

A few words from Sr. Mary Genevieve in honour of Da Ben, Oparannem

How have the mighty fallen? (2 Sam. 2:27).

Why are you cast down my soul? (Ps. 42:11)

On hearing that *Oparannem anwuola*, these and other related questions left me confounded until I mused on the words of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, "Death is a necessary end, it comes when it will come". St. Paul puts it beautifully in Romans 14:8, "Alive or dead, we belong to the Lord". God knows the best for my family. This particular demise of my brother, Oparannem da Ben, pains me so much because it is like losing my father a second time. Da Ben was habitually compassionate. He greatly appreciated my vocation to the Religious life and my prophetic role. On one occasion, when we all came home for Christmas, Da Ben in his characteristic humour remarked, "Sister has secured the Passport for each of us ..."

When you became sick last August, you manifested tremendous confident hope and trust, an unwavering faith in Jesus and His Mother, coupled with a profound spirit of resignation, to the effect that anytime I tried to convince you that the Immuno-therapy you were attending would help towards your recovery, your reply would be, "Whatever is God's Will", and I would be pondering in my heart, "Does Da Ben not want to recover"? You felt happier to hear that prayers were going on for you. Your faith in divine healing, Divine Mercy and prayers, was terrific! It was edifying. Praise God!

Da Ben was forever aware of those needs that called for family involvement and hastily attended to them. Man

of the people, he was full of jokes, fun and laughter. His door was always open to all; so was his heart. He gave generously. So many have written about his attributes. Oparannem was too unassuming to undertake my last request for his documentation of the inestimable role he played to save Enyigugu and Emekuku Owerri from utter destruction during the Biafra War (1967-1970). Among his numerous attributes and achievements, I mostly value his conspicuous adherence to his Catholic faith until death. It was not by chance that he received the sacrament of Extreme Unction from his nephew Rev. Fr. Jude Osondu. To God be the Glory!

Da Ben, I pray that God, through the powerful intercession of Our Blessed Mother Mary may receive your **beautiful** soul; console your widow Ibitoru and all our family; bless and reward all those who were praying for you during the period of your illness, and all who helped in any way, particularly your spiritual son, Engr. Greg Ntiwunka and family. Amen.