

Opinion

Explaining Governor Okorocho's Concession Policy

By Ik Ogbonna



Governor Okorocho

Importantly, let me briefly note that concession, by definition is the act of an instance of conceding (as by granting something as a right or accepting something as true). It is "something that you allow or do, or allow somebody to have, in order to end an argument or to make a situation less difficult."

It is something done or agreed to in order to reach an agreement or improve a situation, and this is exactly the intention of Imo State Governor, Owele Anayo Rochas Okorocho. This is geared towards an improved and better state/society for all of us.

Recently Governor Rochas Okorocho declared a policy of concessioning and outsourcing the management of some non-performing government parastatals and agencies in the state. This policy became necessary due to the non-performance of these departments and their resultant inability to pay staff salaries, non-declaration of profits, corruption and general lackadaisical attitudes to work by the staff.

Interestingly, these agencies and parastatals have an enabling law that makes them profit oriented and self-sustaining, but it is regrettable that government has been paying them subsidies over the years with no corresponding returns to the government and people of the state.

The concessioning of these agencies and parastatals will make way for private sector management to take over the running of these organisations, pay their staff salaries without burdening government and make profit too. They will also render the much needed services for which they were

set up. No doubt, the private sector has high level of productivity and it is this agility that His Excellency, Owele Rochas wants to inject into the public sector for the good of the state in general.

Concession does not entail outright sale. It is a management lease agreement geared towards ensuring profitability, accountability and smooth running of these organizations. We should know that the agencies and parastatals are part of the government's body. Selling them is just analogous of someone cutting off his hands and legs for sale. And this, rational government will not do. They still remain Imo State Government's properties, with the right selection and planning, the concession can greatly enhance the profitability of an overall operation. While an area touched by concession policies may not necessarily be the state's primary source of revenue, it must be approached with the goal of increasing bottom-line profit for the state.

Governor Rochas Okorocho, a revolutionary governor, a man of ideas has refused to make the mistakes of previous governments that have encouraged corruption, ineptitude, nepotism and gross mismanagement of state resources by the continued subsidies of these agencies and parastatals with state funds.

The managements of some of the parastatals already listed for concessioning are those of Imo Newspapers, Imo Orientation Agency, NEPAD, Imo ADP, Agric

Loans Board, Water corporation, PFMU and PSGRDP, Consumer protection Council, Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, Imo State Sports Council, Imo State Tourism Board, Imo State Zoological Garden, Imo State Library Board, Imo Job Centre and Imo State Investment Promotion Agency.

Others are the State Directorate for Employment, Okigwe Cattle Market, Imo Livestock, Ministry of Agric and Natural Resources Shop, Niger-Delta Bureau, Poverty Alleviation Bureau, IWADA, Bureau for Public Procurement and Price Intelligence, ENTRACO, Imo Marketing Company, Imo Blue Lake Oguta and Imo Essential Drug.

The government has also listed to concession the General Hospitals and Health Centres in the Twenty-Seven Local government Areas in the state including the General Hospitals at Aboh Mbaise, Ngor Okpala, Ihite Uboma, Okigwe, Arondizogu, Mberi, Awo Omama, Oguta, Ogwa, Ohaji Egbema and the Specialist Hospital, Umugwuma.

It is pertinent to note at this point that some sectors we take for granted here are the main stay of some countries' economy. For instance, Kenya as a country lives through the huge resources they generate from their tourism and zoological sector. Here, in Imo, the Nekede Zoo is an "ancient landmark" of the state which in the past attracted people from all corners of the country and beyond for site-seeing. Thank God it is now being renovated. The Blue Lake, Oguta is yet another among many others. But these are now lying waste and languishing because no government wants to take the bold step.

This brave move will see these parastatals and agencies return back to life, meet their obligations to the state and see more people enjoy the services they were created to offer. All these actions have been taken in the overall interest of the state and her people, and indeed designed to keep the state on the fast lane of development and growth.

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Following Christ Without Fear:

By William Shimbo

Fear of harm and what is to come in the future which is seldom predictable is one of the many things that hinder most of Christ's followers into following faithfully the direction, precepts, and exemplary life of the master - Jesus Christ. Significant numbers of Christians no longer live as expected of them due to fear of being assaulted, insulted or even killed by the fanatics of Christianity; heretics and the violent members of other religious sects. Often times we (Christians) are so much intimidated that we can't speak for Christ our leader, guide and epistle of our faith (Jn. 7:13, 12:42-43). As a result of falling into this social and religious intimidation, our goal of evangelization of Christ's message of salvation is hindered and left unaccomplished.

Jesus said "... do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot afterwards do anything worse... fear God, who, after killing, has the authority to throw into hell. Believe me, he is the one you must fear!" (Lk. 12:4-5). When we believe and trust in the Lord, fear evaporates from us (cf. 1Sam 14:6). A Christian with unshakable faith in God and his promises is not afraid of trials and troubles (Acts 5:17-18); because the spirit of God who inspires us to have faith in Him, and who guides our hearts and minds into serving him faithfully fills us with power and does not make us timid (2Tim. 1:7).

It is obvious that Jesus conceived that to "follow him truly" is not an easy task; it is not a place of comfort. Christianity is not a bed of roses. It is a one-way adventure that does not look back nor take time to look and gather pleasures and pleasurable seen by the sides of the highway. A Christian does not look back; he is not bothered by obstacles on the way. The mandate is 'thou must keep moving'. If our fathers in faith were drawn back by fear of sword, torture, imprisonment and death, the church would have not been where it is now. "The church is built on blood of the martyrs and Apostles". Christians need to be courageous, without fear even of death for Christ's sake (Luke 9:24-25). Fear should not excuse us from God's work (cf. Jgs 7:10-11) because God's love to us is assured (cf. Gen 46:3-4). Fear stays away from us as long as we remain faithful (cf. Joshua 1:5).

We are obliged to follow Christ without fear because it is only in Him that the mission of our earthly life is accomplished. We follow him without fear because we fear him than all other fear-inflicting agents on earth. This is why we don't seem to take note of pains we face in the course of

following him. Just like any other DONT God has ever pronounced; DONT FEAR is a command; a call to obedience, and certainly a prerequisite for serving him faithfully in all our endeavours.

When we are obedient to him and at all times faithful irrespective of circumstances, our friendly relationship with Him is affirmed and strengthened.

The scripture says "To fear the Lord is the first stage of wisdom" (Job 28:23). "Those who have fear and reverence for the Lord will learn from him the path they should follow" (Ps. 25:12). When we turn from evil we are enabled to understand God's ways in our lives (Job 28:28).

Prophet Isaiah who was chosen and sent, filled with the spirit of God (Is. 61:1) received the mandate to follow and fear God in holiness, because he, (God), is holy: "With his great power, the Lord warned me not to follow the path which the people were following. He said: Do not join in the schemes of the people and do not be afraid of the things that they fear. Remember that, I, the Lord Almighty am Holy, I am the one you must fear..." (Is. 8:11-15). The emphasis 'I am Holy' paints it clearly that only the Holy one should be feared. Since we are the people of the Lord (Ps. 100:3), we must obey him with fear (Ex. 19:5; Dt 4:26; 30:2, 8, 10, 16; 1Jn. 5:2) and serve him in holiness all our days (Lk. 1:75).

As the Psalmist says: "The Lord looks on those who love him, on those who hope for his love, to rescue their souls from death; to keep them alive in famine" (Ps. 33:18-19). When we fear the Lord and serve him faithfully and fearlessly he will grant us protection (Ps. 91:14-16) and deliver us from the hands of our enemies and those who hate us (Ps. 44:5-7; 64:7-10).

In following Christ without fear, there is a dire need to always be ready and willing from within to deny ourselves some comforts for the sake of Christ. We should be ready to sacrifice our feelings and desires for the conversion of souls and for the good of the church and those around us. Our life needs to be good and exemplary one (Titus 2:7) such that in all things we please our brothers and sisters for their own good in order to build them up in faith (Rom. 15:2).

We must persevere in humility in the service of one another (1Pet. 5:5b-7) and never held back in doing good because of other people's view of us (cf. Prov. 29:25) so as not to be rejected by God and men of good will. We should not at all take offence nor get discouraged when we are insulted for the cause of following Christ,

because this means that the glorious spirit of God is resting on us (1Pet. 4:14); and as Jesus promised, a great reward awaits us in heaven (Mt. 5:12). St. Paul reveal the truth about the lives of true Christian who are suit as a firm foundation of faith that "Throughout our lives we are always in danger of death for Jesus sake in order that his life may be seen in this mortal body of ours" (2Cor. 4:11).

The focus of a faithful, diligent and fearful disciple is seen in the way the disciple follow the footsteps of his Master. Good deeds - especially in this context - obedience, come from good inner intention. A follower is not expected to put his hand where his master did not or did tell him not to.

To expel fear from us especially while attempting to focus on and face the future we need to be fortified by the strength and grace of the spirit of God. The Mission is tough, but, God's will must be done; because after all, whether we live or die we are the Lord's (). The Devil's devices are very clear, appealing and deceitful; they look like what we want; just they are merely what the flesh wants. We can do without them. But, the flesh can not do without that which the spirit of God offer. Hence, we need not fear temptation, but courageously, wisely, logically, sensibly and objectively face them and deny the devil access into our hearts.

The pride of faithful followers of Christ is in shaming the devil. Even when we falter, the fear of God in us should compel us to come back to God and be reconciled with him since it is unrealistic to deny our human frailty (Ps. 51:5).

St. Paul prophesied that: "The time will come when people will not listen to sound doctrine, but will follow their own desires and will collect for themselves more teachers who will tell them what they need to hear. They will turn away from listening to the truth and give their attention to legends" (2Tim. 4:3). This is one of the modern challenges of the evangelical mission of the Apostolic Church. People feel free to interpret the truths of faith in their own ways as it pleases them, and they are not even afraid to teach the self-made gospels to others. Consequently the flock of Christ is scattered as people are blown left and right by winds of theologies, miracles, signs, and wonders. It is nothing to fear.

To be contd.

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Chinwe Christabel Chinagorom flanked by her brothers cut her Birthday cake.

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The reforms of the Judiciary and Administration of Justice In Imo State

The integral Universal picture of Justice is one of a woman blindfolded and wielding a menacing sword. This scary image has given rise in me genuine apprehensions about the appropriate uses of the sword in evolving situations.

How does Justice guide itself blindfolded?

In my view, justice would have been better served with eyes wide open. But I am told that being blindfolded means that Justice is fair and acts without fear and favour.

In Imo State like elsewhere in the world, Justice is also blind; blind to the suffering and anguish of litigants pauperized by extensive judicial processes, poorly motivated judicial staff who are always owed backlogs of pays and often striking white awaiting trial mates languish in prisons because of onerous bail conditions. Records of Corruption in the Imo State Judiciary however are perhaps lowest in the eastern region but there are seemingly no existing and effective policies to monitor and check same as they are not unremarkable and inconsequential.

Our system of administration of justice is also blind to the phenomenon of babies who serve prison terms with their

becomes the law when it is interpreted. If that were the case, the law is not knowable until it is interpreted; meaning that legal rights and obligations cannot be defined and understood until the law creating them are interpreted by a court of law. Some school of thought also considers the law as normative and prescribing norms of conduct for society.

I think an understanding of the law embodies all of these views in so far the law is written, knowable and clearly stated.

Our customary law is however unwritten and one of the suggested reforms needed is its codification using the repugnancy test.

On the other hand, our legal system is influenced by the English law. Each state in Nigeria has its own legal system under our federal structure. Even within a state, there can be a multiplicity of legal systems under diverse customary laws.

Indeed the sources of Nigerian law and indeed the Imo legal system are Nigerian legislations, English law including the doctrines of equity, statutes of general Applications, customary law, and judicial precedents.

The ethnic customary law preexisted English law in our society the establishment of

archaic. More often, the procedure for their administration in our legal system remains frustrating or inadequate under scrutiny. Thus in every case before our courts, it is not just the litigants that are on trial but the court system itself.

Indeed the administration of justice in Imo state is anything but satisfactory when we consider the fact that modern civilizations are shaped by their understanding and love for justice which must not be delayed and always seen to be done.

It is a great injustice to litigants when litigation becomes endless and provocatively costly, when judicial officers lose public confidence.

In some states in Nigeria the problems of the judiciary are constantly under scrutiny and deliberate efforts and policy made to provide much needed succour.

In Lagos, constant monitoring and implementation designs to rid the judiciary of legal bottlenecks, provide and sustain humanitarian rights that are indicative of concern and interest in legal development. In Imo State we appear satisfied with the Status quo in the backdrop of a discernible lethargy to

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To be realistic, Jesus did not tell the disciples to go and build temples and invite people to come and receive miracles and fortune-oriented prophecies. The church's mission, it is a tough mission of the proclamation of the gospel of repentance and salvation through Christ. It is not an assurance of success or well being; as many churches preach today: "A child of God will not suffer"; "suffering is not your portion" etc. The evangelism of the true gospel is really hindered by all these.

People have tagged fund raising ventures different biblical names to attract "customers". This is nothing to fear, because, it is not competition, as Jesus said "If no one praises God, the stones will stand and praise Him". The influence of worldly forces and snares should not divert our dedication and attention into preaching the gospel of Christ. (2Cor. 4:7). We ought to live like the early Christians—a good example of dedicated and fearless followers of Christ. "They only engaged themselves in preaching and teaching the message of salvation" (Acts 6:2).

Preaching is mission and not reputation or business. That is why in commissioning the twelve, Jesus said: "Go... make this proclamation; the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt. 10:5-8) and He admonished them: "You have received

without paying, so give without being paid" (Mt. 10:8).

St. Francis of Assisi said: "Preach always; sometimes use words." I talked about preaching in this article so as to refute the one-sided notion that is recorded in us. Preaching entails living a good life, worthy of Christ followers. It is not only proclaiming the gospel of Christ by words of mouth. In its real sense, as I just unveiled, it is the perfection of following Christ without fear; the climax of the gospel in the life of mankind to the greater glory of God. The mission must be accomplished to God's glory because we have been called and chosen (2Pet. 1:10-11) not to suffer but to give glory to God in all things, even if it means suffering and death.

To walk carefully is to see that every step bears us heavenward, to have our face always set towards God and our heart towards his will; to have our eternal home in view; and by its vision be inspired and guided to be journeying in its right path even though it is tiny; thorny and fear-inflicting. At all times we ought to fearfully and industriously live for God and heaven (cf. 1Jn. 2:15-17).

This was how Jesus lived throughout his life on earth; that is why he did not sin (1Pet. 2:22); He was ever obedient to the Father even at the point of that shameful and painful death on the cross (Mt. 26:39).

Persecution is indispensable in following Christ (Mt. 10:16-23; 2Tim 3:12). But, it is joy to die for Christ (Mt. 5:10) because it not only strengthens our brothers in faith and makes them firm and fearless but also help in the spread of the true faith. Even if we die, darkness cannot overcome the light (Jn. 1:5). It is glory to be a martyr of the Christian faith; the church is built by blood of the Martyrs and Apostles. As you walk, the devil will always attempt to impact fear in you, to draw you back or distract you that your steps no longer match with those of the master—Jesus you follow. Fear not! And never give him a chance. Rather pray and always renew your faith resolutions with the Lord, to follow him without fear at all times till the end of your life here on earth. By God's grace we can; and nothing will hinder us.

St John Paul II admonishes: "Do not be afraid! Open the doors to Christ. God works in the concrete and personal affairs of each one of us. Don't let the time that the Lord gives you run on as if everything were due to chance."

The End.

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