

**OKUSIA JENNIFER (2013-M092-20013)**

**Exploring the Influence of the Arua Diocesan Synod Bride Wealth Declaration on Marriage Practices of the Catholic Lay Faithful in Ediofe Vicariate.**

Arua Diocese conducted its third diocesan synod at the end of the year 1999 on „Christian Marriage in cultural Tradition“. One of the declarations passed by this synod was on the practice of bride wealth. This study was undertaken to explore the influence of the synod bride wealth declaration on the marriage practices of the lay faithful in Arua Diocese.

Specifically, the study sought to find out if the Catholics in Ediofe Vicariate were aware of the declaration; to explore their perception of the declaration; and to establish whether the synod declaration had any effects on their marriage practices. A multi-methods approach utilising both a case study design and exploratory designs was used. Data was collected from ten parishes in Ediofe Vicariate. A total of 261 respondents participated in the survey. Eight focus group discussions and 7 key informant interviews were held. Quantitative data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and simple descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of quantitative data. Qualitative data was entered into excel, thematically analysed and presented alongside the quantitative findings. The study findings indicate that majority of the respondents (78.3 percent) had heard about the synod bride wealth declaration. These respondents also had a basic understanding of the synod bride wealth declaration. The study findings also revealed that majority of the lay faithful negatively perceived the synod bride wealth declaration. The influence of the synod declaration was found minimal as majority of the lay faithful continue demanding for bride wealth (76%), paying bride wealth (89.5%) and receive bride wealth (89%) in spite of the synod bride wealth declaration, thereby constituting an affront to Arua diocese position. However, some positive outcomes of the synod can be seen, as a few parents have allowed their children to get married in church without paying bride wealth. The general conclusion drawn is that the synod bride wealth declaration had very limited influence on the marriage practices of the lay faithful in Ediofe Vicariate and this can be generalised to infer the same situation to the whole of Arua diocese. Given the largely unsuccessful attempt of the church to waive off bride wealth, it is imperative for the church to engage in an extensive research to find out why the vast majority of the lay faithful resisted the synod bride wealth declaration. Arua diocese should have an extensive consultation and engagement of elders in matters of cultural transformation. Arua diocese should further embark on evangelisation of people with the help of families that have had a receptive attitude to the declaration in question. The diocese should continue communicating the synod declaration over the social media, church pulpit, radio and other means with evidence of change and good practice.

**Key Words: Bride Wealth Declaration, Marriage Practices, Arua Catholic Diocis**