

# ***The Journey so far!***

***Amazing memories...***

Oban , Scoltand 21 June 2022



## **Rev. Fr. Philip Ortavershima Bua**

**ORDAINED DEACON:** BY H.E. JAMES CARDINAL HARVEY

At the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Rome  
10th June 2021

**ORDAINED PRIEST:** BY THE RT REV. BRIAN MCGEE

At the Cathedral of St Columba's Oban, Scotland  
21st of June 2022

***"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged"***

*(Deuteronomy 31:8)*



## Family Background

On a summer placement at St. Mary's in Fort William, during a conversation in the car on our way to visit the housebound, Rev. Thomas Wynne asked me: "Would you write your story and share it with us, because it will help people to know you and remember you in their prayers?" I was encouraged by him asking such a thing. It was not an easy story to tell, for God has blessed me in ways uncountable. But I wrote something, and the parishioners there seemed appreciative.

Today, and especially for those who do not know me or my story, I thought I would expand upon what I did for those kind parishioners of St. Mary's, Fort William. Here goes!

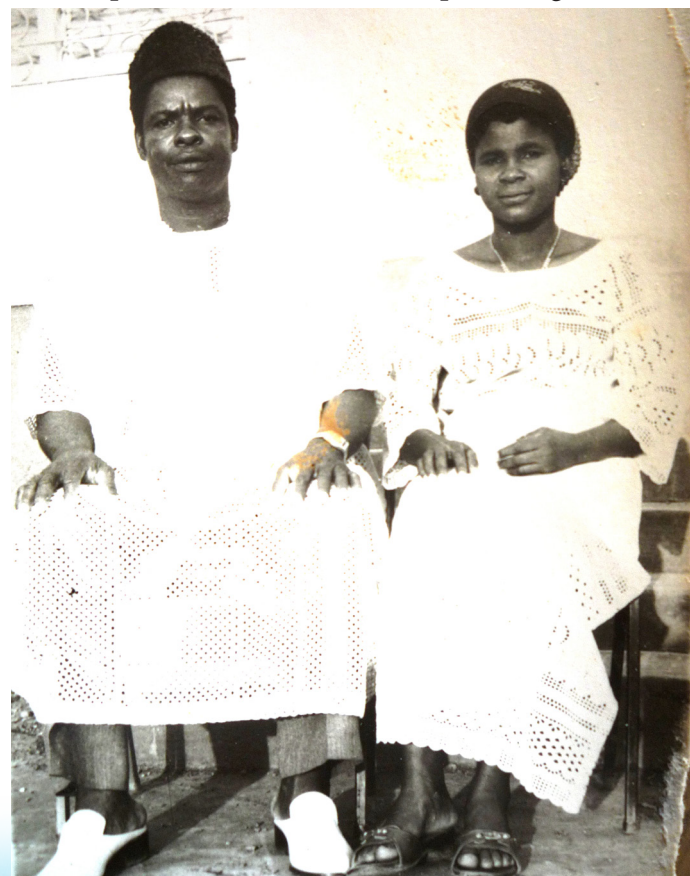


My name is **ORTAVERSHEMA PHILIP BUA**, *Ortavershima* means: 'Man with a strong heart' and *Bua* means 'Bull'. I was born and brought up in Adikpo, Kwande Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. I am from a tribe known as Tiv. Tiv people are located in the middle belt of Nigeria and they are predominately farmers with a total population of about 6.5 million across Nigeria and Cameroon. My mother tongue is therefore Tiv, which is spoken by about 7 million people, most of them in Nigeria. I come from a polygamous family and my late father Engr. John Bua Uti had five wives and fourteen children. Tiv tradition held that it was right to have many wives. In those days the number of wives, children, and farmland that one possessed showed your wealth. Bua was one among the first to have co-aster buses, three ton and hiace buses in Adikpo town for commercial purposes and indeed he was an



*Engr. Bua & Family, Philip with his father*

efficient driver and mechanical engineer . My parents were firm and discipline people, especially my father; for example, he wouldn't allow us to go out and play with any of the other children on the street when he was around. We only played in the house, or at school, or after Mass on Sundays. I was very close to my parents - my father was a highly skilled man. He was proficient and effective in providing all kinds



*Engr. John Bua & Mrs Agnes, Philip's parents*





## *The Lord himself goes before you ...*



*Engr. John Bua Uti ( Philip's Father)*

of mechanical solutions to different types of engines whether, motor cars, heavy duty motors, motorbikes, grinding engines, wrist watches and building etc. Indeed he was a builder, an engineer, and a constructor of the highest repute and he taught me how to work and, through his care, I acquired a lot of skills from him. On several occasions, I followed my mother to our farm and helped her prepare for the market. She taught me how to cook, take good care of my stomach, farm, and conduct business. Today, I am so grateful for the training and education I received from my parents. They built the foundation of my life.



*Mothers & Children, Philip in the middle of the first line*



*Philip & his Father during his holiday from the Seminary*



*Philip with his elder brother Dr. Terhile Felix Bua*

One of the things that really contributed to our upbringing was the freedom from our parents to be close to God. Although at that time, they were non-practicing Catholics, they never stopped us from worshipping God. Rather, they were so pleased to see us participate in the various activities offered by the Church. Felix supported me as a big brother, I used to follow him to the church, and as a child, he helped me to cross the roads and find a place to sit in the church on many occasions.



*Mama Agnes Mbalamen Bua (Philip's Mother)*



## Faith Community

Being part of St. Ann's parish in Adikpo helped me built up my faith. I must say, participating fully in activities in the Church was always my interest and any time there was anything to do in the church, I was there. When I joined St. Andrew's Secondary School Adikpo my desire to be baptized as a Catholic increased although it was not an easy process. One had to register, attend catechesis classes, and sit for the exams. Candidates were made sure

that they knew what they were getting into. I was determined so joined the catechetical classes in the church and at school. The school was strict regarding religious activities; we had to identify with a religious group in the school (either Catholic or Protestant) follow all their activities, which was fine by me.

Every Wednesday at 11:30 am there was Mass for Catholics and a service for the Protestants, and it was



*Philip's first year in secondary School (Jss1)*

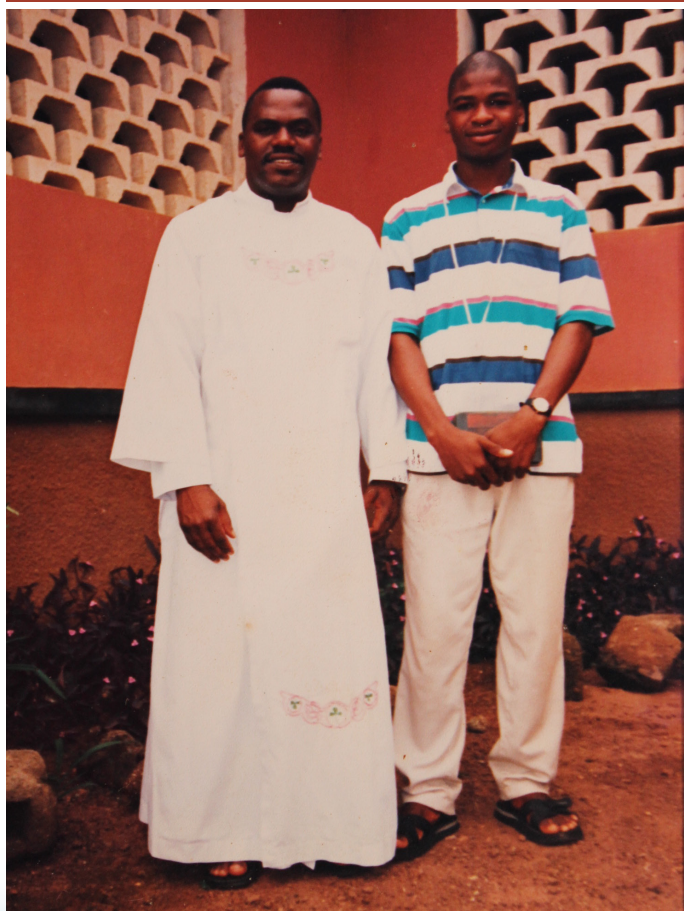


*Philip's Classmate, first year in secondary School (Jss1)*

compulsory to be in the chapel for that. Then there was choir practice every Tuesday evening for the students who were interested but when a new chaplain arrived, this was made compulsory. All this developed the religious discipline in me.

## Why did I decide to become a priest?

It was never my intention to be a priest when I was young, I wanted to be like my father, to marry and have many children, houses, and cars. In fact, I thought my vocation was to replace my father since I am just like him in appearance and many mannerisms! I was also imitating and acquiring very quickly his practical skills, but my involvement in the church and my love for God's works made me desire to be a priest and to serve people in that way. There was this inner joy and fulfillment I used to experience each time I shared the Word of God and recited the Holy Rosary with others, and the feeling continued until today.



*Fr. Isaiah Utusa with Philip (the priest who Baptized Philip)*



*Philip with his Parish Priest & some Friends (St. Ann's Adikpo)*





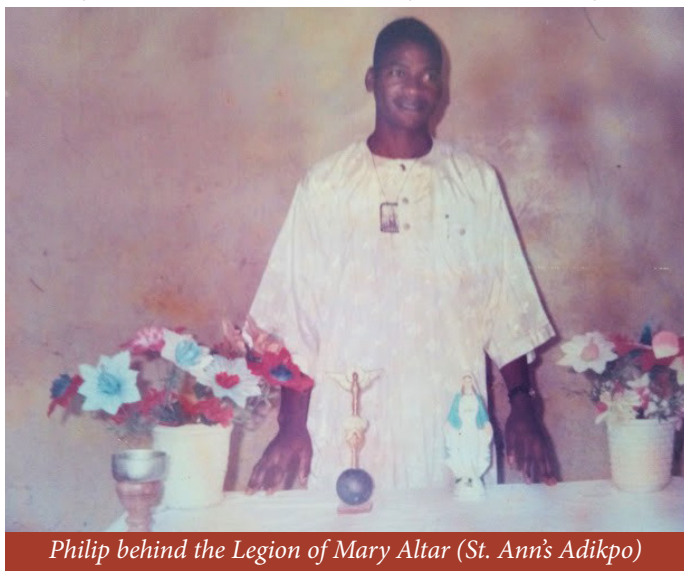
## *The Lord himself goes before you ...*



*Philip officiating Scapular Group Meeting (St. Ann's Adikpo)*

Some of the leadership roles I held also motivated me to desire to be a "Marian priest" This was because of my love for Mary, Mother of God, and as a young man I was not interested in any Societies apart from those associated with Mary.

I was in the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary, Legion of Mary, Confraternity of the Brown Scapular, and then Confraternity of Mary Queen of all Hearts. It was not that I disliked other Societies. I tried joining the English choir and the Charismatic group, but I was not comfortable and left after few days. The Holy Rosary was and still is one of my favourite prayers.



*Philip behind the Legion of Mary Altar (St. Ann's Adikpo)*

I enjoyed meditating on the mysteries of the rosary.

I used to follow all the obligations for those who wear the scapular, and I would carry out first Saturday devotions, attain night vigil on every last Friday night of the month, and concluded with the Mass the following day and fasting for the first Saturday of the month. I tried to be very pious.

I must say Mary has contributed so much to my vocational journey. I don't remember how many decades of the rosary I was reciting in a day. My belief as a teenager was that the more I recited the rosary the more graces and holy I would become, I would go around in the night with the rosary in my hand inside the pocket reciting and walking slowly to my friend's house



*Some members of Scapular Confraternity (St. Ann's Adikpo)*



*Some members of Legion of Mary (St. Ann's Adikpo)*

(James Yarkwan). Sometimes I would take a long path from my house to another friend's house (Christopher Amadu) and then back home, this was a common routine.

Also, on my way from school, in the evening around 4 pm, I would go to the Church to join the Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary for prayer meetings on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Everywhere I walked I recited my Rosary! Most of the time the extra decades were my personal novenas that I decided to do. Fridays were Confraternity of the Brown Scapular and Sundays the Legion of Mary meeting after morning Mass. Benediction which was one of my favourite prayer times was in the evening. All this helped keep me on track during my youth.



*The Association of Mary, Queen of All Hearts (St. Ann's Adikpo)*



## THE JOURNEY SO FAR... 21 JUNE 2022

Another thing I enjoyed was visiting homes and hospitals. I found so much joy sharing the Word of God with people and praying with and for them. These were the major duties of the Legion of Mary. We used to carry out the visitations in groups and give a report in the meeting on Sunday after Mass.

For the Scapular Confraternity, one of the rules for those invested was to receive Holy Communion daily, therefore, I was always in the Church for Mass, mostly in the mornings before going to school.



*Legion of Mary members, after hospital visitation (St. Ann's Adikpo)*

In the midst of all these I tried to keep up my practical skills I had learned at home, creative skills that might be helpful to the Societies I belonged to.

So, I used to draw, paint, print t-shirts; I made a big statue of Mary which was on the altar of St. Ann's parish from 1997 until 2017 when it was left outside during some rebuilding and got broken.



*Philip displays Mary Statues he modelled (his younger ones with him)*



*Chris Amadu, Holy Rosary Sisters & Philip (St. Ann's Adikpo)*

Few people knew that I had made the statue and given it to the parish. God had given me talents, and I wanted to use them for his glory. I use it anywhere I go and I'm still using those skills in the college in Rome, making cards and other practical things. I hope to put more of it into my pastoral work as a priest because it brings for me a lot of insights and relaxation.



*Philip displays some of his Art works*



*Philip is making handmade Greetings Cards (his friends with him)*





*The Lord himself goes before you ...*



*Salesian of Don Bosco formation house , Ondo, Nigeria*

After my secondary school, I joined the department of Fine Art at the College of Education in Katsina-Ala for a year, before leaving to join the Salesians of Don Bosco in 2003. According to the history of the Salesian Congregation, I was the first Tiv Man to be professed as a Salesian in 2004. After some years with the Salesians Congregation, I left in 2013 on my own accord to reflect more on what exactly God was calling me to.



*Philip's first Religious Profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco*

Looking back, I thank God for all who helped me to mature and study during my upbringing. My parents from the initial stages of my education in Adikpo, and the Salesians who supported me through philosophical studies in Ibadan, funded me and I obtained an International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) from South Africa and a Certificate in Computer Graphics from Ghana. Also, a BA (Hons) in Social Communication at Tangaza University in Nairobi, Kenya, with a specialty in electronic media (video production, online journalism, photography, computer graphics, computer software, and hardware).



*Philip's MA graduation day, Catholic University of Nairobi*

In order to pay for my MA program and sustain myself on leaving the Salesians of Don Bosco, I started a business of repairing computers, graphic designing, website design and hosting, photography, video production, and part-time lecturing at Tangaza College, Nairobi in above mention areas.

In 2016, I was awarded MA (Hons) in Project Planning and Management from the Catholic University of Nairobi-Kenya. I went for MA in Project Planning and Management to combine with my BA in Media Production in order to get a good job in Nairobi, this idea was for-gone, I decided to move to Scotland to become a priest.



*Repairing computers, one of Philip's jobs while in Nairobi*





## WHY SCOTLAND, AND WHY THE DIOCESE OF ARGYLL AND THE ISLES?

After completing my MA program, I thought of applying for a good job or going back to the Salesians of Don Bosco to continue with my priesthood training, since I was still having the desire to be a priest, but something happened. The Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception Sisters (FSIC) in Kericho, Kenya invited me to film and produce a video for the final profession of their Sisters. FSIC was founded in Glasgow, Scotland in 1847, and during her speech, their Mother General, Sr. Louis McGlone, began by



Philip with Sister Placida in Kericho, Kenya after his MA program



Philip with Sr. Rita & Sr. Genevieve during one of his visit to LWHC



Philip training clients on how to make batik & tie and dye, Kericho

saying to the people present in the Cathedral that we should pray for vocations in Scotland. She said "we need young people for the priesthood and the consecrated life." I thought that instead of praying, I could be a priest in Scotland!

I thought of Fr. Brian McGee(now Bishop), whom I had met earlier while I was volunteering at Live With



Philip with some young people Bishop Brian brought to Kericho, Kenya (July 2012)to volunteer in LWHC.



Hope Centre in Kericho. The HIV/AIDS Centre is run by the FSIC and Fr. Brian had come with young people to volunteer at the Centre. They were very friendly and kind to me, and I helped them design and print some posters for the program they were going to do for the young people in Kericho. I also made a video for them. I had admired the simplicity of Fr. Brian, who invited me each evening to join them for prayers, dinner, and jokes afterward. I did a lot of things with them, but I never knew that one day I would be in Scotland as a priest





with them. It never crossed my mind to leave Africa, because I love my culture, especially farming and the food!

When Sister Jane McCann told me that Fr. Brian had been made Bishop and installed as Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, with the encouragement I got from both Sister Jane McCann and Sister Rita Onah, I wrote to him. I got an email from Bishop Brian saying that the diocese would provide me with the things I needed to come over to Scotland and that the Vocation Director Fr. Michael Hutson would contact me with the details. A few days later, I got an email from Fr. Michael Hutson requesting to have a face-to face chat with me.



Philip with Friends at Nairobi Airport ready to come to Scotland

To cut a long story short, I arrived in Scotland on the 20th of January 2017, with the support of the diocese and Sisters.

From the onset of my journey to the priesthood, looking at all the things I can achieve with my talents and skills, I prefer to offer all to God service to his people using all I got! The words of Timothy Cardinal Dolan always reminds me about the choice I have made: ***“The priesthood is a call, not a career; a redefinition of self, not just a new ministry; a way of life, not a job; a state of being; not just a function; a permanent, lifelong commitment, not a temporary style of service; an identity, not just a role.”***

I am grateful to Bishop Brian, the diocese of Argyll and Isles for trusting me and sponsoring me for priestly training and studies at the Pontifical College of



Philip is welcomed back to Uist as a deacon by his friend

## *The Lord himself goes before you ...*



Philip's first week in Scotland (St. Andrew's Church, Rothesay)

Beda in Rome, where I was awarded a BA (Hons) in Theology and a Certificate of Post Graduate Diploma in Theology.



Philip on Ben Nevis, with Fr. Roddy and John

Today, I am a priest in the diocese of Argyll and the Isles, something which I am very proud of. It is a vocation I have followed knowing the challenges of this way of life. Considering the present days, the situation of the world and the Church being in the centre, this quote gives me hope:

***“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”*** (Deuteronomy 31:8)



Fr. Roddy and Philip with some members of jogScotland



## Scottish Hospitality

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome I have received in Scotland from the start. The parishioners of St. Andrew's Church Rothesay were amazing. The very evening that I arrived they organised fish and chips to welcome me and to mark my birthday which had been two days earlier. It was incredible thoughtful although I was shocked to be handed a box of chips and a big fish, it tasted good. These first few moments gave me such a positive first impression of the Scottish people. Also, I spent a month with Bishop Brian in Isle of Benbecula, the people were just wonderful. After a few months of moving around the parishes in the diocese, Bishop Brian asked me to stay in Uist, St. Peter Daliburgh, the place I call home. The hospitality is just amazing and It was the same in other parts of the diocese I have been. I met good priests, caring and kind parishioners, and fine people, in fact saints who continue to care for me. All this has created a positive stain in my heart, as we say in Africa, and I made Scotland a home. I ask the Lord to give me the grace to serve Him well here.



Philip's first day, welcomed with fish and chips supper (Rothesay)



Priests of the Diocese celebrating the Birthday of Philip



Philip with friends in Portree, Isle of Skye



Philip with some parishioners in St John's Church, Caol



Philip with some friends in Oban





*The Lord himself goes before you ...*

## Being in Rome...



*Bishop Brian and Fr. Ronald with Philip in Rome*

To study in Rome was extraordinary to me. The experience of being there for four years is something I will never forget. I had opportunity to play games in the college and compete with other colleges in Rome. Also, every Thursday is free day from the college and for the past years I walked extensively on the streets of Rome visiting places I had heard about at church and school as a child in Africa, and I took a lot of photos, something which I personally enjoyed doing. So much I learnt over the years, especially in the fourth year as a deacon and the dean of students.



*Canon Philip (Rector) Philip was awarded a BA (Hons) in Theology*

I had the chance to meet people who hold very important roles. Seminarians of all nationalities come to Rome for their studies, and at the Pontifical Beda College we had seven nationalities living together. It was amazing to hear about people living out their faith in other parts of the world and seeing the Pope often at his Wednesday Audience and Sunday Angelus.



*Canon Fraser (L), Canon Michael (R) with Philip in Rome*



*Philip's first time inside St. Peter's Basilica, Rome*



*Beda College football team at interseminary tournament, Rome.*



*Rector with the newly ordained deacons in St. Paul's Basilica*

On 10th June 2021, I was ordained a deacon by Cardinal James Harvey at the Basilica of Saint Paul's Outside the Walls, beside the bones of the great Apostle. How can I ever forget these things!



*Cardinal James Harvey with Philip after ordination, Rome*



THE JOURNEY SO FAR... 21 JUNE 2022

## Looking forward...



Bishop Brian, Philip, Robert & Cheryl in Benbecula

I am looking forward to now serving as a priest after many years of study and training. I look forward to getting to know people, learning, and sharing your highs and lows, the joys and the tears of life. I look forward to celebrating the sacraments. I would like to continue being present with the sick and the dying. I look forward to being an instrument of God among my parishioners, showing the love of Christ to them, and sharing with them the joy of the Gospel of Christ.



I want to thank God Almighty for his blessings and for granting me the opportunity to do this, that I am able only by his grace. Both my parents are dead, but I thank them for their help.

Thank you to Bishop Brian McGee for believing in me, making me feel loved and welcomed among the young people you brought to Kenya and later accepting me into your diocese. Thank you for all your fatherly love, trust, encouragement, prayers and support. I am very grateful, God bless you. Thank you all my Vocation Directors, Canon Michael Huston for making me feel welcome in Scotland from Day One and to Canon John Paul, now has the role. Thank you to the priests of the diocese. I am so grateful to all those whom I stayed with on placement. Thank you for your love, encouragement, and friendship, I am deeply grateful! Thank you particularly to Fr. Ross, my parish priest at St. Peter's Daliburgh, in South Uist. I am grateful and God bless you.

I am very grateful to the formation team and staff at Pontifical Beda College, Rome. I am able to play my part because you trained me and approved me to become a priest. Thank you and may God bless you all. Thank you to all the Students of Beda College and Scots College, Rome.

I am grateful for all your friendship and support.

To the saints, the people of Argyll and Isles, you know it is difficult to mention you one by one, but I want to thank you from my heart for welcoming me to the diocese and making me feel at home. I will never forget your individual and collective support. You have been there for me. May God kindly bless you all. Please, be assured of my humble prayers always.

My appreciation to the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, particularly Sisters Placida and Rita, God used you all as his instrument. Thank you for what you have done. **"Pray for Vocations in Scotland"**. That is what Sister Louise said all those years ago. Here I am to play my part!

Families and Friends, thank you for standing by me. Thank you for your tireless contribution, friendship, advice, and prayers, I need those things now more than ever. Please, be assured of my continued prayers. God bless you.

A big thank you to my brother, Dr. Bua Felix, for being present here in Scotland to represent the Bua family. Thank you very much for coming over to witness my ordination. I know our parents are looking at us right now, at what we have become for society, for the world. I thank them kindly for bringing us into this world and for caring for us, giving us training and education. I am so grateful, Baba, Mama: may your Souls rest in peace.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who would have loved to be at my ordination but who have gone before us. I know they are looking at me, at all of us indeed. I thank God for their contributions to my life and it is my prayer that Almighty God grant them eternal rest. May the soul of the faithful departed...

Booklet sponsored by  
the family of John Christine



Pauline, Michael, Joseph & John

Designed by Philip Bua (Rome, May 2022)