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

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

On November 15, 2009, Vivian was abducted during a home robbery and killed when she refused to submit to her captors' threats of violence. Her courageous faith at the tender age of 14 has inspired her diocese to promote her cause for sainthood.

Let's add our prayers to theirs and see another MCA member become a saint! (Can you name one who already is?)