

Sowing in the Desert: The Establishment, Growth, and Challenges of Catholic Church in Katsina, Northwestern Nigeria, 1710–2023

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Abstract

Northern western Nigeria, which has been centre of Islamic scholarship since the 14th and 15th centuries owing to spread of Islamic religion through trans-Saharan trade, Arab merchants, and Islamic scholars' missionary activities, has over centuries experienced not only the spread of the religion of Christianity by different Christian missionaries' bodies but also the establishment and development of Churches, missionary schools, and healthcare centres by different Church denominations. In view of this, using primary and secondary sources, this paper examines the birth, growth, and challenges of the Catholic Church in Katsina since 1710, when the first attempt was made. The paper argues that the birth and growth of the Catholic Church were associated with colonial and post-colonial push-and-pull factors in migration and intergroup relations, the activities of Catholic missionaries, and the conversion of the Katsina Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups from traditional religion and Islam to Christianity. In fact, this gave birth to the growth of indigenous Hausa and Fulani Christians, the Catholic community, Catholic outstations, Parishes, Deaneries, and the Catholic Diocese of Katsina, which was created from the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto in the year 2023, with a native of Argungu, Kebbi State, Rt. Rev. Mssgr. Gerald Mamman Musa as its first bishop. This is a major landmark in the history of Northwestern Nigeria, where the heartland of Islam is, and also the seat of the Caliphate established by the Jihad of Uthman Danfodio since 1804, with a well-structured Islamic system of government.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Establishment, Growth, Challenges, Katsina, Impact.

Introduction

Katsina has been one of the centres of Islam and Islamic scholarship since the 15th-century owing to conversion of many Maguzawa (Hausa) traditional religious followers to Islam (Wycliff, 2012). This gave birth to Hausa Muslim

community, Islamic scholars, as well as spread of Islamic schools, Islamic belief and culture, and system of governance (Shehu, 2012 & NAK/KATPROF/3813). This was further intensified through the 19th-century Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio, which not only spread the Islamic

religion but also promoted Islamic learning, the establishment of Sharia law, and the emergence of a new form of leadership, resulting in the creation of the Katsina and Daura Emirates under the Sokoto Caliphate (Wycliff, 2017; Wycliff, 2019).

Over the years, Katsina, which is located in the Northwestern part of Nigeria with a large number of Muslim communities and a few traditional religious followers (Maguzawa), experienced not just the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ but the conversion of the Indigenous Hausa and Fulani communities to Christianity (Hassan, 2002; Wycliff, 2012). As well as the establishment and growth of Christian centre of worships (Church), schools and hospitals in the early 20th-century, which also extended even down to the 21st-century, as a result of the activities of Christian missionaries such as Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Baptist Mission, and Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), amongst others (Bamigboye, 2000 ; Sagir, 2014 ; Rabe &Wycliff, 2017).

However, one of the less considerable themes in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial history of Katsina is the establishment, growth, and challenges of Catholic Church (Catholicism), despite its immense contributions to the development of the area. In fact, in October 2023, Pope Francis created the

Catholic Diocese of Katsina and appointed Most. Rev. Dr. Gerald Mamman Musa as its first Bishop. This major landmark also made the bishop, a native of Argungu from Kebbi State, the first person to reach that position in the whole of Northwestern Nigeria, and also the first Catholic Bishop in modern Katsina State (Maiden General Assembly, 2024). This shows that a ‘baby’ Church in one of the strong and largest centres of Islamic followers and scholars has grown beyond outstations (mission stations), Parishes, and Deaneries, and become a Diocesan area. Thus, the inability of Church history scholars and other researchers to write on this major landmark has created a lacuna that requires scholarly intervention to document, preserve, and reconstruct these historic human experiences.

To this end, this article is divided into five subheadings. While the first section is the introduction, the second focuses on the early attempt to establish the Catholic Church in Katsina. The third section examines the impact of the Catholic Church on Katsina, while the fourth and last part is on the challenges and the paper’s conclusion. This article, therefore, seeks to answer these questions: What was the first missionary body that made early attempt to spread the Gospel of Christ and also to establish the Catholic Church in Katsina? What were the factors that led to, and also

aided the establishment and growth of the Catholic Church in Katsina? What were the major impacts of the Catholic Church on Katsina? What were the risks and challenges that affected the growth and development of the Catholic Church in Katsina?

The Early attempt to establish the Catholic Church in Katsina

The early attempt to establish the Catholic Church in Katsina could be traced to the early 18th century, which predated the 19th-century Sokoto Jihad of Uthman Danfodio. According to Akurbor and Akinwale (2014), Rabe (2012), and Wycliff and Ameh (2023), the early attempt was between 1710 and 1711, when two Catholic priests of the Society of African Missions (SMA Fathers) arrived Katsina city, which was the administrative headquarters of precolonial Katsina Emirate, and currently the Katsina State capital in the Northwestern Nigeria. This information was further confirmed in an oral interview with Katsina indigenous Hausa Christians, such as Reverend Aliyu Auta Sadauki, Reverend Audu Bakwa, Reverend Idris Yantumaki, Professor Musa Adamu Mamman, Pastor Samaila Shehu, and Elder Lawal Jibril, whose parents were converted from Islam and traditional religions. These converted Christians revealed that Fr. Carlo Maria di Genova and Fr. Severino da Silesia – the Franciscan priests of the Catholic

Church arrived Katsina city in the year 1710, and worked for only one-year, and died as a result of sickness in 1711 and were buried at *Danmarna* cemetery of Katsina city (Saduaki, 2017; Bakwai, 2017; Yantumaki, 2017; Mamman, 2017; Yantumaki, 2017; Shehu, 2017). As such, the two Catholic priests could not do much because of their deaths, and as such, there was no evidence of converts, mission stations (oustations), or the establishment of any Catholic Church.

Of equal importance to state that much was not done during that period because of the nature of the weather in the Western Sudan region as a whole, the means of transportation (using camels and horses) in the desert, which causes so many sicknesses to foreigners, such as malignant and pestilential waters, which led to swelling of the body, which eventually led to the death of the aforementioned two priests. Noting that Lavers (1993) stated that Fr. Severino died in August 1711, which was 8 days after the death of Fr. Carlo, who was an experienced surgeon as well as a physician. To buttress this fact, Vishigh (1997), Rabe (2025), and Ayandele (1991) noted that Christian missionaries found it very, or even impossible, at the time they reached the Sudan (Hausaland) through the trans-Saharan trade routes, probably due to the predominance of Muslim caravans and harsh weather along these routes, which did not favour

them thereby hindering their ability to spread Christianity in Katsina.

The second reason or obstacle was the influence of Islam and its traditions in Katsina. For example, when Fr. Carlo died in Katsina, Fr. Severinto was asked to embrace Islam to claim the property of his dead Christian missionary companion and priest. This shows that Islam had official recognition in Katsina. Interestingly, the ability of Fr. Severinto to stand firm in Christian faith and refuse to convert to Islam, despite the horrible situation he found himself in, led the Katsina king not to confiscate the properties of his companion missionary coworker, but also his own, after his own death (Rabe, 2025; Ayandele, 1991).

The third reason, according to Wycliff (2019) and Rabe (2012), was attributed to a trade treaty purportedly signed by Caliph Muhammed Bello, the Son of Othman Danfodiyo, and Hugh Clapperton in 1824, and then the one signed between Aliyu Baba and Henry Barth in 1853. These treaties only allowed commercial relations and the safety of Europeans on the condition that they would not preach the Christian religion, and also, when a European merchant died in the Sokoto Caliphate, the Caliph would take one-tenth (*ushir*) of his wealth as the Islamic Sharia stipulates (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). This explains why by the beginning of the second half of 19th-century,

according to Ayandele (1991), northern Nigeria remains the largest territory unaffected by Christian missionary activities in the world. This situation continued to early parts of 20th-century when the British colonial administration in 1900 declared Northern Nigeria as its Protectorate. A development that led to the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate. In fact, the use of the military might of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) led to the conquest and colonization of Northern Nigerian Empires, Emirates, Kingdoms, and Chiefdoms, especially in 1903 when Katsina and Daura Emirates fell (Wycliff & Simon, 2024).

The policy of the Indirect Rule System, which protected customs and traditional systems of government in those Muslim areas from external influence, was another factor. This was followed by the colonial government's promise not to interfere with Islam. This was reiterated at the installations of every emir (*Sarki*). In keeping with this agreement, the establishment of Christian mission stations and activities was restricted in the predominantly Muslim areas (Ajamu, 2013). In fact Hassan (2002) argued that the mission work was further complicated due to British colonial government and its administrative officers' attitude towards Christian mission activities in northern Nigeria.

However, in early 20th-century, there was a turnaround owing to Mission

Conference held at Edinburgh, which called for a change in attitude and policies of the British government against the propagation of Christianity in northern Nigeria (Ayandele, 1982). Subsequently, in 1926, another Conference was convened at Lezoute in Belgium, where the British colonial government, under the leadership of the Governor of Nigeria, Graeme Thomson (November 13, 1925–June 17, 1931), who assured Christian missionaries access to Hausaland. In fact, according to Vishigh (1997), it was at this conference that Dr. Rowland Binham, one of the pioneer founders of Sudan Interior Mission (SIM now Evangelical Church Winning All [ECWA]), pressed the colonial government to allow the penetration of the hinterland of Kano and Katsina, and the whole of Hausaland (Northwestern Nigeria), which was accepted.

The colonial government also assured them that Emirs would be taught not only to allow the penetration of Christian missionaries but also to accept religious tolerance (Vishigh, 1997). Hence, the Lezoute Conference held in Belgium became a major landmark for Christian missionaries to penetrate the restricted areas (Muslim Emirates) and start their evangelical work using the 3-in-1 missionary enterprise and strategies, which were Church, School, and Hospital (Wycliff & Ameh, 2023). As

such, in 1930s and beyond, Katsina witnessed the introduction and spread of Christianity as a result of the efforts of three principal missionary societies. In fact, according to Rabe (2025), they were the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CSM), the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), and the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), which gave rise to the Catholic Church (Catholicism) in Katsina, the central focus of this paper.

Of equal important to put on record that the first Christian missionaries to start their full evangelical work, and also to established a Church (Christian centre of worship) in Katsina during the colonial era and was the Anglican CMS, which established the first Church (St. James Anglican Church) at Funtua in 1935 under the leadership of former British Railways Corporation (BRC) worker by name James Okoye (Hope Magazine, 2010), and some produce and merchant workers of British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA), United African Company (UAC), Compagnie Francaise d'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO), Société Commerciale de l'Quest Africaine (SCOA), John Holt, Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), Patterson Zachonis (PZ), Mandrides and Logois, Miller Brothers, Red Fearn, John Walkden, London and Kano, and S. Man draids, who have been in Funtua since 1903, while some since 1928 (Hope Magazine, 2010). This was made possible according

to Abdullahi (20205) because Funtua has been one of the cosmopolitan and renowned towns of Katsina since 1911, with so many colonial firms, farms, railways, and lots of migrant communities across different parts of Nigeria, especially the Yoruba, Igbo, Idoma, Igala, Bajju, Jaba, Kilba, Bachama, Marghi, Urhobo, Ijaw, and Tiv, amongst others.

Similarly, in 1936, the same Anglican CMS established St. John's Church, located in the Government Reserved Area (G.R.A.) in Katsina city, which has been the administrative headquarters of colonial Katsina Province, and contemporary Katsina State and Katsina local government area since September 23, 1987 (Igbo Day Magazine, 2008). Over the years, this Church became the Cathedral Church of St. John G.R.A., to the extent that the first-ever Bishop in the history of Katsina and Anglican Church was ordained in 1990 by name Revd. James Shekari Kwasu (JP) (1990–2007). Upon his retirement, late Rt. Revd. Jonathan Sani Bamaïyi (JP) (2007–2024) succeeded him (Habu, 2023). Him too was also succeeded by Rt. Revd. Nuhu Yohanna (2024-date) upon his death. Consequently, there are over 50 Anglican Churches between 1935 and 2023, owing to its extensive evangelical works with northern and southern Katsina, particularly towns like

Katsina, Funtua, Bakori, Kankara, and Kafur.

The second missionary body according to Wycliff (2025) was SIM, which established many mission stations that became Churches. For examples, Baban Ruga established in 1937, Malumfashi 1937, Matazu 1939, Katsina 1942, Fago (Daura) 1945, and Wagini 1945. In fact, according to Ajamu (2013), as at 2010, SIM (ECWA) in Katsina had over 62 churches, 34 prayer houses, and 16,546 members.

The Establishment and Growth of the Catholic Church in Katsina

The third missionary body to establish Church was RCM owing to the labour migration of Nigerians from the colonial and post-colonial Southern parts of Nigeria, which encompasses the present-day South-South, South-East, and South-West geo-political zones. Thus, the first Catholic Church established was St. Martin De Porres in Katsina city (Wycliff, 2017; Wycliff, 2021). It was an outstation in June 16, 1953, the same year the Catholic Prefecture of Sokoto was created before it became a full Diocese in June 16, 1964 (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014; Wycliff & Abdullahi, 2025).

In 1964, a residence was built on the Church compound for the Priest to live there. This Church grew tremendously

with Catholic population from different parts of Nigeria, and with many outstations (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014; Rabe & Wycliff, 2018). The first pioneer Catechist trained by Missionary Father, and who has been highly instrumental in the early evangelization of Katsina city and its environs, was Vincent Tyo, an indigene of Benue State. Consequently between 1953 and 2023, St. Martin De Pores Catholic Church has over 2,000 Catholics with indigenous Hausa and Fulani Christians from Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, and Sokoto States of Northwestern Nigeria as part of its congregation (Shuaibu-Liti, 2023; Wycliff, 2012).

St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Funtua, which the city has been a commercial and agrarian town located between Zaria (Kaduna State) and Gusau (Zamfara State), was the second Catholic Church established in Katsina. The Church started as an outstation (mission station) in 1929 with 4 baptized and 6 catechumens who formed the Catholic community, and who were from the southern Nigeria (SMA Baptism Register, 1929). The first Baptisms in Funtua took place on July 25, 1929, by the Minister of Baptism – Father John Lupton of the Vicariate of Western Nigeria with its headquarters at Asaba (Catholic Church, Zaria Baptism Register, 1929). The place of worship was initially at the British Cotton

Growers Association (BCGA), where the Church started in 1954, before they were forced out in 1959. This pushed the Church to build on its own plot of land, which it acquired with the sum of £5 through the letter written to Emir of Katsina, Alhaji Usman Kabir in 1959 (SMA Etat, 1928–1929). In 1960, the Church building was completed. This enables the Church to become a resident station with a resident Priest and indigenous Hausa Christians as part of its Parishioners (Akubor and Akinwale, 2014). In 1954, this Church became one of the six Catholic missions established by the Dominicans when the Prefecture of Sokoto was created out of Kaduna Prefecture. In fact, as at 2014, when the Sokoto Diocese celebrated its 60 years anniversary, St. Theresa's Church Funtua, had 12 outstations under her i.e., St. John's Faskari, St. Joseph's Maicibi, St. Paul's Tafoki, St. Titus' Sabon Fida, St. Mary's Godiya, St. Matthew's Madara, St. Titus' Sabon Fida, St. Augustine's Gidan Gaga, St. James' Aku, St. Raymond's Unguwar Shudi, St. Michael's Sabuwa, and St. Charles' Dandume (Akubor and Akinwale, 2014).

The next Church established was St. Vincent Ferrer's Catholic Church in Malumfashi town, which was also one of the cosmopolitan regions, just like Katsina and Funtua towns. This town attracted lots of migrant communities, such as Yoruba and Igbo since the

colonial period. Hence, this Church was established in 1958 as an outstation and became a Parish in 1962 (Wycliff, 2022). This was also followed by the establishment of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Layin Minista in the same Malumfashi area, which began in 1959, and by 1978, the Church building was put in place in its present location (Akubor and Akinwale, 2014). The Church population was predominantly the Hausa Christians. In fact, according to Shuaibu-Liti (2023), in the early 1990s, the number of Catholic congregants increased to the extent that in 1994 it became a quasi-parish, and by 1996 it became a Parish

The establishment of St. Gabriel's Catholic Church in Daura, one of the ancient cities of Katsina, was another milestone in the history of Catholic Church in the area. According to Akubor and Akinwale (2014), St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, Daura, popularly known as the Roman Catholic Church, existed before the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970 at *Dole*, where their place of worship was before the outbreak of the war. This young community possibly started the Church service around 1966 when the Church had few individuals, which included one Pa Chinaka Duru. In fact, they used to gather at present-day Daura Primary School to say the Rosary in Hausa language (Peter & Wycliff, 2020). Between 1969 and 1970, and

following the influx of Catholics from the Southern parts of Kaduna, the Church population increased tremendously. In fact, the arrival of Gabriel in 1970, and Kile, a Police Officer in 1976, who tremendously kept the Church together using their professional skills further boosted the congregation to the extent in 1976, the Church moved to the premises of the present-day Federal Government College (FGC) Daura, formerly known as Emergency Teachers College Daura (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014).

In 1986, when the Kafanchan riots broke out, the Catholics were driven out of the venue, which enabled them to move to ECWA premises, which was behind Daura General Hospital. Consequently, when the Catholic Church building was erected, the people of Daura town demolished it, claiming it was close to their Mosque (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). This scenario still pushed Catholics to continue to use ECWA premises as their centre of worship, along with some of the staff of the General Hospital who were Catholics, as well as teachers and students of the Federal Government College, who contributed to keeping the Church alive both spiritually and financially. Consequently, in 1991, the Church left ECWA premises for its present place of worship. According to Akubor and Akinwale (2014), this new place was

initially a residential house, and people were making use of a partitioned room for worship before the owner, Sergeant Yate, sold it to the Church when he was leaving Daura. Consequently, in November 1999, the Church became a Parish. Remarkably, this triumphant Church as at 2014 has 3 outstations, namely, St. Mary's Kongolam, St. Jerome's Zango, and Federal Government College, Daura.

The establishment of St. Mary's Catholic Church at Dutsin-Ma, which has been one of the old local government areas long before Katsina State was created from the defunct Kaduna State (Wycliff & Katsina, 2023), was another landmark in the growth and development of the Catholic Church in Katsina State. The Church started in 1972, like a young plant in arid ground, with 8 persons in the house of Mr. Onoja, a Police Officer, who invited Catholics to pray together. The congregation were Igbo traders and businessmen who returned to Dutsin-Ma town after the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970. In fact, according to Akubor and Akinwale (2014) when the Universal Primary Education College was brought to Dustin-Ma between 1974 and 1975, the number of Catholics increased tremendously (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). The Church further experienced growth in its congregation owing to transfer of policemen from Kaduna State following the creation of Katsina State in

1987. According to Wycliff (2016), the Church membership kept increasing, especially with redeployments of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members to Dutsin between 1973 to 2023, as well as the establishment of the Federal University Dustin-Ma in 2011 by the administration of former President of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (May 6, 2010–May 29, 2015) (Wycliff, 2016).

Interestingly, St. Mary's Catholic Church, which started in a Police Officers' House in 1972, experiences changes in the venue of worship, before it finally settled in its present location, which has Church building, a parish priest's house, Nursery and Primary School, and Secondary School. For instance, after the transfer of the former police officer out of Dutsin-Ma, the Church services were held at the House of a Catholic member and a Police office, Sergeant Emmanuel Ikoh, before they moved to Universal Primary Education College Hall (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). In 1982, they moved to one of the classrooms at Government Day Secondary School Dutsin-Ma. Then to Chief Emmanuel Okeke Compound, and finally to its present place. Further to this, the Church was inaugurated as a Parish on August 15, 2005. As at 2013 it had a population of 400 Catholics, with 1 outstation at Kankia, which has a Catholic community of about 50

members worshipping in a rented building.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church at Magaman Jibia, one of the border towns of Katsina with Niger Republic was another Church established. This Church began in 1986 by the Catholic community along with staff of the Italian Construction Company constructing the Jibia Dam. Then other Catholic community who were already there. Such as Igbo traders, and officers of the Nigerian Police, Customs and Immigration, and other paramilitary law enforcement agencies manning the border (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). The establishment of St. Joseph's Catholic Church had reduced the frequent and weekly movement of Catholics from Magaman Jibia to St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church Katsina, which was about a 40-minute drive. Thus, the Church members usually travelled to Katsina township in order to participate in the Eucharistic celebration and other sacraments, or joined other Christian centres of worships in Jibia such as Deeper Life Bible Church and ECWA.

The establishment of St. Joseph Catholic Church at Shagari Low-Cost Housing Estate in Katsina town in April 2010 was another historic development. This arises as a result of the need for the expansion of St. Martin De Porres Catholic Church, which has a large congregation more

than any other Parish in Katsina State (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). The idea of establishing St. Joseph Catholic Church was conceived, nurtured, and shaped into a Parish by Fathers Joseph Atado and Victor Mordi, as well as Martin Musa, a volunteer Catechist who did extensive work of primary evangelization in the outstation (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). With the support of the other members, especially the Laity, like Augustine Omoreka, then Acting Chairman of the Laity Council, Maureen Odiaua, a dynamic leader of the Catholic Women's Organization, and Fred Ugwu, leader of the Catholic Men's Organization, the infant Church witnessed a phenomenal growth (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014).

Interestingly, unlike other Catholic Church in Katsina, which stayed for about 10 years as an outstation before they became a Parish. The case of St. Joseph Catholic Church was different. It was elevated to status of Parish in less than 2 years, by His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Mathew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, Nigeria on February 12, 2012. As of 2014, the Church was home to about 300 Catholics (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). The Church also serves 2 outstations, namely, St. Stephen's Catholic Batsari, and St. Jacob's Catholic Church, 35 Battalion of the Nigerian Army.

Of equal importance, the land on which the Church is built was obtained through

the kindness of the family of Chief Charles Ahanonu, a well-known generous to Christian community in Katsina. Later, the land accommodating the Presbytery, the Guest's Quarters, the hall, and the Parking lot was also bought for the Church use. This makes of St. Joseph Catholic Church to have good plot of land for her future developmental projects.

The Impact of the Catholic Church in Katsina State

It is a well-known fact that wherever Christian missionaries set foot and establish mission stations, the land and people of the society always experience the 3-in-1 missionaries' enterprises' impact, namely the Church, School, and Hospitals. To this end, this section looks at the impact of the Catholic Church in

Katsina State, especially in the areas of evangelism, education, and healthcare services.

Evangelical Impact

The penetration of the Catholic Church in Katsina had paved way in the preaching and conversion of large number of Hausa and Fulani Katsina traditionalists and Islamic religious followers (Program of the Catholic Diocese of Katsina, 2023). However, the most striking issue about the Catholic Church's impact is in its growth, from 1 Church in the year 1953 to 33 Churches in the year 2023, and 3 Deaneries, namely, Katsina, Funtua, and Malumfashi. For details on the names of the Catholic Church in Katsina State, and also those placed under her from Kaduna and Zamfara States.

Table 1: List of Catholic Churches in Katsina State, 1953–2023

S/No.	Name of Church	Location	Local Government Area
1	St. Martin De Porres Catholic Church	G.R.A.	Katsina
2	St. Joseph Catholic Church	Shagari Low-Cost	Katsina
3	St. Jacob's Catholic Chaplaincy	Army Barracks	Katsina
4	St. Stephen's Catholic Church	Batsari	Batsari
5	St. Joseph Parish	Magaman Jibia	Jibia
6	St. James' Catholic Church	Dandagoro	Batagarawa
7	St. Mary's Parish	Dutsin-Ma	Dutsin-Ma

8	St. Gabriel's Parish	Daura	Daura
9	Federal Government College	Daura	Daura
10	St. Jerome's Catholic Church	Zango	Daura
11	St. Theresa's Parish	Funtua	Funtua
12	St. Joseph Parish	Layin Minista,	Malumfashi
13	St. Vincent Ferrer's Church	Malumfashi	Malumfashi
14	St. Patrick's Parish	Gamzago	Malumfashi
15	St. John Bosco Catholic Church	Malamawa	Malumfashi
16	St. Paul's Catholic Church	Tafoki,	Faskari
17	St. Patrick's Catholic Church	Gidan Maikanbu	Kafur
18	St. Anthony's Parish	Gidan Bala	Kafur
19	St. Mary's Parish	Gidan Korau	Kafur
20	St. Jarome's Parish	Gidan Yawa	Bakori
21	St. John of the Cross Parish	Gidan Kurma, Tsigi,	Bakori
22	St. Joseph Parish	Gidan Maichibi, Tsigi	Bakori
23	St. Titus' Catholic Church	Sabon Gida	Bakori
24	St. Augustine's Catholic Church	Gidan Gaga	Bakori
25	St. James' Catholic Church	Gidan Aku	Bakori
26	St. Raymond's Catholic Church	Unguwar Shudi	Bakori
27	St. Michael's Catholic Church	Sabuwa	Sabuwa
28	St. Charles' Catholic Church	Dandume.	Dandume
29	St. Mary's Catholic Church	Kongolam	Mai'adua
30	St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Chaplaincy	Federal Polytechnic, Kaura Namoda	Zamfara State
31	St. Peter's Parish	Kaura Namoda	Zamfara State
32	St. Matthew's Catholic Church	Madara	Giwa, Kaduna State
33	St. Mary's Catholic Church	Godiya,	Giwa, Kaduna State

Source: Field Work, October 2 – December 20, 2025.

The growth of Catholic Church in Katsina consequently led to the creation of the Catholic Diocese of Katsina on Monday, October 16, 2023, by Pope Francis (March 13, 2013–April 21, 2025), who was the head of the Catholic Church and the Sovereignty of the Vatican City (Maiden General Assembly, 2024). This historic development led to the appointment of a Hausa man, Most Reverend Monsignor Gerald Mamman Musa, as its first bishop by His Holiness Pope Benedict (The Catholic Diocese of Katsina, 2025). Thus, Bishop Musa, before his appointment, was Associate Professor of Communications at the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, who eventually became the first man in the history of northwestern Nigeria to attain that position in the Catholic Church. More so, his appointment led to the upgrade of St. Martin De Porres Catholic Church (Parish) to the Cathedral level, namely, St. Martin De

Porres Cathedral. Thus, before the creation of the Diocese, all Catholic outstations, Catholic Church (Parish), and Deaneries were under the Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, which previously encompassed Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states between 1953 and 2023. This marked 70 years. Hence, the Catholic Diocese of Katsina now includes Katsina State and Kaura Namoda region of Zamfara State, covering approximately 25,060 km² in northwestern Nigeria. As of 2025, the Diocese has 28 priests, 1 higher institution, 1 health institution (run by Dominican Sisters), 3 secondary schools, and 11 nursery and primary schools (The Catholic Diocese of Katsina, 2025).

Between 2023 and 2025, the Diocese had 23 Catholic Churches, divided into 3 pastoral deaneries to ensure effective evangelization and administration. See Table 2 for a list of Churches and their location.

Table 2: List of Churches under Catholic Diocese of Katsina, 2023–2025

KATSINA DEANERY			
S/No.	Catholic Church Name	Location	Local Government Area
1	St. Joseph's Parish	Shagari Low Cost	Katsina
2	St. Jacob's Catholic Chaplaincy	Army Barracks	Katsina
3	St. Martin's Cathedral	Katsina	Katsina
4	St. James' Dandagoro	Dandagoro	Katsina
5	St. Mary's Parish	Dutsin-Ma	Dutsin-Ma
6	St. Gabriel's Parish	Daura	Daura

7	St. Joseph's Parish	Magaman Jibia	Jibia
FUNTUA DEANERY			
8	St. Theresa's Parish	Funtua	Funtua
9	St. Paul's Pastoral Area	Tafoki	Faskari
10	St. Mary's Parish	Gidan Korau	Kafur
11	St. Joseph's Parish	Gidan Maichibi	Bakori
12	St. John of the Cross Parish	Gidan Kurma, Tsiga,	Bakori
13	Our Lady of Perpetual Help	Bakori	Bakori
14	Holy Cross Parish	Dandume	Dandume
15	St. Peter's Parish	Kaura Namoda	Kaura Namoda, Zamfara
16	St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Chaplaincy	Federal Polytechnic	Kaura Namoda, Zamfara
MALUMFASHI DEANERY			
16	St. Jerome's Parish,	GidanYawa	Bakori
17	St. Patrick's Church	Gidan Maikambu	Kafur
18	St. Anthony's Parish	Gidan Bala	Kafur
19	St. Joseph's Parish	Layin Minista	Malumfashi
20	St. Vincent Ferrer Church	Malumfashi	Malumfashi
21	St. Patrick's Parish	Gamzago	Malumfashi
22	St. John Bosco Parish	Malamawa	Malumfashi
23	St. Patrick's Parish	Sandamu	Sandamu

Source: *The Catholic Diocese of Katsina*. (2026). Access January 5, 2026. <https://www.catholicdioceseofkatsina.org/about>

Educational Impacts

Educational advancement was one of the major impacts of the Catholic Church in Katsina (Wycliff, 2017). One of such impact was the establishment of theological institutions and training centres such as St. Joseph Mukasa Catechetical Training Centre

Malumfashi in 1965 by the Catholic Dominicans as a regional centre for training Catechists and their spouses (Wycliff &Wajiga, 2021). The Catechists are teachers of the Catholic faith and a pastoral assistant to the Parish Priest (Reverend Father). The institutions began by running a 1-year program and later became a 2-year program (Wycliff,

2019). It was initially meant for Hausa-speaking Catechists and their spouses. Its pioneer students were predominantly Hausa Christians who converted from traditional religion and Islam. In fact, according to Wycliff (2019), Bishop Dempsey used the centre as a tool for evangelization amongst the indigenous Hausa-speaking people in and around Malumfashi area. This explains why the pioneer students were Hausa non-Muslim (Maguzawa and Dukawa) from the areas around Malumfashi, Kafur, Bakori, and Yelwa before other Catholic Dioceses sent their Catechists to the centre for formal training. Between 1965 and 2011, the institution has graduated about 1000 Catechists. These figures included the Catechists' wives who passed through the Women's Training Course Section handled by the American Dominican Sisters.

Subsequently, this institution became a centre for the development of human resources for the evangelical work among Hausa Christians, whose population was converted to Christianity from traditional religion and Islam. To the extent that some of the sons of the parents who got converted are currently serving as Catechists and Reverend Fathers within and outside Katsina State. Examples, Catechist Ibrahim Markus, Catechist Suleiman Isah, Catechist Samaila Joshua, Reverend Father Habila Bala, Reverend Father Yohana Luka, and

Reverend Father Iliya Balarabe Tsiga (Abale, 2025).

The establishment of missionary primary and secondary schools, which provided a Western kind of education, was another impact. Especially in complementing government efforts in reducing the high level of illiteracy, as well as in provision of quality education, which is not obtainable in most public primary and secondary schools in Katsina. According to Wycliff (2018), all the missionaries' schools established in the part of northern Nigeria were predominantly by SIM, RCM, Anglican CMS, and the New Generation Church. These schools were built on the core values of discipline, honesty, holiness, hard work, and integrity. Also, to provide quality educational services that meet the contemporary needs. Thus, out of the 43 different Christian missionaries' primary schools established in Katsina, 4 were established by the Catholic Church. While out of the 13 missionary secondary schools, 5 were also owned by Catholic Church.

The first of such school was St. Theresa's Primary School Funtua, established in 1943 when a plot of land was acquired by Father John Connolly from Zaria Mission, for building a Church and School (Wycliff & Ameh, 2023). According to Akubor and Akinwale (2014), by 1960, the school was well organized with pupils from

both Catholics and non-Catholics before it was closed down during the Nigerian Civil War. Even when it was reopened after the war, the North Central State Military Government took it over in 1975 (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014) without any compensation. Furthermore, that same school was demarcated from the mission compound by the government, and renamed it as Sambo Primary School. This means it is now government property, not that of the Catholic Church. In the wake of that, after 28 years without a Catholic school in Funtua, St. Theresa's Catholic Church Funtua, opened a Nursery and Primary School in September 2004 when Father Joseph Ike was the Parish Priest. As such, the school began in that period with 10 pupils, 2 teachers. The first Head-Teacher was Chief Lawrence Ajisola, while Mr. Steven Onah was his assistant. As of 2014, the school has graduated about 200 pupils and thousands as of 2023 (Wycliff, 2019).

Of equal importance, while the Church was seeking registration with the Katsina State Ministry of Education, the school changed its former name to Seat of Wisdom Community School. It also relocated from the Church compound to accommodate Muslim students (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). This has tremendously increased the pupil's enrolment, and also debunked the stereotype views and thought that

mission schools were mainly centres of converting Muslims to Christianity.

The establishment of Maryamu Nursery and Primary School in Malumfashi was another impact. This school was established on January 11, 1988, by Father Maximus Ikeh, who was the Parish Priest of St. Vincent Ferrer's Catholic Church Malumfashi. While Sister Regina Anyararah, OP, was the appointed pioneer Head-Teacher of the school. The school is located in the Church compound, which also houses the St. Vincent Ferrer's Catholic Church, the St. Joseph Mukasa Catechetical Training Centre, the Central Clinic, and a Sisters' Convent (Wycliff, 2019). This school started with 35 pupils comprising Catholics and non-Catholic Christians, including Muslims. The first set graduated on July 22, 1995. Since then, hundreds of pupils have graduated as future leaders of this great country and the globe at large.

The emergence of St. Martin De Porres Nursery and Primary School in Katsina city was another breakthrough on the educational advancement. The school was established on September 13, 2004, as a result of the ideas conceived by the then Parish Priest, Father Joseph Atado. The school began with 105 pupils, comprising 43 boys and 62 girls, whose population cut across Muslims and Christians. Its first headmaster was Mr.

Josep Abale, who was assisted by 5 teachers (Abale, 2025).

More so, St. Mary's Nursery and Primary School Dutsin-Ma, was another prominent missionary school established in the premises of St. Mary's Catholic Church. The school was established with the effort of the first Parish Priest, Father John Adili, in the year 2010 (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014).

Aside from the aforementioned primary schools, the Catholic Church had also established quite a number of secondary schools. The first of this kind was St. Martin De Porres College, established on October 13, 2003, at Katsina city opposite the Nursery and Primary school. At its inception, there were 31 students with 4 members of the NYSC as teachers. The pioneer Principal was Mr. Clement C. Uzor, while Father Joseph Atado was the administrator of the school, and also the motivator behind the establishment. This school also has boarding facilities for students who wish to stay in boarding, especially those coming from outside Katsina city, other States of Nigeria. Between 2003 and 2011, the school graduated 350 students who have also since graduated, contributing their own roles to peace and nation-building in Nigeria (Abale, 2025).

Similarly, there was the establishment of St. Vincent Ferrer's College Malumfashi in 2006 (Wycliff, 2012). The secondary

school started with 40 students with Mrs. Tina Charles as its pioneer Principal. She was assisted by 9 teachers. Between 2006 and 2011, the school graduated 20 students (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). In 2012, enrolments rose to 130 students, and tripled with Christian and Muslim student populations. This promotes inter-faith avenues and intergroup relations for national consciousness and unity in diversity.

The establishment of St. Theresa's Secondary School in Funtua town in 2010, with 25 students, was another impact (Wycliff, 2017). The pioneer Principal was Chief Lawrence Ajisola, while Mr. Stephen Onah was the Vice Principal. According to the 2011/2012 academic session list, there were 73 students enrolled (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014).

The establishment of St. Mary's Secondary School, Dustin-Ma, was equally another milestone. Its establishment created avenues for graduating from St. Mary's Nursery and Primary School Dutsin-Ma, to be enrolled in the secondary school. This meets the yearning needs of Catholic and non-Catholic parents of that location.

Health Care Services

Health care services which are one of the great services rendered to humanity in the world. Has been one of the areas in

which the Catholic Church contributed immensely. Besides, a healthy nation is a better society, which produces a good human resource for a better workforce. In response to service to humanity, the Catholic Church established the Central Clinic and Maternity in Malumfashi. The whole idea of establishing the clinic was conceived by Catholic Dominican Friars Sisters who visited Malumfashi in 1960, and saw the health needs and challenges of the inhabitants (Wycliff, 2019). According to Akubor and Akinwale (2014), during that time, there were many cases of snake bites among the Maguzawa (Hausa non-Muslims) to the extent that in 1964, the American Dominican Sisters treated patients in the villages who were suffering from various sicknesses and diseases. This gave birth to Catholic Church Central Clinic and Maternity, and also created opportunities in the spread of the Gospel of Christ, which led to the conversion of the Hausa non-Muslims to Christianity, and even some Muslim communities in Malumfashi, Bakori, Kafur, and Kankara local government areas.

Interestingly, this missionary clinic, which started with 3 Dominican Sisters who were from the United States of America, experienced a setback in 1975 owing to the establishment of the affiliated Rural General Hospital under Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital, Zaria, which was less than 1

mile from the Catholic Mission compound (Lawal, 2011). However, although the missionary clinic was closed down, it was reopened with more modern health care services, facilities, and equipment. The clinic, according to Akubor and Akinwale (2014), offers diverse health services. As of 2014, the missionary clinic had a staff strength of 26, including 2 medical doctors and security officers (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014).

Challenges Facing Catholic Church in Katsina

Despite the establishment and growth of the Catholic Church in Katsina, it was characterized by quite a number of challenges that attempted to hamper its successful story. Obtaining a valid Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) from the government for building of 3-in-1 Christian missionary enterprises has been a challenge experienced. According to Akubor and Akinwale (2014), Wycliff and Ameh (2023), Rabe and Wycliff (2018), and Sagir (2014), even when the plot of land was obtained with the C of O, the Catholic Church was always threatened by the hostile Hausa Muslim community. One such incident was experienced by St. Joseph's Catholic Church Magaman Jibia, who obtained a plot of land and built the church, but kept receiving threats from the antagonist Muslims, who lacked the spirit of religious tolerance and unity in diversity.

In another scenario, St. Mary's Catholic Church Dutsin-Ma lost the plot of land originally approved with valid credentials by the then Northern Regional Government of Nigeria in 1966 to build a permanent place of worship (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). They lost the land because many southern Nigerians who constituted the Catholic community left Dutsin-Ma during the Nigerian Civil War, and no one asked for the piece of land after the war. As such, the then State Government built a children's hospital on the land despite the Church valid C of C from government. This incident led the Church to obtain another plot of land where it built the Church, school, and pastorium (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014).

Conflicts, and riots were other challenges that affected the growth of the Catholic Church in Katsina. One such experience was the Nigerian Civil War. Which led to the relocation of most Nigerian migrant communities from the Southern part, especially the Igbo ethnic group who constituted the large Catholic community on the eve of the war (Wycliff, 2016; Peter & Wycliff, 2020). This led to the decline of Catholics in Katsina owing to forced migration, displacement of population and lost of lives, and even closed down of centres of worships such as St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Funtua before it was reopened in 1975 (Wycliff & Ameh, 2023).

Also, the Kafanchan riots of March 1987, which occurred as a result of misunderstanding between some students of the College of Education in that town, and its spread to other parts of northern Nigeria such as Katsina. On March 11, 1987, during the riots, St. Theresa's Catholic Church Funtua was burnt down to ashes to the extent that some of the parishioners lost their lives (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). This was a setback to the growth of Catholic Church and Catholic community. This riot turned Catholics orphans, widows, widowers, and homeless. While some lost their sources of livelihood leading to psychological trauma and forced migration (Wycliff, 2023). It equally cost the Church to use the materials it has preserved for other developmental projects for renovation/rehabilitation of the burnt Church, as well as to support the welfare of the victims of the riots.

The Kafanchan also led to the demolition of St. Gabriel's Catholic Church at Daura by the people of the town because, according to them, it was close to their Mosque (Akubor & Akinwale, 2014). This terrible experience cost the Church millions of naira spent on purchase of the plot of land and the Church building project.

The 2011 post-presidential election violence was another factor that affects not just Catholic Church but other Christian denominations. The violence

according to Wycliff (2023), Ajamu (2013), and Wycliff (2016) led to deadly tolls on Christian centre of worships, Christian homes and businesses, mission compounds and pastors. Wycliff (2023) findings reveal that more than 60-churches worth billions of naira were torched, thousands of houses belonging to Christians were destroyed, and several pastors and Church congregations killed while others raped by the hoodlums and religious extremist of Katsina. This incidence rendered them homeless, and destitutes coupled with serious psychological trauma, and drastic reduction of Christian community through death and forced migration, which seriously affected Catholic congregations and the further expansion of the Church.

Conclusion

This paper revealed that the early attempt to establish Catholic Church in Katsina between 1710 and 1711 failed, as a result of trade treaty signed by European explorers and Sokoto Caliphate, the harsh weather of the desert, and the means of transportation of that time. This followed by the widespread spread of Islam through trans-Saharan trade, Arab merchants, scholars, and also through 1804 Jihad of Uthman Danfodiyo. However, the fall of Sokoto Caliphate, and the whole region of Northern Nigerian empires, kingdom, and chiefdoms to British colonial

administration, especially from 1903, has paved way in the penetration of the Christian missionaries in the 1930s, which equally gave Catholic Church the great opportunities to penetrated Katsina, established mission stations, which eventually development and became Parishes, Deaneries and Catholic Diocese. This a historic moment gave birth to the first Hausa man as the first Catholic Bishop in not just Katsina the entire region of northern Nigeria.

The paper also revealed that the evangelical activities of the American Dominican Sisters, the Reverend Fathers among the Hausa Muslims, especially the Hausa and Fulani non-Muslims of the southern Katsina, led to their conversion to Christianity, and the birth of the indigenous Hausa and Fulani Christians in the history of Katsina.

The paper also reveals that the 3-in-1 missionary enterprises have indeed paved way not only in the establishment and growth of the Catholic Church, but also the Catholic owned higher institution, primary, and secondary schools, and also the Catholic clinic/maternity. These enterprises created employment opportunities to thousands of Nigerians as teachers, medical doctors, nurses, medical laboratory scientists, security men, sanitation officers, consultants, and administrators, and also foreign clergymen and women who developed

spiritual and physical needs of Katsina society. The schools and the healthcare centres also served as sources of government internally generated revenue through taxes and levies they paid to the local, state, and federal government revenue boards agencies.

In fact, the missionary schools, which were made up of Christian and Muslim pupils and students, and who are also people from different family backgrounds, Church denominations, religious sects, ethnic groups, and languages, became a centre of intergroup relations, which created avenues for Christian and Muslim dialogue, and unity among Nigerians. These kinds of great opportunities are not obtainable in Katsina public primary and secondary schools, where pupils and students' enrolment are predominantly Muslim, and people of the same ethnic identity i.e., Hausa and Fulani.

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