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## **DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY**

### **LECTURE SERIES ORGANIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY**

The following Essays represent series of Lectures organized as Inaugural and Departmental Lectures by the Department of Theology of the Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul, Bodija, Ibadan, Oyo State from October 2012 – April 2017

## **EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS: FROM THE SERVICE OF THE FAITH TO THE SERVICE OF THE MISSION**

Being the Department Lecture of Theology on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2012

By

Sr. Florence Oso, EHJ

### **INTRODUCTION**

To begin with, I must say that, my research in this paper does not pretend to be conclusive, rather it intends to stimulate further reflections and research on the subject matter.

Over the years I heard people use this expression *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* indiscriminately among my colleagues, theological students, in Ecumenism class, in inter Religious Dialogue class, at Conferences and seminars, without giving enough thought to the whole expression. Some just know that it was a slogan that was operative in the Church at a time while some have also commented on it or made reference to it. Some of these comments at times may appear funny, while others may be unscholarly; some others still make sense and some are careful not to make reference to it at all. In a nutshell it is obvious that a proper understanding of the term is what is needed because we cannot erase from the history of the Church the fact that the Church, at a point in time, expressed herself in that slogan. In 2005, Bishop Matthew Ndagoso in a paper he presented to Diocesan Ecumenical Directors at Kaduna, said: “Before the Second Vatican Council, the popular theological slogan without qualification was “*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*”.<sup>1</sup> Some think the new slogan in the Church now should be: “outside ecumenism there is no salvation.” Is the Church really looking for a new slogan? If the answer is in the affirmative then definitely not this one because this new one here does not completely capture the teachings of Vatican II.

EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS, “this was our faith; we believed it and professed it to be so”. The Church’s affirmation which says “*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*” is a traditional position tied to the scripture read under the missionary mandate profile. (Mtt.28:16-20). This scriptural text is a theophanic narration through which Matthew presents the mission, that is, the duty and vocation of the disciples. According to a commentary on Matthew it says that: “the task of “making disciples” of nations involves first of all the command to baptize. Since baptism is the sign that all Christians have in common, the command to baptize is a confession of the whole Church. To become a disciple is not to belong to one of Jesus’ “schools” but to become a member of the whole Church”.<sup>2</sup> By baptism here, Matthew is thinking simply of membership in the Church.<sup>3</sup> Baptism is considered as a necessity for salvation.<sup>4</sup> Jesus also submitted to baptism in order to fulfil all righteousness. (cf. Mtt.3:13-17)

Some people are of the opinion that the Church went soft in her theology in favour of the separated brethren and other *extra-ecclesiam*. Did the church really go soft? Did she change her theology to accommodate other Christians and other Religions? Did this move annul the evangelizing mission of the Church? What really happened concerning the position of the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Ndagoso, *The Effective Ecumenical Director: A paper Prepared For the First National Seminar for Diocesan Ecumenical Directors*, At the Catholic Social Centre, Kaduna, May 4, 2005, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> U.Luz, *Matthew 21-28: Hermeneia - A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, Fortress Press, Augsburg, 2005, p.631.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.632.

<sup>4</sup> The Church is the means of salvation, without which no one can enter the glory of the heavenly kingdom DH.3868.

Church on this tradition? It is only in recent times that the study of this problem has brought about a reconstruction of the history of this affirmation and a deep change of mind in the Church's meaning. For the right understanding of this affirmation the history of this affirmation is something that should be studied.

### 1. ORIGIN OF THE AFFIRMATION

What is the origin of this affirmation? When was it said and why? This affirmation originated from Origen and Cyprian. Origen was a fervent Christian. He had the desire to become a martyr. He was a bishop of African origin and was condemned by two councils after his death and that is why he is not a father of the Church though a great theologian. Origen makes this affirmation in 150 AD, in his writing "In Iesu Nave", commenting on the episode of Joshua 2:9-21 he wrote: "Anyone who wants to be saved must come to the house of this prostitute of old, outside this house, no one will be saved. If anyone goes out of this house he will be blamed for his own death."<sup>1</sup> This statement of Origen is not a theological affirmation but rather an exhortation to the new converts to Christianity who under the harsh persecutions were tempted to return to paganism, it was meant to be a warning, a watch out for the Christians and not a condemnation of non-Christians. This affirmation equally supposes a conception of the Church as a true salvific institution. Further in his speech he wrote: "attaining salvation through this sign, are all those that would be found in the house of the prostitute of old, washed in the water and in the spirit and in the blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> This is a strong affirmation, which in positive terms affirms and in negative terms denies that there is salvation outside the Church. We can observe that Origen did not have as aim our problems and elsewhere he has a wider conception of salvation. Therefore when Origen said this he did not mean that those outside the Church will not be saved but rather his preoccupation was the weak new converts whom he was exhorting to persevere to the end. As of the time this affirmation was originally made the problem was not the same with those who echoed it centuries later. It made no reference to other Christians or ecclesial communities which were not in existence then.

The second author of this affirmation is Cyprian, a bishop from Carthage, a writer of a less spiritual and hierarchically more pronounced ecclesiology than the one presented by Origen. He was one of the most popular authors in Christian antiquity and in the Middle Ages. He wrote many treatises and letters and all of his works are written for specific occasions and served practical purposes. He was a man of action and interested in the direction of souls rather than theological speculation. Cyprian defended this affirmation in some of his letters but he did this in a more organic way in his "De Unitate Ecclesiae" which was written probably in 250 AD.<sup>3</sup> This letter was probably composed chiefly because of the Novatian heresy as well as that of Felicissimus of Carthage. His concern in this letter was those who as a result of the heresy were separated from the Church. The introduction to this letter explains that schisms and heresies are caused by the devil and are more dangerous than persecutions because they jeopardize the internal unity between believers, ruin the faith and corrupt the truth. It further obliged every Christian to remain in the Catholic Church and there is only one Church that is built on Peter. There is no salvation outside of this Church: He who does not

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<sup>1</sup> Origen, *In Iesu Nave* III,5; PG 12, 841-842.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, *De Unitate Ecclesiae* VI; CSEL III/2, 795; (Cyprian was consecrated bishop in 249 and this work of his was probably read at the Council which took place in Carthage in 251).

have the Church for his mother cannot have God for his father. If anyone who was outside the ark of Noah could escape, then he may also escape who shall be outside the Church. (cf. Gen. 7:23)<sup>1</sup> This affirmation for the fathers, largely concerned the condition of Christians and touches particularly the condition of those who are at the verge of returning to paganism or being involved in any heresy.

## 2. THE AUGUSTINIAN TURNING POINT

In Augustine's time the situation began to change. Taking into consideration the deep transformation of mentality which carries with it the fact that with Constantine Christianity became an official Religion of the Empire and majority of the people accepted the faith. This change favoured the conviction that the Gospel is being preached everywhere and he who does not accept it was guilty of unbelief. On the other hand there is need to take into consideration the novelty which was introduced by Augustine, a Theologian whose idea can never be summed up in few lines. We can assume as take off point of his idea, a certain rigidity of Cyprian's Ecclesial Unity. The Donatist crisis led Augustine to an ulterior rigidity of the institutional and hierarchical aspect of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Though it was difficult for the laity to differentiate between the lapsed, the sinners and the legitimately ordained ministers, notwithstanding this, Christ continues to operate in their ministry.<sup>3</sup> This rigid prospective will affect our theme, where it becomes binding with the theory of the Church of Abel, which is the Church which existed right from the time of the first man and which embraces all the just. This theory which justifies the membership of the Church outside every historic concreteness and juridical visibility, together with this anti-Donatist institutional rigidity ended up in giving a theological covering to the strong emphasis of the un-eliminable right of the visible Church.<sup>4</sup> Congar explains this with his 'faith before faith', 'grace before grace'.<sup>5</sup> Though in Augustine these different points still created a certain tension which disappeared with the writings of his disciples which were so much centred around the theme of Predestination of all the baptized and his presentation of the elects. They believe that God saves some, the elects, while the others are left in their sins. The elect must be in the Church, all those who are baptized have been chosen. God has always wanted our salvation. The eternal love of God is forever.<sup>6</sup> Augustine introduces a non-Biblical theme, saying God wants

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Cyprian in his writing on the subject of those who are separated from the Church as a result of heresy affirms: "whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulterous, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ, attain to rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is a profane, he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his father, he who does not have the Church for his mother. If anyone could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the Church". 214-215." Cf. also Gen.7:13-23.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Baptism against Donatist*, 1-4, bk. IV, chap.1, art.1. Augustine's comparison of the Church with paradise shows us that men may indeed receive her baptism outside her pale, but that no one outside can receive or retain the salvation of eternal happiness.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Y. Congar, *Ecclesia ab Abel*, in H.Elfers, F.Hofmann (edd.), *Abhandlungen uber Theologie und Kirche*, Festchrift fur Adam, Patmos, Dusseldorf, 1952, pp.79-108.

<sup>4</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna Salvezza fuori della Chiesa*, in *Id, Il Nuovo Popolo di Dio*, Queriniana, Brescia, 1971, p.373.

<sup>5</sup> Y. Congar, *Salvezza dei non Evagelizanti*, in *Id. La mia Parrocchia vasto mondo. Verita dimensione della Salvezza*, Paoline, Roma, 1963, p. 160

<sup>6</sup>Cf. G.Colzani, *Anthropologia Theologica, L'Uomo Paradossso e Mistero*, Dehoniane, Bologna, 1997, pp.167-185.

the salvation of only the elect and not of all.<sup>1</sup> The salvation of all belongs only to the eternal love of God. This affirmation of Augustine does not belong to the mind of Christ, and at this point Augustine separate his thought from that of the Catholic faith, from the Pauline theology.<sup>2</sup> The growth in the importance of this thesis of Augustine ended up in some, becoming no longer sensitive to the contrast between the biblical presentation of a God who saves all and the thesis of the election of some, bringing back in others, the idea of sin as belongs to the realm to the human freedom and responsibility. He who does not believe does not because he does not want to.

Some Theologians like Prospero of Aquitanis tried to weld the Augustinian thesis on predestination and the election of some while, others are left in their sins, with the biblical thesis on the presentation of a God who is the saviour of all. Others like Lucifero of Cagliari and especially Fulgenzio of Ruspe (+533) adopted a more harsh form of this thesis. In his “Veritate Praedestinatio”, Fulgenzio opposes the idea that all those who do not believe would be saved.<sup>3</sup> And in “De Fide Ad Petrum” he opposes the position of the possibility of the salvation of heretics and schismatic and even of the Jews and pagans.<sup>4</sup> This thesis was accepted in the Medieval period without any problem and thereby entered into the Magisterial documents; it is found in four of the Church’s documents: 1) The Letter of Innocent III to the Bishops of Tarragona in 1208. 2) The Lateran Council IV in 1215. 3) The Bull of Boniface VII “Una Sanctam” in 1302. 4) The Decree for the Copts of the Council of Florence in 1442. Up to that point there was no problem about the interpretation of this thesis because there was a common conviction that lack of faith in those who do not believe is due to their refusal to believe: therefore they are condemned because they are guilty.

Such a peaceful idea requires a peacefully Christian world, for it to be accepted; but there were so many happenings in the world of the time, with the image of the world itself changing, the thesis, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* could no longer remain unaffected. We can therefore understand why the shift in the image of the world at the beginning of the Modern epoch meant indeed an earthquake for our ‘theme’ which entered into a new phase. This change in the perception of the world is certainly responsible for the geographical discovery of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century but not without the influence of a political debate of the time which introduced the concept of tolerance.

### 3. EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS IN THE MODERN AGE

It is obvious that theologians like Lucifero of Cagliari, Fulgenzio of Ruspe and others who pose the expression *Extra Ecclesia Nulla Salus* in after the teaching Origine had no idea of Africa, Asia or Latin America. This idea was maintained until the post- discovery period. When Columbus discovered America after the Portuguese discovered Africa, the people began to ask the question: ‘Is it really true that outside the Church there is no Salvation? This is a term which served as a driving force for the missionary thrust or activities under the profile of missionary mandate from the time of the discovery of the New Worlds. The necessity of the faith and of baptism and the Divine Will of the universal salvation was for centuries tied to the salvific role of the Church and this conviction found an incisive expression in the

<sup>1</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Treatise on the Predestination of the Saints*, Chapter 11 (VI)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Chap 12 (VII) Augustine confesses that he had formerly been in error concerning the grace of God and opposes the Pauline theology on this; Cf. Rom.5;1-2; 3:21-26; 8:28-30.

<sup>3</sup>Fulgenzio di Ruspe, *De Veritate Praedestinationis* III, 16.18; PL 65, 660-661.

<sup>4</sup> Idem., *De Fide ad Petrum* 38; PL 65, 704.



theological expression “extra ecclesia nulla salus”. It is only in recent times that the study of this problem has brought about a reconstruction of the history of this affirmation and a deep change of mind in the church’s meaning of it.

This theme was again taken up in the Modern Age, but radically re-formulated in a new way since those who know Christ are very few in comparison to those who do not know him. The discovery of the three new continents revealed that there was still a great multitude of people in the world that has never heard about Christ. The geographical discoveries throw into crisis the fundamental premises of our stand, the guilt of one who is not baptized or baptized but is outside the Church, the population and the condition of those people is such that we cannot think of a refusal of the Gospel in their case. This started off another reflection on this statement. The beginning of the solution to this problem passes through an overcoming of the condition of lack of faith as a condition of guilt. In order to resolve this problem there has to be a return to the medieval and Patristic idea of the good faith subjected to objective situation of sin, with the thesis of “the erring in good faith”.<sup>1</sup> It was only in the medieval with Abelardo’s moral of the intention that full significance was given to these voices. This would be summing up the people’s situation to that of ignorance without guilt. Seeing them in the light of Paul’s letter, “And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is preacher for them? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent?” (Rom.10:14-15). Thomas in 1700-1800 has always sustained that God would never have left anyone in the situation of ignorance for life, even if the person is in the jungle God would have sent inspiration to the person or a preacher or even an angel to lead the person to the faith.<sup>2</sup> This adds a spiritual angle to the discovery of the new worlds; put in other words, that if the Portuguese and Christopher Columbus have not discovered the new worlds God would have made them to still hear the Gospel preached to them.

The theme of Supernatural faith in the One God, of those who are ignorant of Christ was also introduced at this point in time to accommodate the Jews and adherents to other Religions in God’s plan of salvation. Though they are not Christians because they have no knowledge of Christ yet they could not be called non-Christians because they have the virtue of habitual and actual faith in common with the Church and therefore before God they are considered along with the Christians. Though this thesis was not too clear and therefore difficult to understand but all the same it ended up in some documents of the Church, “Singulari Quadam” of Pius IX in 1854, and in his “Quanta Conficiamur Moerore” of 1863<sup>3</sup>. Leo XIII and Pius X picked up this thesis in their reflections and gave it a serious second thought saying that, only those who are outside the Church as a result of guilt would not be saved. To remove the crux of the guilt of those who do not believe some theological theses were developed. Among which are these very important two: The application of the implied faith – *La fides s’implicita* and the Baptism of desire - *Baptismo de desidero*.<sup>4</sup> This is explained by theologians as the desire in some people to become Christians but who were not baptized. At the background of the first thesis is the text of Hebrew 11:6.”Now it is impossible to please God without faith, since anyone

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<sup>1</sup> O.Lottin, *Les Cas de L’ignorance invincible des Verites e la foi, Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medioval*, 8 (1936)pp. 299-303.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, In *Il Sententiarum* d. XXVIII, q. 1, a 4, ad quartum.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. H. Denzinger, (DH), *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Moribus*, Edizione Bilingue a cura di P.Hunermann, Dehoniane, Bologna, 1995, 2866-2867.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum* (1896), AAS 28 (1895-1896), P.708; Pius X, *E Supremi* (1903), AAS 36 (1903-1904), p.136.

who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who try to find him.” This concept is not the faith in Jesus Christ but a faith in God, the judge of good and evil. But is this the faith of the Church? The heart of the Christian faith is the Christological and Trinitarian faith. This perhaps could have been one of the reasons for proposing the evangelization of the people in the newly discovered worlds to Spain and Portugal as expressed in the bull, *Romanus Pontifex* of Nicholas V in 1455. In this bull Pope Nicholas gave the king of Portugal permission to conquer Muslim and pagan territories and to reduce Muslims, pagans and other enemies of Christ to perpetual servitude.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of implied faith got another attention in the age of geographical discoveries in which it confirmed the universality of God’s salvific will towards those people who had no possibility of entering into a relationship with the Church, admitting that there could be a rudiment of faith even in those non-practicing and the non-believers. These theses were used as theological instruments to amplify the fact that outside the Church there is salvation

Soon the scene of the debate became that of Augustinianism, that of the relationship between grace and freedom. There was a divergence in the thesis of some modern theologians particularly some Jesuit from that of Augustine, this ended up in a series of condemnations.<sup>2</sup>

On one side was the condemnation of those who say that Christ’s redemptive work is not for all and has no influence on all, on the other hand was the refusal of the thesis which says that the lives of non-believers is totally sinful and that the same negative infidelity which is in those that Christ has not been preached to, is a sin. With such a background idea they could not but have agreed that the expression “extra ecclesia nulla salus” assumes a new meaning.

The teaching of the Church on this affirmation after the whole of that polemic was presented in the letter of the Congregation of Sancta Uffizio in which it was affirmed that the Church is ‘the means of salvation without which no one can be admitted to the Kingdom of the celestial glory’. This text maintains that it is not always necessary that for one to obtain eternal salvation he must be incorporated into the Church, but it is required that the person must at least adhere with the vow and the desire. The vow must not always be necessarily explicit, as in the case of the Catechumens but where one suffers from invincible ignorance even the implicit vow is accepted by God.<sup>3</sup>

This debate clearly suggests that the crux of the problem is the understanding of what the Church is, particularly her visibility and membership. This raises the question on the meaning of the Church and its membership. The problem that this raises after the reform is a particularly delicate one because at that time Catholic theology emphasized the visible dimension of the Church while Protestant theology tended to leave to God alone the judgement of those who are truly members of the Church. This then called for a re-definition of the Church.

#### 4. VATICAN II RE-DEFINES THE CHURCH

The only authoritative voice on this theme before Vatican II was the Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis* of Pius XII in 1943. This encyclical presented a rigid identification of the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> J.Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History*, Pauline Publications, Nairobi, 1994, p.47.

<sup>2</sup> In April 1949 three lay Professors of the Jesuit Boston College and distanced themselves from the Rector of the college. They were of the opinion that whoever does not visibly belong to the Church is destined for condemnation. A Jesuit Priest, Fr. L.Feeney, the Director of St.Benedict Centre publically supported them. Consequently, the Archbishop of Boston, Msgr. R.J.Cushing intervened by condemning the activity of the Centre, Feeney and his followers.

<sup>3</sup> DH 3868; DH 3870.

Church and the Mystical Body. Adopting the thesis of Cardinal Bellarmine which presented three elements as the condition for belonging to the Church: 1) profession of the true faith, 2) the communion of the sacraments, and 3) submission to the legitimate pastor, the Roman Pontiff, Pius XII affirms that those who do not belong to the visible organ of the Church are not sure of their salvation because they are deprived of those heavenly gifts and help that could only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> This was rather a rigid position which did not escape the criticism of some theologians who commented on it and were of the opinion that those who are separated from the faith could still be saved.<sup>2</sup>

The Vatican II Council in *Lumen Gentium* abandoned the rigid identification of, only the Catholic Church with the mystical body of Christ for a more inclusive consideration. It could no longer continue to maintain the distinction between the baptized members of the Church and those ordered by the desire the vow of Baptism. Consequently it returned to the ancient or old language reserving the idea of *votum* to only the Catechumens and developed in a different way the different forms of the membership of the Church. It deliberately dropped the term member which it used only once in the context of the state of lives in *Lumen Gentium* 13.<sup>3</sup> The Council describes the Church as a mystery and underlines that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church.<sup>4</sup> It also teaches that those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways.<sup>5</sup> Those who are incorporated into the Church are those who possess the spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who by the bonds constituted by profession of faith Sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Catechumens who, moved by the Holy Spirit, desire with an explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church, are by that very intention joined to her.<sup>7</sup> The Church knows that she is joined in many ways to the baptized who are honoured by the name of Christian, but who do not however profess the Catholic faith in its entirety or have not preserved unity or communion under the successor of Peter.<sup>8</sup> This is the condition under which other Christians are considered by the Church. At this point there was a transition, from, “outside the Church, there is no salvation” to “Outside Christ, there is no salvation”<sup>9</sup> But what is the faith of the non-Christians. Can a non-Christian be saved? If the answer is in the affirmative what makes it possible for a non-Christian to attain salvation? The Council considered this too and therefore affirm that the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems who profess to

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<sup>1</sup> R. Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, III,2,75; cf. DH 3821.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. De Lugo, *De Virtute Divinae Fidei* III, d. 12, n. 104 (ed. Vives, Parigi 1968, vol. I, p. 425); (In this work, De Lugo is of the opinion that the Jews and any other non-Christians; could be saved if he/she has the supernatural faith in the One God; DH 2005. Most of the modern theologians and particularly, the Jesuits condemned all those who say that the redemption wrought by Christ is not for all); Thomas Aquinas, *Ila Ilae*, q.2, a5-8

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, Lumen Gentium*, (LG) (Rome, November 21 1964) n.13.

<sup>4</sup> LG.16.

<sup>5</sup> LG.18.

<sup>6</sup> LG.14

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> LG.15.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. LG.13. Made reference to the universal redemption of Christ.

hold the faith of Abraham and together with us adore the one true and merciful. God is not far either from those who seek the unknown God in shadows and images.<sup>1</sup>

This affirmation of the Council therefore throws into confusion the Church's Mission to evangelize. If a non-Christian can be saved without becoming an official member of the Church then the mission of the Church runs into trouble. The question then is: is there any need again to go on mission? Paul VI in his Encyclical, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* proffers a solution to this problem when it expanded the idea and scope of mission. Before when people talk of mission they stop at proclamation but in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* another aspect was added to mission which is tagged witnessing.<sup>2</sup> The Encyclical again identified dialogue as another path of the evangelizing mission of the Church. He says there are elements in these Religions that are sparks of the Divine therefore he encouraged solidarity with them.<sup>3</sup> Consequently when people of other Religions begin to ask questions about your religion and you are explaining, it is no longer dialogue but catechesis even when the aim of this dialogue is not a change of religion.

In recent times John Paul II in the first chapter of his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, takes up again the new teaching of the Church on this subject matter saying that The Universality of salvation in Christ is asserted throughout the New Testament, maintaining that God loves all and grants them the possibility of been saved. Consequently the Church becomes the Universal Instrument of Salvation. To this catholic unity of the People of God therefore, all are called and they belong to it or are ordered to it in various ways whether as Catholic faithful, or others who believe in Christ or finally all people everywhere who are called by God's grace to salvation.<sup>4</sup> Since Vatican II dropped "Extra Ecclesia nula Salus" and now talks in terms of "Full Incorporation" or "Perfect Communion"; Partial Incorporation or "Imperfect Communion; and Gleam of Faith, the great difference is the fact that the Church no longer leaves those outside the Catholic Church in a "Hopeless" situation of "No Salvation".

## CONCLUSION

Considering the presentation in this paper what actually changed: The position of the Church, the Theology, or the understanding of the Church? Obviously with Vatican II the Church finally got over the slogan. When Pope John XXIII called for Vatican II he called for "aggiornamento", a re-awakening in the Church, an invitation to look at her situation in the Changing world. The task of Vatican II was carried out through its four definite objectives which are: 1) Self-Awareness; 2) Self-Renewal; 3) Christian Unity; 4) Dialogue with the Contemporary World. The first objective was to make the Church evaluate in the light of the Gospel herself, her apostolate in order to better intensify daily growth in Christian living. The second objective was to enable the Church do something about what she discovers about herself and make it a process of becoming more healthy and wholesome so that her response to God may become more sincere and generous. This therefore means adapting her life, her teaching, her structures and methods so that they will more readily appeal to the people of our age. The third objective is a call to Ecumenical Dialogue in its broadest sense, including

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<sup>1</sup> LG.16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation, The Evangelization of the Men of Our Time, Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (EN) (Rome, December 8, 1975) n.41.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. EN.53.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul, *Encyclical Letter on the Church's Mission, Redemptoris Missio* (RM) (Rome, December 7 1990) nn. 9-10.

dialogue with people of other living faith. The fourth objective concerns the limitless vistas of encounter with all men and women and their needs, hopes and aspirations, bringing us face to face with the life-size problem of the human person in the world today. All four objectives bring about a better understanding of the Church and her membership. Finally Vatican II is surnamed a Pastoral Council because it did not intend to change anything of the article of Faith or give new definitions but rather to figure out new ways of getting the faith across to the world. Consequently it adopted a rather practical and pastoral approach instead of dogmatic and ideological approach. These objectives are what actually challenged our tradition of “extra ecclesiam nulla salus”

The new dispensation of the Church, which affirms the possibility of salvation for all, raises some questions concerning the missionary activity of the Church: If there is possibility of salvation in any other religion, would the missionary activity of the Church not become superfluous? Would the missionary action still be necessary? Is mission still relevant today? In a bid to respond to these questions, I must say that, Mission has not been replaced and cannot be replaced with Dialogue in any form; it only remains one of the many paths of Mission.<sup>1</sup> I therefore conclude in the words of St.Paul by saying that Mission is a grace that has been given to us to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and we cannot but speak because the love of God impels us to speak (Eph. 3:8; 2Cor.5:14).’ Mission in all forms; *ad gentes, pastoralis, ad intra* and *ad extra* must continue until Christ final coming

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<sup>1</sup> RM.4.

## **CATECHESIS AND CHRISTIAN FAITH IN OUR AGE: *PORTA FIDEI* IN FOCUS**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of the Department of Theology on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2012

By  
FR. MICHAEL A. ODUBELA, OSJ

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every form of life begins with some sort of romance. Hence, love is said to be the foundation of life. As love is the foundation of life, “faith is” (as it were) “the foundation of Christian life.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, as a human person cannot live life meaningfully well without love sharing with others, so a Christian cannot profess his religion meaningfully without faith. Faith is therefore for the Christian what love is to life.

But the journey of faith is also a journey of love, so much so that one cannot say I believe convincingly if he /she has not already been overwhelmed by an experience of love sentiment – “a divine romance”. It was this experience of unbreakable connection between man and his creator that made St. Augustine to acclaim in his confessions “you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you”<sup>2</sup>.

Thomas Watts in his poem “Rest” corroborated the thought of Augustine when he affirmed that when God made man he gave him all things but ‘rest’, so that in enjoying all things and not finding true rest in them man may turn back to God in whom is true ‘rest’. In fact, we all do acclaim on a common parlance that there is no rest in this life. Hence, the Church prays every night the ‘*Nunc dimittis*’ “at last all powerful master you give leave to your servant...” (cf. Lk.2:29-32).

Man by himself cannot ascend to the height of faith, he needs the help of God to know God and discover himself. Thus, in every age and in every nation man has sought after God. They seek him to learn from him how to understand themselves and how to understand the world.<sup>3</sup> By his own initiative God endowed man with faculties capable of bringing him to the knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith (cf. CCC, 35). The proof of God’s existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason

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<sup>1</sup> Kunnumpuram Kurien, *Towards the Fullness of Life*, St. Paul, Mumbai, 2009, 11

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1,1,1

<sup>3</sup> Aid to the Church in Need, *I Believe: A Little Catechism*, 10

(cf. CCC, 35). Hence, “Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason.”<sup>1</sup> Without this capacity, which man has because he is created “in the image of God” (cf. Gen. 1:27), man will not be able to welcome God’s revelation. To this the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught that “it pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will....”<sup>2</sup>

### **THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY OF FAITH**

The journey of the Christian faith dates back to the Old Testament time when God decided to meet man by revealing himself to him. We find it succinctly summarized in the genealogy of Jesus the messiah as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew. Matthew started the infancy narrative of Jesus by tracing his root from Abraham our father in faith. It was in the encounter of ‘yhwh’ with Abraham that the seed of the Christian faith was sown and the drama of a covenantal people was to find its culmination in the new people of God – the mystical body of Christ, beautifully described as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people. A people set apart to proclaim the mighty acts of God, (cf. 1 Pet 2: 9), a mission which catechesis was designed to fulfil at the service of the faith.

The letter to the Hebrews reveals that the stages of the supernatural revelation of God was completed in the person and mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, when it says “in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a son (Heb. 1:1-2). The letter to the Galatians referred to this as the fullness of time (the *kairos* of God) when God made all things new. In this newness of time, God brought redemption to those under the law, made those who were slaves adopted children, sent His Spirit into the hearts of His children and made them heirs of God (cf. Gal 4:4-7). It is in this favourable time of God’s salvation that the mission of the Church was born. The Word of God which was incarnate in the Virgin Mary was also to become incarnate in every land, language, tribe, culture and people.

The mission to make the Word incarnate in the nook and crannies of the world gave birth to the commissioning of the Apostles to make disciples of all nations, “confirming” them in the name of the Blessed Trinity and making them witnesses to the Life, Truth and Love of God (cf. Mt. 28: 18-20). The power to proclaim the Good News in all its fullness was given to the Apostles with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s Power on the day of Pentecost. From that day, the Apostles began their mission as “fishers of men”. The birth of the mission to evangelise also became the birth of the mission to catechise. This we already see being manifested at that early time of the Church when Philip had to explain the hidden reality of the Scripture to the Ethiopian Eunuch (cf. Acts 8: 26-40). Having said this, let us turn our attention to the understanding of Catechesis itself.

### **WHAT IS CATECHESIS**

The word “catechesis” comes from the Greek verb *katechein* meaning to resound or echo<sup>3</sup>. Luke/Acts uses the verb as instruction in the way of the Lord. In St. Paul, *Katechein*

<sup>1</sup> Vat. Council I, *Dei filius* 2, cf. Vat. II, *Dei Verbum* 6, also CCC. 36

<sup>2</sup> Vat. II, *Dei Verbum* 2, cf. CCC. 51

<sup>3</sup> Lopresti James, “Catechesis” in Komonchak A. Joseph et al, *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Theological Publications, Bangalore, 2003, 161

refers to oral instruction, a handing on of all that has been received in and through Christ.<sup>1</sup> This understanding makes clear why catechesis was initially done in solely oral and recital method. It also shows that catechesis is an interactive process in which the Word of God resounds between and among the proclaimer, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit! Catechesis is a life-long process of initial conversion, formation, education, and on-going conversion. Hence catechesis could be said to be “the process of transmitting the Gospel, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways.” (General Directory for Catechesis (GDC), 105)

Furthermore, the term catechesis has undergone a semantic evolution during the twenty centuries of the Church's history. In the General Directory for Catechesis, the concept of catechesis takes its inspiration from the post-conciliar Magisterial documents, principally from *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Catechesi Tradendae* and *Redemptoris Missio* (GDC, 35).

Quite early on, the name catechesis was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ. (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 1) “Catechesis is intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life. Not only her geographical extension and numerical increase, but even more her inner growth and correspondence with God's plan depend essentially on catechesis.” (GDC, 7) Periods of renewal in the Church, as we are having within this year of faith, are also intense moments of catechesis. In the great era of the Fathers of the Church, saintly bishops devoted an important part of their ministry to catechesis. St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, and many other Fathers wrote catechetical works that remain models for us till date ( cf. GDC, 8)

The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion-bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the twofold objective of **maturing the initial faith** and of **educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ**. This means that "catechesis" must often concern itself not only with nourishing and teaching the faith but also with arousing it unceasingly with the help of grace, with opening the heart, with converting, and with preparing total adherence to Jesus Christ on the part of those who are still on the threshold of faith. This concern will in part decide the tone, the language and the method of catechesis (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 19).

## **SPECIFIC AIM OF CATECHESIS**

The specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God's help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by baptism. Catechesis aims therefore at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's word, so that the whole of a person's humanity is impregnated by that word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like him, to judge like him, to act in conformity with his commandments, and to hope as he invites us to. To put it more precisely: within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavours to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know his "mystery", the Kingdom of God proclaimed by him, the requirements and promises contained in his Gospel message, and the paths that he has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow him. It is true that being a Christian means saying "yes" to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this "yes" has two levels: it consists in surrendering to the word of God and relying on it, but it also means, at a later stage, endeavouring to know better and better the profound meaning of this word (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 20).

### **THE CHALLENGE OF CATECHESIS AND CHRISTIAN FAITH TODAY: IN DIALOGUE WITH PORTA FIDEI**

Since faith in Jesus Christ is the faith of the Church and the faith of every Christian believer in the Church, it follows that the faith which the church teaches and which every believer professes as his/ her own when he/she says I believe is the tool for catechesis. The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, emphasised on this when he says "profession of faith is both personal and communitarian" (*Porta Fidei*, 10). The Church he says is the primary subject of faith. Alluding to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he re-echoed "'I believe' is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during baptism. 'We believe' is the faith of the church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. 'I believe' is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both 'I believe' and 'we believe'." (CCC.167, cf. *Porta Fidei*, 10).

The established rapport between personal and communal faith reflect the unbreakable link between the life experience of Christians and its relationship with the ecclesial community – the Church. Owing to the tension of modern time, the Holy Father wishes to rekindle the light of faith within the Church and in the life of the faithful, hence, he called us to remember that "The "door of faith" (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church."(*Porta Fidei*, 1)

As though awakening to the realisation that the light of faith is going dim, the Holy Father called unhesitatingly as though in protest "**We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden** (cf. Mt 5:13-16). The loss of taste as salt or the loss of the brilliance of the light of faith would mean the loss of courage of Christ faithful to witness to the faith they profess. **We could pause for a while to ask ourselves how well we have all fared in our various states of life, our responsibilities as men and women and as sons & daughters of the Church, either as individuals or as a community of faith. The result of our reflection, if sincerely made, would confront us with the inner struggle we make daily to be true to our Christian calling and may even fill us with sense of guilt for having been weak when we ought to have been strong or even for having orchestrated a wave of discomfort that ripples on in the community of faith or in the life of others.** The Holy Father, however, does not want us to regress into a state of hopelessness or helplessness, thus, as though gaining freedom from a body of confusion that held him bound, he exclaimed "We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples (cf. Jn 6:51). Indeed, the teaching of Jesus still resounds in our day with the same power: He added as if to

gently warn, in the words of Jesus “Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (Jn 6: 27). (cf. *Porta Fidei*, 3)

Realising the role and responsibility of every individual Christian in engendering authentic faith, the Holy Father says, “The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us. The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summon to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world.” (*Porta Fidei*, 6) this renewal will further “arouse in every believer the aspiration to **profess** the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope. It will also be a good opportunity to intensify the **celebration** of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, which is “the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; ... and also the source from which all its power flows.”(*Porta Fidei*, 9).

Since the maxim for the year of faith is ‘know your faith and share it with others’, I believe that a re-reading and meditating on the recommended documents for this year will not only help us to rediscover the beauty of our faith but will also spur us to share them with others, hence like Fr. O’Hea we can all be eager to “pass on the faith”. The Holy Father assured that in order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* a precious and indispensable tool. It is one of the most important fruits of the [Second Vatican Council](#) and he declared it to be a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion and a sure norm for teaching the faith. (cf. *Porta Fidei*, 11)

The challenge of subjecting every element of the faith to verification principles and the pragmatism of science is still present with us (cf. *Porta Fidei*, 12) and in as much as we would argue that this attitude which marginalises God and relegates Him to the background is not yet deeply rooted within our African setting yet we seem to be contending with an attitude that maligns God. This is done as a result of the crass religiosity displayed by many who seem to give spiritual interpretation to every atom of their human experience and therefore fall continual prey to the antics of the so called ‘men of God’ present everywhere today. A formidable catechesis, deeply rooted in orthodoxy, is more urgent in our situation than ever before. This must also be watched out in our seminaries were, for various motives, many upon ordination, assume the role of self-declared exorcists and some even promise to manufacture pregnancies, more than the self-acclaimed *Oko Oloyun*.

The example of the Saints in their trust and abandonment to God’s providence, the faithful celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments, the cultivation of authentic prayer life, living out our profession of faith and other professions, vows and oaths that binds us to God and to one another, the struggle to live a unified life and not create disparity between religion and moral life, the love for charity (cf. *Porta Fidei*, 13) and truth and the desire and frantic effort to live in peace with all men, together with the resolution to work humbly with God, while leaving in conformity with the teachings of the Church, no doubt will reduce the crises of faith around, cast away the shadows of the hermeneutic of suspicion that is gradually settling around us and make us witnesses of the Word himself and the faith he handed on to us.

Before concluding this paper I would like to cite the 8 key elements of authentic Catechesis which the “Motu Proprio Data” *Porta Fidei* also witnesses to and which could be beneficiary in enhancing the proper living of the faith and sharing it with others.

## **8 Key Elements of Authentic Catechesis<sup>1</sup>**

### **Key 1: Centered on Christ – (1 Cor 2:2)**

Christocentricity is the hallmark of catechesis. “We must therefore say that in catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught. Everything else is taught with reference to him and it is Christ alone who teaches. Anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips.” Every catechist must be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: “My teaching is not mine, but his’ who sent me.” (Jn. 7: 16) (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 6)

### **Key 2: Systematic and Organic – (Acts 20:26-28)**

“Authentic catechesis is always an orderly and systematic initiation into the revelation that God has given of himself to humanity in Christ Jesus, a revelation stored in the depths of the Church’s memory and in sacred Scripture, and constantly communicated from one generation to the next by a living active traditio.” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 22)

### **Key 3: Associated with Life Experience – (1 John 1:1-4)**

“It is useless to play off orthopraxis against orthodoxy: Christianity is inseparably both. Firm and well-thought-out convictions lead to courageous and upright action; the endeavour to educate the faithful to live as disciples of Christ today calls for and facilitates a discovery in depth of the mystery of Christ in the history of salvation. It is also quite useless to campaign for the abandonment of serious and orderly study of the message of Christ in the name of a method concentrating on life experience. No one can arrive at the whole truth on the basis solely of some simple private experience that is to say without an adequate explanation of the message of Christ, who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (Jn. 14:6)". Nor is any opposition to be set up between a catechesis taking life as its point of departure and a traditional, doctrinal and systematic catechesis.” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 22)

### **Key 4: Promotes the Sacramental Life – (John 6:56-57)**

Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole of liturgical and sacramental activity, for it is in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, that Christ Jesus works in fullness for the transformation of human beings. Every form of catechesis necessarily leads to the sacraments of faith. On the other hand, authentic practice of the sacraments is bound to have a catechetical aspect. In other words, Catechesis always has reference to the sacraments. Sacramental life is impoverished and very soon turns to hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments, and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in the sacramental practice. (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 23)

### **Key 5: Driven by Scripture – (2 Tim 3:16-17)**

“The Ministry of the Word – pastoral preaching, catechesis, and all form of Christian instruction... is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture.” (CCC, 132, See also, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 27) “The Church desires that in the Ministry of the Word, sacred Scripture should have a pre-eminent position.” (GDC, 127)

### **Key 6: Fosters the Moral Life – (1 Tim 6:18-19)**

“Conversion to Jesus Christ implies walking in his footsteps. Catechesis must, therefore, transmit to the disciples the attitudes of the master himself. This moral testimony, which is prepared for by catechesis, must always demonstrate the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel.” (GDC, 85)

### **Key 7: Connected to the Ecclesial Community – (Phil 2:1-4)**

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. <https://acmrcia.org/blog>

Catechesis is closely linked with the responsible activity of the Church and of Christians in the world. A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavouring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same step. “Catechesis runs the risk of becoming barren if no community of faith and Christian life takes the catechumen in at a certain stage of his catechesis. That is why the ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.” (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 24)

**Key 8: Directed to the Life of Prayer – (1 Tim 2:1-4)**

“When catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. This climate is especially necessary when the catechumen and those to be catechized are confronted with the more demanding aspects of the Gospel and when they feel weak or when they discover the mysterious action of God in their lives.” (GDC, 85)

**CONCLUSION**

With the characteristic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where our phones have become wire-less, our cooking – fire-less; our food – pepper-less; our cars – key-less, our engines – noise-less; our fashion – top-less; our dresses – sleeve-less; our youth – job-less; our leaders – shame-less, our relationships – meaning-less; our attitude – care-less; our feelings – heart-less; our children manner –less; our society – God-less, and every other thing is becoming less of itself, **I pray that we do not become hopeless as to lose faith in God who is able to do all things. May our faith forever increase and our joy remain endless in the Lord! Thank you all.**

Being the Departmental Lecture of Theology on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2013

By  
Rev. Fr. Richard A. Omolade

### **Preamble**

I was at a loss as to what the title of this lecture should be. At a loss, because this is not meant to be a homily, but at the same time, it is not meant to be a critique, no matter how rational this discourse may be. I eventually settled for a theological ‘reflection’ and ‘reception.’ The first term is easy to understand and that is what I have done for most part of this paper, to give a reflection on certain aspects of the Year of Faith. The second term “reception” is not so clear to many people because it is essentially a new concept or a concept that is beginning to take some root in theological discourse. I have settled for this title because the invitation to celebrate the Year of faith is not a blind call demanding blind response from Christians. The call to faith at any time has always demanded from people a free but faithful response, a total response and a committed engagement. The term that encapsulates this reality is “reception”. According to Anthony Akinwale, “reception is a process through which the Church in a given place discusses, interprets and finally makes part of its own life the teachings or practices, decrees and decisions of a Council.”<sup>1</sup> Our reflection on the Year of Faith will not be complete if we do not fashion out a way to internalize its riches; a way to adapt it to our life and a process that will allow it to inform and transform our way of life, especially our religious fervor and commitments, our social engagement and moral choices.

Of course the invitation to celebrate the Year of Faith is not necessarily the decree of a Council, but it is a Pontifical initiative, an exercise of the Petrine office. It is thus my candid submission that while the celebration is not optional for Catholics, faithful and meaningful celebration and observance of the Year demands a reception from Local Churches and every individual. For instance what impact has the Year had on the Seminary as a community? Or is it just flying past this sacred community?

I am therefore, going to situate the Year of Faith in the Church’s tradition of observance of special Years, the need for this Year of faith, the demands of the year and the mode of celebration and finally, the expected benefits for the universal Church, particular church and each individual. Our reflection on the Year of faith will not be complete if we do not fashion out a way to internalize its riches, a way to adapt these riches to our life and a way or process that will allow the fruits of the Year to inform and transform our way of life especially our religious fervour and commitment, our social engagement and moral identity and imagination.

### **Introduction**

In the overall scheme of things, every year is significant. After all, even this year is so named 2013 AD, that is, in the year of our Lord 2013. For good measure, the Church has always focused on certain years because of the significance they hold for the Church. No wonder, while the world through the United Nations dedicates certain days for certain events,

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Akinwale, *The Congress and the Council: Towards a Nigerian Reception of Vatican II*, (Ibadan: The Michael Dempsey Centre, 2003), p. 4

for instance, April 22 was observed as the World Earth's day; the Church dedicates different years for special events. In the recent past we have celebrated

- 1954 – Marian Year declared by Pius XII through the encyclical *Fulgens Corona*
- 1987 – The Marian Year declared by John Pal II in preparation for the forthcoming millennium – the longest Marian encyclical ever written by a Pontiff *Redemptoris Mater*. The year was meant to increase the faith of the people and their devotion to the Virgin Mother
- 2000 – **The Great Jubilee** Year – declared by John Paul II was also called a Holy Year and a Jubilee. Proclaimed through the promulgation of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1994. It is called holy because its purpose is to encourage holiness of life and strengthen faith.  
**A holy year** is a year of forgiveness of sins, reconciliation between adversaries, of conversion and receiving the sacraments. A jubilee year is a year of Christ, who brings life and grace to humanity.  
**A Jubilee** can be *ordinary or extraordinary*. It is ordinary if it falls after the set period of years and extraordinary when it is proclaimed for some outstanding events.
- 2008 - June 29, 2008 – June 29, 2009 - The Year of St. Paul – announced by Benedict XI, to honor the great apostle to the nations.
- 2009 – June 19, 2009 – June 19, 2010 – Year for Priests – Declared by Benedict XVI to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. John Vianney, called to encourage a deepening of the spiritual life of those called to priestly ministry.
- 2012 – October 11, 2012 November 24, 2013 – The Year of Faith, announced by Benedict XI through *Porta Fidei*, the door of faith.

The essence of these years is to direct the attention of the faithful to themes central to the celebration, for instance, to focus more on the role of Mary, or the role of Paul or priests. Hence a year dedicated to faith is aimed at leading the faithful to a better appreciation of their faith and to arouse in them the zeal to ensure the same faith is deeply rooted in the hearts of all.

### **The Year of Faith**

Pope Benedict XVI declared October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013 as the Year of Faith. The first Year of faith was celebrated in 1967 and was declared by Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation *Petrum et Paulum apostolos*. That year was meant to commemorate the 1900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in Rome. At the end of the Year, Pope Paul VI proclaimed the “Creed of the People of God”, which was designed to “attest to our unshakable proposition of fidelity to the Deposit of faith.” In short, the basic goal was to call all Christians to uphold the faith of Peter and Paul, to keep within the faith and not allow oneself to be swallowed by the prevailing false doctrines of the era. As far back as 1967, Karl Rahner remarked that the goal of the year of faith is to engender a profound reflection with a view of rendering this concept, the Christian one” credible to the contemporary spirit.”<sup>1</sup> It is worth citing in full Paul VI’s call and vision for the Year of faith because the crux of the matter is still relevant today as it was almost 5 decades ago. He said:

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Connor, About Paul VI’s “Year of Faith” 1967-1968. BlogSpot. 2012.

We would also like to ask one small, though important thing: we wish to beg all of you, Our brothers and our sons, individually to remember the Saint Apostles Peter and Paul who bore witness to the faith of Christ with their words and their blood, so that you may profess truthfully and sincerely the same faith that the Church, founded and made splendid by these persons, assumed devotedly and expounded with authority. However, this profession of faith which, with the blessed Apostles as witnesses, we render to God should certainly be individual and public, free and conscious, interior and exterior, humble and decisive. We would also like this profession of faith to come from the innermost heart of every man, and that its echo throughout the Church be one, identical and overflowing with love. In fact, what more grateful service of memory, of honour, of communion could we offer Peter and Paul if not the declaration of the same faith we received from them in legacy?”<sup>1</sup>

The current Year of Faith coincides with certain landmarks in the history of the Church:

October 11, 2012 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vatican II council

October 11, 2012 also marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC).

We celebrate a Year of Faith not because other years are not faith based. We celebrate a Year of faith because as a people we acknowledge that the faith we profess is going through a crisis, it is facing some serious challenges and the year is set aside to rediscover the riches of the faith, to witness to it and to celebrate it anew.

### **Aim of the Year**

Pope Benedict XVI in his series of catechesis on the Year of faith insists that the Year of faith is not meant to celebrate any anniversary, that if we celebrate the Year of faith, it is because there is the need today as it was 50 or 20 years ago to reflect more deeply on the Christian faith. So the main theme for the year is faith – the Christian faith, the faith that we have received from the apostles. There are different dimensions of this faith. The Year of faith calls us to reflect on

- a. What is the faith of the Church?
- b. How did the apostles and the early Christians preserve this faith, and how was this faith passed on to us?
- c. What has happened to the faith of the Church in the successive years?
- d. How is your own faith today as an individual?
- e. How do we preserve this faith and pass it to others?

### **What is faith?**

The faith we talk about is not just an intellectual assent to a system of beliefs, doctrines and values, it is an encounter with a living person, Jesus Christ. It is this encounter that transforms us profoundly and helps us to transform our world. According to Benedict XI “with faith, everything changes in us and for us, and it reveals clearly our future destiny, the truth of our vocation in history, the meaning of our lives, the joy of being pilgrims en route to our heavenly homeland.” (Benedict XVI, Catechesis on the Year of Faith)

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<sup>1</sup>Paul VI, Petrum et Paulum apostolos, Apostolic exhortation to convene a special jubilee year – the Year of faith. Rome, February 22, 1967.

### **Prevailing Climate of Faith**

Since his enthronement as the Pope, Benedict XVI has been waging a war on those forces arrayed against the Church and the Christian faith, notably atheism or the denial of God, syncretism and secularism. These contemporary values are clearly threats to the development of faith. No wonder, the Year of Faith is being celebrated in an atmosphere of another call for a new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith. Benedict said “This will be a good opportunity to usher the whole Church into a time of particular reflection and rediscovery of the faith...”<sup>1</sup>

### **Indices of decline in faith**

Europe provided a rich cultural background for the development of the faith, helping the church to clearly articulate in concepts clear, and useful for the contemporary elements of the faith. In essence after the effort of those early Church Fathers, Europe ensures that the Catholic faith became a force to be reckoned with. A force that is not simply religious in nature, but whose reach extends to the social, and political life of many nations. Catholic influence as such could be seen in many areas of human life. In the Europe and America of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, faith flourished, Churches were filled, celebrations were carried out with pomp and pageantry. Ministers abound in great numbers as vocation to the priesthood and religious life flourished.

Today the same cannot be said of these traditional Catholic environments. Church attendance has dwindled; there is scarcity of personnel in many erstwhile Catholic countries. Religion has been relegated to the fringe of life for many people. Catholic values are daily subjected to ridicule or are being replaced by secular values. While the Church is still a force to be reckoned with, individuals now keep their faith to themselves, afraid to proclaim or display any sign or symbols in public, especially in the political realm. (The present fad of wearing the rosary is albeit often reduced to a social fad rather than a religious profession of faith). In some countries, laws rooted in Christian values are being reworked, values that arose out of Christian traditional values are being questioned and redefined and often Christians seem helpless or unwilling to fight for their values. Through a secular agenda and slogan such as “live and let live” Many Catholics are quick to embrace compromises even when the other party does not give back anything of value – Christians, in the words of St. Paul are becoming conformed to the world, when our faith demands of us, fidelity to Christ and not to be conformed to the patterns in the world. (Cf. PF 2) While much of the indices may have Europe in the background, many of those indices abound among us. The climate of corruption and nepotism in government and in religion, the prevalence of witchcraft and occultic practices even among Church goes, Catholics inclusive and most probably involving Catholic priests means that the faith needs resurgence even among us.

### **Challenges to be faced and resolved**

The Church in our time is being called upon to transmit the faith just as the early Christians did. We have to communicate the Gospel truth to the people of our time in a way that they will understand. We have to use the gospel message to shed light on many of the prevailing but corrupt values, cultural and social practices of our time.

For instance, relativism has become the norm for many people. Only the here and now makes sense to people. For many today, there are no clear ideals to live by. The same is also

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, 4



true for many Christians who do not even know the core of what they profess, the creed. Benedict XVI says “this can leave the door open to certain syncretism and religious relativism that lacks clarity about the truth we must believe and about Christianity’s unique power to save.” (Benedict XVI Audience of October 18, 2012)

For Catholics in Nigeria, this relativism could be in the form of religious prostitution, whereby, many of our members see every church as the same and they can move from one Church to another, everything is relative, depending on what they get from each Church visited. Priests can also succumb to this relativism, as some of us say “everything is good to the eyes that can see” Hence some will adopt any means to accomplish their goal. But the question is: what does the Lord expect of us?

### **The nature of faith in Nigeria**

Faith is universal and should have a common identity, but permit me to say that it does not seem to be so. For us in Nigeria, faith seems to be characterized by **sensationalism, sentimentalism and many times privately by superstition. (3S)** A faith practice that is solemn and organized is often not appreciated today but only those services that appeal always and solely to the senses. No wonder pastors often appeal to the sentiments of people instead of leading them to true faith, faith that works and works that are faith filled. Catholics must be vigilant in this regard and future priests must be helped to know the difference. Faith is beyond the material senses, it may use the senses and material things, but it must go beyond these. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn. 20: 29). It is lack of this proper grounding that makes people to rely on arcane sacrifices and superstition. Nigeria is a deeply religious nation, there should be something to show for it in the daily lives of our people and not just in the number of Churches and mosques we find everywhere. What we find instead are indications of a people lacking in moral rectitude, and religious imagination. It is as if religion and in our regard, Christianity is merely only dancing and shouting of alleluia with no ingrained virtue.

Catholics must therefore show the world the way out of this darkness – our faith must travel out of our churches into our streets and market places; our faith must transform not just our liturgies but also our work ethics and interpersonal relationships. Nigeria as a country is said to be a religious country, but it has become a-religious. It behooves us to change this, through our constructive faith and this is the challenge the Year of faith is asking us to embrace.

In concrete terms the following aspects of our life affect the practice of the Catholic faith in Nigeria. During this Year of faith and beyond, can we reflect on them and find some solutions? How can we make our faith shape our way of life? The Synod of Bishops for Africa called for just such approach and Benedict XVI observed:

The Synod members noted a dichotomy between certain traditional practices of African cultures and the specific demands of Christ’s message. In her concern for relevance and credibility, the Church needs to carry out a thorough discernment in order to identify those aspects of the culture which represent an obstacle to the incarnation of Gospel values, as well as those aspects which promote them.<sup>1</sup> If we must transform our culture, and our way of life, then we need to do much more than we have previously done. This is what I mean:

- a. Naming ceremony is still largely treated as something incompatible with Baptism and we seem helpless at finding a solution. The whole idea of dedication among our people

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae munus*, no 36.

is closely related to the traditional practice of allowing for a period of healing for the mother before she resumes her normal duties. Yes, some will quote the dedication of Jesus, but go back to the Gospels, He was dedicated on the eighth day, not after three months as is the practice among our people today. Furthermore, in many instances our Catholics are confused as to what to use for naming ceremony, this is indicative of the Pentecostal influence where most items have become demonized. Whereas at creation God saw all that he had made and they were good. How are we going to catechize our members to see creation as essentially good and holy and also to learn how to appropriate the transforming power of God to renew his creation by bringing these objects for purification and sanctification?

- b. Marriage ceremonies have left our people confused and our religious values undermined. Most of our members probably engage in at least two forms of marriage rites, the traditional and the Church rites. The traditional, it seems for many is the real thing and once that is done, they begin to live together. The only way we are recognized in this process is because of our threat of withholding Holy Communion. What is called engagement in most Yoruba rites today is nothing more than fund raising for the MCs. How can our Christian faith transform these practices? I do not pretend to have all the answers but we must open up a channel of engagement for discussion. For some marriage rites, the bride price is often returned under the pretext that the bride is not for sale. If common sense can accomplish this, what have we brought the gospel value to accomplish? Yet, we know that bride price is just a token, a symbol. Have we as a church spoken out enough to keep this token as a token and not a price? Do we just throw the symbol out as some do, when the bride price is returned, so that it is not misconstrued for something else? How do we continue to promote what it stands for? If it is a token, then it must be accepted for what it is. To reject it is to devalue its symbolism and significance and to fail to understand its meaning. The entire rites needs evangelization and priests must be involved in the process. For now, the public dictates the tune and our people are dancing with the confused crowd.
- c. Marriage today has become a very fertile mining ground for the Protestants and the Pentecostals. They usually come, see our beautiful girls, well formed and they simply carry them away – very easy. What is wrong with our catechesis, that our young men cannot woo their wives from these churches and bring them home? What is wrong with our religious education that at marriage our ladies come to realize that they do not have a religion except the religion of their husband? How come husbands have become gods that must be followed and worshipped? These are pastoral challenges militating against Catholicism and the priests of today must find answers to them quickly.

### **Main themes of Porta Fidei**

1. Porta Fidei is quite clear in its claim that faith is the gift of God and Christians profess faith in God who is a Trinity of persons. It is to a rediscovery of this Trinitarian life in communion of person that the Year of faith invites us by opening for us the Door of faith (Acts 14: 27). The idea of the door is symbolic, while faith is a gift, it demands

personal response. The door is always open, but only to those who will pass through it. This journey, PF reminds us is a journey of a lifetime, from our baptism till our union with God. No wonder faith also involves fidelity, a constancy that is permanent. This is grossly lacking in the sense that while some have never heard of the message and need to hear it through us, there are others who have heard it and become lukewarm. Benedict XVI reaffirmed in PF what he said at his inauguration as the Roman Pontiff, that “we must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life and life in abundance.”<sup>1</sup>

2. The world is in a bad shape – it needs transformation on many fronts and Christians are called to once again lead the way, to be the salt of the earth and light of the world.(cf. Mt.5: 13-16). The word of God remains the rich fount we can go to and return often to nourish ourselves. In deed one of the problems of mankind today is that it does not know where to turn to or who to turn to, and the Bible offers us such light, after all when the people asked “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” John 6:28, Jesus answered them “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent.” (Jn 6:29).
3. The connection between the Year of faith and the documents of Vatican II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church is important for us in the academia and future priests. Some people are already calling for Vatican III. Why do we need Vatican III when the riches of Vatican II are yet to be discovered and utilized? Pope Benedict XVI, cited the words of John Paul II that the documents of Vatican II “*have lost nothing of their value or brilliance*. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church's Tradition ... I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as *the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century*: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.”<sup>2</sup>
4. For instance, what is our attitude towards ecumenism? Ecumenism according to Vatican II is not optional, it is one of our binding duties as Christians? How much engagement do we have with our other Christian brothers and sisters? In the same vein, what is our attitude towards the world? Isn't it true that many of us still see the world as evil to be avoided thereby shying away from our responsibility of committed engagement that can bring about the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God already present among us?
5. The problem is probably one of dichotomy between faith and practice and Benedict XVI reminds us that “faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.” (PF 7)
6. Present in *Porta Fidei* is also the call to the intensification of faith in our liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharist. In other words, our faith must be professed,

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome, 2005

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 57: AAS 93 (2001), 308.

celebrated, lived and prayed. Everyone is also reminded that belief is not a private act. Confessing faith with our lips indicates it has a public dimension, that of testimony and commitment. We only need to look at the Church at Pentecost: It confesses the Lord with the lips, an act of profound public testimony that showed clearly her commitment to the Lord. Christians are once again called to return to that root.

7. The Year of faith also reminds us that the faith we are talking about is the faith of the Church, it is this faith that we are called to bear testimony to, not our own views and opinions. Hence the Catechism of the Catholic Church becomes an indispensable tool to guide us as to the content of faith to preach and live. Benedict XVI says “The Catechism provides a permanent record of the many ways in which the Church has meditated on the faith and made progress in doctrine so as to offer certitude to believers in their lives of faith.”<sup>1</sup>
8. The document also includes the models of faith similar to what we find in Hebrew 11. Here we are offered the preeminent example of Mary, the apostles, those early Christians, the martyrs and the countless men and women who have consecrated lives to Christ.
9. In all these, *Porta Fidei* constantly reminds Christians the essential link between faith and love. As we know while faith, hope and love abide, the greatest is still love and faith without love cannot bear fruit.
10. The last paragraph of *Porta Fidei* contains what I have come to term the summary of the whole Year. Benedict XVI echoed the words of Paul to Timothy and in doing so, sets for us the goal of the Year: “*aim at faith*” (2 Tim 2:22). *It then offers the reason why this is necessary “That the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph” (2 Th 3: 1).* This is not just a piece of literary genius, it is also theologically significant. Faith is God’s gift to us and we cannot offer our brothers and sisters anything better other than the gift of faith that leads to salvation.

### **Symbolic representation of the theme of the Year of faith 2012-2013**

In our age of adaptive learning and multi approach to knowledge acquisition, the logo for the Year of faith is rich and requires careful study and explanation. There are many images present in the logo, but these images are symbolic and someone on the outside, the uninitiated may not understand. So it is important for us to decipher the meaning behind the symbols present in the logo.

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, 11.

## Explanation of the logo for the Year of faith



YEAR OF FAITH 2012  
2013

These are the symbols present in the Logo: **A ship, a fish, IHS, the Eucharist, crucifix.**

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, on June 21, 2012, said that the “significance of the logo is very simple.”

“The boat is the sign of the Church, and you can see this is a moment of movement,” he explained, “we also have the cross, and the cross is the sign of love, it’s the sign of our faith. And together with the cross there is the sign of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist for us is at the center of our lives, it is the center of the life of faith.”

### What IHS really means – Jesus

The insignia “IHS” is common in Catholic circle, but what does IHS mean? Why is IHS a sign for the Name of Jesus? The name “Jesus”, in Greek, is written  $\text{ησους}$  which is transliterated as “ihsous” and pronounced *iēsous*. This is the Holy Name as it was written in the Gospels.

However, in Hebrew, the name “Jesus” is written  $\text{ישוע}$  which is transliterated as “yeshu‘a” and pronounced *yeshūa*. Finally, in Latin, the Holy Name is written *Iesus* which gives us the English “Jesus”, since the “j” often replaces the “i” at the beginning of a word (as well as between vowels).

The insignia “IHS” comes from the Latinized version of the Greek  $\text{ησους}$ , [In Greek capitals this would be  $\text{ΙΗΣΟΥΣ}$  or  $\text{ΙΗΣΟΥΣ}$  in Latin letters] taking the first three letters in capitals IHS(ous). Much as the popular “chi-rho” symbol (pictured right, X – P) comes from the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ,  $\text{χριστος}$  (*Christos*) – *XPistos*.



Chi (x) and Rho (p), CHRist

This is the true meaning of IHS, it is the first three letters of the Greek spelling of the Holy Name of Jesus. The insignia is nothing more (and nothing less) than the symbol of the Holy Name.

***Iesus Hominum Salvator – Jesus the Savior of men***

It is popular legend that the IHS stands for the Latin phrase *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, “Jesus the Savior of (all) Men”. While this is a fine devotion, it is not historically accurate. The IHS symbol was so popular that it is not uncommon to find the Latin *Iesus* misspelled as *IHeSus* (with the “H” added, though in Greek this “h” is equivalent to the Latin “e”). In fact, the first known use of the IHS abbreviation comes in the 8<sup>th</sup> century: “DN **IHS** CHS REX REGNANTIUM”, the first three words being abbreviated from “*DomiNus IHeSus CHristus*” – “The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Kings”. (For a further explanation of the history of the IHS, see the Catholic Encyclopedia article.)

Although historically inaccurate, there is certainly nothing wrong with seeing in this insignia a testimony to the truth that *there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts 4:12). Most certainly, Jesus alone is the Savior and without his grace we can neither attain nor even desire everlasting life.

***In Hoc Signo vinces – In this sign, you will conquer***



After three nails were added under the insignia (together with a cross above), some noticed that the inscription now contained a “V” below the IHS – so that we see IHSV. (see image on the side) In this form it was adopted by St. Ignatius as the symbol of the Jesuits.

IHSV was interpreted to mean *In Hoc Signo Vinces*, “In this sign, you shall conquer”. It was taken as a reference to the victory which Constantine won against Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge on 28 October 312. Before the battle, the future Emperor saw a sign in the sky (probably the Greek chi-rho X-P, the symbol of “Christ”) and heard the words *εν τούτω νικά*, which is Greek for “In this [sign], you shall conquer”. The phrase was translated into Latin

and it was noticed that the first letters of each word added up to IHSV – thus was born the legend that IHS stood for Constantine’s vision and the Christianization of Rome.

Most certainly, in the Holy Name of Jesus we shall conquer every enemy – and the last enemy to be destroyed is death itself.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE YEAR OF FAITH**

The Committee responsible for the planning and the celebration of the Year of Faith also issued some guidelines as to possible ways of celebrating the Year. There are programmes for the Universal Church, to be presided over by the Pope such as the canonization of saints, meeting with seminarians and novices; celebration with catechists as the catechism of the Catholic Church marks its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary etc.

The guideline also includes recommended programmes for dioceses such as the study of the Documents of Vatican II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Reflection on Faith and Reason, the role of Mary in salvation History, pilgrimages to centres of faith etc.

**The Creed**, notably the Nicene creed has been designated as the creed to be professed daily during the Year of faith just as the early Christians did. The recommendation is for believers to learn this symbol of faith by heart and be able to profess it from deep down their heart instead of just reciting dead letter or singing words no longer touch people’s life.

**The Universal Prayer** is the other prayer recommended for our use during the Year. A close study of the prayer shows that it is rich in faith and touches every aspect of our life in an atmosphere of total surrender to God.

**Act of Faith:** this is one of the traditional prayers of the Church that many still pray daily. During this Year of faith, it might be helpful to embrace this practice if you are not used to it. It will serve as a reminder to you what is demanded of you in your faith journey – a complete assent to God’s will, an assent that is not just theoretical but must become a lived experience.

### **Benefits of the Year of Faith**

It is expected that the Year of faith will lead to greater fervour. Various activities planned for the year should arouse greater faith in God and greater commitment and adherence to the Lord. Such faith should lead to better participation in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

In order to be able to reap abundantly the fruits of the year, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI has set the conditions to obtain certain indulgences. The indulgences and conditions are as follows:

1. Plenary indulgence to the faithful valid from the opening of the Year on 11 October 2012 until its end on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The Plenary indulgence is for the temporal punishment of sins imparted by the mercy of God.
2. The faithful may obtain the indulgence if they are truly penitent, participate in sacramental confession and the Eucharist and pray in accordance with the intention of the Supreme Pontiff.
3. Each time they attend at least three sermons during Holy Missions (Retreats) or at least three lessons on the Acts of the Council or the articles of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in Church or any other suitable location.
4. Each time they visit on a pilgrimage a papal basilica, a cathedral church or a holy site designated by the local ordinary for the Year, and there participate in a sacred

celebration, or at least remain for a congruous period of time in prayer and pious meditation, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and depending on the circumstances, to the Holy Apostles and patron saints.

5. Also when in those locations designated by the local ordinary, also participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Liturgy of the Hours, adding thereto the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form.
6. On any day they chose, during the Year of Faith, if they make a pious visit to the baptistery, or other place in which they received the Sacrament of Baptism, and there renew their baptismal promises in any legitimate form.
7. Those unable to visit the prescribed locations for legitimate reasons may still obtain Plenary Indulgence if united in spirit an thoughts with other faithful, recite the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form and other prayers that concord with the objectives of the Year of Faith, offering up the suffering and discomfort of their lives.

As you can see, there is ample opportunity to gain graces, and we need to avail ourselves of these moments of grace.

### **Conclusion**

Theology has been aptly described as faith seeking understanding. The Year of faith calls us to such undertaking, as a church and as individuals. We need to make our faith more meaningful to us by feeding ourselves with the Word of God. Dear brothers and sisters, in this Year of faith, I urge you: “aim at faith” (2 Tim 2:22) “that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph” (2 Th 3: 1). Our celebration of the Year of Faith should not be equated with the mode of celebrations in Nigeria, lots of festivities and no substance, lots of dancing and no transformation; lots of preaching and not conversion; lots of churches and very little conversion. In deed there can be no meaningful celebration if true conversion does not accompany it. Our church needs to be converted anew, individuals need conversion and a firm commitment to follow the Lord anew. Isn't it apt that our Church is already undergoing this metanoia? Look at Benedict XVI, he renounced the office of Peter, Bishop of Rome, by so doing, he did not allow the glamour of office to warp his thoughts and imagination and most especially his love for God and the good of the soul entrusted to his care. Pope Francis has continued this process of conversion and renewal, by calling the Church to become the Church of the poor, a Church where all are welcome and feel at home, a church not just noted for pomp and pageantry, but for her care of the poor and the weakest; a Church where authority is truly for service and not for lordship.

In this Year of Faith as always, if we hope to be relevant, then this conversion of heart and life must take place. The Church is both the message and the medium. For far too long, we have told ourselves that the message is not ours, it is God's message and we are only the medium, so people should accept the message and live it. While this is true in itself, but we are also the message, because the Church is the body of Christ. Our deeds are not just empty deeds but the deeds of the body of Christ. What we do can save as well as lead to perdition. We can no longer preach a message and be found wanting in our adherence to that message. The Year of faith is a wakeup call for the Church, a kind of retreat, a period of self-introspection that should lead to greater fervour and evangelical zeal. This is what RECEPTION calls for.



The new evangelization is not just rhetoric. It is a necessity of our time. Hence the last Synod describes it as “The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith.” While the emphasis has been on the fact that it is new in zeal, method and expression, more and more we are discovering that the most portent element of the new evangelization is the new zeal that is expected of all of us. New methods are good and necessary, but look at other religions around, Islam, ATR, the zeal of their members is still unmatched. The Pentecostals around us are not necessarily better than Catholics in modern means of communication, other than their good microphones and revivals, yet we know that the zeal of the members outshines that of many Catholics. When it comes to the message itself, I also feel it is not just a matter of packaging the message better or encoding it more effectively, but also about how it is transmitted and accepted and lived out in the concrete world.

Marshal McLuhan, the communication expert asserts that “The medium is the message”. Our Church must become more credible to be effective. Our priests must become more credible for people to accept their message; our people must be credible before they can attract others. This is the challenge before us – the identity of many of us today is not yet authentic, it is not yet credible and the Year of Faith calls us to a personal conversion of life, before we embark on the transformation of the world. Preach the Gospel, if necessary, use words.

I hope this detailed reflection has shed more light on the Year of Faith, thereby helping us to understand it better and receive it wholeheartedly. Here I stand, I can go no further for you, you have to continue your own journey of faith, the door of faith is always open. May you find the Lord every step of the way.

## **THE CHALLENGES OF PRIESTLY FORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of the Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October  
2013

**By**

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Life is a mystery. When it is lived, it becomes an experience...  
The best teacher in life is experience. But when experience is devoid of faith,  
life becomes a thorny cross and drudgery (Ofoha V)

The Church, in response to the injunction of Christ in Matthew 28:18-20, insists on her obligation and right to form her own sacred ministers. Hence, Canon 232 declares: “The Church has the duty and the proper and exclusive right to form those who are designated for the sacred ministries”. Furthermore, the Church is ever alive to the fact that for the work of evangelization and catechesis to be given the deserved attention and be appropriately undertaken priestly training both initial and continuous has to put in the front burner of ecclesiastical discourse. This paper therefore intends to participate in this discourse by examining “The Challenges of Priestly Formation in Contemporary Times”. The topic in my view has three dynamics, the essential aspect, the contextual aspect and the phenomenological aspect. The essence of the topic, priestly formation, has three visible components in an interpenetrating relationship, namely, formation, the objective structure, and human agents, the principal partners, the formators and the formed (formandi). The interplay between the agents produces formation. The invisible component is the “pericoretic” dynamics of the Triune God. The context of the topic is the contemporary times which mirror the changing circumstances. These provide opportunities to measure and review strategy and methods, the correctness of approach and the effectiveness of life witnessing in priestly formation. The third aspect serves as the applicative platform, the challenges. This discourse is all the more germane and urgent because the quality and vitality of the Church depends to a large extent upon the quality and vitality of her priests. And the quality and vitality of her priests depends to a reasonable degree on the quality and vitality of seminarians; priests in training (CBCN “I Chose You”). I wish to add that the quality and vitality of the seminarians depends to a qualified extent on the quality and vitality of the formators. There is no gainsaying the fact that the kind of seminarian of today is a strong indicator of the priest of tomorrow! To properly situate this discussion, the paper examines firstly the identity and mission of a priest and secondly draws there from some challenges of forming young men of today along that path.

### **Priestly Identity and Mission**

In an authoritative manner and with pin point accuracy, John Paul II teaches that the priest’s identity has its source, like every Christian identity, in the Blessed Trinity, which is revealed and communicated to people in Christ, establishing, in him and through the Spirit, the Church as “the seed and the beginning of the kingdom” (PDV 12). This teaching underlines the relational dimension of the priestly identity. Against this backdrop, the priest is a man related to Christ, the gospel he preached, to the Eucharist and to the Church (Catholic Bishops’

Conference of Nigeria 11). Christ is the prototype and gauge of all priesthood; all priesthood in its essence is nothing else than a living continuation and operation of Christ's high priesthood, a perpetuation of his mission (Stockums 22). The reality and mission of the priesthood and thus its identity, remain grounded in the mystery of Jesus Christ, in the mystery of the triune God (Cozzens 10). Hence, John Paul II describes the priesthood as the history of an inexpressible dialogue between God and human beings; a fathomless mystery (John Paul II). It is important to say that the life of a priest is to be entirely immersed into the mystery of Christ and of the Church in a new and specific way (Agu 96). This explains why Cardinal Bernardin says: "priests are not indispensable "functionaries" in the Church but bridges to the very mystery of God and healers of the soul" (Bernardin 28).

The priest is permanently configured to Christ in such a way that this ontological reality can no longer be removed, even in the unpleasant eventuality of the priest abandoning his sacred ministry. It is Jesus Christ who gives meaning, unity and a sense of direction to the life and ministry of the priest. Indeed, Jesus has to be at the center of his occupation and pre-occupation (Arinze 15). As the minister of Christ, the priest is also the steward and dispenser of the mysteries of God (Stockums 83). To be drawn closer to Christ and be moulded in his image along the path of holiness, priests are called to make the Eucharist the centre of their spiritual and ministerial life (EIA 194). As an *alter Christus*, the priest is profoundly united to the Word of the Father who, in becoming incarnate took the form of a servant (Phil 2: 5-11). The priest, like Christ, is first of all a teacher, an announcer of divine truth. What he has to announce in his character as priest is not human knowledge, wisdom or sophistry, much less subjective opinions and convictions, but the eternal, immutable deposit of revelation imparted to man by God Himself (Stockums 25). The priest, as minister of God's Word, is a messenger of meaning. It is his primary task to proclaim the paradox of the gospel: that life is to be found in dying to oneself; that freedom rests in our surrender to God's loving plan for us; that happiness follows upon selfless care and concern for our neighbor; that the first shall be last and the last first; that the least among us shall be the greatest (Cozzens 110). It goes without saying that the priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus Christ (CCC 1589). The priest, true to his vocation and mission, has to love Christ above all else and live by his dictate and example. Love for Jesus Christ however is inevitably linked to love for Christ's Church guided and enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which each one of us has a role and mission to carry out (Benedict XVI 115).

By his ontological consecration, a priest becomes an official ambassador of Christ and the Church in the world. Thus, a priest acts *in persona Christi* and *in nomine ecclesiae*. In this dual capacity, the priest is a man of the Church. As a man of the Church, he must stand with both feet and without wavering on the principles of the Church. The genuine priest is always found on the side of the Church. The words of Stockums are very instructive here: "he rejoices with the Church whenever the occasion presents itself; sorrows with her when she is afflicted with sufferings; for better or for worse he is bound to the Church (Stockums 109). The genuine priest, Stockums continues has instinctive perception for what is ecclesiastical or not. He recognizes the weaknesses and faults in the Church and more importantly adopts delicacy and restraint in his spoken or written opinions about the Church, avoiding pain and offense in showing distress and shun anything that might bring the Church into disrepute. He concludes by saying: "To the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church belongs our reverence, obedience, love and loyalty" (Stockums 113). Specifically Can. 273 prescribes that "clerics have special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and their own Ordinary".

It goes without saying that loyalty and obedience to the Church does not preclude but presuppose love and respect for the rule of law, both in substance and in procedure, even when a priest disagrees with decisions by Church authorities or and seek (hierarchical) recourse against administrative acts of superiors (cf. Cann 1732-1739).

The concept of *Koinonia* – communion is at the heart of the Church’s self-understanding. The Church has a vocation to be one in the midst of diversity; she is called to be a marvelous communion of a multiplicity of charisms and ministries (Aryankalayil 346). Just as division is a symptom of death, unity is an essential of life; if the limbs are separated from a body, they inevitably die and the whole organism becomes harmed. So it is with the Church (Suarez 151). The Church is a sign of unity, not only among people but between the supernatural and temporal worlds. As an ambassador of the Church, the priest should regard himself as a sign of unity, a symbol of ecclesial communion. He does this in the following ways: i) by harmonizing and bringing into symphony diverse vocations, charisms and services within the portion of the people of God entrusted to his pastoral care (Aryankalayil 365); ii) by working for the healing and reconciliation of broken human relationships and serving as God’s instrument in the reconciliation of human division and hatred (2 Cor. 5:18-21) and (iii) by personally avoiding acts, words, gestures that are capable of causing division, confusion, acrimony or tear apart the members of the Church (Suarez 13-14).

The priest, a man of the Church, is called to cultivate a healthy relationship to the Church in her networks of relationships; to his chains of superiors, especially his bishop, to fellow priests, to the faithful and to himself. No doubt, a good number of the crises in the life of a priest are connected to, though not limited to these levels of relationships.

The Church is very consistent in upholding that the bishop and his priests are collaborators. The Council Fathers call priests co-workers of the Episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ (PO 7; CCC 1562). Apart from being co-workers, *Christus Dominus* 16 describes priests as friends and sons of the bishop and speaks of “easy familiarity” in their relationship. Explicating further on this point, John Paul II teaches: “the bishop’s special affection for the priests is demonstrated by his accompanying them as a father and brother in the fundamental stages of their ministerial life” (*Pastores gregis* 47). The father-son relationship between the bishop and his priest does not have to do with age but with a spiritual bond. It is a bond of special privilege in relationship. One recalls the effrontery of Paul in addressing Timothy who was then already a bishop as “my son” (2 Tim 1:2). It is important to stress that trust is indispensable to a healthy relationship between a bishop and his priests. It facilitates understanding, openness and willingness to carry out whatever assignment the priest is given. Speaking on the bishop-priests relationship, Francis Cardinal Arinze counsels: “the climate of relationship between the Bishop and his priests should be one of joy, collaboration, mutual enrichment and help, and joint examination of challenges (Arinze 85). In his post synodal exhortation on the Church in Africa, John Paul II urges priests to live their “faithfulness to their vocation in the total gift of self to their mission and in full communion with their Bishops” (EIA 97). In this regard, a loving and loyal attitude of cooperation and obedience is expected from the priest (Arinze 37).

By the virtue of intimate sacramental brotherhood, priests are to be united with their brother priests by the bond of charity, prayer, and total cooperation (PO 8). To make this teaching

come alive, Can 280 prescribes: “Some manner of common life is highly recommended to clerics; where it exists, it is as far as possible to be maintained. The Church and her work of evangelization have suffered so much set back on account of disunity among the priests. There are so many complaints from priests themselves, religious and the lay faithful with regard to incessant quarrels and misunderstandings between parish priests and their assistants often caused by pecuniary matters. At times there is a gulf between the old priests, the not so young and the young priests. It is not uncommon to find priests being uncharitable to their fellow priests; not welcoming to them to the mission houses, not visiting those who are posted to remote areas of the diocese, or those who are sick and “unassignable”, saying untoward things about themselves, worse still when such are not verified. The Council Fathers enjoin priests to cultivate the disposition of acceptance and respect; hospitality, kindness and sharing of goods. In all, priests are enjoined to associate with themselves and be charitable towards themselves (PO 8).

The priest is a man for others. He is appointed to act on behalf of the human person in relation to God (Heb 5:1). His ministry though tied to the community is not defined by the community. This is to say, the priesthood though lived with and for the people is of Christ and not of the people. Christ is the one that sets the standard and not the people. In the words of Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*: “the priest is not an elected official by the community. The community cannot give him his instructions nor can he say the things the community likes or wants to hear. It is only from God through his Church that the priest receives his powers and the words he is to utter whether people like them or not” (Suarez 13).

Every priest, in a very qualified sense, is called to be a pastor. To be a pastor is to engage in pastoral care; shepherding, nursing, nurturing, mentoring, and ensuring healthy growth and development. I regard the distinction between a priest scholar and a priest pastor, at least in our clime, as very slim, largely academic and peripheral. The point is whatever work a priest does or wherever he is assigned, he is pasturing. And he does so in relationship to the different network of relationships in the Church. Whatever assignment given; in the parish, in the school, in the Army, in the civil service, even in politics, does not define the priest but only a space, an opportunity to exercise priestly ministry. Often, I reflect on the statement of Jesus recorded in Matt 9: 37-38 (see also, Luke 10:2): “The harvest is rich but the labourers are few”! While few are those who labour and harvest into the ban of the Master, limited also is probably the notion of ministry/pastoral care.

The mission of each individual priest will therefore depend also and above all on knowledge of the sacramental reality of his “new being”. His ever renewed enthusiasm for the mission depends on the certainty of his own identity not artificially and humanly constructed but freely and divinely given and received (Benedict XVI 126). Unquestionably, faith is absolutely necessary if a priest is to live his vocation and carry out his ministry to God’s greater glory for a protracted length of time (Arinze 62). The practice of the virtue of faith takes the form of what is often called “supernatural outlook”; getting into the habit of seeing everything, even the most ordinary things, the little events of each day, in the light of the plan of salvation (PDV 133). A priest therefore is not to be carried away by the spirit of novelty and obscurantist relativism. He must uphold the eternal truth of the faith which he constantly seeks to communicate in new ways intelligible to the contemporary society.

### **Challenges of Priestly Formation**

There are a plethora of challenges pummeling at Priestly Formation in contemporary times. Notable among them are: Quality of pre- Seminary formation of candidates for the priesthood, Adequate Preparation of Formators, The percentage of formators in relation to the number of seminarians, Adequate funding of the seminary, Sexual explosion and sexuality misinformation, Information Technology and Communications, and so on and so forth. For the purpose of this discourse, however, I shall focus on the following areas of concern, namely, i) Faith: an ineluctable desideratum, ii) Human Formation, iii) Right Intention; iv) Role of the Formandi; v) Missionary Consciousness. Quite interestingly, the first three stress areas were indicated by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II (Evangelii Nuntiandi 48; PDV 62; Can 1029).

### **Faith: an ineluctable desideratum**

Today more than ever before, the Christian, nay the human person, is being flagellated by the three isms among others, liberalism, individualism and relativism. These continue to drag Christians to the precipice of superficiality and inauthenticity with an ever increasing sense of isolation and abandonment. The current of relativism makes it quite difficult for people to discern truth from falsehood, good from bad and true love from false love. Christians can never take faith for granted. It is a gift from God to be nurtured, nourished and reinforced. In the words of Pope Francis: “Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time” (Lumen Fidei 4). Though has a personalist dimension, faith is not a private matter. It is ecclesial (Lumen fidei 22). It is the Church that believes first, and so bears, nourishes and sustains our faith. It is through the Church that we receive faith and new life in Christ by baptism (CCC 168). The Christian faith therefore is born in the waters of baptism, watered in prayer, nurtured at the table of the Eucharist and deepened in the Word of God; it is incarnated in culture and lived in context. No doubt the unity of the Church in time and space is linked to the unity of faith (Lumen fidei 47). This is our faith! This is the faith of the Church! We are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord! It is only in the context of faith that the meaning and worth of life is established. Dealing with questions about meaning is a sign of the transcendence of the human being; it demonstrates our innate capacity to see beyond appearances. Human experience should not be interpreted superficially but rather in depth (Onwukeme 153). This is why Frankl opines that it is important that one discovers at every moment the meaning of one’s life, for this enables one to embrace the ultimate meaning which may be beyond one’s reach at the moment (Frankl 8). In the search for meaning philosophy meets with theology. While the former searches for meaning, the latter searches for the ultimate meaning. It is however important to stress that this search is neither conducted in a vacuum nor in vain because it departs from faith and returns to faith for there is no real discrepancy between faith and reason (CCC 159; Fides et Ratio 16). This is the bond between faith and truth. For this reason, theology is impossible without faith (recall Anselmian dictum: fides quaerens intellectum); it is part of the very process of faith which seeks an ever deeper understanding of God’s self disclosure culminating in Christ (Lumen Fidei 36). True priestly formation must depart from faith and geared towards faith. Hence the philosophical and theological studies in the seminary must be at the service of faith. In this sense the seminary becomes a school of the Gospel wherein the members are led by Christ into the service of God the Father and of all the people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (PDV 42).

## **Human Formation**

John Paul II with a masterly stroke affirms that “the whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation...In order that his ministry may be humanly as credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mould his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ” (PDV 43). The goal of human formation is to build on what is already there in the person in terms of his natural disposition and potentialities which are to be confirmed and strengthened. This is because the formative process has been operative from the moment that one is in the womb of the mother and the basic thrust or direction of one’s life has already been established by the time one enters the seminary (Iperu Formation Community IX). At the heart of human formation is the development of the capacity to relate with others in love...Thus, involves the attainment of an affective maturity which enables the priest to love wholeheartedly and selflessly, an education for sexuality which equips the priest to assume the demands of celibacy, an education in responsible freedom and an education of the moral consciousness (PDV 44). The post conciliar magisterium insists with all intent and purpose on human development which engenders growth to emotional and psychological maturity (PDV 50). Human maturity is a harmony of elements and an integration of tendencies and values. This is why Can. 244 directs: “The spiritual formation and doctrinal instruction of the students in a seminary are to be arranged harmoniously and so organized that each student, according to his character, acquires the spirit of the gospel and a close relationship with Christ along with appropriate human maturity”. Maturity is a complex reality which cannot be easily or fully defined. In the words of the Congregation for Catholic Education, one can judge as a mature person, among others, i) one who has acquired a ready and habitual capacity to act freely; ii) one who has integrated his or her developed human potential with habits of virtue; iii) one who has acquired an easy and habitual self-control by integrating his or her emotional drives and placing them at the service of his or her reason, iv) one who enjoys community living because of his or her willingness to give himself or herself to serve others (Congregation for Catholic Education 18). A careful reading of these qualities suggests that human formation is not a programme but a process. Human formation focuses on the attainment of a well-integrated person; ensuring a balance between emotions and their expressions; between the attitude to success and failure; between adulation and criticism. Concerted efforts must be made to feed and nurture these qualities in the candidates for the priesthood. In particular, (a future priest) must practice goodness of heart, patience, kindness, strength of soul, love for justice, even mindedness, truthfulness to his word, coherence in the duties freely assumed (PDV 43; PO 3). For a matured and maturing seminarian, conscious efforts must be made to make his word his bond. On this note, a seminarian is challenged to cultivate the virtue of telling it the way it is at all times. Truth is power; it liberates the mind and consequently the individual (John 8:32). Telling the truth shows strength of character and level of maturity. All the guises for telling lies; mental reservation, diplomacy, are nothing short of philosophical brouhaha! This explains why human formation is certain channel to the areopagus of truth (Nwazeapu 90). Formation in human maturity for the formandi and the formators becomes both a thermostat and a thermometer for priestly journey; a fabric unto which other activities of formation are implanted. It is only when a candidate attains a substantive level of human formation that all the other forms of priestly formation take their proper place.

### **Right Intention**

The word, intention or motivation, signifies an act of the will that makes a person act or behaves in a particular way. Obviously, it has an ambivalent connotation, that is, it begins with the internal (mind) and becomes manifest in the external (attitudes, actions and reactions). The adverb, right, which qualifies the word, intention suggests that the combination of willing and acting in the subject are in conformity to a standard or an ideal that necessarily governs the action or behavior of the person. With regard to the priesthood, right intention is an indispensable sign of a priestly vocation. It is first and foremost a sole and noble desire (Pius XI 40) that translates into a clear and firm will to consecrate oneself entirely to the Lord's service and the salvation of souls (Paul VI 987-988). It has two essential components, namely, genuine interest and inclination towards the priesthood and a true supernatural motivation.

Gemelli surmising on the opinion of St. Alphonsus de Liguori avers that right intention consists in making one's aim in life to be the service of God and His glory, the salvation of souls and to appreciate and desire the goods of Jesus Christ (Gemelli 15-16). These three elements necessarily preclude the pursuance of one's own happiness and sensible pleasures which are the goods for which the human person craves. What this line of thinking suggests, among others, is that if a candidate for the priesthood is overly concerned about living a comfortable life and for his future security, hence anxious about money and what money can buy, then the intention is far from pure and right.

An introspective look into the rite of priestly ordination reveals the mind of the Church regarding the specificity of right intention. The ceremony of cross-examination begins with the call on the candidate by the ordaining prelate to declare his intention before receiving the sacrament of the priesthood. Four questions are subsequently posited to which the ordinand is expected to answer in the affirmative. The first question revolves around the preparedness of the candidate to do his work conscientiously as a fellow worker with the bishop by taking care of the flock of Christ. The second and third questions inquire about the readiness of the candidate to apply himself to the service of the mystery of the word of Christ. While the second question requires the candidate to carry out the service of the word in truth and in faith as laid down by the Church, the third seeks to examine the intention of the candidate as to preaching the gospel with wisdom and explaining the mystery of the word in line with the catholic faith. The fourth question inquires about the resolution of the candidate to unite himself more intimately with Christ the High Priest who offered himself in a perfect sacrifice and to consecrate himself to God for the salvation of the people of God.

From these questions, one can sum up that right intention of a candidate to the priesthood entails two things, namely, preparedness to unite oneself more intimately with Christ in consecration to God the Father and the readiness to collaborate with the diocesan bishop in the service of the Church and the people of God. Consequently, a candidate to the priesthood submits himself in obedience to God and the Church through the diocesan bishop or (the one equal to him in law) and his legitimate designate. From all indication, a candidate to the priesthood who perdures in the right intention after ordination continues to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and then listens to the voice and the legitimate dictate of his bishop with regard to posting, remuneration, further studies and future life.



Can 1029 explicating on the qualities required in the candidates for the priesthood talks of “those motivated by right intention”. This phraseology suggests that there are more factors than one by which one can be motivated. It is in this context that Lendakavil talks of the dominant trait among the different levels of motivation, namely, genuine, inadequate and invalid (Lendakavil 196). When genuine motivation is the dominant trait and it relates well to the goal being sought by the one who is being motivated, one can be said to be motivated by right intention. The dominant trait however serves a corrective purpose and achieves a better integration of the other factors in the life of the candidate.

This perspective to right intention admits the multiplicity of motivations and intentions in the candidates for the priesthood. Some of these motives/intentions are noble and others not so noble. Again, these motives/intentions are mixed and varied; some are conscious, others are subconscious while some others are deeply unconscious. For instance, some candidates were attracted to the seminary by the comfortable life style of the priests or so it seemed to them, some by the cassock and some others by the way a priest celebrate the Eucharist. Again, some candidates who come in with some measure of right intention can be susceptible to vitiation if not guided, transformed, constantly renewed and purified (Mozaia 21). There is then the need for purification of intentions both for those whose intentions are not so noble and on the part of those with good intentions for constant and consistent growth. It is not as much what a candidate came with but what he becomes in the process of becoming! It is obvious that the Church does not expect perfection in those who come forward but that they have some basic qualities required and more importantly that they are desirously open to formation; good disposition, guidance and transformation. The seminary, among others, is to help individual candidate come to terms with the quality of motivation that he is bringing on board. This cannot be achieved unless the formators are interested in the “life story” of the individual candidate and are willing to gradually lead him through this stage of purification such that the right intention becomes dominant before he attains the ordination stage (Asambe Recta Intentione 14). This task is actually the specific preserve though not exclusive of the spiritual directors. Permit me to say that for the formators to carry out this task efficiently there is need for appropriate training. A training that equips them with the capacity to assist much more in forming than judging; in selecting than eliminating; in seeing those to be formed as gifts to be celebrated rather than troubles to be solved (Asambe Recta Intentione 12).

### **Priestly Formation: The Role of the Formandi**

One of the contemporary approaches to priestly formation is to focus on the role of the formed in his formation. On this matter, John Paul II asserts: “the candidate himself is a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation” (PDV 69). Furthermore, the Supreme Pontiff avers: “the personal participation of the candidate in his own formation comes out of an interior motivation to cooperate with his formation and leads to the internalization of values that are integral to the priestly life and ministry (PDV 59). Self formation or auto formation is key here! It is the formed who tells his story; it is the formed that is making the journey of discernment. It is the formed that must have his motives and intentions purified and integrated. It is the formed who submits himself for formation. In this approach the formator accompanies; a necessary one at that; encourages, energizes, directs, reprimands, and evaluates; he is a co-pilot, a confidant, a friend, and a shepherd! What a beautiful blend if this relationship between the formator and the formed is grown in trust and charity; in openness

and honesty; in simplicity and humility. In this climate, the seminary becomes a community built on deep friendship and charity; an ecclesial family of God where dialogue takes place in a honest and forthright manner even on personal issues (Iperu Formation Team 74). In this seminary community (AM 122), there is assurance and confidence on the part of the formed who then acts freely and not compulsively, who expresses himself without fear or intimidation. No doubt, fear limits possibility; a student-priest who lives in perpetual fear cannot realize his full potential. The CBCN recognizes the importance of a favorable climate in the seminary where she affirms: “responsible freedom in an atmosphere of openness allows the candidate to be committed to his personal development and to participate in his formation” (CBCN Ratio Fundamentalis 29). This atmosphere should lead the seminarian to be open, honest, sincere and forthcoming, especially regarding his motivations, preparedness and suitability for the priesthood. It is important for a seminarian to know that he cannot be a priest at his own terms and that desperation to become a priest at all cost is not in his best interest or in the best interest of the Church.

### **Missionary Consciousness of Candidates for the Priesthood**

The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit (LG 48; AG2). By the same token, the missionary activity flows immediately from the very nature of the Church (AG 5). Recent magisterial teachings now adopt an expansive understanding of *missio ad gentes* to include both *ad intra* and *ad extra* horizons (*Redemptoris Missio* 67). Hence, John Paul II declares that “the missionary activity *ad intra* is a credible sign and stimulus for missionary activity *ad extra* and *vice versa*” (*Redemptoris Missio* 34). Missiologists are now talking not only of *missio ad gentes* but also of *mission inter gentes*. For seminarians today, from the very beginning their doctrinal training should be such that they understand both the universality of the Church and the diversity of people (AG 26). Furthermore, they should be filled with that truly Catholic spirit which habitually looks beyond the boundaries of their diocese, country or rite, to meet the needs of the whole Church, being prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere (*Optatam Totius* 20).

Can 257, #1 domesticates the above stated conciliar teachings when it calls for a universal vision of the Church and pastoral ministry for all the candidates for the priesthood such that they are not limited to their diocese of incardination. The canon rules: “The formation of students is to ensure that they are concerned not only for the particular Church in which they are incardinated, but also for the universal Church and that they are ready to devote themselves to particular Churches which are beset by grave need”. One effective instrument of ensuring this universal sense is exposing the seminarians to a variety of languages and cultures, which make them able to serve in many places where their services might be needed. Speaking to this problem, the Catholic Institute of West Africa in her communiqué of the 15<sup>th</sup> Theology Week has this to say:

The establishment of many major Seminaries in our sub-region is a welcome development in view of the vocation boom that we are yet enjoying. However, we note the parochial dimension of this development, which limits the seminaries to one ethnic group in many instances. We ask as a matter of policy that these seminaries be open to all dioceses. In addition, dioceses should send seminarians for training outside their cultural background. This will surely broaden the horizons of priests in training and make them more appreciative of different cultures (...).

This practice if well utilized would certainly speak to the danger of “excessive particularism” among priests and future priests.

### **Conclusion**

To aspire for the catholic priesthood is to aspire to a position of leadership in the community. It is important to note that leadership is not an achievement but a means to an end. Hence, Vincent de Paul holds that the priesthood is not a status but a service and a mission (Kaitholil 304). A candidate for the priesthood must aspire to lead the people of God after the manner of Jesus Christ, the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep John 10:10). Towards this end, there is need for holistic formation of which self formation is of utmost importance. Self participation in formation, challenges the candidate to the priesthood to bring to the fore the motivations/intentions, latent and active, conscious and unconscious, that brought him to the seminary. In other words, why does he want to be a priest? One would agree that the answer to the question is more poetry than prose, more intuitive than discursive. It lies in the depth of the soul. The priestly formation is to tease out these motivations and drives and help in purifying them for authentic and effective priestly ministry.

By way of conclusion, I recall the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “The seminary represents a time of preparation for the priesthood, a time of study. It is a time of discernment, formation and human and spiritual development. May seminarians use wisely the time which is provided for them to build up the spiritual and human resources from which they will draw throughout their priestly life” (AM 123).

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**“Speak Lord your Servant is Listening” (1 Samuel 3:10): The Task of Theology in an Attentive and Intelligent Encounter with God**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of Theology on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2013

By  
Rev. Fr. Dr. Michael Olusola Omojola

There are so many things that can elicit scholarly discussion in and about the books of Samuel. These include the different Characters involved in the narratives such as the parents of

Samuel: Elkanah and Hannah, the priest Eli, Samuel himself and some of the major figures like King Saul and King David. These are some of the special characters that have theological implications for every generation. Some other points of discussions are the novelties of the different narratives, their social and theological innovations for social and religious transformation, the geographical settings and their importance for the future of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his Chosen people.

Another area that easily receives scholarly attention is the composition of the book itself, the source and the question of its authorship. These areas continue to re-appear in biblical scholarship and they have often generated and shaped the direction of the discussion among scholars. This is demonstrated in the recent publication of Moshe Garsiel: *The Book of Samuel: Its Composition, Structure and Significance as a Historiographical Source*.<sup>1</sup> This he contends is so, because it treats a very important and indeed the most “crucial period in the history of the Israelites...The book, as is seen even at first sight, is a unique combination of historiography, literary poetics and ethical and theological perception.”<sup>2</sup> In this paper however, all these areas will be considered because they will help to properly understand the pericope of our discussion.

The passage for our consideration narrates the call of Samuel and how the priest Eli guided him to properly decipher the voice of Yahweh and disposed him to the vocation and mission that Yahweh would assign to him. And make the final and definitive response to His Call. With this background, we realized that the passage is relevant as we celebrate the NACTHS Week and as we present ourselves for formation into the Sacred Priesthood of Christ in the Catholic Church. Therefore, the examination of this passage should help us to present ourselves for proper formation that has a transforming effect for the work of evangelization to which we are called. However, without proper disposition and opening of self to true discernment which is the action of the Holy Spirit, in the humble efforts of our Formators, who like Eli, help us to decipher the true voice of God calling; we may not achieve a desired result.

### **CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL**

The title of the books itself is an anomaly because the character by which they were named after only occupy few chapters (1, 3; 7-10; 15-17; 19.18-24; 25.1) of the entire fifty five chapters. For this reason, scholars have wondered why such a name should be given to books that have such men as Saul, who was the first king and David the man whom God declared saying ‘I have seen the man after my own heart’ (1Sam 13.14). In rejecting the plea of Saul for clemency after failing to carry out fully the Lord’s command, Samuel declares that Saul’s kingdom has been brought to an abrupt end for his disobedience and that “The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and has appointed him commander of his people....” It can therefore be said as some scholars opine that there is no justification for such ascription in the narratives and if it must be, it should be limited to the First book of Samuel not the two

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<sup>1</sup> This is the title of his article in the publication *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures* Vii Ehud Ben Zvi ed. Gorgia Press, 2011, 131-173 comprising the contents of *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, vol 10.

<sup>2</sup> M. Garsiel; “The Book of Samuel”, p.131.

volumes.<sup>1</sup> For these and many other reasons, the books of Samuel continue to generate Scholarly discussions and literary relevance. Perhaps, a short examination of the history of the title may be of some help in this regard.

### **THE BOOK OF SAMUEL IN HEBREW (MT)**

In the Hebrew Bible, the books of Samuel were held to be one in the Hebrew Mss until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and named after this character Samuel because of the Rabbinic tradition that held that the books as well as the book of Judges were written by Samuel just as the Pentateuch was attributed to have been written by Moses.<sup>2</sup> Although, now divided into two following the LXX tradition, the rabbinic authorship had the influence of the name in all of modern translation and even in the Hebrew Bible since then.

### **THE BOOK OF SAMUEL IN GREEK (LXX)**

The influence exerted by the LXX, a 2<sup>nd</sup> cent Greek translation of the Hebrew writings on the overall understanding of the Bible is enormous. In the LXX, the two books of Samuel were joined with the pair books of the Kings by the translators to make them four in number and named basileiwn A-D which means ‘of kings’ 1-4.<sup>3</sup> It is from the LXX that Vulgate takes its name *libri regnorum* I-IV. The LXX has this title because most of the events treated in the books were beyond Samuel who had died before they took place and that most of the events concern the kingship in Israel and their kingdom of Israel. Furthermore, earlier scholarship attributed the diary at the palace as the sources of the information contained in the books and so it was rightly named as the books of the kings. The division of the LXX influenced the division of the books in all the modern translation but the title held by the Rabbinic scholars and traditions influenced the names given to the pair books. Nevertheless, the pericope that concerns us falls in the first part of the books. Although the title kings may sound appropriate yet, the books could be called in my own opinion the **Books of Samuel** because of the roles he played in the tradition that shaped the history of Israel.

### **THE PERSON OF SAMUEL**

Samuel is described as one who “stands at the intersection of an acephalous clan culture and the hierarchy of the nascent monarchy he inaugurates. He is charged with preserving the conservative values of the past while also plotting out the future during a period of national transition.”<sup>4</sup> His contributions and actions are pivotal to the eventual emergence of the people both as geographical entity and in their self religious group. Indeed, the book could be called Book of Transition of which Samuel enjoyed not only a luminal figure but also, has consistently shown him as a leading figure. The Books of Samuel, especially the first part that concerns us, has at least four different accounts of transitions recorded in which Samuel played

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<sup>1</sup> According to Otto Kaiser, “The title Samuel is to some extent appropriate for the first book, but not at all for the second. As far as subject matter goes the names in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate are preferable.” *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Otto Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Presentation of its Results and Problems*, Blackwell, 1975, p.152.

<sup>3</sup> The Catholic Church holds that the Lxx is as inspired just as the Hebrew Text. For this reason it has a tremendous influence on the Bible. In fact, in some parts of the books of the Bible, the LXX translation preserved a more original reading than the Hebrew Text and it is often used to correct some defective Hebrew Text. This is a case of ‘the daughter older than the mother’.

<sup>4</sup> M. Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping of Tradition*. p. 6

major roles.<sup>1</sup> On the person of Samuel, his identification has been difficult because he has been described with various epithets: A seer, a priest, a prophet and a judge.<sup>2</sup> These roles singled him out as a man with special character in the development of Judaism and Jewish history.

### A. PRIEST

The first is the transition from Tribal Amphictyony led by charismatic leaders and Judges as recorded in the book of Judges to a Hierocratic state led by the priest Eli which actually opens the first book of Samuel. The first chapter of the book of Samuel presented his parents as faithful who went to perform their religious duty at Shiloh but silence if they priestly family. However, in the book of genealogy presented in first Chronicles, Samuel was presented as one from the stock of Levi though their function was that of singing (1Chron. 6.18-20) which was part of the service to the Tent of Meeting since the priesthood was an exclusive reserve of the Aaronic lineage (Num 18.1ff). However, Samuel grew up to occupy the priestly position in Shiloh because the sons of Eli dishonor Yahweh and he vowed to take this privilege from their house. As a priest he carried out his duty throughout their cities, blessing the people, their food and offering their sacrifices (1 Sam 9.12-13). He also anointed the first and the second kings of Israel: Saul (1 Sam 9.14-27) and David (1 Sam 16.12-13). The first book of Samuel records various activities of Samuel carrying out his priestly duty throughout the towns and villages of Israel and the people deferring to him after the death of Eli without any constraint.

### B. PROPHET

The Second was the transition from Hierocratic society of Eli to a Theocratic one led by the Prophetic mission initiated by the various visionary movements represented by Samuel (1 Sam 9.9; 19.18-20). Although the Deuteronomic historian conclude that Moses was the prototype, the model and the standard of prophetic vocation (cf Deut 34.10), yet, classical prophecy began with Samuel in the narratives of his vocation and the various prophetic activities he carried out (1 Sam 9.15). As quoted above, he was acknowledge as one of the greatest prophets in Israelitic history if not on the same level with Moses but also very close (Jer. 15.1).<sup>3</sup> Here, Jeremiah sees him as a figure of intercession since this is one of the major functions of a prophet.

### C. MONARCHY

When they were just members of the tribal league and led by charismatic leaders such as Samson, Gideon etc. they were plagued by all sorts of invasion from the neighboring nations who were best organized than themselves. This is because the foreign nations manipulated

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<sup>1</sup> Although, he is making reference to the rejection of one Yahweh's agent in favour of another who has the right heart of Yahweh, Benjamin Johnson, notes that the book of first "Samuel could be described as a narrative of transitions. It details the transitional phrase from the era of the judges to the era of the monarchy; it transitions from one failed dynasty (saulide) to one successful dynasty (Davidide). "The Heart of YHWH'S Chosen One in 1 Samuel," in *JBL* Vol. 131(3), 455-466, 465.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "Samuel" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol 5, David N Freedman ed., Doubleday New York, 1992, Pp.954-973, 954.

<sup>3</sup> According to Blenkinsopp, "the call of Samuel at Shiloh (1 Sam.3-4.1) marked the beginning or at least a new beginning, of prophetic activity." J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy In Israel*, Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox press P. 47.

their disunity. Therefore, there was a need for a monarch to lead and rule over them like some of the nations roundabout so that they too could be an organized state having their own military and form of government to lead them (1 Sam. 8). This quest found answer in the presentation and anointing of Saul as the first king. There are two strands of narratives, (one pro-monarchical 1 Sam 9.1-10.16; 10.27-11.15 and the other anti-monarchical 1 Sam 7.2-822; 10.17-27) concerning the quest. The importance of the monarchy cannot be over-emphasized in the self-consciousness of the people of Israel. This gave them identity and the unity they needed as a people. The monarchy gave them the true sense of monarchy especially through the efforts of David in uniting the entire kingdom and establishing a Capital where they all could call their own.

In actual fact, the destruction and the eventual exile was precipitated by the division of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. Each has to make alliance with other foreign nations to establish their autonomy at the expense of the other. The effect was the destruction of their cherished land and the eventual evacuation into a foreign land. The monarchy gave birth to the so-called Davidic *Berith* which introduced the messianic expectation as the fulfillment of the promise made by Yahweh (2 Sam 7.14). It became a model for the kingship of Yahweh and a foundational influence to the establishment of the reign of God now termed Kingdom of God.

#### **D. JUDGE**

The fourth transition is the change of baton from one monarch to another (Saul to David) with its attendant intrigues and challenges that will eventually characterize successive monarchical periods till the dissolution of the Israelitic state (1 Sam 15-16; 18.8-19.24; 23.25-23). Although his role as a judge was not so much highlighted, yet he was considered a reputable judge in Israel, an office he assumed at Mizpah after the death of Eli (1 Sam 7.6). He composed law concerning the monarchy and explained them to the people (1 Sam 10.25). He judged Israel as long as he lived and even appointed his sons to judge as well (1 Sam 7.15-17; 8.1). As a judge, he counseled the people as to the appropriateness of having a king and its implication, he reminded them of their sacred duty to Yahweh and judge the king Saul about his failure to carry out the order of the Lord.

The Scripture itself paid glowing tributes to this personage and describes him in various forms such as priest, prophet and judge. “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD. And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD” (1 Sam 3.19-20).

Whatever informed the choice of the name Samuel of these twin books by the Rabbi, it must be borne in mind that the theological relevance of the person of Samuel to the nascent monarchy, the mid-wiving of the kingdom of Israel and the establishing of the prophetic mission. All of these confirmed not only their identity as people who have special relationship with Yahweh but also shape their identity among nations (1 Sam 8) their history and their understanding of their God. They formed the bedrock on which the existence of the Judaism and Yahwistic religion was built which became pivotal for the future of the Jewish state and the eventual salvation history.



It could be said that the person of Samuel stabilized the covenant relationship hitherto promised to Abraham, given through Moses and established in the Davidic dynasty. Therefore, as the books of the Pentateuch were appropriately called the books of Moses because he mediated between Yahweh and the people in establishing the Covenant relationship and facilitating the giving of the Torah so too it becomes imperative and reasonable that the person who saw to the establishment of the kingdom should be identified with the work.

By his stay with Eli, Samuel has been properly formed and schooled in the religious tradition that will shape the theological future of the people.

### **DEDICATION AND VOCATION OF THE BOY SAMUEL: EXAMINATION OF 1 SAM 3.10.**

This passage reflect the final stage as it were in the formative period of the life of the young Samuel who has been dedicated to the service of Yahweh immediately after he had been weaned by the mother. *“And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young....Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.”* (1 Sam 1.24-28). When Samuel was given to Eli, the best she could have hoped for was to assist the priest of Yahweh at Shiloh which was at that time hereditary (Num 18.1; 1 Chron 6.18-20). The work consisted of looking after the person of the priesthood and the place of worship, takes charge of the work connected to the place of worship. The proper sacrifice and the sacred vessels shall be handled by the priests of Aaronic lineage (Num 18.2-4). It is for this reason that the Chroniclers in their short genealogical tree of the workers at the Temple named his grandson Heman among those who were listed as choirs of the temple by King David (1 Chron 6.18).

However, by helping him to answer this call, the old man Eli shows that Yahweh has a special assignment for the boy as indeed indicated in the narrative. Yet he must not only consult and seek the guidance of the old priest Eli, but also complete the period of his formation. According to some authors, Samuel’s vocation was necessitated by both the physical and spiritual weakening of Eli’s strength and Yahweh has found himself a strong man in the young Samuel. This passage of our consideration is the centre of the story which began in Chapter one with Hannah’s prayer. It is the summit and conclusion to the infancy of the boy Samuel.

Furthermore, the call of the boy Samuel begins a new personal relationship between Yahweh and his people. Hence, “as has now been addressed directly by Yahweh, and the significance of this fact extends beyond the immediate circumstances, for the closing verses of the account make it clear that Samuel is henceforward to be the medium through which Yahweh will address his people.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, this passage is a bridge between the old order as it were and the new things that Yahweh wants to do. This is the nature of God that time and again, in different circumstances, he intervened and gets involved directly in the affairs of his Chosen People. In doing this, he calls individuals to partner with him in bringing about this radical

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<sup>1</sup> P.K. McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, in Anchor Bible, W. F. Albright & D.N. Freedman (eds) Vol.VIII, Double day & Co. New York 1980, p.100.

change. Samuel will now be called a prophet. A term which in its Akkadian root means to be called or summoned by the gods “one called to duty by a god.”<sup>1</sup>

### **IMPLICATION OF SAMUEL’S VOCATION FOR THEOLOGY**

The theology of the Books of Samuel shows that the narrators/redactors re-worked the different historical traditions from their sources to give appropriate place to God’s intervention in the unfolding of events. According to Mark Leuchter, this was the major concern of the Deuteronomic Historian who constructed “a theoretical narrative of Israel’s landed experience ...for the purpose of establishing a vision of society where sacral leadership and old covenantal ideals formed the basis for evaluating righteousness, theological fidelity, and social responsibility.”<sup>2</sup> These events eventually shaped the history of the people along the traditions received, bearing in mind their relationship with Yahweh as his covenanted people. Consequently, the books of Samuel betray the hand of the Deuteronomic writers. According to scholars, the Priestly and the Deuteronomic traditions are steeped in theological ideologies that have consequences on the shaping of the life of the people. This is particularly true in the book of Samuel whose theological outfit reflects the “religion of a people deeply rooted in the life of a people settled on their land and leading a natural agricultural and political existence.”<sup>3</sup>

This picture of the book of Samuel helps the redactors to present Samuel as the personage that bears this new theological vision on his shoulder and thus incorporates other narratives that have implication for the exilic period and even beyond.

Samuel thus functions within a work that was not always a single narrative, but which was always part of a textual curriculum with an interconnected vision. His diverse roles as priest, prophet, and judge are the end result of careful hermeneutical creativity on the part of the redactors who recognized Samuel’s liminality and its potential as an interface between tradition.<sup>4</sup>

This is still the work of theology today. It is appropriate to show that in the unfolding of the daily events of a people, the place of God is not relegated to the background or allow cynics to control the interpretation of such events. Rather, it is right and fitting to show and acknowledge the guiding but unseen hands of God in directing the affairs of the universe both in the case of the individual and that of the nations within the universe.

### **IMPLICATION FOR SEMINARY FORMATION TODAY**

There is no doubt that the book of Samuel and in indeed the person of Samuel have a deep implication for formation today as the world rolls into the Third Millennium and more for a country like Nigeria where we are grappling with various transition programs (from cultural, tribal, clan, and society, to an amalgamated state and indeed transition into a globalization). Also, religious transition from Traditional religious worldview to embracing a Judeo-Christian/ Islamic religious worldview; from traditional monarchical leadership, to military dictatorship and to democratically system of government. Yet in all of these, we seem not to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.99.

<sup>2</sup> *Samuel and the Shaping...*, p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, OUP, Oxford, 1972, p.179.

<sup>4</sup> M. Leuchter, *Samuel and the Shaping...*p.21.

have our feet properly firm and steady on the ground. What can we contribute or rather how do we make impact through our vocation. In a prophetic manner, Karl Rhaner has this to say about the priest of tomorrow:

He will be a man to whom mature people find their way even though the society does not drive children to him. He will be a man who truly endures the grievous darkness of existence together with all his brothers and sisters, knowing that its first source and its blessed fulfillment are found in the mystery of love which conquers by the incomprehensibility of the cross... will not have power drawn from the social power of the church, but ill have courage to do without that power...<sup>1</sup>

The pericope of our consideration could be termed the Call Narrative. Like most of the other call narratives in the Hebrew Bible or the whole bible in general, it has special literary and theological significances.

### **Call Literary Structure:**

It could be said that this passage follows a literary genre that is common to call narrative such as Abraham, Moses and other prophetic figures.

#### **THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE CALL NARRATIVE**

- a. Introduction: this narrates the setting which includes time and place
- b. Confrontation, the deity meets the human
- c. Reaction: that of fear
- d. Commission: the deity gives a specific instruction or commission to the human agent
- e. Protest: commonly claim of unworthiness
- f. Reassurance: the deity gives confidence to the human agent
- g. Conclusion: this often takes a less formal way

### **Theological Relevance.**

Samuel was called like most other people at the critical juncture in Yahweh's relationship with the Chosen People. Abraham was called to begin the process by the invitation to leave his land and his people to a place the Lord will give him (Gen 12.1,7). He was promised the Land and thus, the journey began with him. In the same way Moses was called to lead the nation of Israel out of slavery into freedom so that they can exercise their relationship with Yahweh (Ex 3.1-12. Through him the Law and the Covenant was given and ratified and the journey to possess the Promised Land began. Samuel in this case was called to establish the kingdom of Israel through the appointment of and confirm the people. Their calls have some things in common. They were to be the beginning of a long and lasting process of relationship with Yahweh that will shape the future of the People of God. Little wonder then they were called prophets and even seen as model of prophetic mission on which the future Prophets will not only model themselves but by which they will judge their faithfulness. These calls have theological implication. An examination shows that these people so called were Nigeria could be said to be a nation in transition groping in the dark and looking for direction. There is no doubt, it needs a luminal figure like Samuel to lead her out of the quagmire she finds herself. The political class that have ruled us since her independence except for the few years

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<sup>1</sup> K. Rahner, *Servant of the Lord*, Herder & Herder, New York, 1968, 112.

of charismatic leadership of the triumvirate such like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe and Ahmadu Bello, the successive leadership have groped in what may be termed trackless and directionless road.

In the recent times, charlatans and cynics both in political and religious arena have taken reign of the soul of the nation and not only appropriating the economic fortunes of the country to themselves but also amuse themselves at our expense (what the Italians call *prendi in giro*) through the various proposed programs used as diversionary scheme to keep us in check or in line.

This is the major contributor to the craze either for power at any expense or the unending proliferation of churches and religious centers, the unending religious rallies and vigils, the captivating themes and slogans and the various radio and television jingles. Sad enough, this is sometimes found even among us. Many have taken to this vocation just to satisfy their personal curiosity.

As noted above, through the formation of Samuel, he was not only able to fashion a theological transformation that led to the construction of the worthy Temple for Yahweh (1 Chron 9.22), but also created a social and political transformation that gave consciousness to the people even long after the division, destruction and the dissolution of the monarchy. This is what eventually gave birth to the Judaism as a consciousness, a religious worldview and a people till today.

Nigeria is at the threshold of her centenary celebration as a nation when the Northern and the Southern protectorate was amalgamated, we need visionary leaders who will, using Nigerian language, *'take us to the next level.'* We need leaders who will not only annex the different resources of the nation but who will also give a sense of identity to the citizens. It is rather unfortunate that Nigerian do not see themselves as Nigerians but members of their ethnic groups. As I have noted somewhere, there is no nation that can develop without a language. Language gives identity to a people and challenges them to think. In Nigeria, the major tribes that have their languages often have consciousness of self worth that are sometimes construed as arrogance or pride. The English language as it stands today is a second language to most Nigerians as such it is difficult to forge unity without a common tongue. A nation without a language is relegated, despised and treated as nonexistent. It is for this reason that Nigerian citizens are regarded with some scorn whenever we have to travel. Even in the computer setup, we have English language from different English speaking countries but not Nigeria despite our population. Have we ever pay attention to the greetings of the Pope especially the Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI whenever he greets people at his *Ubis et Orbis*, he speaks about forty something languages and non from Nigeria while smaller nations like Burundi or some of the western nations are represented.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, some scholars have seen in the book of Samuel especially the narrative of his call, a deliberate attempt to show that at his best, man cannot please God. Therefore, the choice of who leads the people finally falls on God. If this is a correct reading then, it is not only that Yahweh is the guidance of history, but that the call of Samuel shows that it is He that chooses.

This recalls what Jesus told his disciples, you did not choose me no, I chose you and sent you to bear fruit that will last (John 15.16).

The situation of Israel before the call of Samuel was precarious because the lot of the people fell in the hand of Eli and his family who seem to be old and incompetent. This is a heavy burden that should not rest on a natural or family ties but an act of God's providence because of human frailty. The call of Samuel then shows that it is God who calls and he calls whom he loves just as he called Samuel. Through the dedication of Samuel, he was able to help the people to have a personal encounter with their God because he too kept a personal relationship with the God who called him. Eli helped him to shape this relationship into maturity and guide him to know the will of God for the boy Samuel and the people. Moreover, this knowledge of God helped him to midwife the Chosen people and navigate through the political, social and religious waters of his time.

This same God is still concerned with the affairs of his people today and will intervene through our vocation. Nigerian is need of leaders who can help her to navigate through the political, social and religious crises she finds herself. How to be a prophetic voice in these challenging times should be our concern as well like Samuel. Our vocation and formation should help us to read the signs of the time and attend adequately as the prophet of old. We cannot remain silent or unconcerned as charlatans take control of the people. In the words of St Gregory the Great, "a religious leader should be careful in deciding when to remain silent and be sure to say something useful when deciding to speak. In this way he will avoid saying thing that would be better not said, or leaving unsaid things that ought to be said." It is our duty as future priest to listen attentively to the voice of the Spirit, to discern what the Spirit wishes to say and to guide those under our care as the priest Eli guided the boy Samuel. However, how can you guide when you have not gathered, how can you discern when you have not listened and how can you lead when you have never followed?

## **Ecological Crisis in Africa and the Christian Response**

Being the Departmental Lecture of Theology on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2013

By

Fr. Wilfried Kouijzer, SMA

### **INTRODUCTION**

This lecture deals with the Ecological Crisis in Africa and the Christian Response.

After explaining the severity of the ecological crisis in Africa, a description of the relationship of the African Ancestors with nature follows. In order to understand current Western environmental ideas in the African society, a historical overview of the relationship of the Western Christians with their environment is inserted. A way out of the ecological crisis in Africa is then described by means of the concept 'Eco-centric Thinking and Acting', as part of an eco-spirituality.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS IN AFRICA**

#### **1.1 Ecology and the Ecological Crisis.**

Ecology comes from the Greek word '*oikos*', meaning 'house' or 'household'. Ecology is the study of the relationships between an organism and the environment in which it lives, including other living organisms and the non-living surroundings.

If we have a look at the earth, our habitat, then we see that the aforementioned relationships are broken in many ways resulting in a big crisis, an ecological crisis. The crisis becomes visible in climate change, land degradation, water pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, species extinction, and use and misuse of biotechnology. What is true for the earth is also true for Africa. Africa is in pain, because the African is no longer in harmony with nature. As a result, the lives of many Africans are at stake today, as well as the existence of animals, trees, grasses, forests, indeed the entire ecosystem.

The earth is both home and belonging; it is the situation where God loves to be with us. It is home to all living. Living our lives here on earth, we are not so much on a journey through a valley of tears to the life hereafter but, rather, we are fulfilling our lives. We are home already and heaven is the completion of our search where it all began. St. Augustine formulates it as follows: "Christ, while in heaven, is also with us; and we, while on earth, are also with him through grace."<sup>11</sup>

#### **1.2 The Facts and Causes of the Ecological Crisis in Africa.**

Never before have human beings exploited, damaged and degraded the environment in Africa to the extent that we have now. The environment in Africa is fast being destroyed by deforestation, pollution and poaching. Consequently it is less and less habitable for both humans and animals. The negative effects of deforestation are large-scale soil erosion, famine and drought. Soil degradation and erosion together with a reduction in rainfall and the resultant drying rivers, lead to a reduced food production which causes famine that leads to people abandoning their homelands.

When we look in the animal kingdom we see that many species of animals in Africa today are threatened by environmental destruction and poaching. Animals that face extinction from poaching are elephants, rhinos and others that offer an easy profit.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE AFRICAN ANCESTORS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT.**

#### **2.1 The Relation of the African Ancestors with Nature.**

Traditionally we saw in Africa a connection between the people and nature, producing solidarity between the two. When we look to the relation of the African ancestors with nature, we see that they cared very much to preserve their environments and that they were keen to know the other creature's language of communication. The many life-forms that exist on the planet were viewed as fellow creatures closely related to one another. The African was able to interpret and understand the sign languages of mountains, rivers, trees, birds and all the animals and insects. Their capacity for understanding and communicating with nature underlined their love

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, "Sermon on the Ascension," in *The Divine Office* (London: Collins, 1974), vol. 2: 627

and great concern for nature. This close identification with water, soil and trees, reflects an African religious holism.

Though the African People have the human being as their centre, other creatures were never neglected. Many societies cared for other creatures. Some societies have traditionally chosen specific places in their landscape as sacred places where deeper levels of consciousness and spirituality are experienced. If some lakes, groves, springs or other similar natural objects were regarded as holy, it meant that there were certain prohibitions connected with them. The nature of conservation of the African people and their traditional religion, is derived from the closely connected ideas of sacredness and taboo.

## **2.2 To Know Nature is to Know God.**

To know nature, for Africans, is to know God. To know God through nature may sound pantheistic, but it is meant in the sense that nature simply communicates God's presence or acts as a vehicle for His reality. There is a sense of the presence of God in all things and at all times. Nature becomes a God-infused and God-breathed place. Thunder and lightning are direct manifestations of God's power and He controls not only the health and lives of people and the animals, on whom these people depend, but also the rain and the food supply which the rain brings from the soil. Because of this intimate association of the natural environment with God, the Africans observe a unique and intimate relationship with the natural environment. This theocentric interpretation prevents the African from dividing and differentiating the universe in special opposing categories as found in the Western world. For instance the division in natural and supernatural are unnecessary from the African cosmological viewpoint. Moreover the theocentric interpretation of the universe justifies taboos and territorial cults which intend to protect and contribute to the use and preservation of the environment. African religious rules preserve the ecology for the benefit of the overall community.

The Traditional African belief that the presence of God is realized not only through human interactions but also through natural phenomena, we see in the practice of sacrifices. Through the ages Africans have had a dialogue with parts of nature. The traditional practice among some African communities to offer sacrifices to the spirit of the forest before hunting expeditions or to the spirit of the earth before planting reveals the belief in such dialogue. Among the Akan of Ghana, 'Asase Yaa' is the female spirit of the earth and it is taboo to cultivate the earth on Thursdays. Traditionally, the Africans did not take from nature without asking for what they needed for life. Moreover they did not take more than they needed. They tried to return to nature in some other way what they took, as if to repay this debt.

That the ancestors knew God becomes clear when we see that they were able to give God a name. The following table illustrates the powerful images with which the ancestors described God.

**Table 1: Names Given for God.**

<b><u>Name for God</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>	<b><u>Language</u></b>	<b><u>Country</u></b>
Asase Wura	Owner of the Earth	Fanti	Ghana
Odomankomah	Giver of Life	Fanti	Ghana
Totrobonsu	Giver of Rain	Fanti	Ghana
Chukwu Okike	God the Creator	Ibo	Nigeria

Ọlorun	The Owner of Heaven	Yoruba	Nigeria
Elemii	The Giver and Owner of Life	Yoruba	Nigeria

Notes: Ọlorun – the Owner of Heaven, where the word 'heaven' is used for the sky as well as for the dwelling-place of the Deity.

We can say that nature is the first book of Revelation. By observing nature, the ancestors got to know the great qualities of God as is shown in the following table.

**Table 2: Qualities Attributed to God.**

<b>Name for God</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Country</b>
Nyame Nyansa Boakwa	All Knower	Fanti	Ghana
Tumi Wura	Power belongs to Him	Fanti	Ghana
Naangmen Kaa	He who Cares	Dagaare	Ghana
Naangmen Kpeo	The Source of Strength	Dagaare	Ghana
Sarki Sarakuna	The King of Kings	Hausa	Ghana
Chinwe Uwa	The Owner of the Earth	Ibo	Nigeria
Osebuluwa	He who is as Old as the Universe	Ibo	Nigeria
Ọlorun Nikan Lo Gbọn	He who is Wise	Yoruba	Nigeria
Arinurode Olumoran Ọkan	The One who Sees Both the Inside and the Outside of a Person	Yoruba	Nigeria

### **2.3 God and Creation.**

It is generally believed in Africa that God is the creator of the universe. Throughout Africa there are creation myths which depict God as the source of all things and beings. In the creation myth of the Ewes, Mawu, the Ewe God, made the first man and woman out of clay and water. Since clay was scarce, when man died, Mawu took their bodies to make new men. This explains why children resemble their parents and it explains the link between the living and the dead. Another myth about an old woman with a pestle is popular in Ghana, although there are variations of it in many African societies. According to this myth, God was once very near to the earth, but each time an old woman pounded her fufuu or corn the pestle hit Him and so He withdrew. This myth indicates that, although God wants to be with us, our own behaviour keep us away from him.

The Akans of Ghana know God, not only as the creator of the Universe but, also, as the controller and maintainer. God (Onyame) gives rain to fertilise and soothe the earth. Trees, animals and humans alike depend on divine grace for rain; hence the name "Totrobonsu" – "Giver of Rain". Onyame is also the giver of sunshine to provide warmth for earthly creatures. Hence the name "Amowia" – "Giver of Sunshine". As the being responsible for rainfall and sunshine, God controls and regulates the seasons to enable people to plant and harvest at the appropriate times. The Yoruba know God as the one who controls the seasons and the course of events. Hence He is known as "Olojo Oni" – "The Owner of this Day", meaning each day owes its being to him.



So far we have seen that the traditional theocentric perspective, to know nature is to know God, is a worldview among Africans. This perspective preserves the ecology. However, nowadays the theocentric approach to nature seems to be replaced by an anthropocentric approach. This approach we meet in the Western World. It manifests itself in the way we express ourselves. In the past the African was the 'Kyiamé', meaning 'Linguist', of God. He was the intermediary between the subjects and God and he spoke on behalf of God. God spoke through him. The 'Linguist' spoke as follows: "God says that...", but nowadays the African says: "I say that...". In order to understand this drastic change in approach we have to look to the Western Colonizers and Western Christianity which came to Africa through the Western Missionaries.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WESTERN CHRISTIANS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

#### **3.1 The Worldview of the Western Christians.**

In the Christian worldview, the world, creation, is the place where God is present to us. Christianity's most distinctive belief is that divine reality is always mediated through the world, a belief traditionally expressed in the Chalcedonian formula that Christ was "fully God, fully man". St. Irenaeus of Lyons (130-200) explained that through creation itself the Word reveals God the Creator. The desert father, St. Anthony (250-356), said that he read the words of God in the nature of created things and St. Basil (330-379) taught the people that he wanted creation to penetrate them with so much admiration that wherever they would be, the least plant would bring them the clear remembrance of the Creator.

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) saw all creatures as his brothers and sisters because he understood that he and they had a common father, God the Creator. St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) taught in his Spiritual Exercises a way of seeking God in all things since God dwells in all things, gives them being, preserves them and grants them growth. And so we see that the Saints tell us that God is revealed in the book of creation, but creation is not identified with God any more than the written biblical revelation is identified with God. Creation and Bible are both word of God, each in its own way, each in harmony with the other.

However with the European Renaissance, the view of divine immanence in the universe was replaced by a God who is a 'Deus absconditus' - a 'hidden God'. In the eighteenth Century scientists like Newton removed God's presence still further from being manifested in the created universe. This led to a deistic theology; the belief, based solely on reason, in a God who created the universe and then abandoned it and giving no supernatural revelation. It imagines God as a clockmaker who winds up the clock of the world by creating its laws and leaves it to run by itself. This essentially banishes God from the world and leads to an anthropocentric conception of the universe in which humanity replaces God as centre of the universe. In this way man could justify his dominion over nature.

#### **3.2 Cartesian-Newtonian-Darwinian Thinking.**

Under the influence of Cartesian-Newtonian-Darwinian thinking, the dimension of mystery present in all creation was less and less recognized. René Descartes (1596-1650) is sometimes considered the father of the new, scientific way of thinking. However, he built on the

earlier achievements of Copernicus, Kepler, Francis Bacon and Galileo. Like them, Descartes took mathematics as the pattern for all genuinely certain knowledge. He preferred to quantify and measure reality rather than contemplate and admire it. Descartes stressed the radical distinction between mind and matter. By stressing this difference, instead of the synthesis of mind and matter in the human person as medieval philosophy had done, Descartes made it possible to view physical nature, animals, other human beings, and even one's own body as an object. The result of this reasoning is that subjects come to stand over and against objects and relate to them as a field for exploitation and manipulation. The world, the objects, could now be brought under rational, human control for the well-being of at least some.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) argued that human reason would soon be able to explain all phenomena and so removing the mystery in the world and leaving nothing to a sense of wonder or fear. For Newton the universe is not holy in itself and not a means of communion with God, but is created and conserved in existence by one all-holy, all-powerful, necessary being.

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) showed in his theory of "natural selection", that nature favours the individuals who make the best adaptation to their environment and succeed in overcoming their competitors in the struggle for survival. Darwin envisioned the physical world as a battlefield, a war between one organism and another. This concept seemed to justify the spirit of competition and greed which powered the industrial revolution.

### **3.3 From the Modern Devotion to Romanticism.**

Modern Devotion and Romanticism were among the influential currents of spirituality at the time of Descartes and Newton. The Modern Devotion flourished in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For the Modern Devotion, God was a distant, heavenly being whose judgments are incomprehensible, but who shows tender mercy to all who trust in divine help.

Jansenism was one of the most influential religious movements of the seventeenth century. Jansenist spirituality sees a sharp dichotomy between creatures and the creator, body and soul, nature and grace. What counted in Jansenism was interior worship and growth in humility. Exterior things, including nature and other humans, were either of lesser value or a complete obstacle to perfection.

The Enlightenment, less a spirituality than a spiritual philosophy, influenced eighteenth century Europe. The form of religion that appealed to enlightened people was deism, a belief in the existence of God based solely on natural reason, without reference to revelation. God is seen as a remote but beneficent figure completely separate from the universe. Reason became the standard measure of all reality.

The Romantics of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century tried to recover a more holistic view of the human person. For them, God was immanent within nature and within their own being, knowable through feeling and sensation. However, the romantics were ultimately engaged in a search for self. The immanent presence of a transcendent God was not recognized. The human self was the source that imposed meaning, value and order on the world. The Romantic era was unable to overcome the Cartesian split between subject and object.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONTEMPORARY AFRICA : THE AFRICAN AND THE WESTERN WORLDVIEW.**

#### **4.1 How the African Copes with Different Worldviews.**

The Cartesian-Newtonian worldview, which was introduced to Africa with the coming of the European colonizers, has proved to be a path to ecological disaster for Africa. The treatment of the world as an object of endless manipulation has resulted in the separation and alienation of the African from their surroundings. The Christian Missionary contributed to a diverging from the path set out by the African ancestors by introducing the new Christian culture, rather than respecting the existing African Traditional Religion and Culture. At present in Africa, the two different worldviews, African and Western Christian, are both present and depending on the level of education more or less intermingled.

The new alternatives offered by the West are chosen selectively by the African according to 'how well it works' and how easily it fits in with their traditional world-view. The African has no problem with shuttling between the visible and invisible worlds, between Western and African worlds, whereas agencies of Western-styled development do have problem with this shuttling. Myths and taboos continue to orient and direct the masses alongside logical persuasion and modern laws.

#### **4.2 How Worldviews Affect the Approach to Ecological Problems.**

Today's global institutions for ecological management, including those of the African Governments, continue to assign different meanings and interpretations to 'reality' than the people living in the villages. The consequence is a parallel approach to ecological problems. Western solutions are officially maintained at the higher echelons of the bureaucracy while unofficially African solutions continue to hold sway at local level. Two strong western cultural biases maintain this parallelism; scientific materialism and individualism. For the African, life proceeds from his cultural traditions and reality is rather social than individual. The Western individual bias effectively blocks social action and transformation by not recognizing or affirming the importance of the existing social reality.

To illustrate this, I use the indiscriminate bush-burning which destroys Northern Ghana. At national level the management of tropical eco-systems is in the hands of forestry experts trained at Aberdeen, Scotland, and at local level the ecological task is left to fire departments. However, the fire engines of these departments, which are donated by ecologically-minded Northern countries, are more used to provide water at exorbitant prices for the local population rather than for fighting bush fires.

In 1975, the Frafra Traditional Council, which is a Local Council in the North of Ghana, granted a Chief permission to have the annual rites of burning around a sacred grove. The Chief stated that it is a customary festivity celebrated annually by chiefs in his area and failure or negligence to observe this honourable practice means an insult to the powers of the gods and may even result in a disaster in the village or clan concerned.<sup>11</sup>

## **CHAPTER 5**

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<sup>11</sup> Jon Kirby, "Bush Fires and the Domestication of the Wild in Ghana," in Natural Resource Management in Ghana and its Socio-Economic Context, ed. Roger Blech (London: Chameleon Press Ltd, 1999), 116.

## A CHANGE FROM ANTHROPOCENTRIC TO ECO-CENTRIC THINKING AND ACTING.

### **5.1 A Change from Anthropocentric to Eco-centric Thinking and Acting.**

The way out of the ecological crisis, not only in Africa but in the whole world, is a thinking and acting from the earth perspective. This means a change from anthropocentric to eco-centric thinking and acting. In order to understand this, we first have to revisit our own place in creation, the presence of the Spirit in creation, the commission to dominate the earth and last but not least, Jesus who taught us how to live on earth.

#### **5.1.1. "We" in Creation.**

When we look around us, we can easily conclude that we are at war with the plants and the animals, with the soil and water, with ourselves and with God. The earth is our home. We belong to the earth and the earth does not belong to us, it belongs to God. We are not on the earth, but we are made of the earth. We are truly made of the dust of the earth, and to dust we shall return. In Ecclesiastes 3:20 we read: "Both man and beast go to the same place; both originate from the dust and to the dust both return." We are also reminded of this in the liturgy of Ash Wednesday when the priest places ashes on our forehead and says: "Remember, man, you are dust and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19). Where we belong in the earth community now becomes clear by looking to our identity. We are alive, dust, animal, vertebrate, mammal, a primate and human. From this we see how all things are mutually dependent; they live with each other and for each other, therefore we can easily say that life is community, and community is the communication of life.

We do not weave the web of life, we are merely a strand in it. What we do to the web we do to ourselves.

#### **5.1.2. The Presence of the Spirit in Creation.**

The prophet Joel tells us that Yahweh will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 3:1). This Spirit, "Ruach", is the breath of God's life. From time immemorial, God's Spirit has been called the Spirit of life, for the Spirit gives life. When the Spirit of life leaves us, all that is left is destruction, death and desolation. The Psalmist tells us this in Psalm 104:29-30; "You turn your face away, they suffer, you stop their breath, they die and revert to dust. You give breath, fresh life begins, you keep renewing the world." In the treatise "*On the Trinity*", of Didymus of Alexandria, we read: "The Holy Spirit frees us from sin and death; and from being earthy, made of dust and ashes, he makes us spiritual, sharers in the divine glory, sons and heirs of our God and Father, formed according to the image of the Son, his fellow heirs and his brothers, who will reign with him and share his glory."<sup>1</sup>

Today we first of all have to rediscover the holiness of life and the divine mystery in all created things, we have to defend it against arbitrary manipulation and destruction. Life comes from the source of life, the creative divine Spirit, and must therefore be encountered with reverence before God.

A pre-assembly meeting of the World Conference on Church and Society in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1990, developed the relationship of the Spirit to creation as follows: "The Spirit is God's uncreated energy alive throughout creation. All creation lives and moves and has its being in this divine life. This Spirit is in, with and under all things. The Spirit strives to

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<sup>1</sup> Didymus of Alexandria, "On the Trinity," in *The Divine Office* (London: Collins, 1974), vol. 2: 607.

bring them to their full perfection (redemption). Because of the presence and pervasiveness of the Spirit throughout creation, we not only reject a view in which the cosmos does not share in the sacred and in which humans are not part of nature; we also repudiate hard lines drawn between animate and inanimate, and human and non-human. All alike, and all together in the bundle of life, 'groan in travail' (Romans 8) awaiting the full redemption of all things through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1.3 The Commission to Dominate the Earth.

God commissioned us to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it (Gen. 1:28). However, fruit bearing is more than child bearing. Concerning the commission to multiply, we can say that we multiply because we want to continue, as we ourselves are aging and are on our way out; death and decay. In death and burying, we show that we belong to the soil. It is the best way of paying gratitude; a returning of what we had borrowed. Death is our companion of life, it completes the circle of life, it completes our life on earth. However, death is final only in so far as it is an event we have to go through in order to continue. That this is possible the Risen Lord has shown us.

In the commission to dominate the earth, dominion does not refer to exerting power, controlling or dominating. It is not a stepping out of the web of creation and to put ourselves on top. It is quite unrealistic to think of managing the ecosystem of the whole planet in which we, ourselves, are participants. We are not the managers of this world but the stewards, agents, or trustees of God, charged with the safekeeping of the world's resources for the benefit of all. As stewards we are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the earth and we will have to give an account to God of how we have used or abused our position.

In 1985, Pope John Paul II made the following statement during his visit to Nairobi, Kenya: "It is a requirement of our human dignity, and, therefore, a serious responsibility, to exercise dominion over creation in such a way that it truly serves the human family according to criteria that take into account not only the immediate needs of people but also the needs of future generations. In this way the stewardship over nature, entrusted by God to man, will not be guided by shortsightedness or selfish pursuit; rather it will take into account the fact that all created goods are created directly to the good of all humanity."

In the same line Pope John Paul II explains the biblical mandate to exercise dominion over creation during the celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1 1990. "The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to 'use or misuse' or to dispose of things as one pleases."<sup>2</sup>

Our responsibility toward the earth, which reflects our creation in the image of God, has been placed in a new context with the coming of Christ. With the resurrection of Jesus a horizon of hope has been opened for the creature. For our part, we are placed in a new situation of responsibility. This responsibility is represented by our call to make disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus has commanded us (Mt 28:19-20). When placed in

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<sup>1</sup> David G. Hallman, ed., Ecotheology-Voices from South and North (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 100.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation, (World Day of Peace, January 1, 1990): 34.

its full biblical context, this work of announcing the new covenant is seen to have great ecological implications. Reconciliation of the earth with people will be the essence of this new covenant (Hos 2:18-20). Paul's words in Romans 8 are an echo of this very idea: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God." We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. Non-human creation is now included in the saving event opened up in Christ. Here man and the world of creation belong together.

The Bible presents God's future in terms of plenitude, a gathering up of all good things into a final concert of praise. In this final vision - both Isaiah and John's Revelation concur - the earth (and the body) will not so much be unmade as remade. Isaiah's vision of the new creation in Isaiah 65 pictures a new Jerusalem in which people live out their years, build houses, plant vineyards and eat fruit; where their offspring are blessed; and where the wolf and the lamb shall feed together (Is 65:25). The ecological concept of relationships, in which each living thing has its own place prepared for it, is closer to the biblical vision than to Newton's view of space as a receptacle, meaning a container holding all things together. When Jesus promises to prepare a place for each of us in John 14:2-3, he is speaking of the perfection of these ecological relations. And when he tells us to pray daily that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, he is telling us to pray for the coming of the Kingdom in which those relations are perfected.

Jürgen Moltmann, a German Reformed theologian, points out that the goal toward which creation moves is the renewal of heaven *and* earth, which will together become God's dwelling. This is why in the Book of Revelation's imagery of heaven (Chapter 21 and 22), the temple and creation are mixed, for in the final celebration all these are brought together in the new heaven and new earth. Jürgen Moltmann sums up this vision: "The kingdom of glory is the indwelling of the triune God in his whole creation. Heaven *and* earth will become God's dwelling, the surroundings that encompass him, and his milieu. For created beings, this means that - all together, each created being in its own way - they will participate in eternal life and in the eternal bliss of God who is present among them."<sup>1</sup>

#### **5.1.4 Jesus Taught us How to Live on Earth.**

We can look for God in heaven, but God looks for us here on earth. Moreover God cares for us through the earth, of which we are the children. God created us through the earth.

When the Father sent his only begotten Son, Jesus, among us here on earth, He shared the same identity we have; dust, animal, vertebrate, mammal, a primate and human. Jesus, in being one like us in all but sin, taught us how to live on earth; a life of humility, service, integrity and self-expansive love of the wider community of life. The necessity of Jesus teaching us how to live on earth, becomes all the more clear when we realize that we have broken relationships with the three communities to which we belong. These three communities are the earth community, the community of human beings and the community of all those believing in God. Jesus, by his teaching, parables and lifestyle, taught us how to reconnect to these communities. That this teaching, is still unmistakably needed is shown especially by Christians who in their hurry to go to heaven, trample upon the earth. Without following Jesus: the Way, the Truth and the Life we will perish in the wilderness.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William A. Dyrness, The Earth is God's - A Theology of American Culture (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Dowd, Earthspirit A Handbook for Nurturing an Ecological Christianity (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 68.

## 5.2 The Church and Eco-centric Thinking and Acting.

We can say that a distinctive Christian ecological discipleship proceeds within the living tradition of the Church in communion with the teaching of the great Fathers and Doctors, within the inclusive spiritualities and liturgies, and within the exemplary lives of the Saints. However it is a fact of history that the Catholic Church has been slow to recognize the gravity of the ecological problems facing the earth. It is not easy to find any reference to the environment among the documents from Rome in the decades preceding the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II. Nevertheless, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - '*Lumen Gentium*', we find the doctrine of creation.<sup>1</sup> (No36: "The laity must recognize the inner nature, the value and the ordering of the whole of creation to the praise of God." And "not even in temporal business may any human activity be withdrawn from God's dominion."). The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation – '*Dei Verbum*' describes that God creates and conserves all things by his Word.<sup>2</sup> And The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World – '*Gaudium et Spes*' confronts us with a domination theology which claims that all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and summit.<sup>3</sup> There is here no mention of respect for other life forms, obeying of ecological laws or establishment of more just human societies within the limits of the natural world.

Pope Paul VI does speak about the environment in "*Octogesima Adveniens*", the Apostolic Letter to Cardinal Roy published in 1971, but the destruction of species or ecosystems is not seen as in itself a moral and religious problem. The Pope writes: "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in turn the victim of this degradation."<sup>4</sup>

In ecology, Pope John Paul II has done more than to clarify Catholic faith. Although much of his ecological teaching is in addresses and homilies, already in his first Encyclical, '*Redemptor Hominis*', Pope John Paul II makes a number of references to the environment,<sup>5</sup> and in his 1990 World Peace Day Message, Pope John Paul II remarks: "For Christians an inclusive care for the environment stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ."<sup>6</sup>

The theme of the importance of the science of ecology and the preservation of the environment is further consolidated in the Encyclical '*Centesimus Annus*'.<sup>7</sup> Implicitly in this Encyclical, the Pope challenges us to transform the models of production and consumption that we too easily take for granted.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter IV # 36.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Dei Verbum*, Chapter I # 3.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, Chapter I # 12.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, # 21.

<sup>5</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, Chapter I and III.

<sup>6</sup> Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, Chapter IV.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, approved by Pope John Paul II and published in 1992, deals with 'Respect for the Integrity of Creation'.<sup>1</sup> It comes here down to the stewardship of those whom God created in his own image.

At present there is a cry for an entire Encyclical on Christian ecology as formulated by the Anglican Bishop Hugh Montefiore: "I regret that more is not said in the encyclicals about the world population explosion and the planet's environmental problems. Although the social teaching of the Encyclicals is global in outreach, it seems to lack an appreciation that we human beings can only flourish in a healthy environment, and that we do have some moral responsibility as being made in God's image for the rest of his creation."<sup>2</sup>

In order for the Church to remain theologically, spiritually and morally adequate for the future of creation, it is necessary that priests and people respond convincingly and soon to the ecological crisis.

### 5.3 The Liturgy and Eco-centric Thinking and Acting.

In the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church we find a wealth of eco-centric texts and prayers. However, there is also evidence that we ignore the earth for the sake of heaven. Especially, when we look upon the earth as a valley of tears through which we are merely pilgrims on our way to heaven. These prayers tend to encourage us to carry the cross of mismanagement of the earth, a cross which Christ never put on our shoulders.

The following intercessory prayers, as found in The Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite, serve as an aid in how to live on earth.

."Show us your goodness, present in every creature, that we may contemplate your glory everywhere." – Morning Prayer Week 2, Sunday.

."You created all things, and now you provide for their growth, may we always perceive your handiwork in creation." – Morning Prayer Week 2, Friday.

."We give thanks to God whose power is revealed in nature, and whose providence is revealed in history." – Evening Prayer Week III, Sunday.

Unfortunately the new translation of the Divine Office happen to be **less "green"** than the previous translation. For example:

."We thank you for the beauty of creation: may the work of humankind not disfigure it, but enhance it to your greater glory." – Old Evening Prayer Week 2, Wednesday.

Is replaced by:

."Eternal God, help us to remember that life is like a flower which blossoms in the morning, but withers in the evening." – New Evening Prayer Week 2, Wednesday.

And another intercession with stress on dominion is added:

."You instructed us to labour and **to exercise dominion over the earth**, may our work honour you and sanctify our brothers and sisters." – Morning Prayer Week 4, Tuesday.

It is in the same spirit that the following intercession is added:

."Lord, it is your will that we use our minds to unlock nature's secrets and **master the world**, may the arts and sciences advance your glory and the happiness of all peoples."

The Offertory and Eucharistic prayers are another source showing the interconnection of creation. The Eucharist has cosmic significance, because all creation participates in it as shown

<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 2415-2418.

<sup>2</sup> Edward P. Echlin, "Do We Have a Green Pope?," *Priests & People* 2 (1995), vol. 9: 72.



by "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise" (Canon III), and "With countless hosts of Angels, we too, confess your name in exultation, giving voice to every creature under heaven" (Canon IV). In the Preparation of the Gifts we read: "Lord God of all creation, through your goodness we have received the bread.... the wine we offer you, fruit of the earth....the vine and work of human hands". The latter part refers to the grain and the grapes which are raw materials that have to be cultivated, harvested and transformed by the work of human hands before they can become elements for Eucharist. Thus the finished products of bread and wine symbolically gather into themselves not only the earth and the sun but all human activity as well.

The altar has a special place in the church, it is the place where heaven and earth meet. It is the place for the gifts and thanksgiving prayer. It is, therefore, more appropriate to have real, natural flowers on the altar instead of artificial, plastic flowers. The candles on the altar should preferably be from wax, wax produced by bees and the altar cloth preferably from natural material like linen. In this way the altar becomes more an offering of the fruits of the earth, the work of human hands.

The well known 'Harvests' in Africa, express a thanksgiving to God for the fruits of the earth. They are therefore holy as they unite heaven and earth. Therefore we should be careful not to turn 'harvests' into mere fundraising events. It is true that we need money too, but there are other ways for collecting this.

Finally I want to remark that the surroundings of the Church, the Church compound, is a holy and sacred place. It is a place of healing and reconciliation. Peace can come to us when we have a nice and harmonious compound made up of flowers and trees. Seats or benches can be placed under these trees and among these flowers in order to enhance our healing and reconciliation and our prayers of thanks with the whole of creation.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **ECO-CENTRIC THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS IN AFRICA.**

#### **6.1 A Change of Lifestyle.**

What becomes clear from the previous chapters is that we are the latest development of a process that has been spiritual from the beginning, and that we are part of an organic, living universe in which everything is interrelated and interdependent. In order to adopt this new insight in our lives, a change of lifestyle is necessary.

So far, our relation to God and the rest of creation has been one of separation from and above the rest of nature. We now have to acknowledge that God is intimately revealed in the diversity of creation. Instead of 'Worship the Creator, not Creation,' we now rather worship the Creator in and through creation. Instead of adopting the hierarchical way: God, father, mother, children, animals, plants, bacteria and rocks, we now rather understand that we are each part of a living communion of diverse personalities bound together in an inseparable relationship in space and time. A graphical representation of this old understanding, would be a pyramid with God on top, representing the hierarchical way and a representation of the new understanding would be concentric circles with God as well in the middle as everywhere else. Concerning the hierarchical way, it is worthwhile to note here that even yet, in most African families, the father gets the best food and that children are seen, but not heard.

The task now for the Africans, and the whole of humankind, is to implement these thoughts and actions. We are all witness that the dualism of western philosophy has ruined much of what is holy in the lives of Africans. It is to this that Pope John Paul II refers when he remarks that Africa bears the scars of its long history of humiliations. This continent has, too frequently, been considered only for selfish interests. Today Africa is asking to be loved and respected for what it is. It does not ask for compassion, it asks for solidarity.<sup>1</sup> In 1998 Pope John Paul II continues: "Instead of cursing the past and repeating the question, 'What can the world do for Africa?,' it is time for Africans to look to the present and future and say, 'What could Africans themselves do for Africa?'"<sup>2</sup> My response to this question, and, I hope also yours after this talk, is the implementation of eco-centric thinking and acting. We accept that we are earth and that we are part of the rest of nature. What we do to Earth, we do to our Self. We are the self-conscious and spiritually aware organization of the elements of this living planet.

## **6.2 How Eco-centric Thoughts and Actions are Implemented in Africa.**

While being confronted with the ecological crisis in Africa, it is encouraging to see how some Africans have already taken some steps and actions in the spirit of care for the environment. Examples of these concrete steps and actions are the following.

### **6.2.1 Communication of Environmental Data.**

Professor Margaret Karembu, who teaches Environment Science at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya, recently did an extensive research on information networks and the environmental challenges in Africa. In her research, she shows how information networks can contribute to environmental awareness.

Professor Karembu states that Internet increases opportunities for public access to environmental information.<sup>3</sup> The main challenge is how to get this high level environmental electronic information down to grassroot level and, conversely, getting non-electronic environmental information up to the high electronic levels.

An organisation meeting this challenge is Econews (ENA). Econews uses the Internet and worked with three communities in East Africa on a pilot project to halt desertification. Econews monitors global trends in desertification through the Internet, then informs those communities about policies at global, regional and international levels through newsletters. These letters are distributed to the community information officers who then translate such information. The dialogue that follows is condensed in the form of a newsletter which Econews again puts on the Internet.

Communication of environmental data is not only vital for broadening public awareness and participation in the debate on environmental challenges, but is indispensable when an ecological crime becomes a matter of life and death. An example of this is the toxic

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<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Angelus 24 September 1995," *L'Osservatore Romano*, (9 February 2000): 3.

<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Message to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 10 January 1998," *L'Osservatore Romano*, (9 February 2000): 3.

<sup>3</sup> Margret Karembu, "The Information Superhighway and Environmental Challenges in Africa," in *Africa Media Review* 2 (1996), vol. 10: 72-96.

waste dump by an Italian company in the Nigerian village of Koko in Delta State in 1988. Greenpeace International used computer networking to monitor the traffic of the 3,500 tonnes of hazardous waste. Any delay in releasing such information would be disastrous to people in not only West Africa, but Africa as a whole.

Despite the presence of electronic environmental information, the fact is that, in Africa, public access to it is hindered by a lack of computers and low levels of computer literacy. It is therefore that, at present, newspapers, which are available and affordable for many people in Africa, play an important role in this communication of environmental data. In this respect a greater awareness of need for care for the environment, specialization and environmental education is needed for journalists.

### **6.2.2 Actions by Christians in Nigeria.**

The aforementioned toxic waste dump in Koko, Southern Nigeria, in 1988 has led to the following actions and initiatives. Prior to 1988, Nigeria responded to most environmental problems on an ad hoc basis. However, following the Koko incident, the Nigerian government formulated a national policy on the environment. Consequently, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) was created and charged with the administration and enforcement of the environmental law.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, set up the Basel Convention Centre to be handling waste, especially hazardous waste, at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, which is headed by Professor Oladele Osibanjo and Dr. Evans Aina, who was part of the team involved in the decontamination process of Koko town.<sup>2</sup> Professor Oladele Osibanjo has worked extensively on waste disposal and environmental issues in West Africa and at present he expresses his concerns that the quest to bridge the digital divide has led developing countries to embrace e-waste. This flood of e-waste and second-hand electronics from developed countries, he believes, will bring serious human and environmental problems into the importing countries.<sup>3</sup>

### **6.3 Recommendations.**

In order to become good stewards of the earth, I stress the following points:

- Humility and Respect towards other Living Organisms and the Nonliving Surroundings.
- Environmental Accountability.
- Responsible use of Resources. (Responsible use of private boreholes)
- Reduction of Consumption Levels.
- Reuse and Recycling of Material Products.
- Composting of Organic Waste.
- Environmental Awareness Creation.
- Environmental Education and Environmental Leadership Training.
- Environmental Concern Clubs at Schools.
- Publication of Environmental Research Data by Scholars.
- Public Access to Information Networks.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. Gozie Ogbodo in "Environmental Protection in Nigeria: Two Decades after the Koko Incident," [www.digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/annlsurvey/vol15/iss1/2/](http://www.digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/annlsurvey/vol15/iss1/2/)

<sup>2</sup> Odimegwu Onwumere in "Toxic Waste Dumping: Africa at the Mercy of God," [www.nigeriansinamerica.com/articles/1522/1/Toxic-Waste-Dumping-Africa-At-The-Mercy-Of-God/Page1.html](http://www.nigeriansinamerica.com/articles/1522/1/Toxic-Waste-Dumping-Africa-At-The-Mercy-Of-God/Page1.html)

<sup>3</sup> Professor Oladele Osibanjo in "Climate," [www.zoominfo.com/p/Oladele-Osibanjo/605534463](http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Oladele-Osibanjo/605534463)

- Environmental Discussion Fora.
- Reduction of Toxic Emissions. (Responsible use of private cars)
- Responsible use of Fertilizers, Insecticides and Weedicides.
- Protection of Biological Diversity. (Responsible tree felling and bush burning)
- Tree Planting and Erosion Prevention.

### **CONCLUSION.**

The problem of the ecological crisis in Africa, and in the rest of the world, is a problem of identity caused by a broken relationship with the earth. We have broken relationships with the community of the living, with the water, the air, the soil, the animals and plants, with the oceans and rocks. We act as aggressors of creation instead of being her guardian, custodian and steward. We have put ourselves above nature and have refused to recognise our obligations to the earth.

The biggest challenge now, not only for the African Christian but for all of us, is to discover how we fit in the totality of life. In order to change the current critical ecological situation, a change of lifestyle is necessary. A change from anthropo-centric to eco-centric thinking and acting, brought about by the awareness that we are part of an organic, living universe in which everything is interrelated and interdependent.

Care for the earth is foremost a religious concern. We have lost our bearing and we have to reconnect the people through the earth to God. We have to become down-to- earth Christians. Ecology should be our way of life as environment is 'us'. As human beings we are the brains, the intellect of all creation. We stand in creation to serve and to give thanks to God, to praise God on behalf of the whole of creation.

In the light of the ecological crisis there is hope for Africa if we look how eco-centric thinking and acting are already implemented by some Africans. These Africans, by their eco-centric thoughts and actions, are a sign of hope, a sign of reconnecting people to the earth, to each other and to God. And this is Good News for all of creation.

### **DOMICILITY VIS-À-VIS RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF CHRIST'S FAITHFUL**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of the Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2014

By

Rev. Fr. Joseph Paul Iyamah

### **Introduction**

In last year's keynote address to the annual convention of the Canon Law Society of America, John Myers noted:

As with any legal system, it is evident that canon law is not self-initiated, self-justified, or self-implemented. Canon law must be communicated to members of the Church, and its application must attempt to address the real life of real Catholics who live in real world circumstances. Moreover, church law should not be used to control others. It should be used to provide understanding and readily applicable means of accomplishing what is to be done. For various matters, it should also clearly indicate what is not to be done and, in some fashion, express specific consequences of actions which openly transgress norms regarding what is not permitted<sup>1</sup>.

The motivation of the Canon Law Conference of Nigeria to focus on the theme, *Ethnicity and the Nigeria Church* is in my mind an attempt to address a real life issue concerning Nigerian Catholic faithful in line with the above stance of Canon Law. My presentation on "Domicility vis-à-vis the rights and obligations of Christ's faithful" is, therefore, a practical contribution to this discourse.

### **Definition**

The term domicile according to the Dictionary of Law signifies a place where one has his or her permanent and primary home, or where a corporation has its headquarters or principal place of business or the place with which one is associated for taxing and voting purposes. It is noted that one can have many residences, but only one domicile. The one, whose domicile is in a particular place, is said to be domiciled there or a domiciliary of the place<sup>2</sup>. Domicile is also defined as a country that a person treats as his permanent home and to which he has the closest legal attachment. A person, it says cannot be without a domicile and cannot have two domiciles at once. He acquires at birth a domicile of origin. Explaining further that if the father is alive, he takes the father's domicile; if not, his mother's. The domicile of origin is retained until (if ever) he acquires a domicile of choice in its place. This domicile of choice is acquired by making a home in a country with the intention that it should be a permanent base. This may be acquired at any time after a person is 16 years, and can be replaced at will by a new domicile of choice<sup>3</sup>. In the understanding of the term domicile, within the context of this study, distinction is clearly made between domicile of origin and domicile of choice. The former is the domicile of a person at birth, derived from the custodial parent or imposed by law. The implication of this is that, domicile of origin is the domicile that the law assigns to each person at birth. The later, which is domicile of choice, is the domicile that a person chooses after he or she reaches majority. This, the person acquires by establishing a physical presence within a particular state or territory with the intention of making it a home<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> J.J. MYERS, "The past as prologue: A consideration of Canon Law in the United States", *CLSA Proceedings* 75 (2013) 2.

<sup>2</sup> J. E CLAPP, *Dictionary of Law*, New York, 146.

<sup>3</sup> J. LAW – E.A. MARTINS, *Oxford Dictionary of Law*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2013, 182.

<sup>4</sup> B. A GARNER (ed.) *Black's Law Dictionary*, West, A Thomas Reuters, St. Paul, Minnesota, USA, 2009, 559.

The term domicile in Latin is *domicilium*, which means a dwelling place or a home<sup>1</sup>. Domicile can therefore be understood as a person's permanent place of dwelling, and as such a legal relationship that a person has with a locality<sup>2</sup>. In a nutshell, domicile is seen as the place at which a person has been physically present and that the person regards as home. It is a person's true, fixed, principal, and permanent home, to which the person intends to return and remain even though currently residing elsewhere<sup>3</sup>.

### **Domicile versus Residence**

Closely related to the term domicile is the term Residence, which as highlighted in some contexts may or may not be of the same meaning as the term 'Domicile'. Residence connotes any place where one has a home, even if the person's domicile is elsewhere. It means the place that a person actually lives as different from his domicile or temporary sojourn<sup>4</sup>. Residency is the act of residing or state of being a resident – that is, of having a residence or domicile within a jurisdiction. A resident then would be one who has residence, or sometimes his domicile in a specified place<sup>5</sup>.

Domicile, from a jurisdictional understanding, indicates “a legal residence which is the place where a person has fixed dwelling with an intention of making it his/her permanent home”<sup>6</sup>. From this point of view, it becomes clear that the term domicile combines two concepts, residence and the intent to remain. What flows from this is that the term domicile is larger in scope and significance than the term residence because the understanding of domicile includes residence. What then is generally meant, as residence is a place where one lives, a building used as home, so when compared to domicile, it is more of a temporary nature. Hence, residence is also more of a person's present physical location of stay. However, it can also be an individual's fixed place of stay with no intention to move from there.

Further distinction between these terms include the fact that domicile involves intent of the individual and is more used in reference to personal rights, duties and obligations whereas, residence is in the realm of the objective, hence a person may have a residence in one place and domicile in another place<sup>7</sup>. We must however, also not lose sight of the fact as mentioned earlier that the terms can be used interchangeably or as synonyms. This occurs when the terms are given equivalent meaning in issues of subjects of domestic policy. For instance when a statute requires residence as a qualification for the enjoyment of privilege or with regard to the place of incorporation of a business. But the distinction between the two terms is usually based on the relative permanency of a domicile and the intent to make it a principal place of abode<sup>8</sup>.

### **Domicile versus Citizenship**

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<sup>1</sup> L. P WOOD, (ed.), *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law*, Massachusetts, USA, 2011, 150.

<sup>2</sup> <http://domicile.uslegal.com> (accessed on July 9, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> B. A GARNER (ed.), *Black's Law Dictionary*, 558.

<sup>4</sup> L. P WOOD, (ed.), *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law*, 424.

<sup>5</sup> J. E CLAPP, *Dictionary of Law*, New York, 374.

<sup>6</sup> <http://domicile.uslegal.com> (accessed on July 9, 2014)

<sup>7</sup> <http://domicile.uslegal.com/distinctions-between-domicile-and-residence/> (accessed July 9, 2014)

<sup>8</sup> L. P WOOD (ed.), *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law*, 424.

The word citizen is from the Anglo-French term *citezein* which itself is an alteration of the Old French *citeien*, that is from the term *cit * which means city<sup>1</sup>. A citizen is a person who, either by birth or naturalization, is a member of a political community to which he owes allegiance and from whom he is entitled to all its civil rights, privileges and protections<sup>2</sup>. It is based on this understanding that one, who is a native or naturalized individual who owes allegiance to the State or nation, that the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, states “all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the state wherein they reside”. A citizen is also a resident of a town or state who is also a U.S. native or was naturalized in the U.S.

From all of the above, citizenship is the status of being a citizen and also domicile. This last part particularly has legal implication, for in the area of jurisdiction it has diversity of jurisdiction, which gives federal courts power over civil disputes involving parties with diverse citizenship<sup>3</sup>.

In the Roman law setting, law as it concerns *ius gentium* was attributed a considerable practical importance, in the sense that it was applied to both citizens and to peregrines. This is largely because from the ancient law principle, that law was ‘personal’: “the law by which a man lived depended not on where he was, but on who he was – on his nationality”<sup>4</sup>. Based on this thinking, a non-citizen, a foreigner (*peregrinus*) really had no rights under the specifically Roman *ius civile*. However, despite the fact that limited rights were now being granted in the later time of the Roman era resulting in the creation of “Latinity” as a status, but the privileges it conferred were always never the same. From this arose three distinct different rights. The right to be a party to a formal sale or transfer or purchase of anything (*mancipatio*) and to use some other specifically Roman methods to acquire property and make contracts (*commercium* or *ius commercii*); the right to contract with a Roman citizen a marriage that is recognized by the civil law (*conubium* or *ius conubii*); the right to make and take under, a Roman will (*testamenti factio*)<sup>5</sup>. But by the end of the Roman Republic, Latinity as a status had ceased to have any geographical or even ethical significance. From what apparently may be the origin of modern practice of naturalization in nations, the Romans by the end of the Republic granted citizenship to the whole of Italy, Emperors also started granting same status to communities and individuals. The last straw that broke the camel’s back was the disappearance of the distinction between citizen and non-citizen with or after the granting of citizenship to the entire population of the Roman world in A.D. 212.

### **The 1999 Constitution**

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria treats the subject of citizenship in chapter III. The Constitution lists three ways one becomes a citizen of Nigeria. These are by birth (Section 25 [1]), registration (Section 26 [1-2]) and by naturalization (Section 27). According to section 25 (1a): “one is a citizen of Nigeria by birth if born in Nigeria before the date of independence to parents or any of whose grandparents are from one of the indigenous Nigeria community”. The second classification is on those who become citizen by birth after

<sup>1</sup> L. P WOOD (ed.), *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of Law*, 77.

<sup>2</sup> B. A GARNER (ed.), *Black’s Law Dictionary*, West Publishing, USA, 2009, 278.

<sup>3</sup> L. P WOOD, *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of Law*, 268.

<sup>4</sup> B. NICHOLAS, *An Introduction to Roman Law*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, 57.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 64 – 65.

independence. These are those according to section 25 (1b) become “if their parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria”. There is yet a third category of people envisaged in the Constitution, who become citizen by birth of the Nigerian state. These group are those, who though may be born outside the country, but if their parents are Nigerian citizens, they too become citizens of Nigeria (section 25 (1c)).

It is based on this citizenship that chapter four following chapter three of the Nigerian Constitution treats the fundamental rights of every Nigerian citizen. These include: right to life (section 33); right to respect and dignity (section 34); right to personal liberty (section 35); right to fair hearing; (section 36); right to privacy and family life (section 37); right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (section 38); right to freedom of expression and the press (section 39); right to peaceful assembly and association (section 40); right to freedom of movement (section 41); right to freedom from discrimination (section 42); and right to own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria (section 43). From the nature of this 1999 constitution, a person has no right apart from the right given him in the Nigerian Constitution, thus, the moment a person relinquishes any of such rights by committing a crime, such a right ceases according to the constitution of Nigeria.

### **Domicile versus Ethnicity**

Another related term in this discussion particularly as it relates to Nigeria today is the subject of ethnicity. Nnoli Okwudiba defined ethnicity as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. Therein, the constitution of ethnic groups is described as social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. Then language, culture or both are what constitute the relevant communal factor in the concept of ethnicity. But the specific characteristics of ethnicity are: (a) Ethnocentrism, (b) Conflict proness, (c) Common consciousness and (d) Exclusiveness<sup>2</sup>.

The first, ethnocentrism, represent the subjective dimension of ethnic behaviour, which is the belief that one’s own cultural group, language and way of life is superior to others. The result of this kind of superiority is the generation of a corresponding dislike or misunderstanding of other cultural group and language. The second, which is conflict proness is presented as behavioural in form and conflictual in context. The source of this attitude often comes from competition to control, state power, resources or struggle for supremacy. This type of ethnic conflicts is seen manifested in individual, sub-group and group levels. According to Mazi Mbah, when ethnic conflicts are politicized and allowed to prolong, it can degenerate into danger.

This ethnic conflict ... ensues from the deliberate acts of people who take upon themselves to exploit the ethnics resource or advantage in combination with other factors like religion, social, class and sex resources in competition with others. Meaning that it is used as a tool for achieving individual or group ends that it becomes dangerous and problematic<sup>3</sup>.

The third, which is Common Consciousness, is the awareness of being one in relation to other groups. However, distinction is made between ethnic groups in itself marked out by

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<sup>1</sup> N. OKWUDIBA, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu, 1980, 5.

<sup>2</sup> M.C.C. MBAH, *Government and Politics in Modern Nigeria: The Search for an Orderly Society*, Joannee Educational Publishers Ltd, 2001, 125 - 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 126



linguistics or cultural similarity without a common consciousness or identity on the one hand, and a group identified with both linguistic and or cultural similarity and a common consciousness or identity on the other. This second part of the distinction is the one that highlights better the understanding of ethnicity.

The fourth and last characteristic of ethnicity is exclusiveness, which tends to distinguish certain people as either belonging or not belonging to a group. The way it is manifested is often through inter-ethnic discrimination in areas like jobs, housing, marriages, admission into educational institutions, business transactions and even in the distribution of social services<sup>1</sup>. All of which today are fanning the flames of corruption and nepotism in our nation. Moreover, the manipulation of ethnic factor in political contestation has frequently resulted in negative outcome<sup>2</sup>. Need not mention that the same is becoming the case in the Church today.

Within the Nigeria context, T. Babawale is of the opinion that ethnicity, conceptualized both in its theoretical and instrumental context, especially in the political terrain has played more of a negative than a positive role. This he argued is because it has robbed our politics of any productive content, kept our people permanently divided, made our country perpetually underdeveloped and sustained the element of violence in our politics, and it is being used by the elite in the reposition of themselves in the struggle for state power in the country<sup>3</sup>.

Seeing this as ethnicism, G. Ehusani describes it as an “unexamined loyalty to one’s ethnic group, and the application of learned prejudices against other groups in our multi-ethnic society”<sup>4</sup>. This attitude of sentiment is an evil plague in the Nigerian nation leaving behind a trail of destruction both material and human in the different part of the country. The fact of this primitive sentiment to perpetuate violence constitutes it a retrogressive clog in the development wheel of the Nigerian nation. This must be worrisome to all Nigerians. “But the presence in the Church of such tribal sentiments and unexamined loyalty to one’s ethnic group, especially when expressed by bishops, priests and religious is a scandal of monumental proportion that should be a matter of great embarrassment and concern for all who claim to be spreading Christ’s kingdom of love and brotherhood in our nation”<sup>5</sup>.

### **Domicile in the Code of Canon Law**

The first thing to note here is that the concept of domicile is not original to canon law; it is borrowed from the Roman law. It was however enriched in canon law by the unique invention of the theory of quasi-domicile as part of the concept of domicile. Domicile as found and practiced by the Romans, was the extension or communication of a person’s pre-existing legal status, which is his origin (*origo, jus originis*); accordingly, each person is a constituent of his district, where, in contributing his share to the expenses and taxes of the city, he has a right to the common advantages. In this Roman concept too, children naturally follow the condition of their father, and as such belong likewise to their father’s city, even though born at a distance. Such is the nature of the Roman *origo*, quite analogous to what we call nationality,

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<sup>1</sup> N. OKWUDIBA, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu, 1980,

<sup>2</sup> T. BABAWALE, “Nigeria in the Crisis of Governance and Development. Retrospective and Prospective Analysis of Selected Issues and Events” in *The Political Economy of Development, Governance and Globalization*, vol. 1 Nigeria, 2007, 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 35 – 36.

<sup>4</sup> G. EHUSANI, “Evangelising Ethnic Loyalty in Nigeria: The Challenge Before Church Leaders” in *Encounter: A Journal of African Life and Religion*, vol. 6 (2002-2003) 144.

<sup>5</sup> G. EHUSANI, “Evangelising Ethnic Loyalty in Nigeria”, 144-145.

except that the understanding of the Roman *origo* relates to the restricted locality of one's birth, and nationality to one's native land. Consequently, birth, the legal birthplace is what determines a person's *origo*, that is, not the actual spot of birth but the place where each person should have been born, the municipality to which the father belonged<sup>1</sup>.

Apart from the factual error of explaining *origo* as domicile resulting from one's birthplace, by the glossarists in the development of the use of domicile in the Church's canonical lexicon, their efforts nonetheless, richly highlighted the double constitutive elements of domicile: - the material element (*corpus*), which is the actual habitation in a place, and the juridical or formal element (*animus*), which is the intention to remain in a place of habitation indefinitely<sup>2</sup>.

The characterization of domicile by Emperors Diocletian and Maximianus contextualizes succinctly its understanding as follow: "It is certain that each one has his domicile in the place where he has established his home and business and has his possessions; a residence which he does not intend to abandon, unless called elsewhere, from which he departs only as a traveler and by returning to which he ceases to be a traveler"<sup>3</sup>. From this definition it becomes clear that intention, which is the will of the individual to definitively settle in a place, is the constitutive juridical element of domicile. It is an element that implies indeterminate stability, which however does not necessarily mean perpetuity in the strict sense that will indicate or suggest that one has lost the right to change domicile. One can actually acquire another domicile given the same conditions used in obtaining the first.

The canonical understanding of domicile is in a way associated with the term origin, which is the juridical relation of a person to the place where he or she is believed to have originated. In the perspective of the Church's law, the use of the expression 'place of origin', which is a notion received from the Roman law, does not in strict principle, point to the actual place where a person was born. In its canonical usage, it is a juridical concept that takes into consideration, the domicile of a child's parent when the child was born as a general norm, serving as the more stable point of reference from local situation, than the material fact of the birth, which possibly could have occurred in a place that neither the child nor the parents have any stable relationship<sup>4</sup>.

The application of the principle of domicile in its inscription in the gloss of *Liber Sextus* of Pope Boniface VIII<sup>5</sup> was noticeably in determining juridical competence, ordination, as well as the reception of baptism, Holy Communion, viaticum, confession, anointing of the sick, funerals and interments. However, the invention of the term quasi-domicile that was unique and exclusive to canon law connotes staying in a place for a significant period or length of time, later determined to be a period covering more than six months (*per majorem anni partem*)<sup>6</sup>. This determination eventually found its way into the 1917 Code<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia: "Domicile" <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05103b.htm>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> A. de FUENMAYOR, "The Canonical Status of Physical Persons" in Á. MARZO – J. MIRAS – R. RODRÍGUEZ-OCAÑA (eds.), *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, vol. 1, Wilson & Lafleur, Montreal Canada, 2004, 705.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Chapters 2 & 3, XII, in VI<sup>o</sup> "De Sepulturis" <http://digital.library.ucla.edu/canonlaw/librarian?ITEMPAGE=CJC3&PAGENUM=267>

<sup>6</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia: "Domicile" <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05103b.htm>

<sup>7</sup> The *CIC/17* Code granted domicile after ten years of residence (c.92 §1) and quasi-domicile after six months (c. 92 §2)

The exclusiveness of quasi-domicile to canon law makes it alien to both Roman and civil law. But being modeled after domiciled, quasi-domicile is construed as staying in a place for a sufficient length of time. The practice does not require the negation of domicile, for one can maintain both. The significance of the acquisition of quasi-domicile is that the individual while in the place can receive the sacraments and also carry out acts of Christian life and even become subjects to the judicial authority of the place. For this to be, it must be the case that just as for domicile, two conditions must be at play for the acquisition of quasi-domicile – the fact of residence and the intention of being in the place for sufficient length of time.

The *CIC/1917* utilized the notion of *locus originis*, in considering regulations in c. 544 § 2 that prescribes that the ordinary of origin be informed of anyone who wanted to be admitted to the novitiate; the competence of the bishop for ordination of candidates for the priesthood in c. 956 which establishes that “in the case of ordination of seculars the proper Bishop is solely the Bishop of the diocese in which the person to be ordained has a domicile together with origin, or has a simple domicile without origin. In the latter case the person to be ordained must confirm by oath his intention to remain in the diocese for life”<sup>1</sup>. It was also used to regulate the pastor for solemn baptism (cc. 462, 738).

The categorization of person by place in this Code was:

By a child’s place of origin is meant that place where the father had a domicile or (failing a domicile) a quasi-domicile at the time of the birth of the child. This rule also applies to a convert. In the case of illegitimate or posthumous children, the domicile or quasi-domicile of the mother determines the place of origin. If the parents have neither domicile nor quasi-domicile, the child’s place of origin is where it was actually born<sup>2</sup>.

What we have in this canon is the different normative principles for determining the *locus originis* of a person. The circumstances considered in the norm are:

a) The origin of a child that is neither illegitimate nor posthumous is the place where the father has domicile or quasi-domicile at the time of the child’s birth.

b) If the child is illegitimate or posthumous, his origin is the place of the mother has domicile or quasi-domicile at the time of the child’s birth.

c) In a situation where neither the father nor the mother has domicile or quasi-domicile at the time of the child’s birth, he is seen as *filius vagorum*, and his origin is the place of his birth.

d) Should it happens that the father of a child is a *vagus*, but the mother has a domicile or quasi-domicile, and the child in this situation is neither illegitimate nor posthumous, it is the mother’s domicile or quasi-domicile that is used to determines the child’s origin

e) In a situation where only the mother is a *vaga*, and the child is illegitimate or posthumous, the child is considered *filius vagorum* and consequently, the origin of the child is the place of birth

f) The last consideration is that of a foundling, whose origin is determined by the place where the child is found. However, should both parents or any of the parents of the child

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<sup>1</sup> T.L BOUSCAREN – A.C ELLIS, *Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, Milwaukee, USA, 1946, 359.

<sup>2</sup> Canon 90 *CIC/1917*

eventually acknowledge the child, then the appropriate rule from (a) to (e) is to be used in the determination of the child's origin rather than this last rule which is merely one of last resort<sup>1</sup>.

It is noted that the determination of a person's origin was before the 1917 Code the place of baptism alone, thus the provision of this canon is considered a new change<sup>2</sup>. At the time of the revision of the 1917 Code, the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law, in the seventh session of April 26-30, 1971 called for the removal of the distinction between legitimate children and illegitimate children from the new Code. As a consequence, this distinction no longer exists in the 1983 Code of Canon Law<sup>3</sup>.

Nonetheless, the above provision and the 1922 response of the Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the canons of the Code of Canon Law served as the main sources for the present c. 101 of *CIC*83<sup>4</sup>, which states that:

§ 1 The place of origin of a child, and even of a neophyte, is that in which the parents had a domicile or, lacking that, a quasi-domicile when the child was born; if the parents did not have the same domicile or quasi-domicile, it is that of the mother.

§ 2 In the case of a child of *vagi*, the place of origin is the actual place of birth; in the case of a foundling, it is the place where it was found.

This legislation reveals that, the present c. 101 was a change of the prescriptions of c. 90 *CIC*/1917 regarding place of origin during the revision work of the Code Commission. It appears that the initial position of the study group, *coetus studiorum* was to maintain the status quo as provided in the old legislation, seen as uniquely regulating the competence of the bishop concerning secular candidates for the priesthood. However, the position changed by their session of 17<sup>th</sup> December 1979<sup>5</sup>. The modifications resulting from the changes to old c. 90 preserved some aspect and also suppressed some other part of the norms. Notably, against the previous legislation, that determines the place of origin of a child, as that of the father, and if the child was illegitimate or if the father had died, then the domicile or quasi-domicile of the mother; the new law gave consideration to common domicile of the couple, when it determines place of origin as the domicile or quasi-domicile of the parents, or if the parents did not have the same domicile or quasi-domicile, the domicile or quasi-domicile of the mother.

#### *Son of the Soil phenomenon*

This phrase indicates an intimate connection or closeness of a person to the land of their birth or origin, which is the geographical place into which he or she is born. It is this soil that he or she claims to be theirs. Within the Nigeria setting, the phenomenon is linked to the

<sup>1</sup> T.L BOUSCAREN – A.C ELLIS, *Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Response of the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts (Prot. N. 12900/2011) in S.A. EUART – J.A. ALESANDRO – T.J. GREEN, (eds.), *Roman Replies and CLSA Advisory Opinions 2011*, Canon Law Society of America, 2011, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. de FUENMAYOR, "The Canonical Status of Physical Persons", 705; T.L BOUSCAREN, *The Canon Law Digest*, vol. I, Milwaukee, USA, 1934, 225 -226.

<sup>5</sup> E.N. PETERS, *Tabulae congruentiae inter Codicem iuris canonici et versiones anteriores canonum*, Wilson & Lafleur Ltée, Canada, 2000, 10; A. de Fuenmayor, "The Canonical Status of Physical Persons", 706.

manifest consciousness of the different peoples in the country agitation for state and local government creation.

The Code in using the expression place of origin of a child could be said to have also recognized this concept of 'son of the soil'. But one's place of birth in the Code is where one's parents have domicile or quasi-domicile, not where the person's progenitor come from. What the Code accentuated in the canon is that it is the place of residence that makes a person part of the Church and by belonging to it; he or she becomes subject of rights and duties. The place of origin in the Code is therefore not one's native land of birth to which 'son of the soil' syndrome determines those who belong and also fences off others perceived as not son of the soil from participating in the community life.

This phenomenon is beginning to sectionalize the flock of Christ in Nigeria with a public embarrassing consequence resulting in rejections here and there. The attitude of the 'son of the soil' syndrome is thus a social malaise, which is also a sin against the nature and mission of the Church<sup>1</sup>.

### **Domicile and Quasi-domicile**

The concepts of domicile and quasi-domicile are principally that of intention in relation to a place as it pertains to either being there permanently in the case of the former or temporarily in the case of the later. The general meaning of Domicile is believed to be that of a more or less settled and permanent place of residence. It should be noted that in law, strictly speaking, the term domicile refers less to the place than to the juridical status of the person, which arises from his relation to the place. Therefore, according to A. de Fuenmayor, "domicile and quasi-domicile constitute the juridical base of a person; they are the place that the law considers a person's juridical center, by reason of his real residence or the one determined by law"<sup>2</sup>. This illustrates domicile as a stable residence, which entails submission to local authority and permits the exercise of acts for which this authority is competent. Interestingly, the place of a person's domicile is not really the house structure; it is rather the territorial circumference or district where the house is located. Territory in this regard is understood as parish, diocese or other territorial divisions from a canonical viewpoint. What is important however is that such division has the element of governance. Anyone in a territorial division without this element of self-governing cannot be said to have acquired domicile in such a place. It is in the city in the case of civil societies that the acts and rights of civil life are exercised, and in the parish those of the Christian life<sup>3</sup>.

However, when it comes to quasi-domicile, it is noted to be slightly less permanent and settled than domicile. Quasi-domicile is characteristically a canonical institution that like domicile bestows a physical person with a stable place, nonetheless, both domicile and quasi-domicile have the same canonical effects. And for this, quasi-domicile is said to have a supplementary character; and both are lost for the same reason (c.106)<sup>4</sup>.

A domicile is either parish or diocese. In the determination of a person's domicile or quasi-domicile following this parochial and diocesan distinction, a parish in the eyes of the law is analogous to a quasi-parish (c. 516) and a diocese is equivalent to territorial prelatore,

<sup>1</sup> J. ASANBE, "'Son of the Soil' Syndrome in the Church in Nigeria: which way forward?", in *Ekpoma Review: A Philosophical & Theological Journal of the Catholic Major Seminary of All Saints, Ekpoma*, vol. 2 (2014), 139.

<sup>2</sup> A. de FUENMAYOR, "The Canonical Status of Physical Persons", 708.

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia: "Domicile" <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05103b.htm>

<sup>4</sup> A. de FUENMAYOR, "The Canonical Status of Physical Persons", 709

territorial abbacy, vicariate apostolic, prefecture apostolic and permanently established apostolic administration (c. 368).

The acquisition of domicile and quasi-domicile is established in c. 102 as follows:

§1. Domicile is acquired by residence in the territory of a parish, or at least of a diocese, which is either linked to the intention of remaining there permanently if nothing should occasion its withdrawal, or in fact protracted for a full five years.

§2. Quasi-domicile is acquired by residence in the territory of a parish, or at least of a diocese, which is either linked to the intention of remaining there for three months if nothing should occasion its withdrawal, or in fact protracted for three months.

§3 Domicile or quasi-domicile in the territory of a parish is called parochial; in the territory of a diocese, even if not in a parish, it is called diocesan.

What is unambiguously stated in the above canonical provision is that the ordinary way a person attains parochial domicile or quasi-domicile is by living within the parish. By so doing, the person also concurrently has a diocesan domicile, because the parish is located within the diocese. Going by the fact that it is the individual intention to personally reside in a certain place permanently is the determining situation here, J. McIntyre concludes that domicile in effect, puts a person in relationship to the local Church, both parish and diocese<sup>1</sup>. However, in c. 102 §3, a special scenario is envisaged where a person may not have a parochial domicile, but has a diocesan domicile or quasi-domicile. In this circumstance, one cannot but doubt the practicability of this provision, even though some have argued that part of what is envisioned in this canon are territories, such as territorial prelate, an apostolic vicariate and an apostolic prefecture which, though are equivalent to dioceses (c. 368), but are yet to establish parishes. It is nonetheless clear, that the notion of diocesan domicile or quasi-domicile was virtually not known in the early law<sup>2</sup>. However, the *CIC/17* treatment of this peculiarity is distinctly outlined when it explains that domicile is parochial if acquired within a parish or quasi-parish (cf. c. 216 §3), diocesan if acquired within a diocese, vicariate, or prefecture (cf. 293, §1), but not within a parish or quasi-parish (c. 92, §3). The latter case supposes that all the conditions for acquiring a domicile are not fulfilled as regards any one parish or quasi-parish, but are fulfilled as regards the larger territory<sup>3</sup>.

There are three ways a person can have domicile. The first known as real domicile, is a person's voluntary residence in a place of choice with the intention of staying there permanently unless a situation arises that occasions a withdrawal or prevent such stay. This mode of domicile is made real by actual residence in the place for a protracted period of five years (c.102 §1).

The second is real quasi-domicile which though similar to, but presupposes real domicile in the mode of its acquisition, the only difference is that it is less permanent regarding the intention to stay and the actual stay, which is for a period of three months (c. 102 §2), hence between the two there is often the comparison between the stable and the transitional.

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<sup>1</sup> J.P. MCINTYRE, "Physical and Juridic Persons", in J.P. BEAL – J.A. CORIDEN \_ T.J. GREEN, (eds.), *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, New Jersey, 2000, 146.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> T.L BOUSCAREN – A.C ELLIS, *Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, 80

The third is legal domicile and quasi-domicile. This legal or necessary domicile and quasi-domicile is so called because the law imposes them. In the old dispensation, this type of legal domicile affected three groups of persons. These are (a) a wife who is not legally separated from the husband, thus her domicile is that of the husband; (b) an insane person, that the law determines his or her domicile is that of the guardian; (c) a minor, whose domicile is that of the parent or guardian under whose control the minor is subject (*CIC/17*, c. 93, §1). The present legislation suppressed the legal provision that a married woman's domicile or quasi-domicile was that of the husband by its reference to the couples' common domicile or quasi-domicile (cc. 104, 1151 & 1135). However, in a situation of lawful separation or some other just reason, each of them may have his or her domicile or quasi-domicile. Other examples of legal provision include: minors and others under the guidance of whom they are entrusted, assumes the domicile or quasi-domicile of the one they are subject (cc. 98 §2; 99 & 105). According to c. 103 §1, members of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life acquire domicile or quasi-domicile in the place of their house. This is in conformity with the residence obligation for members of religious and society of apostolic life in cc. 665 §1 and 740. In this norm, members of secular institute are not included because they live their lives in the ordinary conditions of the world, either alone within their families or in groups with other members (c. 714), consequently their domicile is determined by c. 102 §2. We also have the domicile of the dean and assistant dean of the College of Cardinals (c. 352 § 4). A number of these legal domiciles are referred to as relative or derived because they are subordinated to those of other people along with whom they exist or upon whom they depend<sup>1</sup>. Example of this is aptly found in c. 105 dealing on minors and all those whom the law subject to guardianship.

### **Juridical effects of the Canonical concepts of domicile and quasi-domicile**

In the canonical order, the concept or institutes of domicile and quasi-domicile are of great importance. Domicile represents the place wherein the individual Catholic is going to work out his or her salvation both historically and personally according to the responsibilities associated with the individual's proper state in life<sup>2</sup>. The juridical effects are:

#### *1) Designation of persons by relation to a place*

From an individual's relation to domicile and quasi-domicile are derived four different personal designations of *incola*, *advena*, *peregrinus* and *vagus* in the Code (c. 100). A person who has domicile in a place is called *incola* (resident), a term used also to imply one who is an inhabitant of a place; *advena* (temporary resident) is a person who has quasi-domicile in that place; *peregrinus* (traveler or pilgrim), is one who is outside his or her domicile or quasi-domicile which is still retained; and *vagus* (transient) is a person who lacks a domicile and quasi-domicile.

#### *2) Ascertainment of proper pastor and Ordinary*

Practically, the principal effect resulting from a person's domicile and quasi-domicile is the determination of the person's proper parish priest and Ordinary (c. 107 §1). It is through one's connection to domicile and quasi-domicile that this determination is made. Three circumstances arising from the juridic effects of domicile are given consideration in canon 107. The parish priest and Ordinary of a person who is resident (*incola*) and a temporary

<sup>1</sup> A. de FUENMAYOR, "The Canonical Status of Physical Persons", 709.

<sup>2</sup> J.P. MCINTYRE, "Physical and Juridic Persons", 146.

resident (*advena*) is the parish priest and Ordinary of his or her place of domicile or quasi-domicile (c. 107 §1). But on the part of the individual, the canonical provision can be said to have implications concerning parish membership. This is so because, the canonical mandate of offering care of soul to an individual is, and rightly so fulfilled in a person's place of residence<sup>1</sup>. For a *vagus*, that is one who is a transient lacking domicile and quasi-domicile, the proper parish priest and Ordinary is the one in charge of the place that the transient is present at that very moment (c. 107 §2). Canon 107 §3 determines the situation of persons with only a diocesan domicile or quasi-domicile without having a parochial domicile. The parish priest of the place where the person is presently residing is the proper parish priest. From the considerations of this canon, the effect is that all Christ's faithful has both a pastor and an Ordinary.

Considering the fact that a person maybe having several domicile or quasi-domicile or even several of both, and in the mist of such apparent plurality there is no legal or customary provision that determines which among the plurality of the person's domicile or quasi-domicile must prevail in order to determine the person's proper pastor and Ordinary<sup>2</sup>, the person or anyone legitimately representing him or her is allowed to choose any of the domicile or quasi-domicile. However, in some peculiar situations, there are other factors, such as rite, language, nationality (cc. 372 §2; 518) to be considered in the determination of one's proper pastor and Ordinary (c. 1110).

#### *Norms of juridical significance*

a) Procedural law purposes: what we have here is mostly the determination of competence of the courts linked to ones residence. Hence, according to c. 1408, anyone can be brought to trial before the tribunal of domicile or quasi-domicile. Then c. 1409 §2 provides that a person, whose domicile, quasi-domicile or place of actual residence is unknown, can be brought to trial in the forum of the plaintiff, provided no other lawful forum is available.

Canon 1413, 2°: A party can be brought to trial: in cases concerning inheritance or pious legacies, before the tribunal of the last domicile or quasi-domicile or residence of the person whose inheritance or pious legacy is at issue, in accordance with the norms of cc. 1408-1409. If, however, only the execution of the legacy is involved, the ordinary norms of competence are to be followed. Others are that petitions introducing suits must indicate the domicile or quasi-domicile of the respondent (c. 1504, 4°); competence of tribunal for marriage cases which is determined as the tribunal of the place where the respondent has domicile or quasi-domicile (1673, 2°) and the competence the diocesan Bishop of the place of domicile or quasi-domicile of the petitioner is competent to accept the petition seeking the dispensation. If the request is well founded, he must arrange for the instruction of the process (c. 1699 §1).

#### b) Those regarding substantive law:

The focus of this section include the regulations that laws enacted for a particular territory bind those for whom they were enacted and who have a domicile or quasi-domicile in that territory and are actually residing in it (c.12 §3); membership of priest's council (c.498 §2); the faculty to hear confession, (c. 971) and the celebration of marriages. The regulation is that they are to be celebrated

<sup>1</sup> E. KNEAL, "Physical and Juridic Person", in J.A. CORIDEN – T.J. GREEN – D.E. HEINTSCHEL (eds.), *The Code of Canon Law. A Text and Commentary*, Bangalore, India, 1995, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of such specific cases determined by legal norm include legislation concerning minors in c. 98 §2 and those lacking the use of reason in c. 99.



in the parish in which either of the contracting parties has a domicile or quasi-domicile or a month's residence or, if there is question of *vagi*, in the parish in which they are actually residing. With the permission of the proper Ordinary or the proper parish priest, marriage may be celebrated elsewhere (c. 1115).

#### *Norms considering domicile only*

It seems in certain canonical matters the law gives consideration only to domicile without the quasi-domicile. The first part of this consideration, which is for juridical purposes require in matters of proof by means of witnesses, that the names and domicile of the witnesses be communicated to the tribunal (c. 1552 §1). The rationale for this provision is to ensure the facilitation of the issuance of summons by the judge as well as for the respondent (defendant) to recognize and vouch by way of information the credibility of the witness<sup>1</sup>. Under this part tribunal competence for marriage cases is given consideration in c. 1673, 3° & 4°.

The second consideration explains that priests who have faculty to habitually hear confession by virtue of their office or concession by the Ordinary of either the place of their incardination or of the place where they have domicile, can exercise the faculty everywhere (c. 967 §2). Here too we have the provision of c. 1016, which determines the proper bishop for the ordination of secular clergy as the bishop of the place where the ordained has domicile.

#### **Baptism and the canonical status of the *Christifideles***

The treatment of domicile is not for its own sake; it is rather on the account of the personal rights and obligations that are connected or linked to it – that is, on account of its consequences. Canon 96 defines the fundamental precept that borders on the acquisition of personhood in the Church. By baptism, it declares, one is incorporated into the Church of Christ and constituted a person in it. The effect of the baptism consists in the baptized being immediately invested with the quality of person in the Church. This constitutive effect of baptism that incorporates one, also make him or her a member of the community with a personality that is both the holder of several rights inherent to the status of a faithful and also becoming the subject to the juridical duties and responsibility that corresponds to the status<sup>2</sup>. The way this canonical doctrine with theological foundation was earlier on dogmatically framed was: “only those are really to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith and who have not unhappily withdrawn from the Body-unity, or for very grave faults, been cut off from it by legitimate authority”<sup>3</sup>.

The special use of the concept of person for the construction of the juridical system is much more recent and coincides with the work of codification. In effect, in modern legal systems “person” indicates a formal juridical classification that the legal system attributes to or affords those subject to law; in other words, the manner with which the subject, generally, is presented in law, acting as the principal actor of the juridical experience. But with the call for the codification of the Church's laws, the use of the term “person” signaled a break, though not totally from the cultural tradition, by conceiving a person as a conceptual expression of a reality that transcends any specifically ecclesial classification. Following its understanding of

<sup>1</sup> A. de FUENMAYOR, “The Canonical Status of Physical Persons”, 725.

<sup>2</sup> A. de FUENMAYOR, “The Canonical status of physical persons”, 693.

<sup>3</sup> PIUS XII, *Mystici corporis*, n. 21.

contemporary secular culture then, the *CIC/17* sees the person as a formal classification that the legal system attributed and afforded to subjects in law, likewise to regulate them in their lives and their juridical operational capacity. With baptism, an individual is constituted a ‘person’ in the church with all the rights and duties proper to Christians (*CIC/17*, c. 87). However, amidst the understanding of person proffered in the juridical science and in the first Code, the present *CIC/83* using the idea of Christ’s faithful as a product of abstraction central to religious dimension defines the formal aspect of “person” as a classification conferred by the canonical order to subjects in law<sup>1</sup>.

Baptism constitutes the juridic basis for marking one a person in the Catholic Church. Simply put, it is baptism that makes you a person in the Church. The juridic effects of this baptism have dual results – the incorporation of the individual in the Church, thereby constituting him/her a person, and secondly at the same time investing the individual with rights and obligations. These duties and rights proper to all Christ’s faithful are specifically outlined in cc. 208 – 223, which in a way are the spiritual elements that depict distinctively what constitutes Christian personality. However, these duties and rights depend concretely on the state of life of the individual (cc. 207 & 219)<sup>2</sup>. The distinctness of the quality of rights in the Church must be noted: rights in the Church are different from rights in the civil society, going by the fact that the Church and State are different kind of society. Secondly, rights in the Church are always exercised in communion. This means that communion is the background for understanding rights in the Church, it is in the context of communion that rights in the Church are envisioned and claimed. Thirdly, the common good consists in safeguarding rights and lastly, rights also imply corresponding duties<sup>3</sup>.

The existential question raised here from an African perspective during the African Synod by late Archbishop Albert Obiefuna was whether the African Christian considers baptismal water thicker than blood when discussing the Church as family. We are certainly familiar with the slogan or aphorism, ‘blood is thicker than water’ to stress our tribal, ethnic and kindred connections; for the archbishop, the waters of baptism which made us children of God in Christ and through which we are born into the family of the Church, should be considered thicker than the blood that unite or bond together members of the same family or ethnic group in African<sup>4</sup>.

### **Rights of all Christ faithful**

The provisions of the Code of canon law affirm the rights and duties of all the baptized as well as the rights and duties of others who hold specific role and responsibility in the Church. Possession of rights in the church is hinged on two essential elements – sacrament of baptism and ecclesial communion – it is therefore, all the baptized who are in full communion with the Catholic Church that acquire rights in the Church (cc. 96, 205; LG 14). Nonetheless as J. A. Coriden affirms, “most Catholics are not aware of their rights, and some of those who know about them have been stymied in their efforts to have them respected”<sup>5</sup>. In the Church, however, there are four general categories of rights: (a) Human rights – which are common to

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. LO CASTRO, “Physical and juridical persons”, in Á. MARZOA – J. MIRAS – R. RODRÍGUEZ-OCAÑA (eds.), *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, vol. 1, Wilson & Lafleur, Montreal Canada, 686 – 691.

<sup>2</sup> J. P. MCINTYRE, “Physical and Juridical Persons”, 140 – 141.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. CORIDEN, *The Rights of Catholics in the Church*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, New Jersey, 11 – 15.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Special Assembly for Africa, *Bulletin*, no. 8 (12-04-1994) 5.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. CORIDEN, *The Rights of Catholics in the Church*, 8.

all human persons because they are derived from the nature and dignity of the human person. Such rights include for instance, the rights to life, liberty, equality, privacy, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, association, expression and movement, as well as marriage and family, the right to work, ownership of property and education. (b) Ecclesial rights – these are the rights that an individual acquires by virtues of baptism that incorporates him or her as a member of the church (ecclesia) and participation in the mission of the church. These membership rights include: access to the word of God and to the sacraments of the church (c. 213), right to Christian formation (c. 217), right to marry in the church (c. 1058), right to one's own form of spiritual life (c. 214), and the right to Christian burial (c. 1176 §1). (c) Ecclesiastical rights – these relates to the laws of the church that are applied to those holding public office in the church, like bishops, Parish priest. Chaplains. They are more or else the pastoral prerogatives that those holding office have in the church. Examples of these rights are: stability in office for the parish priest (c. 522), decent remuneration for clerics (c. 281 §1), right of a diocesan bishop to establish parishes (c. 515 §2), appoint parish priest (c. 523) and to convoke a diocesan pastoral council (c. 514 §1). (d) Communal rights – are the rights that individual persons acquire by their membership in groups, communities or associations that are recognized by the church. These are men and women religious communities and associations of the faithful. Rights of the faithful in this category come from the law the church proposes for such groups or the approved statutes for the groups. Examples of this right are the right to some form of autonomy of life (c. 586), right to support and assistance to fulfill their religious vocation (c. 670), right to elect their leaders, and to administer their own goods (cc. 298-329)<sup>1</sup>.

It is certainly not possible to espouse all the rights and duties in this paper but consideration will be given to some.

#### *Mission of evangelization*

The task of carrying out the work of evangelization is neither the exclusive reserve of the hierarchy or a no go area for certain people because it is restricted to some section of the Church. All Christ's faithful have the right and obligation to engage in the spread of the mission of evangelization (c. 211) but the Church ecclesiastical authority has a supervisory role in this enterprise (cc. 754 & 756). No one is to be shut out in the mission of evangelization.

Perhaps we need to look at the practice of asking people aspiring to the priesthood and religious life to go to their 'home diocese' when such have domicile in the church that is sending them away. The understanding of domicile is that a child would have Ibadan as his place of origin if the parents were domiciled in Ibadan at the time of their child's birth. When he comes of age and is integrated in the life of the church, he is not to be considered a non-indigene in the church and be sent away on that basis. From all that has been said about the concept of domicile, tribe should not be the determining condition for one to fully and actively participate in the life of the church with the attendant obligations and rights<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Freedom of expression*

Flowing from the bond of trust between Christ's faithful and pastors is the freedom of expression of the faithful in matters concerning their needs and wishes as well as their personal

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 – 10.

<sup>2</sup> J. ASANBE, "'Son of the Soil' Syndrome in the Church in Nigeria", 135.

opinions (c. 212 §§ 2, 3). This ability to express oneself is a basic part of the human need, hence no section is to be refused this freedom on account of ethnic affiliation and no section should be favoured over the others too on the same account. This right touches on communication, which is essential for any organization to function well.

#### *Assistance with the Word and sacraments*

The word of God and the sacraments are part of the spiritual wealth of the Church (LG 37; SC 7) from which the faithful have the right to be assisted by their pastors. Fulfilling this right to the faithful is a serious obligation on the part of the pastors (c. 213). These rights, which are ingrained and stems from the respect due to the human person (LG 26) and the declaration on religious liberty (DH 2) still desire much in ensuring the realization of these rights on the part of the pastors. The practice of denying Christ's faithful funeral for reasons other than what the law provide could be infringing on this right.

The Church's funeral rites are intend to "honour the bodies of the faithful, seek spiritual support for the deceased and to bring solace of hope to those who are alive"<sup>1</sup>. This is why deceased members of the Church must be given Church burials (c. 1176 §1). There are only three situations the church funerals can be denied (c. 1184):

- a) persons who are notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics
- b) persons who for anti-christian motives chose that their bodies be cremated
- c) Other manifest sinners to whom a Church funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful.

In any of these circumstances, the Church teaches that if the persons show sign of repentance, they are to be accorded funeral in the Church. The physical body is an integral part of the human person that the Church shows reverence; it is time we stop the practice of holding corpse hostage for harvest and church development levies.

#### *Right to worship and spirituality*

Also flowing from one's incorporation into the Church with baptism is the right to worship God in the Church as prescribed by the Church and in consonance with the Church to also embrace their personal spirituality (c. 214). Many of our parishes today especially those in the cities are large and multi-ethnic, accommodation is to be given to those requesting different devotions and spiritual practices in the parishes. "Even more than a matter of people's freedom and rights in the church, these multiple spiritualities are manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and a testimony to the kaleidoscopic diversity within the Catholic tradition"<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Freedom of Association*

The Council's Fathers recognition of the right of all Christ's faithful of freedom to form association (PO 8) is juridically affirmed in c. 215 that calls for the expression of this right in the establishment and direction of associations for the purposes of charity, pious and fostering of Christian vocation. Free assemblage aimed at the realization of the aforementioned purpose is also part of this right. This right to associate is predicated on the social nature of human persons. In the context of this discussion, it is in relation to all christian faithful: incorporated

<sup>1</sup> J. A. CORIDEN, *The Rights of Catholics in the Church*, 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

in Christ through baptism; made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ; and called to exercise the mission that God has entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world (c. 204 §1). While this freedom for all is established, there is the prohibition on clerics to refrain from either establishing or participating in associations whose purposes and activity are irreconcilable with the obligations proper to the clerical state. The Congregation for the Clergy explains this restriction further:

It is the right and duty of the competent ecclesiastical authority to see to it that clerics refrain from establishing or joining associations or unions of any kind whatever which are not compatible with the priestly state ... As a matter of fact, whoever acts against the legitimate prohibitive prescription of the said competent authority can be punished with a just penalty, not excluding censure, but with the requirements of the law observed<sup>1</sup>.

#### *Apostolate*

Haven already outlined the right in the task of evangelization; Christ's faithful are further bestowed with the right of employing their initiatives in the promotion of apostolic action arising from their baptism and the Church's mission (c. 216). The term apostolate in Vatican II document is the action "primarily directed to making the message of Christ clear to the world by word and deed and to sharing his grace"<sup>2</sup>. This entails witness of Christian life, proclamation of Christ aimed at transforming the temporal order along with works of charity. What this right guarantees is that lay faithful on their own initiative, can promote and sustain apostolic actions without the hierarchy necessarily been the initiator of such actions. The coordinating and fostering role of the authority of the church is however needed in ensuring such initiatives of the faithful are not contrary to the common good.

#### *Christian education*

The right that is expressed under this context is to bring about maturity of the human person, and correlatively the knowledge and living of the mystery of salvation (c. 217). The source of this Christian education is in *GE* 1-2 and *AA* 30 that affirms the right to education as an inalienable right; as Christians, this right to Christian education is to help them lead life in harmony with the gospel teaching. The primary responsibility of parents for the education of their children is clearly given priority in the Code (cc. 226 §2, 229, 793 §1, 867 §1). But parents are expected to collaborate with the Church as well, since she also has responsibility to form their children in Christ, in catechesis that will make the faith of their wards living and operative (cc. 528 §1, 794 – 795, 843 §2, 851 §2, 890, 914).

#### *Academic freedom of research and expression*

This right pertains to those in theological and related field of study, that in these areas of sacred study where they are experts, they have a just freedom in research and expression. It is however, not an unfettered freedom, for both in writing (publications) and teaching they are to prudently express themselves with due submission to the Magisterium of the Church (c. 218). The CDF Instruction *Donum veritas* affirms that in the Christian faith, knowledge and life, truth and existence are intrinsically connected; and that the truth given in God's

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<sup>1</sup> SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Declaration, Certain Associations or Unions Forbidden to All Clerics, 8 March, [1982] AAS 84 (1982) in *Canon Law Digest* 10, 17

<sup>2</sup> AA 6

Revelation exceeds the capacity of human knowledge, but it is not opposed to human reason. Consequently:

Revelation in fact penetrates human reason, elevates it and calls it to give an account of itself (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). For this reason, from the very beginning of the Church, the “standard of teaching” (cf. Rom 6:17) has been linked with baptism to entrance into the mystery of Christ. The service of doctrine, implying as it does the believer’s search for an understanding of the faith, i.e. theology, is therefore something indispensable for the Church<sup>1</sup>.

Acknowledging that part of the role of the theologian is that of pursuing in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the word of God found in the Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church, explains why those in sacred sciences have to express themselves with due submission to the Magisterium of the Church. The theologian the document says carries out its role “in communion with the Magisterium, which has been charged with the responsibility of preserving the deposit of faith”<sup>2</sup>.

*Specific state of life*

This right protects all Christ’s faithful from any form of threat, pressure or coercion when making choice of vocation to embrace in life (c. 219). This is one of the inviolable rights recognized in the teaching of the church (GS 26). Choosing a state of life must never be to improve the economic status of parents; children are actually to be helped to develop their potentials so as to be able to exercise full responsibility in following their calling (GS 52). Specific protective regulations exist in the Code regarding individual freedom of choice in entering religious congregation (c. 643 §1, 4<sup>o</sup>), for candidates for ordination (cc. 1026, 1036), and to marriage life (cc. 1058, 1057, 1103, 1116).

*Good reputation and privacy of life*

The protection that the faithful have here are the right to one’s good name or reputation arising from the dignity of the human person (GS 26 -27), and the right to privacy (c. 220). No one is therefore permitted to unlawfully harm the good reputation of a person by careless remarks, false accusation or malicious gossip or engage in what is today known as the ‘pull him or her down’ syndrome.

The challenge arising particularly with regard to privacy that no one may unlawfully infringe upon is how to balance delicately the demand for common good and this individual right especially in houses of formation and those who are superiors. In the Church, privacy concerns often borders on moral and physical matters relating to the conscience, hence, we have legislative protective measures on confessional seal and prohibition against use of information learned in confession (cc. 983 -984), exclusion of spiritual directors or confessors from assessment of seminarians (c. 240 §2). Privacy concerns for the individual person includes when the candidate for the sacred holy orders and religious life is to communicate his or her medical and criminal records, psychological test assessments and therapy<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian, 24 May 1990, in *Canon Law Digest* 12, 401.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>3</sup> For more on this topic, see J. A. CORIDEN, *The Rights of Catholics in the Church*, 49; K. E. MCKENNA, *A Concise Guide to your Rights in the Catholic Church*, Indiana, USA, 2006, 37.

*Procedural right*

The declaration about this right is that all Christ's faithful may lawfully vindicate and defend all the rights they enjoy in the Church before a competent ecclesiastical forum observing the relevant norms (c. 221). Implied in this right, is the importance of the faithful to have access to the judicial processes of the Church. In this regard, J. Coriden noted, "human rights that merely stated but not protected by some sort of due process of law remain right in theory, with little practical value"<sup>1</sup>.

**Obligations of all Christ's faithful***Communion with the Church*

The call to preserve ecclesia communion is a leading obligation of all Christ's faithful (c. 209 §1). The bond of faith, sacraments and ecclesiastical governance are the practical external ways of preserving communion in the church by all the baptized. This is to be done even in the external actions, especially in their behaviour. This communion entails maintaining unity with the Church by being part of the Church community.

*Duties to the Church (c. 209 §2)*

While no list is provided, Christ's faithful are to carry out with great diligence their responsibility to the Church. The intricate interplay of this obligation is that while the parish community is the avenue to fulfill the obligation, the diocese, where they live their Christian life and carry out their duties is the basis for communion with the universal church.

*Obedience (c. 212 §1)*

This obligation that is distinctively described as Christian obedience is what all Christ's faithful without exception are bound to show first and foremost to the Bishops constituted Pastors - with the threefold ministry of teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship and ministers of governance (c. 275 §1); and parish priest who are pastors under the bishop's authority (c. 515 §1).

The consciousness of the faithful is that this responsibility is binding on all and is modeled after the example of Christ (LG 37), so obedience to the pastors of the Church, is obedience to Christ who they represent. However, a special obligation binds clerics to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and to their own Ordinary (c. 273). Fidelity to duties as practical consequence of obedience on the part of the clergy requires that they undertake and faithfully fulfill duties entrusted to them (c. 274 §2). At the same time, priests must take to heart the teaching of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council that called on them to be confident in giving lay people charge of duties in the service of the Church, giving them freedom and opportunity for action as well as inviting them to take the initiative of undertaking projects of their own (PO 9).

*Common good*

This clearly is a limitation to the exercise of the rights of the faithful. It is that:

In exercising their rights individual persons and social groups are bound by moral law to have regard for the rights of others, their own duties to others and the common good of all (DH 7).

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. CORIDEN, *The Rights of Catholics in the Church*, 111.

The foundation for this is from the moral principle of personal and social responsibility in the use of freedom.

### **Suggestions and Conclusion**

There is no gain saying that the Church cannot claim to have realized her mission if it does not take into account the concrete situations of man's life. The Church is a communion based on faith, on the solid belief in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity and co-constituted by Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the world, this Church stands as the sacrament of God's presence. It is a communion of those who believe and are baptized, sharing at the table of the Lord and also in carrying out the mission of the church on earth. The Nigerian Church must as a matter of urgency promote the image of the Church as a family, an enterprise that must emphasize care for everyone, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue, trust and ensures the rights and obligations of all Christ's faithful wherever they are domiciled. Building up this Church as a family, means avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, but necessarily involves encouraging reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among particular Churches, without undue ethnic considerations<sup>1</sup>.

Ethnicity in the Nigerian Church is a reality that must be honestly addressed by bishops, priests and the lay faithful, if the Church must be authentic to its mission of evangelizing the Nigerian nation and people. The Church in any part of the country must be home to all Christ's faithful. In appraising his experience at the close of his stewardship as Secretary General of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Fr. Ehusani warns, "in the last few years however I am able to say that ethnicism in the Nigerian Church is perhaps more insidious and volatile than in the secular Nigerian society where it is more openly expressed"<sup>2</sup>. This burden in our local churches is resulting in a situation where everything is now being seen from the prism of ethnicity. What this paper has highlighted is the fact that with the acquisition of domicile, all Christ's faithful acquires what J. Asanbe calls *belonginess*<sup>3</sup> in the Church; therein they can work out their salvation with all their rights and obligations. The time has come; indeed this is the time for us to return to the root of our vocation of preaching the message of love and living the practical African image of the Church as family<sup>4</sup> that envisages the rights and obligations of every baptized faithful. Consequently, the call for a radical change of orientation, training and formation of those who constitute the principal agents of evangelization in all houses of formation, and their subsequent posting across ethnic, diocesan and geographical boundaries to become sacrament of unity and solidarity is prophetic, as the practice could positively begin to heal and reconcile the Nigerian people<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps the Church should also see the need to follow the example of St. Paul who refers to Churches as the Church of God in a place, for the practice as it is now makes people to perceive the church as their possession rather than God's.

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<sup>1</sup> G. EHUSANI, "Evangelising Ethnic Loyalty in Nigeria", 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> J. ASANBE, "'Son of the Soil' Syndrome in the Church in Nigeria", 134.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. F. A. OBORJI, "Building the Relationship in Mixed African Communities" in *Encounter: A Journal of African Life and Religion*, vol. 6 (2002-2003) 31.

<sup>5</sup> G. EHUSANI, "Evangelising Ethnic Loyalty in Nigeria", 145.



Finally, the concept of domicile is clearly not the same as *locus originis* in the secular parlance, hence its secular application in the church setting results in a disconnect between theology and pastoral practice. The rights and obligations of all Christians are not appended on one's place of origin rather arises from baptism that makes him or her a child of God and a member of the Church, and then the status of the person, the place of domicile and whether one is in communion with the Church and not under any legitimate sanction. The importance of the canonical concept of domicile is more on account of its consequences, arising from the juridical status of a person in relation to his or her place of domicile. The idea of "son of the soil" that results in prejudice against "outsider" or "strangers" cannot be approved by a nation without undermining its own civilization according C. Achebe<sup>1</sup> and neither can the Church afford such too.

There can never be a time where in the Nigerian Church, Christ's faithful from different ethnic groups and backgrounds will not be living and sharing one parish and diocese, for this we must recognized our oneness in the house of God.

While this forum is not meant to discuss the many questions about our constitution and the security challenges befalling the nation, I wish every Nigerian can internalized the opening words of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria by sincerely, firmly and solemnly resolving to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign Nation under God dedicated to the promotion of inter-African solidarity, world peace, international co-operation and understanding. And to provide for a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice, and the purpose of consolidation the unity of our people.

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<sup>1</sup> C. ACHEBE, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Enugu, 1983, 7.

**THE SCIENCE OF ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION AND CATHOLIC MORAL  
TEACHING**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of the Department of Theology on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2014

BY

FR. EDWARD MUGE, SMA

**Introduction**

I am humbled to be called upon to present this years' NACATHS' inaugural lecture. Despite the short notice, I will try to give my very best hoping it will be good enough for you. Many are here to satisfy different kinds of curiosity. In spite of all we are united in our divergent curiosities in an intellectual curiosity based on our insatiable desire for knowledge. This presupposes what Bernard Lonergan will refer to as intellectual conversion. For him, intellectual conversion is a stage of life where a person's concerns move from mere experience of life to knowledge of the experience as true and real. It involves a self-transcendence from oneself to what is true – independent of one self. It is the effort to reach cognitive integrity in one's intellectual positions .... The self-transcendence brings a person out of himself to a stage where the person's horizon is widened and enlarged. Thus, we are enclosed within the four walls of this auditorium in what I would like to refer to as a quest in *intellectual solidarity*. This is a way of expressing our social nature, engaged in a rational enterprise associated with learning, knowledge and wisdom.

This lecture does not pretend to have the last word on *The Science of Artificial Insemination and Catholic Moral Teaching*. What I intend to do here is to stimulate our inquiry into the role of technology in human reproduction. It is, therefore, pertinent to briefly refresh our minds on what artificial insemination entails and what the Church says about it. The argument

for technology in human reproduction can be summed up this way: the moral licitness of artificial reproductive technology is based on the fact that granted the legitimacy and goodness of the desire for children by couples then the fulfilment of this desire can be termed good.<sup>1</sup> The plausibility or otherwise of the above argument will become clear by the end of this lecture.

DV in part II holds that *by "artificial procreation" or "artificial fertilization" is understood here the different technical procedures directed towards obtaining a human conception in a manner other than the sexual union of man and woman. This Instruction deals with fertilization of an ovum in a test-tube (in vitro fertilization) and artificial insemination through transfer into the woman's genital tracts of previously collected sperm.* Sidney Callahan<sup>2</sup> in an article titled *The Ethical Challenge of the New Reproductive Technology* sets us moving in our curiosity with the question, *How should we ethically evaluate the new reproductive technology developed to treat the increasing problem of human fertility?*<sup>3</sup> I will put it differently by asking how do we establish a dialogical imperative between science and catholic moral principles on human procreation. For it is evident that science is not listening to the Church as the Church seem to have turned a deaf ear to science with regards to reproductive technologies. The second general Congregation of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 2014 urges the church to dialogue with the world for if the Church does not listen to the world, the world will not listen to the Church (Vatican Information Service, 7/10/14). Does this imply dialogue at the expense of moral principles informed by our Catholic context?

### **Marital love and the problem of Infertility**

The Church hinges its opposition to the overbearing influence of technology in procreation to the inseparability of the sexual act and procreation as separating the unitive and procreative dimensions is to violate the natural integrity of the total act of intercourse<sup>4</sup>; science on the other hand focuses on the desire for children in childless couples *justified on the basis of individual liberty, autonomy, reproductive privacy and reproductive right.*<sup>5</sup> At the centre of these antithetical ideological spectra is the childless couple; What is wrong with putting a smile of the faces of those couples suffering infertility using technology? I hold the view that children deserve to be 'begotten, not made.' We must face the question of whether children should be the result of human procreation or production. Marital love is expressed in the self-gift of the husband to his wife and vice versa, a self-giving that is open to life (spousal unity

<sup>1</sup> Martin Rhonheimer, *Ethics of Procreation and the Defense of Human Life: Contraception, Artificial Fertilization, and Abortion*, trans. William F. Murphy (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 156.

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Callahan is a psychologist and Distinguished Scholar at The Hastings Center, a pioneering bioethics center. She is the author of many articles and books.

<sup>3</sup> Sidney Callahan, "The Ethical Challenge of the New Reproductive Technology," in *On Moral Medicine*, ed. Stephen E. Lammers and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 509. Reproductive Technology became widespread in 1978 with the successful birth of Louis Browne through In Vitro fertilization. As the practise gained acceptance as a means to help infertile couples, it gradually replaced the human reproductive process instead of assisting it.

<sup>4</sup> James J. Walter and Thomas A. Shannon, *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics: A Catholic Perspective* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2005), 129.

<sup>5</sup> Callahan, "The Ethical Challenge of the New Reproductive Technology," 510.

that has procreativity as its goal). The experience of infertility by some couples and the suffering connected with unanticipated childlessness is a sad reality that is threatening married life today especially in our familiar African context where children are seen as signs of blessing and honour as they are the assurance of the future of the society and continuation of the family line. In the face of infertility *spouses may feel they have somehow failed, that they are inadequate in a basic aspect of their marital life. Their pain may even be aggravated by regret or guilt over past contraceptive use, sterilization, abortion, or other factors that can contribute to infertility. The sight of other couples' children may make them yearn for a child all the more and add to their distress. Infertility can affect a couple's sexual relationship and the stability of their marriage. It may even affect relationships with parents and in-laws who express disappointment at the absence of grandchildren. Catholic couples may feel this pain even more deeply as they hear the Church praise family life and teach that children are "the supreme gift of marriage"* (Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [Gaudium et Spes]*, no. 50)<sup>1</sup>. The question that comes to my mind is: Can the Church claim to be suffering with couples experiencing childlessness as a result of infertility? If yes, why the rejections of scientific means of surmounting childlessness like artificial insemination, In Vitro Fertilisation, Cloning etc.? The answer is indeed, the church shares the pain of childless couples as a result of infertility and sees their desire for children as a natural one which expresses the vocation to fatherhood and motherhood inscribed in conjugal love<sup>2</sup>.

In an article written in the Catholic Exchange of July 16, 2007 titled *The Gift of Infertility*, Dr. Jameson and Jennifer Taylor expressed the pains of infertile couples thus:

Having struggled with infertility for nearly six years, we know the pain of not being able to have a baby. We're also familiar with the awkward silences — and tears — that often accompany conversations with those who have never experienced infertility. On the one hand, people tend to believe fertility is something we have perfect control over. "Just relax," we've been told. "When you settle down, I'm sure it will happen." Or, "Maybe you're just not ready yet," as if "buying a house" or "getting a better job" would make us pregnant. On the other hand, it's a mystery why so many couples like us aren't blessed with biological children. [For] if, as Scripture tells us, "children are a gift from the Lord" (Ps. 127:3), how should couples understand their infertility? What hope is there for couples who desperately desire children, but also want to remain faithful to the Church's guidance regarding artificial reproductive technologies?<sup>3</sup>

The Church is not against infertile couples having children of their own. it is however, against the commodification of children who from the very moment of conception have been bestowed the inherent dignity of being *image and likeness of God*. It is against making the child a product of the causative will of the parents.

### **Catholic Understanding versus Secular Understanding of Human Life**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/catholic-teaching/upload/Life-Giving-Love-in-an-Age-of-Technology-2009-2.pdf> [accessed 07/10/2014].

<sup>2</sup> DV 8

<sup>3</sup> <http://catholicexchange.com/the-gift-of-infertility-part-1> [accessed 07/10/2014].

The divergent and opposing views on the understanding of the human person between science and technology and theology can be reduced to the problem of the moral status of the embryo. Theology affirms the transcendental nature of the human person who is an embodied spirit or enspirited body – a substantial union with a spiritual soul and a human body (DV 3)1. Christian anthropological vision is based on the creation of man/woman in the image and likeness of God. It explains the inherent and fundamental dignity bestowed on the person by God which must be protected. Science and scientists:

*... reject the idea that human life is sacred mainly because they believe that sanctity is a superstitious and outmoded concept. They reason that nothing can be holy, nothing can be sacred, because there are no gods. But sacred can simply mean inviolable, infeasible, to be protected, to be safeguarded ... The primary notion of the sacred is that there are things which should be protected in all or most circumstances and for their own sakes, things which are both intrinsically valuable and highly valuable.<sup>2</sup>*

It is pertinent to look at what Peter Bristow refers to as the second more recent understanding of the human person – the person as consciousness. This is associated with the famous ‘*cogito ergo sum*’ which is said to have made subjective thought and consciousness the source of all knowledge which also radically separated the spiritual world from matter making matter and extension two separate substances<sup>3,4</sup>. This led to the person identified with consciousness per se. John Paul II refers to it as “a kind of hypostatization consciousness where consciousness becomes an independent subject of activity and indirectly of existence, occurring somehow alongside the body which is a material structure subject to the laws of nature, to natural determinism.”<sup>5</sup> The separation of the unified nature of the person gives technology the license to immorally intervene in the reproductive dimension of human beings. Peter Bristow holds that:

By separating the person from his embodied nature, the anthropology associated with the new bio-technology fails to give us a full definition of the truth of the person. And by treating humans as a means to an end in embryonic stem-cell research it fails to respect the person, first as a subject, and even more as a subject of intrinsic worth and dignity. The result is that IVF and the successor techniques are dehumanising because they set up technology over and above our nature as intelligent and loving, procreative beings.<sup>6</sup>

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1 *Corpore et anima unus (Gaudium et Spes, 14 par. 1).*

<sup>2</sup> J. Teichman, *Social Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 17-19, in Bristow, Peter. *Christian Ethics and The Human Person: Truth and Relativism in Contemporary Moral Theology*, 2nd ed., (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2013), 82.

<sup>3</sup> Defining substance in his *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes says it is “nothing else than a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist.”

<sup>4</sup> Peter Bristow, *Christian Ethics and the Human Person: Truth and Relativism in Contemporary Moral Theology*, 2nd ed. (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2013), 85-86.

<sup>5</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Community* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 169.

<sup>6</sup> Bristow, *Christian Ethics and the Human Person: Truth and Relativism in Contemporary Moral Theology*, 87-88.

Fr. Norman Ford, SDB, in *When Did I Begin? Conception of the Human Individual in History, Philosophy and Science*, holds the position of delayed hominization in his claim that at conception there is no living individual – a human being until two to three weeks after fertilization. His position encouraged the use of embryos for experimentation and their subsequent destruction.<sup>1</sup>

Though ethicists are not scientist, human life is a divine gift and they are better placed to take on issues of practical decision making. It is as such that the ethicists help couples trying to overcome the problem of infertility to make rational decisions informed by faith. Biomedical practices must be shaped by theological language so that scientists do not end up “playing God.”<sup>2</sup> Human fabrication is playing God. Scientific intervention in human life must respect and serve human life. Paul Ramsey holds that *technology must not be morally blind. For him, to play man is to respect the limits of biology created by God; thus, in playing man we learn not to play God. We neither destroy what God has united, nor do we overstep our limits.*<sup>3</sup> We are called to be stewards of life and not assume onto ourselves the privileges and prerogatives of God. Stewardship is an attitude of appreciation of the goodness of nature and be being its voice before God. It is intervention with limit.

### **Reproductive Technology: To Assist or Replace the Natural Means To Procreation?**

The following question will help put the above topic in perspective: Is it morally licit, for whatever reason, to generate a human being outside of the “natural” act of sexual copulation, that is, *artificially*, by means of *technology*, and thus by means of a specific intervention that imitates nature and partially replaces it? (Martin Rhonheimer, *Ethics of Procreation & The Defense of Human Life*, 155).

The basic principle of moral theology on the relevance of Science and Technology in human reproduction is not the immoral act of replacing or substituting the conjugal act but of assisting the conjugal act achieve its purpose<sup>4</sup>. This brings to mind a salient question that theology needs to challenge science on. It is whether the intervention of science in human reproduction is consistent with the good and well-being of the human person.<sup>5</sup> Some approaches to infertility clearly violate the integrity of the marital relationship. These introduce third parties to fulfil essential aspects of parenthood, by using eggs or sperm or even embryos from “donors” (who are often paid, and therefore more accurately described as vendors), or even by making use of another woman’s womb to carry the couple’s child. The latter practice is sometimes known as surrogate motherhood, though this woman acts the way any mother

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Fisher, *Catholic Bioethics: For a New Millennium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 101-04.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice and Change*, ed. James F. Keenan, Moral Tradition Series (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> Walter and Shannon, *Contemporary Issues in Bioethics: A Catholic Perspective*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> *DV Part II*, Section 7.

<sup>5</sup> Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice and Change*, 170.

would throughout pregnancy and then must relinquish the child to the couple who hired her.<sup>1</sup> Artificial insemination, most often uses sperm that is immorally obtained. In an attempt to conceive a child, the husband's sperm is transferred with a syringe into the wife's uterus. Substituting this technological procedure for the couple's loving sexual union as a way of bringing a new human being into existence is immoral. Often it is not the couple's act at all, but an impersonal act performed by a technician. This procedure can be performed even if the husband is no longer alive, using frozen and stored sperm. The husband and wife may love each other very much and look forward to having a child to love, but in artificial insemination the process by which the child is brought into being does not reflect this reality. Children have a right to be conceived by the act that expresses and embodies their parents' self-giving love; morally responsible medicine can assist this act but should never substitute for it.<sup>2</sup>

Do Couples have rights to Children? Having a right to a child is instrumentalising the child as the object of the parents' desire such that the child ceases to be the fruit of the self-giving of its parents. It becomes the product of their will and desire; a production of the laboratory. Claiming rights over having children negates the gift-metaphor associated with children as a result of the natural self-giving of their parents. For the child born as a result of scientific intervention in the human reproductive process, his/her existence is dependent of the desire of its parents and can thus assert: I exist because you wanted me and nothing more; you produced me to be your happiness, different from a child of the natural reproductive process whose life is a gift of God mediated by the reciprocal love of the parents; and could thus affirm: I am because of the love you have for one another and I am the fruit of your selfless giving to each other.

### **Church Documents on Human Technologies**

The catholic position regarding technological intrusion into the divine sphere of the cooperation between human nature and God as a way of continuing creation started by God are clearly spelt out in Church documents like *Donum Vita*, reaffirmed by *Humanae Vitae*. Other documents we will take a cursory look into are *Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology* and *Married Love and the Gift of Life*. It insists on the application of the natural law theory. The natural law methodology is based on human reason reflecting on human nature. This understanding is discarded for an understanding referred to by some moralists as physicalism. Charles Curran holds that the official natural law teaching suffers from problems—the primary one being its physicalism or biologism. It insists that intercourse must always be present and that no one can interfere with the physical or biological aspect for any reason whatsoever. In this understanding of sex, opined Charles Curran, the physical becomes absolutized<sup>3</sup>. The above documents will give a clear picture of the catholic ethical perspective on reproductive technology.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/catholic-teaching/upload/Life-Giving-Love-in-an-Age-of-Technology-2009-2.pdf> (Accessed on the 13/10/15).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For further reading see, Charles E. Curran, "Natural Law in Moral Theology," in *Readings in Moral Theology* No. 7: *Natural Law and Theology*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). Cf. Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, ed. James F. Keenan, *Moral Traditions Series* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

*Donum Vitae*<sup>1</sup> makes it categorically clear that science and technology must be at the service of the human person (2). It insists that science and technology must be subject to moral evaluation in the light of human dignity. The document affirms *that the gift of human life must be actualized in marriage through the specific and exclusive acts of husband and wife, in accordance with the laws inscribed in their persons and in their union (DV 5)*. *Donum Vitae* advocates four moral criteria that technology must respect: (1) respect, defense and promotion of the human person; (2) man's primary and fundamental right to life; (3) the dignity of the person endowed with a spiritual soul and with moral responsibility; (4) man's call to beatific communion with God.<sup>2</sup> DV Part II, Section B, Chapter 4c:

In his unique and unrepeatable origin, the child must be respected and recognized as equal in personal dignity to those who give him life. The human person must be accepted in his parents' act of union and love.... In reality, the origin of a human person is the result of an act of giving. The one conceived must be the fruit of his parents' love. He cannot be desired or conceived as the product of an intervention of medical or biological techniques.

It is the right of the child to be born out of the natural love of the parents.

### **Moral Issues associated with Artificial Procreation**

Should the technological imperative, that is, that what needs to be done should be done determine the morality or otherwise of the process of life-giving? Should the desire for children be sacrificed at the altar of immoral technological interventions? What is wrong with medical interventions like AIH or IVF? In determining the morality of the scientific process in human reproduction, it is pertinent that we do not become oblivious of the inherent value and dignity of human. The immorality of the scientific intervention in human reproduction is the reduction of the process of procreative into a mechanical process where the person produced is not for his or her sake but the satisfaction of the desires and wants of the parents. It turns the child into a commodity which brings a much desired happiness to the parents who own him or her. The commodification of the human person violates human dignity. This instrumentalisation or exploitation of the child makes the child serve only the end of fulfilling the parents' desires.<sup>3</sup> And Aristotle's distinction between "*to desire*" and "*to intend*" helps in understanding the instrumentalisation of the child. "*To desire is to want something not in our power to do i.e. something that is not properly an object of our doing. "To intend" is to want something we cannot do immediately but is possible when that intention is translated into concrete action [intention leads to a search for a means within the power of the one*

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<sup>1</sup> The Vatican *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation* was given on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1987 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The purpose of this document is to put "forward the moral teaching corresponding to the dignity of the person and to his integral vocation" with reference to issues posed by contemporary biomedical research.

<sup>2</sup> D. Brian Scarnecchia, *Bioethics, Law and Human Life Issues: A Catholic Perspective on Marriage, Family, Contraception, Abortion, Reproductive Technologies, and Death and Dying* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, INC., 2010), 146.

<sup>3</sup> Rhonheimer, *Ethics of Procreation and the Defense of Human Life: Contraception, Artificial Fertilization, and Abortion*, 158.



*intending to achieve that which is intended*]<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, human life ceases to be generated but produced technically (Did God intend human procreation or human production?). We are faced with a Contraposition of “love” and “technology.” *When scientific intervention in human reproduction ceases to be therapeutic, the resultant effect will be a cultivation of an attitude of a specific form of domination over the beginning and end of human life.*<sup>2</sup> In this way and with this attitude, the “goodness” of human life is made dependent ... on its “being desired,” on the recognition or acceptance given by others.<sup>3</sup> For Martin Rhonheimer, technology in human reproduction is most times not only about desiring to have a child but the will to impose the fulfilment of the desire at all costs.

Statistically, it is held that ART has 33% rate of success. For example, in the U.S. in 2001, 29,344 women gave birth to a living baby as a result of ART, which accounts for approximately 1 percent of total U.S. births. However, the number of ART cycles require to produce this result was 107,587, meaning that ART has a success rate of about 33 percent varying from the clinics in which it is performed<sup>4</sup>. The therapy connected with infertility is rigorous and stressful. It can even jeopardize relationships. Based on the success rate of ART, the moral issue of the many fertilized embryos arise. The church holds that personhood is achieved at fertilization. The destruction, experimentation or waste of the embryos is murder and treatment of a person without the dignity and respect required as well as an insult to the sacredness of human life.

Science is arrogating to itself the unlimited power to do any as long as it is possible. This scientific imperative of *if we can do it, then we must do it*<sup>5</sup> expresses a consequentialist attitude on moral issues expressed in the *end justifies the means*. *Humanae Vitae* is opposed to the separation of unitive and procreative dimensions of marriage (HV 12).

## Conclusion

Artificial reproductive technology cannot just be blindly accepted without questioning the morality of the process(es) involved. It has led to a growing mentality in parents who now see *parenthood as indispensable to social adulthood*. The issues that arise from the above mentality is the resultant situation of childlessness pushes infertile couples into desperation. Their desperation is exploited by scientists who have assigned no limits to the intrusion of the technologies into human reproduction which has led to the *techniques [being] sold and used in a rarified atmosphere of medical sophistication, consumer power, free-form family building, and for-profit health care.*<sup>6</sup> A human person is a gift of God whose entrance into the world has to be by the total self-giving of the parents to each in love as co-creators with God. A technologically produced human person is good in relation to the desires of the parents. The person’s dignity as the image of God is in no doubt but that person is denied being generated from nature. DV buttresses the above fact when it asserts that *in reality, the origin of a human person is the result of an act of giving. The one conceived must be the fruit of his parents’*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>4</sup> Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice and Change*, 195.

<sup>5</sup> Padraig Corkery, *Bioethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2010), 44.

<sup>6</sup> Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice and Change*, 193.

love. He cannot be desired or conceived as the product of an intervention of medical or biological techniques.<sup>1</sup> Artificial reproduction technology encourages the separation of "procreation" from the "sexual act," or the substitution of the sexual act with technology.<sup>2</sup> In this way, it interferes with the God-giving means of human cooperation with his grace in co-creating. When ART replaces the natural means the child results from production rather than generation. This can be termed the instrumentalisation of the child as a product of the parents' desires.

Artificial human production goes against the principle of justice where human life in its concrete individuality is recognised as the gift of God independent of its desirability by the parents. Human procreation is the entry into an intimacy of love expressed in the bodily sexual union of a husband and his wife (two persons) which gives no room for the interference of a third party.

Quoting Martin Rhonheimer, *artificial procreation is in a sense an unjust mode of action, and on the basis of its artificiality, but because it is an abuse of the medical arts, an abuse that indeed possesses a "Promethean" element*. He continues that "Children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, his reward" (Ps 127:3); gifts that have not been "received" cannot be "taken" from the owner without offense.<sup>3</sup> In other words, human being cannot take over what belongs to God by right of being the author of life.

In conclusion, what the Church teaches is the sacredness of human life from the womb to the tomb; procreation as cooperation of human nature and the grace of God; the respect of human life and not its commodification, human life that is generated as a gift of God and not fabricated, manufactured in the laboratory; the church demands procreation and not production of human life. It encourages a technological intervention in human production that is moral and that respects the dignity and sacredness of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Donum Vitae, Part II, Section B, Chapter 4c.

<sup>2</sup> Rhonheimer, Ethics of Procreation and the Defense of Human Life: Contraception, Artificial Fertilization, and Abortion, 155.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

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**The Evangelization of the New Global Ethic:  
A Challenge for the Church.**

Being the Departmental Lecture of Theology on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2015

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**Introduction**

If we look to the title of this paper: “The Evangelization of the New Global Ethic,” then we first have to explain the existence of a new global ethic before we can continue talking of how to evangelise it. In order to understand this new global ethic, we have to go back to the end of the so called Cold War<sup>1</sup>, or in other words, the divide between East and West. The end of the Cold War, at the end of the 1980’s, marked a desire for freedom, democracy, religious liberty, equity, sustainable development and women’s empowerment. It was The United Nations, an intergovernmental organization established on October 24, 1945, which at that time presented itself as the only institution capable of making globalization human, ethical and sustainable. The United Nations argued that “global problems” required not only global solutions, but global values – a global ethic that only the United Nations would be able to forge and enforce.<sup>2</sup>

As soon as the Cold War was over, the United Nations embarked upon a process of building up a new global consensus on the norms, values and priorities for the international community. It did so through a number of conferences which covered topics as: education, children, environment, human rights, population, social development, women, housing and food security. During a period of six years (1990-1996) a new consensus was reached on the norms,

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<sup>1</sup> The Cold War: a state of political and military tension after World War II between the Western Bloc (The U.S., its NATO Allies and others as Japan) and the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its Allies) from 1947-1991.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Global Ethic: Challenges for the Church*, Marguerite A. Peeters, Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics, p. 8.

values and priorities of the above mentioned topics and globally endorsed by its members, now comprising 193 member states. Since 1996, this new consensus forms the basis for all further debates. The internet revolution, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) and governance networks brought this new consensus to regional, national and local levels.

Concerning authority, we can say that The United Nations derives its authority from the governments by which it is made up, and whose will is supposed to represent the will of the people for whom they stand. However the experts called in during the consensus building years were not just expressing "the will of the people." At the time there was a powerful population control lobby and the many, mainly secular Western NGO's with their own particular lobby, occupied key positions at the United Nations. The result is as we have it now: the new global ethic. The implementation of this new global ethic is not just left for governments and NGO's but for every organization, group and person in society. As such it is above national sovereignty, the authority of parents and educators and even above the teachings of world religions.

In recent times we have had several examples of how this works in reality. Cameroun, Ghana and also Nigeria were threatened by leading Western countries following Same-Sex Prohibitions. The Nigerian Newspaper Vanguard reported on January 21, 2014: "Leading Western countries piled pressure on the Federal Government, yesterday, following President Goodluck Jonathan's signing of the Same-Sex Prohibition Act 2014. The latest country is the United States of America, whose ambassador to Nigeria threatened that the United States will scale down its support for HIV/AIDS and anti-malaria programmes in response to the Federal Government's position on the gay rights issue. Member countries of the European Union and Canada have expressed their objection to the law and the United States Ambassador to Nigeria said he was worried about "the implication of the anti-same sex marriage law which seems to restrict the fundamental rights of a section of the Nigerian population."<sup>1</sup>

The result of these reactions towards governmental actions, not only in the area of same sex marriage law but also in other areas as abortion and euthanasia, confuses a number of Christians till the extent that they take the new approaches as social doctrine of the Church. From there the urgent need for the Church to discern the action of the Holy Spirit in this new global ethic and to evangelize it. It is in this context that we can speak of "The Evangelisation of the New Global Ethic," which definitely is "A Challenge for the Church" for the evangelisation is to be done in the midst of a world embedded in secular ideas and ideologies.

### **The United Nations General Assembly Sessions**

Every year the United Nations holds its General Assembly. And so it was last September 16, 2014 which marked the start of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The following report of Elyssa Koren<sup>2</sup> gives an insight in the working of these General Assembly

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<sup>1</sup> Okey Ndiribe, Sam Eyoboka and Victoria Ojeme, "*Gay-Marriage:US threatens to sanction Nigeria,*" [www.vanguardngr.com/2014/01/gay-marriage-law-us-threatens-sanction-nigeria/](http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/01/gay-marriage-law-us-threatens-sanction-nigeria/) (accessed on May 2, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Elyssa Koren serves as United Nations counsel with 'Alliance Defending Freedom,' an international, alliance-building legal organization that advocates for religious freedom, the sanctity of life, and marriage and the family in numerous courts and consultative bodies worldwide.

Sessions. The United Nations General Assembly is the biggest U.N. event of the year, which brings with it presidents, prime ministers, ministers, aids and members of the press. Thousands of civil society representatives come to the United Nations to observe and influence the discourse. The United Nations is a battleground for the prevailing issues of our day, and the General Assembly is the most crucial fight of the year. The General Assembly is responsible for the creation of several hundred documents outlining the position of Member States on a myriad of issues. While the spotlight shines on the heads of state, the real excitement of the General Assembly is behind closed doors when delegates battle with one another over words and formulations of statements in the to be produced documents. What you do not see on television is that often head of states are speaking to an empty room. President Obama and several others will attract a crowd, but most will not. The moulding and shaping throughout the negotiation process of a document can turn it into a “pro” or “anti” document concerning a particular issue. The end result is crucial since once U.N. documents are adopted they are used to influence countries, particularly those of the developing world, to change their laws, sometimes for the better, and many times for the worse.

Last September has shown an interesting example of how pressure is put on the world leaders to change or adopt measures, in this case, concerning climate action. During the ongoing General Assembly, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and actor Leonardo di Caprio joined thousands in a march for climate action in New York.<sup>1</sup> This demonstration was part of a global protest, with over 2,000 marches around the world. The aim of these pressure groups is to push for a new universal agreement on climate to be signed by all nations at the end of 2015. Concerning the spontaneity or not of these worldwide marches, it is interesting to note that organisers spent six months preparing the protests in places as diverse as Papua New Guinea, Lagos, London and Rio de Janeiro. Apart from the march in his drive for vision and concrete action concerning the climate issue, Mr. Ban Ki-moon also addressed directly the 125 heads of state and government present at the Assembly. It is interesting to note that in the upcoming 2015 General Assembly of the United Nations the Head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, will also address directly the heads of state and government present. The power and influence of these addresses should not be underestimated, the more as President Obama says of Pope Francis: “An extraordinary individual, I think, a transformative leader, not just within the Catholic Church but globally.”<sup>2</sup> And that is exactly what we need when we talk about: “The Evangelisation of the New Global Ethic.”

### **Human Rights**

The issue of Human Rights, so dear to the heart of the United Nations, is also very dear to the Roman Catholic Church as expressed by Pope Francis in his “2013 Day for Life” message. In this message the Pope expresses: “Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.” It is in this spirit that the US Episcopal Conference, a sponsor of the “Respect Life Month,” made the following

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<sup>1</sup> The People’s Climate March (PCM) was a large-scale activist event to advocate global action against climate change, which took place on September 21, 2014, in New York City. With over 400,000 participants, it was the largest climate march in history.

<sup>2</sup> Barack Obama, “US President: Pope Francis is a Transformative Leader,” [www.zenit.org/en/articles/us-president-pope-francis-is-a-transformative-leader](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/us-president-pope-francis-is-a-transformative-leader) (accessed 02 May2015).

statement last September, 2014: “We want to be part of a society that makes affirmation and protection of human rights its primary objective and its boast. Yet to women faced with an unexpected pregnancy, abortion is often presented as their only “choice.” A large percentage of children pre-diagnosed as having Down syndrome are never given the chance to live outside their mothers’ womb. And elderly members of our families fear they will become burdensome and seek physician assisted suicide. These tragedies go directly against respect for life, and they represent a direct threat to the entire culture of human rights.”

In his concern for the health of the American People, President Obama promoted the Affordable Care Act. However, what is largely ignored or overlooked is that this health plan includes abortion coverage. In other words abortions are subsidised by federal funds. It is in this context that Cardinal Sean O’Malley of Boston stated recently: “Surveys have shown that most Americans do not want elective abortion in their health coverage, and do not want their tax dollars to fund abortions. Their wishes are not being followed, and it can be difficult or impossible for them to find out whether those wishes are respected even in their own health plan.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human rights was adopted and its first article states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity.” This statement was made when there was still a general recognition of the existence of a “natural law.” However current developments claim the right to exercise one’s freedom against the law of nature, against traditions and against divine revelation. And so the new rule of law becomes “the right to choose”. Consequently, we get among others the right to choose abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide. The right to choose has now become the fundamental norm of the interpretation of all human rights and it brings with it a new hierarchy of values. Pleasure is now placed above love, health and well-being above the sacredness of life, the participation of special interest groups in governance above democratic representation, women’s rights above motherhood, the empowerment of the selfish individual above any form of legitimate authority and the right to choose above the eternal law written in the human heart. In short we can say, immanence above transcendence, man above God, the world above heaven. The by then Cardinal Ratzinger gave a term to this development and called it a dictatorship of relativism. Relativism here has to be understood as the denial of absolutes and reacts against anything it considers as “top-down,” such as truth, revelation and morality. However, if cultural tradition or cultural relativism alone governs State observance of international standards, then widespread disrespect, abuse and violation of human rights would be given legitimacy. Wole Soyinka points out that all humans have rights by virtue of their humanity and those rights cannot be conditioned by gender or national or ethnic origin. Wole Soyinka continues that human rights as it exists universally are the highest moral rights, so no rights can be subordinated to another person or institution; e.g. the state.

At the introduction of this paper it was stated that concerning authority, we can say that The United Nations derives its authority from the governments by which it is made up, and whose will is supposed to represent the will of the people for whom they stand. However the experts called in during the consensus building years were not just expressing “the will of the people.”

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<sup>1</sup> Cardinal O’Malley, “*Government Report Confirms Bishop’s Concern on Abortion Coverage,*” [www.usccb.org/news/2014/14-154.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/news/2014/14-154.cfm) (accessed May 2, 2015).

It is this that has let many to conclude that Human Rights, as we have it defined today, are not universal but predicated on Western moral values which might not necessarily be adaptable to, say, someone in Botswana, and therefore should not be imposed as model on non-Western societies.<sup>1</sup> The relativism we see here has everything to do with “the right to choose” and it is this that finally has become a propagation of apostasy in the world and as such the need to evangelize this new global ethic.

### **Rights of Children**

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of Children, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in November 1989, stipulates that children’s rights include the right to life, health and education, as well as to a family life, to be protected from violence, not to be discriminated against and to have their views heard. It is in this light that on September 23, 2014, a group of United Nations independent experts called on governments to make renewed efforts to ensure that children’s views are heard and taken into account. Having read this news, what immediately came to my mind was the saying here in Africa: “Children are seen but not heard.” However, Mrs. Sandberg who chairs the Committee composed of 18 independent human rights experts says that children need to be part of the search for solutions to the many problems our world faces.<sup>2</sup> It is in this respect interesting to see how the standards in this particular convention were achieved. The website of UNICEF explains that the standards in the Convention on the Rights of the Child were negotiated by governments, non-governmental organizations, human rights advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts and religious leaders from all over the world, over a 10 year period. The result is a consensus document of the child. It reflects the principal legal systems of the world and acknowledges the specific needs of developing countries.<sup>3</sup> Apart from three (The United States, South Sudan and Somalia), all the member states of the United Nations have ratified the convention (note: Somalia is currently in the process of ratification).

### **The Culture of Death**

The expression “culture of death,” became common use after Pope John Paul II mentioned it several times in the 1991 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*. In this encyclical the Pope said: “In our present social context, marked by a dramatic struggle between the culture of life and the culture of death, there is a need to develop a deep critical sense capable of discerning true values and authentic needs” (EV 95). The culture of death mentioned here arises in part from a faulty understanding of human freedom. The media often glamorize violence, contraception, abortion and euthanasia as manifestations of freedom, hope and responsibility. But theories of radical individualism fail to recognize that freedom possesses an inherently relational dimension. A freedom that is set against relationships with other people leads to the desire for

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<sup>1</sup> Wole Soyinka, “*The Avoidable Trap of Cultural Relativism*,” [www.content.yudu.com/Library/A1q23k/TheTrumpetNewspaper/resources/content/13.swf](http://www.content.yudu.com/Library/A1q23k/TheTrumpetNewspaper/resources/content/13.swf) (accessed May 1, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> UN, “*UN experts urge real dialogue with children about their rights, decisions that affect them*,” [www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48798#.VUTHAY5\\_Oko](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48798#.VUTHAY5_Oko) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> U.N. “*Convention on the Rights of the Child*,” [www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30229.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30229.html) (accessed May 2, 2015).



destruction of other people, or to the despair of Jean-Paul Sartre, who said, “Hell is other people,” or to the denial of Cain, who asked, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper? Indeed, as the Pope continues in *Evangelium Vitae* no. 21: “When the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life; in turn, the systematic violation of the moral law, especially in the serious matter of respect for human life and its dignity, produces a kind of progressive darkening of the capacity to discern God’s living and saving presence.”

As unnatural as the Culture of Death may sound to us, so early were already the ideas supporting this culture. Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Ayn Rand (1905-1982) advocate the primacy of the Will. By placing the Will before Reason approval is given to making choices that do not accord with reason. Arthur Schopenhauer taught that reality was essentially Will. In his book: “*The World as Will and Representation*,” Schopenhauer claims that our world is driven by a continually dissatisfied will, continually seeking satisfaction. It is in this mindset that Schopenhauer concludes that a real and thorough improvement of the human race might be reached not so much from outside as from within, not so much by theory and instruction as rather by the path of generation by the selective generation of most magnanimous (kind, generous and forgiving) men with the cleverest and most gifted women.<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich Nietzsche was in love with the “Will to Power.” This will to power is a fundamental drive as realized in independence and dominance. Moreover this will is stronger than the will to survive, as martyrs willingly die for a cause if they feel that associating themselves with that cause gives them greater power. And so Nietzsche concludes that “Life is essentially a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, and at least, the very least, exploiting.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally Ayn Rand argued that altruism is the root of all evil and so he promoted the individual at the expense of others. The promotion of the Will is an element we strongly discover in the contemporary “pro-choice” movement.

Utopianism is another contribution to the Culture of Death. Utopian philosophers as Karl Marx (1818-1883), Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) and Auguste Comte (1798-1857) argue that “Man exists for the State.” By doing so they place too much power in government to the disadvantage of the citizen. Consequently there is little regard for people who, because of age, ill-health, or disabilities, cannot justify their existence by means of their contributions to the State.

Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), Helen Gurley Brown (1922-2012), Alfred Kinsey (1894-1956) and Margaret Sanger (1879-1966) place pleasure ahead of the person. By doing so the person loses his primacy and becomes an object. Even more so, he becomes a tool for the pleasure of someone else. With their idea that pleasure is more important than the person, they contributed

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, “*Heredity and Eugenics*,” [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur\\_Schopenhauer](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Schopenhauer) (accessed May 2, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “*Beyond Good and Evil*,” Part 9, no.259, [www.holybooks.com/uploads/Nietzsche-Beyond-Good-and-evil.pdf](http://www.holybooks.com/uploads/Nietzsche-Beyond-Good-and-evil.pdf) (accessed May 2, 2015).

to the “Sexual Revolution” which, in its own way contributed to sexual promiscuity, divorce and abortion.<sup>1</sup>

Peter Singer (1946), Jack Kervorkian (1928-2011) and Derek Humphrey (1930) strongly influenced the legalization of euthanasia. They oppose Christianity that finds meaning in suffering. For them, to find meaning in life, good health and being free of disabilities becomes essential. As such Peter Singer looks upon mentally challenged individuals as ‘vegetables’ and demeans persons with Down syndrome. Consequently care, hope and courage does not mean much for the above mentioned, they rather look for the cessation of all pain, difficulty and discomfort which is finally found in death through euthanasia.

How far the Culture of Death has already implemented itself becomes clear when we see that society and public opinion increasingly accept the idea that those with conditions such as Down syndrome are better off being “terminated.” The underlining reasoning here is that the person’s quality of life is given priority over the inherent dignity of human life. Consequently parents no longer unconditionally value their children for who they are; equal fellow human beings, and they are ready to sacrifice human life. With this we have the practice of eugenics, that is, eliminating those people considered to be genetically defective or inferior. A historical overview of eugenics shows the desire to improve the human race through selective breeding and the elimination of those who are considered weak. Already the Greek philosophers Plato touched on this in his book “The Republic,” where he proposed that human reproduction be controlled by the government.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, I recall that in 2010 the last socialist government in Spain broadened the abortion law and allowed abortion up to 22 weeks in cases of foetal deformities.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of the Utopian philosophers that “Man exists for the State,” easily leads to “a purely economic and functional approach toward elderly persons, the weakest and most fragile members of society as the unborn, the poorest, the sick and the seriously handicapped. And so they are in danger of being “thrown away” from a system that must be efficient at all costs and thus impoverish society of their wisdom, experience and enriching presence.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Catholic Social Teaching**

Cardinal Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, gave the following image of Catholic Social Teaching: “Amidst changing times, Catholic Social Teaching shines like a beacon on the hill, radiating forth a transcendent vision of human dignity and fulfilment.” In our attempt to evangelize the new global ethic, the Catholic Social Teaching offers us the following permanent principles:

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<sup>1</sup> Contribution by Dr. Donald deMarco, member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

<sup>2</sup> John Flynn, LC, “When Babies become Commodities,” [www.zenit.org/en/articles/when-babies-become-commodities](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/when-babies-become-commodities) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> “Spain abortion: Rajoy scraps tighter law,” [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29322561](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29322561) (accessed May 2, 2015)

<sup>4</sup> Silvano Tomasi, “Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi permanent representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva on the Protection of Human Rights of Elderly People,” [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/secretariat\\_state/2014/documents/rc-seg-st-20140915\\_elderly-persons\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2014/documents/rc-seg-st-20140915_elderly-persons_en.html) (accessed at May 2, 2015).

- The dignity of the human person
- The common good, which includes the universal destination of goods
- Subsidiarity, which includes participation
- Solidarity, to which we should add reconciliation

St. Leo the Great (440-461) and St. Gregory the Great (590-604) taught that all human beings have dignity by virtue of being created by God, each one has his unique gift to the others.

Concerning the common good, Cardinal Turkson states that we do not need plans drawn up by a few for the few, or by an enlightened or outspoken minority which claims to speak for everyone. It is about agreeing to live together, a social and cultural pact. If we talk about common good, we talk about the universal destination of goods. All created things are to be shared fairly under the guidance of justice and love: that is, without excluding or favouring anyone.

Subsidiarity stands for participation. It ensures that all, including the economically poorest, those with disabilities and those without citizenship can participate directly in negotiating political and economic solutions.

Concerning solidarity the Holy Father remarks: “Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, gives a diversified and life-giving unity to conflicts, tensions and oppositions.” In fact, what we are doing with solidarity, is that we create friendships which transcend our differences.

Social solidarity is manifested in the first place by the distribution of goods and remuneration for work. Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business and solidarity among nations and peoples.

In the challenge which globalization poses us, the Holy Father remarks the following: “The whole is greater than the part. As such we are called to recognize the presence of ever-widening perspectives, including opportunities advanced by globalization, even while we continue to be grounded in our local reality.”

### **Sin**

With the introduction of a new global ethic, we can ask ourselves anew: “What is sin and what is not sin?” Secularisation and the modern understanding of individual freedom do not help us in our following of the Commandments of God which are summarized in selfless love, simply because the modern understanding of individual freedom can end up in selfish love, which is contrary to love your neighbour as yourself. This selfish love expresses itself very well in the modern “Right to choose, free from norms.” And as a result it destabilizes our whole Christian understanding and life, because it goes against the law of nature, against traditions and against divine revelation. Examples of this are pregnant women who become master over the fruit of their womb. They themselves can now decide the fate of these unborn babies. Moreover, young people are now free to choose a partner to marry, whether male or

female. Indeed, the right to choose has already reached these extremes, making it more and more difficult to distinguish what is sin and what is “no longer sin”. In this respect it is good to remember the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Woe to those who call what is bad, good, and what is good, bad” (Isaiah 5:20).

Throughout the Bible, we discover the development of the notion of sin. A big step forward was the attribution of the responsibility of a fault to a person, without the implication of his family, his tribe or his people. Nevertheless there are social sins. We can even say that there are certain institutions which favour sin. An example of this is corruption. Concerning the development of the notion of sin, the apostle Paul remarks: “Up to the time of the law, sin was in the world, though sin is not accounted when there is no law” (Rom 5:13). However, this does not mean that the law is opposed to the promises of God. “For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law” (Gal 3:21). But as we have it, righteousness and life come through faith in Christ Jesus. The freedom which Jesus Christ gained for each one by dying for us, was exactly a freedom from sin, so that we can do what is right, meaning living a life of love pleasing to God. Because after all, it is God who is offended when we sin.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran, has the following to say about sin and evil. Although recognizing that God uses good and evil to reach his goals, Bonhoeffer also remarks: “To keep silent in the face of evil, is an evil in itself. There is no good other than in Jesus Christ. Man who wants to fight evil has only one road to follow: the road of complete detachment and total submission to God.”

The apostle Paul has expressed his understanding of sin and evil in the following words: “So I find this rule: that for me, where I want to do nothing but good, evil is close at my side. In my inmost self I dearly love God’s law, but I see that acting on my body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. So I am brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body” (Rom 7:21-23). Despite this observation, the apostle Paul continues in the next chapter of his Letter to the Romans: “I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). This gives hope for our evangelization of the new global ethic and also for those who choose otherways, but it can never be an excuse for continue sinning even if good may come out of it. In this context it is good to repeat the words of Pope Paul VI expressed in his Encyclical Letter “*Humanae Vitae*.” “Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come out of it, in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect the welfare of an individual, of a family, or of society in general.”<sup>1</sup> This same encyclical gives as an example deliberately contraceptive sexual intercourse.

### **Sin in the African context**

<sup>1</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* (25 July 1968), n. 14.

To illustrate the understanding of sin in the African context let us first come up with some proverbs and sayings: “The Bashi in Congo-Kinshasa say: “An intimate embrace is not enough to transmit warmth to another person;” that is, the exterior has no significance, if it does not correspond to the interior. The Gikuyu of Kenya likewise speak very clearly, they say: “There is no difference between a thief and one who desires.” This means that not only the material, “physical,” theft is sinful also the thought of taking something unjustly and without permission from another person, in secret or in public, is sinful. And a Nigerian proverb contributes: “We are what our thinking makes us.”

What these proverbs and sayings express is that the person identifies himself with all his actions or in other words one cannot separate external actions from internal conviction. It is in this way that ethical norms are internalized. However ethical norms are not created by the individual, rather the individual must identify with something that already exists. In the African context this means that one cannot avoid or pass over the experiences of one’s ancestors, who established the ethical norms based on wisdom arising out of the community. In this way the life of the community is preserved from disintegration and is rather strengthened in its moral life. Once there is a moral breakdown then the life of the community is at stake, the community being: the entire community of the living, the deceased and the unborn<sup>1</sup>. Laurenti Magesa expresses this same thought when he says: “To threaten in any way to break any of the community codes of behaviour, which are in fact moral codes, endangers life; it is bad, wrong or sinful.”<sup>2</sup> African Religion further recognizes that human wrong-doing against the ancestors and God will sometimes bring times of adversity and suffering to the family, clan or community.<sup>3</sup> This is why communities in Africa are very much interested in individual ethical conduct. And the individual’s growth in wisdom depends on the ethical health of the community as a whole. This identification of the person with all his actions, whether they are sinful or good has its place in the African context, but not in the Western one where this internalization of ethical norms does not take place in the same degree, making one speak rather about a sinful act than a sinful person.

### **The African Worldview**

The importance of addressing the African Worldview in this paper on evangelisation is underlined in the communiqué issued at the end of the 47<sup>th</sup> Joint annual Assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria in Umuahia, Abia State, 12 – 18 January 2014. It states: “Evangelisation begins with one’s own personal encounter with Christ and from this encounter the evangelizer enters into the worldview of the person to be evangelized, understands that worldview before attempting to redeem it.”

During the last September debate in the Security Council of the United Nations on the threat posed by foreign fighters taking the side of the terrorists of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), it was revealed that about 15.000 foreign fighters, among whom many with Western passports had joined ISIL. However, already for many years foreign fighters had joined terrorists in countries like Libya, Mali and Yemen and no extra or special meeting of the Security Council had taken place on this topic. Consequently, the current accusations

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<sup>1</sup> BenezetBujó, *Foundations of an African Ethic*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2003, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Paulines Publications Africa, 2011, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 246.

towards the U.N. are that of having a Western agenda. And that brings us to the different outlook on many other topics, depending on the worldview of the people involved. In the abortion debate Spain argues that abortion can legally take place in the first 14 weeks of a woman's pregnancy because of the absence of a human being. This has to be seen in the light of the brain-life theory which suggests that a human being is defined by the presence of an active human brain.<sup>1</sup> However in the African worldview the person is not defined as an ontological act by means of self-realization, but by means of "relations." This means that the human person in Africa is from the very beginning in a network of relationships that constitutes his inalienable dignity. Thus the question of the origins of human life, the object of the abortion debate, is posed differently in Africa. For the African the unborn child is already a person at the early stage of development, embraced by the love of the visible and invisible community. This nonverbal communication contributes to the process whereby the unborn child itself becomes a person.<sup>2</sup>

The same reasoning takes place in relation to the sick and the dying, placing the euthanasia debate in a complete different light. In Africa, people seldom die alone and isolated. The community of relatives, friends and acquaintances accompany their sick and dying persons until death. Through this solidarity of the community in suffering and at the hour of death, the sick and the dying find fresh courage and learn to face suffering and death with greater human dignity. This at the same time instructs those who accompany them; they learn to reflect on their own existence and to confront suffering and death bravely when their own hour comes. In this way, even the sick and the dying persons make a very significant contribution to the growth in life of those who accompany them.<sup>3</sup>

A close look in the divorce rate in England and Wales shows that since 1960 the number of divorces have steadily increased with a peak in 1993 when 165,018 divorces were registered. Interestingly enough, every time when the rate of divorces goes down, the common factor is recession<sup>4</sup>. Might this be an indication of a material component in the stability of the marriage? Coming to Nigeria, we have the report that the divorce rates in Northern Nigeria are among the highest in all of West Africa. A group of concerned lawyers remarked that many decide to marry in response to cultural or economic pressures rather than compatibility<sup>5</sup>. A marriage counsellor, Dr. Mrs. Eunice Iheanacho contributed that the growing influence of Western values has made divorce "the-in-thing" in Northern Nigeria, where one in three marriages fail. Alfa Delesolu remarks that aside a court of law, a Muslim couple can divorce each other in the presence of members of their families, who would serve as witnesses. As soon as they both present their case and the husband pronounces the union as dissolved, members of the families could still mediate and the man would take his wife back in as much as the husband's

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<sup>1</sup> J.M. Goldenring, *"The brain-life theory: towards a consistent biological definition of humanness,"*

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/4078859](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/4078859) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic*, Paulines Publications Africa, p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Ami Sedghi and Simon Rogers, *"Divorce rates data, 1858 to now: how has it changed?"*

[www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/jan/28/divorce-rates-marriage-ons](http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/jan/28/divorce-rates-marriage-ons) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Kristin Deasy, *"Nigeria: hundreds wed to offset rising divorce rates"*

[www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/120716/nigeria-hundreds-wed-offset-rising-divorce-rates-report](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/120716/nigeria-hundreds-wed-offset-rising-divorce-rates-report) (accessed May 2, 2015).

pronouncement is made on the first or second occasion, but as soon as the gathering is sitting for the third time and the husband makes the pronouncement, then the divorce is forever, it can no longer be reversed.

The custodian of Yoruba culture and tradition, Arole Mabinuori Adegboyega Aare Latosa says that the ifa oracle considers marriage from inception as a union between a male and female(s), adding that ifa encourages mature men and women to marry in order to live peacefully, adding that ifa stresses that marriage should not be dissolved. Aare Latosa further remarked that marriage from the traditional perspective was very important as spouses were married to their in-laws, that is the family.<sup>1</sup>

The above contributions of Alfa Delesolu and Aare Latosa show the communitarian character of African marriage. While Western marriage is primarily something brought about by a contract between two persons, African marriage is understood as a covenant between two families, each embracing a community of several generations.

How do these different worldviews, as just exemplified by abortion, sickness and divorce, emerge or merge in globalisation? The article: “A long walk to freedom,” as published in the Nigerian newspaper ‘The Nation,’ contributes the following: “As it was when Africa’s territorial mass was forcibly organised along the image of the conqueror without any regard to internal dynamics, so it is with globalisation.”<sup>2</sup> If it is so with globalisation, then it is likewise so with the new global ethic, meaning that particular worldviews might simply disappear or are neglected in the overall considered “true” global ethic. As such we, and with this I mean Nigerians, might not even recognize the global ethic as being ‘their’ ethic. This has to be kept in mind when we talk about the Evangelization of the New Global Ethic.

Concerning the organizing of Africa’s territorial mass along the image of the conqueror without any regard to internal dynamics, it is interesting to revisit the nationwide oil workers strike which took place last December here in Nigeria. The bottom line of this strike was the sack of one Mrs. Elo by the French oil giant, Total. The national president of the Nigerian Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) said: “The truth is that we cannot fold our hands to see these foreign investors coming with punitive measures in our own country. I keep saying this, in our nation, our cultures and ways of doing things differ. I want to say this clearly; no white man, no international community person, being an American or Briton, borrows our culture. But what do we do? We borrow their culture and we think their culture is the best.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Evangelisation**

Evangelisation can never mean violence. Violence is the language of death. At the Cross we can see God’s reply: violence is not answered with violence, death is not answered with the

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<sup>1</sup> Sesan, “*M-a-r-r-i-a-g-e: a failing institution?*” [www.goldmyne.tv/m-a-r-r-i-a-g-e-a-failing-institution/](http://www.goldmyne.tv/m-a-r-r-i-a-g-e-a-failing-institution/) (accessed May 2, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> “A Long Walk to Freedom,” in “The Nation on Sunday,” April 26, 2015, p. 3. [www.elotiv.com/entry/a-long-walk-to-freedom](http://www.elotiv.com/entry/a-long-walk-to-freedom) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Meshackidehen and Dennis Naku, “*Oil Workers begin Nationwide Strike Today,*” [www.nationalmirroronline.net](http://www.nationalmirroronline.net) (accessed December 15, 2014).



language of death. In the silence of the Cross, the uproar of weapons ceases and the language of reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue and peace is spoken. And so Pope Francis says: “Overcome the indifference that makes your heart insensitive towards others, conquer your deadly reasoning, and open yourself to dialogue and reconciliation. Pray for reconciliation and peace!”<sup>1</sup>

Concerning evangelisation Pope Francis has said the Catholic Church is too focused on preaching about abortion, gay people and contraception and needs to become more merciful. The church’s pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently. We have to find a new balance, otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. Instead, the Catholic Church must work to heal the wounds of its faithful and seek out those who have been excluded or have fallen away.<sup>2</sup> The new balance, the Pope speaks about here, has definitely to do with the old and the new. Understandings and interpretations change, also of terms long ago defined and taken for granted. In this respect, I want to mention two terms, namely ‘slavery’ and ‘marriage.’ From 1717-1838 members of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), apart from owning slaves in Brazil, had slaves working on their farms in the state of Maryland where they owned farmland estimated at 12,000 acres. The theological view concerning slavery was, as one Jesuit Brother Joseph Mobberly (1779-1827) wrote in his diary in 1818: “A man can serve God faithfully and possess slaves,” and “It is lawful to keep men in servitude.”<sup>3</sup> The Bible does not condemn slavery. Rather we see instructions on how slaves should be treated (Deuteronomy 15:12-15; Ephesians 6:9 and Colossians 4:1) and what slaves should do. Colossians 3:22 states in this respect: “Slaves, obey your human masters in everything.” The condemnation of slavery is one of those non-biblical doctrines that Catholics have developed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit over the centuries.

Concerning the term ‘marriage,’ we can say the following. With new secular understandings of what marriage is, the Church is standing up to defend what marriage has been right from the beginning. Consequently, last April 28, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the constitutionality of states defining and recognizing marriage as the union of one man and one woman. To underscore the point, the following day Pope Francis taught in his catechesis series on marriage and family: “When God finishes the work of creation and makes his masterpiece, the masterpiece is man and woman. It is with this masterpiece that Jesus begins his miracles, in a marriage, in a wedding feast: a man and a woman. Thus Jesus teaches us that the masterpiece of society is the family: man and woman who love one another! This is the masterpiece!”<sup>4</sup> The actuality and importance of this current Church teaching on

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil for Peace, Vatican, September 7, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio Spadaro, “*Interview with pope Francis*,” [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130921\\_intervista-spadaro.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_intervista-spadaro.html) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Brand, “*The Jesuits’ Slaves*,” [www.georgetownvoice.com/2007/02/08/the-jesuits-slaves/](http://www.georgetownvoice.com/2007/02/08/the-jesuits-slaves/) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, “*General audience: On Marriage*,” [www.zenit.org/en/articles/genral-audience-on-marriage](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/genral-audience-on-marriage) (accessed May 2, 2015)



the term marriage cannot be overemphasized in light of more nations deciding on same-sex “marriages” as will be done in a referendum in Ireland this coming May 22, 2015.

### **Catholic Indifferentism**

Michael Voris, a senior executive producer of ‘Church Militant TV’ remarked: “Being indifferent to one commandment is almost always a guarantee that one is indifferent to others as well. People ignore one commandment because they reject the entire system. It is never as simple as rejecting a single rule.” And he continues: “People whom everyone liked because they were never disagreeable, never caused offense, the ‘nice’ people, are the ones who inevitably wind up eternally separated from God. They were never disagreeable because they were indifferent to the Faith and its tenets in this life such that they would never separate themselves from the larger crowd, go against the grain, and stand on principles handed down from Heaven.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, if we are indifferent then we refuse to conform our will wholly to God, and we choose instead to remain with the rest of the crowd.

Concerning indifference, Pope Francis had the following to say in his ‘World Day of Peace message’ for the year 2014<sup>2</sup>: “The ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications in today’s world makes us powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of the nations. In the dynamics of history, and in the diversity of ethnic groups, societies and cultures, we see the seeds of a vocation to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another. But this vocation is still frequently denied and ignored in a world marked by a “globalization of indifference” which makes us slowly indifferent to the suffering of others and closed in on ourselves.” Significant in this respect is the universal prayer chosen by the Holy Father for this month of May 2015: “That, rejecting the culture of indifference, we may care for our neighbours who suffer, especially the sick and the poor.”

Globalisation, as Benedict XVI pointed out, makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers.<sup>3</sup> The many situations of inequality, poverty and injustice, are signs not only of a profound lack of fraternity, but also of the absence of a culture of solidarity. New ideologies, characterized by rampant individualism, egocentrism and materialistic consumerism, weaken social bonds, feeding that “throw away” mentality which leads to contempt for, and the abandonment of, the weakest and those considered ‘useless’.” Concerning ideologies Pope Francis says: “An ideology does not convene. In ideology there is no Jesus: his tenderness, love, meekness. Ideologies are always rigid. When a Christian becomes a disciple of ideology, he has lost the faith, and he is no more a disciple of Jesus. He has become a disciple of this attitude of thought. Ideology within the Church only serves to alienate people. Christians who lose the faith and prefer ideology become rigid, moralists, ethicists, but without goodness. Ideological Christians become proud, sure of themselves and lacking humility. The weapons against ideology are prayer, faith and humility.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Voris, “Catholic Indifferentism,” [www.zenit.org/en/articles/catholic-indifferentism](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/catholic-indifferentism) (accessed on May 2, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Message of his Holiness Francis for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2014, no. 1 and 10.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), n. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis’ homily in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta, Assisi, Italy, October 4, 2013.

To confirm Pope Benedict XVI's insight that globalisation makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers, it appears clear that contemporary ethical systems remain incapable of producing authentic bonds of fraternity, since a fraternity devoid of reference to a common Father as its ultimate foundation is unable to endure. True brotherhood among people presupposes and demands a transcendent fatherhood. Based on the recognition of this fatherhood, human fraternity is consolidated: each person becomes a "neighbour" who cares for others. Fraternity needs to be discovered, loved, experienced, proclaimed and witnessed to. But only love, bestowed as a gift from God, enables us to accept and fully experience fraternity.

In his address to the General assembly of the U.N., Cardinal Parolin<sup>1</sup> reported that today there is the danger of widespread indifference. As much as this indifference concerns the field of politics, it also affects economic and social sectors, "since an important part of humanity does not share in the benefits of progress and is in fact relegated to the status of second-class citizens.

In September 2014, Pope Francis told the bishops of the Democratic Republic of Congo at the end of their "ad Limina" visit: "The most effective way to overcome violence, inequality and ethnic divisions is to equip the young with a critical mind and to offer them the opportunity to mature an understanding of gospel values. It is also necessary to strengthen pastoral care in universities and in Catholic and public schools, combining education with the clear proclamation of the Gospel." But the Pope went further than the youth by including also the leading figures in the nation. Concerning them he said: "Leading figures in the nation, enlightened by pastors and in relation to their skills, can also be supported in incorporating Christian teachings in their personal lives and in the exercise of their duties in the service of the state and society." In our enthusiasm of evangelizing the new global ethic, the Pope also warns pastors not to engage in politics: "In particular, pastors must be careful not to take on roles that rightfully belong to the lay faithful, whose mission is justly that of being witness to Christ and the Gospel in politics and in all other areas of their activities."

### **What to evangelize in the new global ethic?**

The above has already given many insights of how and what to evangelize in the new global ethic. However, what stands out is the arbitrary 'freedom to choose.' This we evangelize with the 'freedom in Christ,' the 'women's empowerment' we evangelize with 'the equal dignity of man and woman,' 'positive living' with 'theological hope' and 'human dignity' with 'the eternal law written in the heart of man.' Pope John Paul II spoke in "Redemptoris Missio" (RM 11) about the "gradual secularization of salvation." In order not to fall into this trap, we as Christians should not preach human rights, sustainability and the Millennium Development Goals instead of preaching the Gospel. If not, little by little we are seduced by secular values and we lose our Christian identity. Indeed, as the same Pope explained in "Novo Millennio Ineunte" (NMI 29): "Start afresh from Christ," then we are on the right way!

### **Who is to evangelize the new global ethic?**

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<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Parolin's Address to 69<sup>th</sup> Session of UN General Assembly, New York 300914.

Finally we come to this all important question; “Who is going to do the work?” The bottom line is that every Christian is called to live his missionary vocation. But knowing the complexity of this task in a globalised world, we definitely need also specialists. Having seen the challenges and complexities of the New Global Ethic, local people from Africa definitely have an important role to play. It is Pope Paul VI who hinted to this in 1976 when he visited Uganda and told the African Bishops: “It is time you become missionaries to yourselves and the rest of the world.” The Missionary Society of St. Paul, founded in Nigeria and being the only missionary society indigenous to Africa, can be seen as a fruit of this statement. Right now this missionary society has 274 priests working in 18 countries all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

### **Conclusion**

New challenges and problems require new solutions and answers. On May 10, 1864 Fr. Borghero, SMA, reached Abeokuta by canoe after a long and dangerous journey of six days over water and by foot from Lagos. 150 years later, on June 25, 2014, the day of the Episcopal ordination of now Most Reverend Peter Odetoyinbo, bishop of Abeokuta diocese, the new bishop was offered transport. No longer was there any talk of a canoe, rather a big black limousine with tinted glass was driven before the sanctuary and handed over to the bishop in order to facilitate his pastoral visits. Indeed, when time changes, also approaches have to change. Also in this sense, we cannot compare the fixed telephone era with the current mobile telephone era. Where is the time that I rushed home because I expected a telephone call?

But no matter how many and big the changes, there are also constants, filling us with the wisdom gathered over the years, tested and proven. After all the hammer of the Stone Age is still as useful today as it was in those days. But in order to be effective and reach the people to whom we are sent, we really need to adapt to the signs of the times. It is in this field of tension between the old and the new that we find ourselves when talking about the evangelisation of the New Global Ethic. In the midst of this tension Pope Francis gives us a very strong guiding principle, he says: “The Christian life is simple: to listen to the Word of God and to put it into practice – nothing more.”<sup>2</sup> Or, if you want to use Pope John Paul’s guiding principle for this new millennium: “Start afresh from Christ” (NMI 29), then we are on the right way!

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Onwukeme, “Africa: You have received a lot of missionaries, now you have to go be missionaries yourself,” [www.zenit.org/en/articles/africa-you-ve-received-a-lot-of-missionaries-now-you-have-to-go-be-missionaries-yourself](http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/africa-you-ve-received-a-lot-of-missionaries-now-you-have-to-go-be-missionaries-yourself) (accessed on May 2, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis’ Morning Homily in the chapel of the Santa Marta residence, September 23, 2014.

## **THE DIGNITY OF MAN AND THE TRAGEDY OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of the Department of Theology on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2015

By  
**Rev. William Ikre, C.Ss.R**

### **Abstract**

*There is a clarion call by the religious and secular leaders of our time for the urgent need to address the pandemic called “human trafficking” which has become the bane of our common humanity. Human trafficking is a violent act that exploits and debases the human person and practically strips the victim of his/her value as a person made in the “image and likeness” of God. It is a crime which has both local and international dimensions to it. It is a tragedy of immense proportion that negatively impacts on the dignity and rights of the victims and also on our own dignity. This is so, because if we fail to look at the margins, to rescue the enslaved, oppressed, and brutalized, then our own dignity is a futile hope.*

*Key words: Human Trafficking, crime, dignity, rights, and violence.*

### **Introduction**

In our contemporary society, human trafficking is among the most dreadful crime still being committed against human kind. It is the plague of our time that violates the rights and dignity of the human person. Employing the words of Edward Schillibeeckx, human trafficking can be described as “a dark fleck in our history.” Pope Francis' 2015 World Peace Day message, which focused on human trafficking referred to it as “a crime against humanity” and “an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ.” It is a “shameful scourge unworthy of a civilized society.” According to the Pope, we should all “commit to be a voice for these our brothers and sisters humiliated in their dignity.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis' 2015 World Peace Day Message, *No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters*. See also Jeffery Haynes, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2016, p.40.

The scourge of human trafficking, either as a source, transit, or destination country, or combination thereof, affects virtually all countries in the world. Human trafficking includes the recruitment, transfer and sale of vulnerable people – women, children and men, through various forms of coercion or deception. These human traffickers under inhuman conditions often hold the victims in bondage. Their aim for engaging in this type of criminal activity may include but not restricted to cheap labour, sexual exploitation and ultimately pecuniary gain.

The United Nation’s document on *Human Rights and Human Trafficking* gives us a clear picture of what human trafficking is about by succinctly stating that:

Human trafficking is generally understood to refer to the process through which individuals are placed or maintained in an exploitative situation for economic gain. Trafficking can occur within a country or may involve movement across borders. Women, men and children are trafficked for a range of purposes, including forced and exploitative labour in factories, farms and private households, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. Trafficking affects all regions and most countries of the world<sup>1</sup>.

It may not be possible to give an exact figure of people who have been trafficked because it is a hidden crime that is perpetuated underground. Experts are of the opinion that well over 21 million people are being trafficked annually (more than 80% of whom are trafficked for sex slavery). It is the third biggest criminal industry in the world after drug and arms trafficking. It is an industry said to be worth \$150 billion annually<sup>2</sup> at the expense of the dignity and innocence of the victims. Through it, human life is reduced to a commodity, the dignity of the victims is eroded and they may remain scared for life due to the trauma they experience. This has created a tragedy of immense proportions for those who are caught up in this web of human exploitation.

### **Some root causes of human trafficking**

Amongst the root causes of trafficking will include; family violence, violence against women and children, poverty, lack of education opportunities, lack of job opportunities, childhood abandonment, fragility of attachment bonds, non-respect of children’s rights, labour rights and human rights in general. Studies have shown that a number of victims of trafficking, particularly in sexual exploitation, have a history of violence during childhood or at some point in their lives, they often lack self-confidence.

### **The Concept of Dignity**

Different definitions have been given to the term “dignity”. To give a precise definition of what dignity is might prove somewhat tricky. This is so because The Oxford Dictionary provides us with quite a few meanings of dignity the first of which seems to be in disagreement with authentic dignity: “a composed and serious manner or style.” This does not sound appropriate in the sense that it gives the impression of one clinging to power. The other

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Human Rights, *Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, Fact Sheet n. 36, New York and Geneva: United Nation, 2014, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO) Report, *Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour*, 2012. Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/profits-of-forced-labour-2014/lang--en/index.htm>. (Accessed 7/10/ 2016)

definitions, however, hit at the core of the subject. Some of the defining terms include: “worthy of honour or respect,” excellence, honourable position, and high regard.

How can we tell that we have dignity? Is it self determined? Do others determine my dignity? Is it inherent or earned or inherited or procured or stolen or learned or acquired through work or fortune? It is my view that it is none of these rather it is God given. We only have to strive towards it in grace and cooperate actively with the grace that is at work in us.

The etymology of the word “dignity” has its root from the Latin term *dignitas* which means worthy of esteem and honour, due a certain respect, of weighty importance. In ordinary discourse, dignity is used only in reference to human persons. The early Greeks held that not all human beings have worth and dignity, most humans are by nature slavish and suitable only to be slaves. Most men do not have natures worthy of freedom or natures proper to free men; hence they never used the term dignity for all human beings but only for a few. While other traditions have limited dignity to some kinds of men, the Judeo-Christian traditions made human dignity a concept of universal application. .... Christianity made it a matter of self-condemnation to use another human as a means to an end.<sup>1</sup>

The international Court’s definition of dignity will also suffice here. It defines Crimes Against Humanity in such a way as to include human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. The language of “crimes against humanity” intrinsically makes the point that these crimes are so evil in nature and broad in outlook as to endanger the whole of humanity. This is quite a weighty statement in itself because we are basically threatened by these sort of crimes, i.e., human trafficking, giving the fact that we are humans and we have a basic understanding of our worth.

### **The Act of Human Trafficking in Relation to the Desired Ends by its Perpetrators: Respect for Persons and Human Dignity**

The rise in the number of cases of human trafficking in the world leaves a sour taste in the mouth. The activities of these human traffickers and their effort at seeking sophisticated ways in achieving their objectives need to be addressed by the international community. Human trafficking is gradually eroding the norms, values and morals of the human society. Human trafficking infringes on the respect for persons and human dignity of the victims, the intrinsic value they possess simply by virtue of being a person.

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<sup>1</sup> See, Michael Novak, “The Judeo-Christian Foundation of Human Dignity, Personal Liberty and the Concept of the Person”, in *Markets and Morality*, vol. 1, #2, 1998, p. 109. The concept of human dignity appears in the writings of many contemporary Catholic theologians, especially the writings of Pope John Paul II, and even in some recent magisterial documents of the Catholic Church. Cf., William W. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, (2nd edition), Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2003, p. 23-24; Karol Josef Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, p. 23; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, 1993, #48.

From the above, the question we still have to grapple with is: “how do human traffickers justify the use of human beings as objects to be employed in the pursuit of their desires, no matter how noble these desires may be? The categorical imperative principles of Kant, especially that which says as human beings we should act according to the principle which allows our actions to be universalized into a general rule of nature<sup>1</sup>, will aid us to see the futility of using human persons “as means to an end”. The principles in question are rules for action, which would motivate all human actions in all situations. Thus, the principle of any moral action is an imperative, or a command, which is not context specific. The only specificity is that the agent be rational so that the principle is rational. Thus, Kant came to the conclusion that people make moral judgments about right and wrong based on rational thought.<sup>2</sup>

However, opponents of this theory are of the view that when considering the universalization of a moral action, Kant does not take into cognizance the various temperaments and situations of people. He tends to apply only rational justification for his moral rules while rejecting religious views, which see moral rules as commands of God. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, Kant’s rational test for any true moral rule is: “can we consistently will that everyone should act on it?”

... if the rules of morality are rational, they must be the same for all rational beings, in just the way that the rules of arithmetic are; and if the rules of morality are *binding* on all rational beings, then the contingent ability of such beings to carry them out must be important – what is important is their will to carry them out.<sup>3</sup>

The belief that “ends justify the means” creates an attitude where it doesn’t matter what happens on the path to the final result. However, there is a basic ethical intuition that certain actions are wrong because they run contrary to universal norms. For example, we perceive intuitively that the use of torture to possibly obtain information from suspects regardless of the situation can never be justified.<sup>4</sup> The same reasoning applies to the case of these human traffickers. Resorting to human trafficking does not necessarily produce the intended outcome of socio-economic advancement of its agents. In all of this, the moral issue is obvious: Does the end justify the means? Is it not morally wrong to forcefully move people from one destination to another without their consent? Human trafficking, as we stated earlier, breaches

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<sup>1</sup> In his theory, Kant claimed that various actions are morally wrong if they are inconsistent with the status of a person as a free and rational being, and that, conversely, acts that further the status of people as free and rational beings are morally right (categorical). Kant believed that to carry out morally right actions was an absolute duty, i.e., imperative because it is the principle by which one should act. He believed there are two types of duty: contingent duties which needed to be carried out only under certain circumstances and categorical duties which always needed to be carried out because they were based on the general nature of things (categorical). From these categorical duties, Kant created the categorical imperative. See, Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant’s Moral Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 165-211.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984, pp. 43-46.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. David Rapoport and Yonah Alexander (eds.), *The Morality of Terrorism: Religious and Secular Justifications*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, pp. 267-274; C. A. J. Coady, *Morality and Political Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 154-178.

the respect for persons and the dignity of the human person. We must stress that the human person, both as a subject and a fellow human being enjoys an inalienable dignity.

According to the *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, the phrase “Respect for Persons” commonly refers to a moral principle expressed most influentially by Kant in his second formulation of the categorical imperative where he affirms that as human beings, we ought to “act in such a way that we always treat humanity, whether in our own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end”.<sup>1</sup> To treat a person as an end is to respect his dignity by allowing him the freedom to choose for himself.

This second formulation of Kant puts its emphasis not on the universal validity of human reason, for which Kant’s moral principles have often been criticized, but on the inviolability of the human person.<sup>2</sup> Even when we do use people as means we should also treat them as ends. It is almost following the saying in the Bible, “do to others what you would have them do to you”.<sup>3</sup> In other words, persons should be treated as beings that have intrinsic value, a value which is independent of their usefulness for this or that purpose.<sup>4</sup>

The Church considers human life as sacred and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The United States Catholic Bishops, in *Sharing Catholic Social teaching: Challenges and Direction*, succinctly articulated this position when they said:

In a world warped by materialism and declining respect for human life, the Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society and ... the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.... We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Childress and John Macquarrie, (eds.), “Respect for Persons”, in *Dictionary for Christian Ethics*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967, p. 541. See also, Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant’s Moral Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.195; Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, L.W. Beck, (trans.), New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1959, p. 428-29.

<sup>2</sup> Even though Kant’s categorical imperative is often criticized precisely for being universal in those circumstances where they should allow for contingency, in this argument, Kant’s “universalizing” is always moving toward the teleological as it is always considering the consequences.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7: 12.

<sup>4</sup> According to Sullivan, Kant distinguishes what has price from what has dignity. What has dignity is above price—is priceless, as we might say. What has price can reasonably be traded for any other good that commands a price, as a certain quantity of hay might be traded for a smaller pile of diamonds. What has dignity is beyond price. Kant says that what has dignity has “an unconditional and incomparable worth.” On this basis Kant is interpreted as maintaining both that what has dignity is incomparably more valuable than anything with price, so that one should not accept the tiniest loss in dignity value in exchange for the greatest gain in what has price, and also that what has dignity has a special non-aggregative value, so one cannot reasonably quantify dignity values. See, Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant’s Moral Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 195-197.

<sup>5</sup> See United States Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Catholic Social teaching: Challenges and Direction*, Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998, p. 4.



In St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, he sums up Christian thought on human dignity when he roots the image of God in man in the possession by the human being of a spiritual soul, endowed with intellect and free will, which allows man to know and love God directly, beyond the power of any non-rational animal<sup>1</sup>. The *Second Vatican Council* was also clear on this when it stated in *Gaudium et Spes* that "whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, slavery..., all these things and others like them are infamies. They poison human society and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, there is a twofold dignity proper to the human person: "one is intrinsic and an endowment or gift; the other is also intrinsic, but it is an achievement or acquisition."<sup>3</sup> These twofold dignities are the dignities proper to human beings who are created in the image and likeness of God.<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas provides us with the philosophical ground and explanation for these assertions of man being created in the image and likeness of the divine in his *Summa Contra Gentiles* when he wrote:

. . . all created things are, in a sense, images of the first agent, that is, God, because the first agent makes products to his own likeness. Now, the function of a perfect image is to represent its prototype by likeness to it; this is why an image is made. Therefore, all things exist in order to attain to the divine likeness, as to their ultimate end<sup>5</sup>.

The second is the dignity to which we are called as intelligent and free persons capable of determining our own lives through our own free choices. This dignity we give to ourselves, with the help of God's unfailing grace, by making good moral choices, choices dependent upon true moral judgments.<sup>6</sup>

The subject of human dignity has always been pivotal in the social teaching of the Church. Every human person is an intrinsically valuable being surpassing in dignity the entire universe, a little less than the angels and lord of creation.<sup>7</sup> The dignity and respect due to every human person is not assigned by any group of people, nor granted by a government. Our dignity is not contingent on what we own, what we are or even on what we do. This dignity and worth comes from God as a complete and inestimable gift. As a result of this dignity, the human

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 93, art. 7-8, (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province), New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., "*Gaudium et Spes*", #27, in Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975, p. 815.

<sup>3</sup> See William W. May, *An Introduction to Moral Theology*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2003, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>5</sup> See, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Part I, Chapter 19. Anton C. Pegis, et al., (trans.), New York: Hanover House, 1945, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> William W. May, *op.cit*, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Cf., Psalm 8: 6-7.

person is the kind of good, which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object and as such the means to an end.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking involves coercing and forcing the victims to do the bidding of their abductors. Coercion and the use of force are violations of the second Kantian theory (respect for persons). It can therefore be argued that human trafficking as such is itself coercive, as is violence.<sup>2</sup> Whenever we engage in violent acts toward another person, as when human traffickers seize innocent citizens and use them to further their own selfish desires, they disrupt their autonomy and violate their will. Respecting persons requires refraining from violating their autonomy. Thus human trafficking can be said to be a form of violence and violence is primarily a means to an end.<sup>3</sup>

Human action entails more than a scenario composed of immediate ends. To be fully human involves rather our quest to be increasingly conscious of the “ultimate end” to which our actions are oriented.<sup>4</sup> The means not only determine the end but also are themselves ends, as the end, in its turn, functions as the means to a further end. To employ human trafficking as a means to economic prosperity is not wrong because it usually fails; it fails because it is usually wrong.

From the foregoing, we can deduce that natural law<sup>5</sup> reasoning becomes the basis for almost all standard moral intuitions.<sup>6</sup> For example, it is the dignity and value that each human being naturally possesses that makes the needless destruction of human life or infliction of physical and emotional pain immoral. This gives rise to a host of specific moral principles, such as the unacceptability of kidnapping, murder, mutilation, physical and emotional abuse.<sup>7</sup> In this case, any form of activity that degrades and dehumanizes the human person and which does not see the human person as an end in itself must be considered wrong.

### **How can we overcome human trafficking?**

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that must be confronted by all, for it tramples on our common humanity. We can no longer avert our eyes from this modern form of slavery. We must work together to stop it in all its forms. No person should be exploited through the use of force, coercion, or fraud for selfish financial gains. The solution must be strong enough to prevent and bring the human trafficking criminals to justice. The international community

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<sup>1</sup> Karol Josef Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines violence as, “behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.”

<sup>3</sup> According to C.A.J. Coady, “we can concede that just as there are those who treat the violence of warfare generally as almost an end in itself, so there are those who do the same with terrorism (*by extension human trafficking*)”. The emphasis is mine. See, C. A. J. Coady, *Morality and Political Violence*, p. 157.

<sup>4</sup> Abbé Jean-Pascal Perrenx, *Fundamental Moral Theology*, Paris, France: Pierre Téqui, 2007, pp. 168-170.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas defined natural law as “human participation in the eternal law of God through the use of reason”. This participation is both reasonable and natural; each person must use his or her reason to discover what accords with 'right reason' in any particular situation, and 'right reason' always conforms to the order inscribed by the Creator in nature. Cf., St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, q. 91, art. 2. For some other definitions of natural law.

<sup>6</sup> Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 311-312.

<sup>7</sup> Arguments from the point of view of the dignity of the human person will definitely not support human trafficking.

should be made to enforce the mandate of the United Nation if the world is to overcome the menace and pain which human trafficking has inflicted on its victims. Below are some of the mandates of the Council:

- Promote the prevention of trafficking in persons in all its forms and the adoption of measures to uphold and protect the human rights of victims;
- Promote the effective application of relevant international norms and standards and contribute to their further improvement;
- Identify and share best practices as well as challenges and obstacles in order to uphold and protect the human rights of victims and identify protection gaps in this regard;
- Give particular emphasis to recommendations on practical solutions with regard to the implementation of the rights relevant to the mandate, including by the identification of concrete areas and means for international cooperation to tackle the issue of trafficking in persons.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from the mandate of the United Nations, there are other practical ways by which we can combat human trafficking. As we very well know, government as an institution is saddled with the task of enacting making laws, some of which can be made as a way to overcome the human trafficking issue. To make these laws more effective, the security operatives such as the police, the civil defence, Immigration and other paramilitary organs of the force should be further empowered to enforce these laws. This should be with some measure of monitoring by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The department of Immigration must be vigilant and watch out for the activities of these criminal elements in many areas like airports, seaports and the land borders.

It is also of practical importance for governments to address the issue of poverty and lack of job opportunity for her teeming population. It is a fact that wherever poverty and unemployment are widespread, there is a likelihood of young men and women including children becoming vulnerable targets for human traffickers, waiting on the fringes for their victims.

### **Conclusion**

Human traffickers and their line of reasoning that, the “intended” outcome of their action should be held as the primary factor in determining its morality, i.e. “the end justifies the means” overlooks the fact that we may never do evil to attain an otherwise good end. Good intentions alone are not enough, as though we could do moral good by using evil means. Hence, it becomes evident that resorting to human trafficking as “a means to an end” not only debases the human person, it breaches the rights of the victims to respect for human dignity and to freedom from degrading and inhumane treatment. The victims are sometimes scarred for life, both psychologically and emotionally. To be aware of this, and to allow it to influence

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution, 17/1: Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking

our moral decisions, is to be morally aware that human trafficking as a means to achieving socio-economic prosperity is not only bad, it is an intrinsic evil in itself. Human trafficking is a crushing global issue that threatens all dignity. If we refuse to look to the margins, to rescue the enslaved, oppressed, brutalized and tormented people, then our dignity is a futile hope.

Human persons must never be treated as a means to whatever end. All human persons are ends to be served by the social and economic institutions that make up the society in which they live in. Human persons are not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined political, social and economic goals. Societies must uphold the dignity of persons and must treat them not as tools or instruments but as the very end they serve within the common good.

The most important moral condition for guarding against human trafficking is the respect for the dignity and worth of the human person as a being that deserve recognition and humane treatment. People should be seen as beings imbued with moral responsibility, as rational, free and social entities. It is against the background of such ethical presuppositions that our common humanity can better realize the goal of curbing the menace of human trafficking. Our conclusion arises from this starting point but brings us into the concerns of human right, which flows from our human dignity.

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**Toward An Understanding of Love of Neighbour in Light of Love of God**  
*Theological Perspectives on the Double Commandment of Love in Deus Caritas Est*

Being the Departmental Lecture of Theology on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2015

By

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**Introduction**

The conversation between Jesus and the scribe, which led to the narration of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, was climaxed by the question posed by the scribe: “And who is my neighbour?”<sup>1</sup> One notes that instead of addressing the issue of who a neighbour is, the parable specifies on how to be a neighbour. This shift in approach not only universalizes the concept of neighbour, but it also gives a whole new understanding to how man should relate to his fellow man. The content of the command to “love your neighbour as yourself,” is no longer about whom to love, but about how to love, and for what reason the love is to be expressed. Though, this parable might have answered the question of how love is to be expressed, nevertheless, it leaves unanswered the reason why one ought to love his neighbour. Moreover, the injunction at the end of the parable to “Go and do likewise,” does not address this point; at best, it urges the scribe to go and show care to those in need. The puzzle does not become any easier when we draw a link between the reason why one ought to love a neighbour and what it means to love a neighbour.

The very command to “love your neighbour as yourself” does not itself give any indication why this should be done. It raises a further question of what loving your neighbour as yourself means. There are some who have suggested that to “love your neighbour as yourself” is not a perfect Christian love. The claim is that the perfection of the commandment to “love your neighbor” is contained in the statement of Jesus: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). Furthermore, one understands what Jesus means with this statement in what follows: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13). As one may wish to grant that there is a

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:25-37. This question lays bare the very reason the scribe had engaged Jesus in this conversation: to put him to the test. It seems he was not just interested in what Jesus thought about what he should do in order to inherit eternal life, since, as a scribe he knew what the law said about it. Rather, the whole conversation was more likely directed at condemning the activities of Jesus who welcomed sinners and tax collectors, those who were not regarded as neighbours, and dined with them. It was more a debate about who qualifies to be a neighbour.

point to this claim, there is also much that is wrong in the self-limiting understanding of “love your neighbour as yourself” that the Scribe’s question seems to suggest and insinuate.

In question 26 of the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas raises the question: “Whether out of charity, man ought to love himself more than his neighbour?”<sup>1</sup> In his treatment of this subject, Thomas proposes that a man ought, out of charity, to love himself more than his neighbour. Does this proposal then set love of self in antithesis to love of neighbour? If it does not, how do we understand Thomas’ proposal, and how does this understanding help shed light on the reason why one ought to “love his neighbour”? The proper context in which “love of neighbour” is given as a command is its reference to “love of God”. The pious Jew daily prays the words of the *shema*: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus united into a single precept this commandment of love for God (in Deuteronomy) and the commandment of love for neighbour (in Leviticus).<sup>3</sup> In this light, the proper context for understanding the “love of neighbour” is in its relation to love of God. A further question remains: what is the connection between love of God, love of self and love of neighbour? Benedict XVI opens his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, with the words of the evangelist John: “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him” (1 Jn 4:16). He notes that this statement is the heart of the Christian faith: “the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny.”<sup>4</sup> Our aim in this lecture, therefore, is to, first, see how Benedict XVI’s reflection on love helps make the connection between love of God, love of self and love of neighbour; and, secondly, to explore how we should understand Thomas’ proposition that “a man ought to love himself more than his neighbour.”

### ***Eros, Philia and Agape: The Higher Perfects the Lower***

Of the three Greek words for love – *eros*, *philia* and *agape* – the Greek Old Testament uses *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all. The New Testament writers prefer *agape*. *Philia*, the love of friendship, is used with added depth of meaning in John’s gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. In his assessment, Benedict XVI notes that “[t]he tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love.”<sup>5</sup> This tendency was seen as negative, especially as the critique of Christianity which began with the Enlightenment grew more radically. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity had poisoned *eros*, which for its part, while not completely succumbing, gradually degenerated into vice.<sup>6</sup> The widely-held perception is that the Church, with all her commandments and prohibitions, has turned to bitterness the most precious thing in life. However, as Benedict queries, one wonders if Christianity has really destroyed *eros*. Such conclusion only comes from a wrong assessment

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 26, a. 4

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-5

<sup>3</sup> “You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; cf. Mk 12:29-31).

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 3

<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 3

of how the Christian tradition understands *eros*. We shall demonstrate this in the course of this lecture.

In the pre-Christian world, the Greeks, like the other cultures, “considered *eros* principally as a kind of intoxication, the overpowering of reason by a ‘divine madness’ which tears man away from his finite existence and enables him, in the very process of being overwhelmed by divine power, to experience supreme happiness.”<sup>1</sup> *Eros* was celebrated as divine power, as fellowship with the Divine, and this found expression in fertility cults and “sacred” prostitution which flourished in many temples. But the Old Testament firmly opposed this religion, combating it as perversion of religiosity. It, however, did not reject *eros*; rather it was adverse to the destructive form of it, because this counterfeit divinization of *eros* actually strips it of its dignity. The prostitutes, who had to bestow the divine intoxication, were not treated as persons, but simply used as means of arousing divine madness. Remarking on this perverse notion of *eros*, Benedict XVI says: “An intoxicated and undisciplined *eros*, then, is not an ascent in ‘ecstasy’ towards the Divine, but a fall, a degradation of man. Evidently, *eros* needs to be disciplined and purified if it is to provide not just fleeting pleasure, but a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns.”<sup>2</sup>

One thing that emerges from this assessment is that the infinity promised by love is not attained by submitting to the instinct. Purity and growth in maturity are called for; and rather than reject or poison *eros*, they heal it and restore its grandeur.<sup>3</sup> When body and soul are intimately united, the proper order in which man is fully and truly himself is realized. And in that order, the challenge of *eros* is overcome. If, however, man aspires to be pure spirit, and rejects the flesh, then he loses his dignity; and if, on the other hand, he denies the spirit and considers matter, the body, as the only reality, he loses his greatness. Therefore, it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is the whole man, composed of body and soul who loves. “Only when both dimensions are truly united, does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love – *eros* – able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur.”<sup>4</sup> When *eros* degenerates to bad use of concupiscence, it becomes a commodity, a mere “thing” to be bought and sold; and man himself becomes a commodity. *Eros* understood in this way, makes human sexuality a purely material aspect of man. According to Benedict XVI, when *eros* is understood and used in this sense, it leads to a debasement of the human body: “no longer is it integrated into our overall existential freedom; no longer is it a vital expression of our whole being, but it is more or less relegated to the purely biological sphere.”<sup>5</sup>

Rather than degenerate into “divine madness”, *eros* in its true sense tends to rise “in ecstasy” towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves. For this reason it calls for the path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing.<sup>6</sup> When *eros* is purified and healed, it matures into true love. It no longer becomes a self-seeking love; a sinking into the intoxication of

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 4

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 4

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 5

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 5

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 5

<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 5

happiness. Rather it rises above any mere expression of inordinate desires, and it reflects the true love in which the lover seeks the good of the beloved. In this, the intentional orientation of the lover is towards the beloved, as the beloved is the reason why the lover loves. It represents that true moment of ecstasy towards the divine, not a display of “divine madness”, but a going out of the self towards authentic self-discovery and ultimately, the discovery of God. Hence, a purified *eros* leads to the path of greater *agape*. This understanding must inform how we view love of God, love of self and love of neighbour: that is, love of God is the crowning of all our love, and it is the reason for which one loves both self and neighbour.

*Eros* and *agape* are often contrasted as “ascending” love and “descending” love. In philosophical and theological debate, the distinctions between the two have often been radicalized to the point of establishing a clear antithesis between them. Yet both can never be completely separated. As Benedict XVI notes, “[t]he more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized.”<sup>1</sup> When, instead of sinking in the intoxication of happiness, *eros* seeks the happiness of the other, it becomes concerned more and more with the beloved; it bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. “The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature.”<sup>2</sup> It is equally true that man cannot live by descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. *Eros* seeks God and *agape* passes on the gift that is received. When these two dimensions of love are cut off from one another, the result is a caricature or an impoverished form of love.

### **Terms of Love of One’s Neighbour as Oneself**

Let us recall, once again, the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Before this time the concept of “neighbour” was understood as something referring essentially to one’s countrymen and the foreigners who had settled in the land of Israel. Now, the limit is abolished; the concept of neighbour is universalized, and yet it remains concrete. Thus, this does not mean a universalist understanding of neighbour which eliminates the notion of the individual and particular person and emphasizes humanity as a whole. In such universalist notion, the demand and practice of charity become vague and abstract humanitarianism. So, even when the concept of neighbour is extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for our practical commitment.<sup>3</sup> The “Samaritan love” becomes a standard that imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter by chance, whoever they may be. And because in charity all men are united in Christ and to Christ, this universal love towards all men goes beyond anything that terminates in man as its proper end. Since love is free, it is not practiced as a way of achieving other ends. Rather, its one end and goal is love of God. As such charitable activity must not leave God and Christ aside.

Concerning the double commandment of love, Benedict XVI observes that two questions are raised as objections: first, can we love God without seeing him? And second, can love be commanded? Since no one has ever seen God, how could anyone love him? And it does not seem that love can be commanded, since it is ultimately a feeling that is there or

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 7

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 7

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 15



not there, nor can it be produced by the will. The words of the Evangelist John may even seem to reinforce the objection that we cannot love God whom we do not see when he says: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 Jn 4:20). But this text does not exclude the love of God as something impossible, rather, it explicitly demands it, and expresses its unbreakable bond with love of neighbour. These words mean that love of neighbour is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbour also blinds us to God.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, no one has seen God, yet he is not totally invisible to us; he does not remain completely inaccessible. He loved us first, and he made that love a concrete reality by sending his Son into the world so that we might live through him (1 Jn 4:9). God’s love challenges us to respond with love. Since he has loved us first, we too can respond with love. “Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere ‘command’; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.”<sup>2</sup> In commanding love, “God does not demand of us a feeling which we ourselves are incapable of producing. He loves us, he makes us see and experience his love, and since he has ‘loved us first’, love can also blossom as response within us.”<sup>3</sup> Love, therefore, is not merely a sentiment, because sentiments come and go. We said earlier that *eros*, through a process of purification and maturation, retains its full meaning as love. When, therefore, we encounter the visible manifestations of God’s love, these awaken in us the joy born of the experience of being loved; and this encounter also engages our will and intellect. “Acknowledgement of the living God is one path towards love, and the ‘yes’ of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love. But this process is always open-ended; love is never ‘finished’ and complete; throughout life, it changes and matures, and thus remains faithful to itself.”<sup>4</sup> In this communion of will, God’s will is not alien to our will; it is not something imposed on us from without by the commandments. It is our will because God is more present to us than we are to ourselves.<sup>5</sup>

In this understanding of love, love of neighbour is possible. It consists in loving the other person in God. Such love is only possible when there is, first of all, an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, an encounter which even affects one’s feelings, but from the perspective of Christ. This love goes beyond external experiences, it recognizes and perceives in others, an interior desire for a sign of love. In an encounter that is born of a sincere love for God, love of neighbour finds its place. Benedict XVI draws our attention once again to the words of the Evangelist John that love of neighbour cannot be real and authentic unless it is rooted in the love of God. He summarizes the correlation in the following words:

Here we see the necessary interplay between love of God and love of neighbour which the *First Letter of John* speaks of with such insistence. If I have no contact with God whatsoever in my life, then I cannot see in

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 16

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1

<sup>3</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 17

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 17

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 17. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, III, 6, 11.

the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God. But if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be ‘devout’ and to perform ‘my religious duties’, then my relationship with God will also grow arid. It becomes merely ‘proper’, but loveless. Only if I serve my neighbour can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me.”<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, love of God and love of neighbour are inseparable, they form a single commandment. The two receive their life from the love of God who has loved us first.

We said that love of neighbour is possible only when we truly and intimately encounter God. God’s love for us was made concrete in the one who was pierced for us (cf. Jn 19:37, Zech 12:10). Our relationship with God is established through communion with Jesus. “The relationship with Jesus, however, is a relationship with one who gave himself as a ransom for all (cf. *1Tim* 2:6). Being in communion with Jesus Christ draws us into his ‘being for all’; it makes it our own way of being. He commits us to live for others, but only through communion with him does it become possible truly to be there for others, for the whole.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when we encounter God, through our communion with Jesus who died for all, we live for him and we allow him to draw us into his being for others.

Augustine makes a connection between love of God and love of self when he writes: “he who knows how to love himself loves God; on the other hand, he who does not love God, even though he loves himself which is naturally implanted in him, is not unfittingly said to hate himself, since he does that which is opposed to himself, and pursues himself as though he were his own enemy.”<sup>3</sup> Two observations can be made from this claim. First, when the love of self is truly inseparable from the love of God, it means the human mind is properly ordered to God. This right order of the soul towards God is represented by the movement of the mind, from the *exteriora* to the *interiora*, and then finally to the *superiora*. It is a movement from *eros* towards *philia*, and ultimately towards *agape*. There, *eros* seeks God and *agape* passes on the gift that is received. The second inference one draws from Augustine’s statement is that love of self is disconnected from the love of God when we do not live by what is highest in us (*ratio superior*) but by what is inferior (*ratio inferior*); when human reason does not rule the passions, and we are not able to ascent from the *exteriora* towards the *superiora*. This corresponds to what we have earlier seen as the degeneration of *eros*. It gives rise to a caricature form of love, in which the self sinks in the intoxication of self-derived happiness, instead of an ascent in ecstasy in which the self moves towards the Divine.

The connection that Augustine makes between love of self and love of God provides a platform for also understanding Thomas’ proposition on the love of neighbour. The following words drawn from the *De Trinitate* highlight this perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 18

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 28

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV, 14, 18

But when the mind loves God and by consequence, as we have said, remembers and understands Him, then with respect to its neighbour it is rightly commanded to love him as it loves itself. For it no longer loves itself perversely but rightly when it loves God, by partaking of whom that image not only exists, but is also renewed so as not to grow old, reformed so as not to be disfigured, and beatified so as not to be unhappy. For although it so loves itself that, if the alternative is proposed to it, it would rather lose all that it loves less than itself than to perish, yet by abandoning Him who is above it... it has become so weak and so dark that it has unhappily slipped away from itself into those things which are not itself and to which it itself is superior, through the affections which it cannot control, and the delusions from which it sees no way to return.<sup>1</sup>

The general inference from these words of Augustine is that love of self reaches its fullest flourishing in the love of God. Let us now attempt to read this in light of Thomas Aquinas' proposition that "a man, out of charity, ought to love himself more than his neighbour."

### **Conclusion: We ought to love out of Charity**

In his treatment of the object of Charity, Thomas Aquinas says the consideration is twofold: the first consideration is the things we ought to love out of charity; and the second concerns the order in which they ought to be loved. He treats of the issues in the things we ought to love in question 25 of the *secunda secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. One significant point he makes here is that God, one's neighbour and oneself are loved with the love of charity.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the three are objects of charity. For him, habits are not differentiated except their acts be of different species.<sup>3</sup> This is because every act of the one species belongs to the same habit. And since the species of an act is derived from its object, considered under its formal aspect, it follows of necessity that it is specifically the same act that tends to an aspect of the object, and that tends to the object under that aspect. For example, it is specifically the same visual act whereby we see the light, and whereby we see the colour under the aspect of light. From all this, Aquinas says that the aspect under which our neighbour is to be loved is God, since what we ought to love in our neighbour is that he may be in God. Therefore, it is specifically the same act whereby we love God, and whereby we love our neighbour. By the same token, we can make the argument that it is also the same act whereby one loves oneself.<sup>4</sup> Charity denotes friendship with God. Therefore, if a man loves himself out of charity, the aspect under which he loves himself is God, since what he ought to love in himself is that he may be God's friend, that is, to be in union with God.

After this first consideration of the object of charity, namely, things we ought to love out of charity, Aquinas treats the second consideration, that is, the order in which we ought to love them – and this he examines in question 26. It is in this context that we revisit the proposition: "Whether in charity, man ought to love himself more than his neighbour?" As a fundamental premise for discussing this matter, it should be noted that there must be some

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<sup>1</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIV, 14, 18

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.25, a.1

<sup>3</sup> See *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.17, a.6; q.19, a.3; I-II, q.54, a.3

<sup>4</sup> See *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.25, a.4

order in things loved out of charity, and this order is in reference to the first principle of that love, which is God.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the order of charity shows that out of charity, “man ought to love God more than his neighbour”, “man ought to love God more than himself”, and “man ought to love himself more than his neighbour. In opening the discussion on “whether out of charity, man ought to love himself more than his neighbour, Aquinas cites the Book of Leviticus: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:18). By citing this text, it immediately indicates that Thomas does not here intend that “love of self” and “love of neighbour” should be in antithesis. In fact, he states that the consequence of the command to “love thy neighbour as thyself,” makes man’s love for himself the model of his love for another. He goes further to allude to man’s spiritual nature and his corporeal nature, claiming that a man is said to love himself because he loves himself with regard to the spiritual nature.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore in this spiritual dimension that a man loves himself more than his neighbour. This dimension is where, in the movement from the *exteriora* to the *superiora*, man truly encounters God. When man lives by what is highest in him, he lives by love in its purest form, because at that level he contemplates God who is the principle of good, on which the love of charity (*agape*) is founded. When a man truly loves himself, *eros* does not sink into the intoxication of happiness, but grows towards *agape*, and man receives the gift of intimate union with God.

Aquinas states that “God is loved as the principle of good, on which the love of charity is founded; while man, out of charity, loves himself by reason of his being a partaker of the aforesaid good, and loves his neighbour by reason of his fellowship in that good.”<sup>3</sup> This represents the connections between “love of God”, “love of self” and “love of neighbour”. First, it must be stated that “love of self” and “love of neighbour” are rooted in the “love of God”, without which they degenerate into impure love; and secondly, these represent different levels of union with God. When a man loves himself, he loves himself with the love of charity (*agape*), which unites him with God. By reason of this love he partakes of the good of which God is the principle. When, however, he loves his neighbour, he does so by reason of his neighbour’s fellowship in that good. Thus, man is united to God and he is in union with his neighbour, whom he loves because of God. Aquinas concludes by saying that “just as unity surpasses union, the fact that man himself has a share of the Divine good, is a more potent reason for loving than that another should be a partner with him in that share. Therefore man, out of charity, ought to love himself more than his neighbour: in sign whereof, a man ought not to give way to any evil of sin, which counteracts his share of happiness, not even that he may free his neighbour from sin.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, this does not make “love of neighbour” any less a love because of God. We must therefore maintain that “love of self” and “love of neighbour” is ultimately because of God, that is, love of charity.

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<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q.26, a.1. Wherever there is a principle, there is order of some kind. The love of charity tends to God as to the principle of happiness, on the fellowship of which the friendship of charity is based (cf. q.23, a.1; q.25, a.12)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 25, a. 7

<sup>3</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 26, a. 4; cf. q. 25, aa. 1, 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 26, a. 4

**Collaborative Ministry in the Mission of the Church:  
Exploring Effective Cooperation between Diocesan Clergy and Religious**

Being the Inaugural Lecture of the Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2016

By  
Rev. Fr. Joseph Paul Iyamah

The focus on the theme of collaboration in the church in this year's inaugural lecture seems to be a timely and auspicious one for our Church. This is so because the problems facing us are simply too complex for one person, whether pope, bishop or pastor, to solve on his own, hence the increasing realization that collaboration is the essential way to go in fostering the mission of the Church and for most of our institutions, maintaining its Catholic identity.

The Second Vatican Council in articulating the mystery of the Church, clearly present Christ as the light of humanity, that it is in the proclamation of his Gospel that all men are called to union with him, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and towards whom our whole life is directed (LG 1-3). The Decree on the Church's missionary activity, aptly describes the nature of the Church thus:

Having been divinely sent to nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation', the Church, in obedience to the command to her founder (Mt. 16: 15) and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men. The apostles, on whom the Church was founded, following the footsteps of Christ 'preached the word of truth and begot churches'. It is the duty of their successors to carry on this work so that 'the word of God may run and be glorified' (2

Th. 3: 1), and the kingdom of God proclaimed and renewed throughout the whole world.<sup>1</sup>

Speaking about this on-going nature of the Church, Pope John Paul II said: “The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the Second millennium after Christ’s coming draws to a close, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service.”<sup>2</sup> But the Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium* provides us the ground for collaboration making it clear that the clerics were not meant by Christ to undertake alone the whole salvific mission of the Church to the world, rather all according to each person’s proper role and one mind are to cooperate in the work of the Church.<sup>3</sup> What is profoundly clear from these teachings is that the Church founded by Jesus Christ is a Church of and on a mission, and it is both an apostolic and evangelizing Church. The theological rationale for collaborative ministry is its connection to the Trinity, sacrament and *communio*. The foundation on the Trinity belief of separate persons constituting one God with one mission; its sacramental linkage is in baptism that places us in the mission of the Church with gifts we have all received; and lastly the association of collaboration with *communio* is about our individual acknowledgement of God-given gifts and the community acceptance of those gifts.<sup>4</sup>

But the challenge of our church today is how to bring to life the vision of collaborative ministry taught by the Second Vatican Council. It seems easier to highlight the elements of collaboration than actually putting them to practice, for the fact that one is committed to the value of collaboration does not necessarily translate into or lead inevitably to actual ability to collaborate. For those who venture into this terrain, frustration, bitter and rancorous disappointment is what they express in trying to put it into practice.<sup>5</sup> This, in part could be because a lot still need to be done in having a single ‘theory’ of collaboration. Interestingly, the legislator of the present 1983 Code used the term collaboration (*collaboro*) only in two places – c. 652 §3 that calls on novice to collaborate with their director in response to their vocation, and in c. 792 §2 that obliges teachers in Catholic schools to collaborate with parents in the education of their wards. According to Joseph Koury however, “collaboration” in these canons are used in the narrow sense of “cooperation”, as it is not used to connote clerics, religious and laity in close and active partnership, co-laboring in the Church ministry, acting or working together, engaging in joint enterprise.<sup>6</sup> Explaining the meaning of collaborative ministry, Theresa Monroe says:

The notion of collaboration is connected for most people in ministerial settings to broader themes in theology and ecclesiology such as the priesthood of all the faithful, collegiality, subsidiarity, and consultation. On a general and abstract level, the term “collaborative ministry” suggest several things: 1) less rigid role definitions,

<sup>1</sup> Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, (7 December 1965), 1

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), n.1

<sup>3</sup> Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, (21 November, 1964), n. 30

<sup>4</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 47 – 49.

<sup>5</sup> Theresa M. Monroe, “The Rhetoric and Reality of Collaboration”, *CLSA Proceedings* 54 (1992), 149

<sup>6</sup> Joseph J. Koury, “The Code and Collaboration: Recent Literature”, *CLSA Proceeding* 54 (1992), 169 - 170

especially those which allow women and laity to assume more responsibility than was traditionally permitted; 2) more decentralized structures and flexible staff relations; 3) participative decision making process which include open and honest communication and feedback mechanism.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Term Collaboration**

It is a general belief that in any situation where a common understanding of term is absent, what reigns is ambiguity, which in turns produces anxiety, tension, and conflict. The presence of these factors will undoubtedly hinder collaboration in the ministry. In the context of this paper, collaboration is seen as “the identification, release, and union of all the gifts in ministry for the sake of the mission”. What can be underlined from this definition is that: a) gift is the essence of collaborative ministry; b) collaboration is never an end in itself: rather a vehicle for ministry and c) the goal of collaborative ministry is the mission of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The mission of the Church is not directed solely at itself but at nurturing and forming people called by God, who with the influence of the Holy Spirit will play their part in the sanctification of the world. When we speak of collaborative ministry, the understanding is that ministry is about the work of the church and is a work of service.<sup>3</sup> It then means that collaborative ministry cannot merely be seen as a good idea because it is the very nature of the Church. As Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles noted: “Collaboration is necessary not only to achieve our goals more effectively, but more important to live out our witness as church more authentically”.<sup>4</sup>

There are four levels at which collaboration operates; these are: coexistence; communication, cooperation and collaboration. At the first level of co-existence, the individual persons or group generally identify with one another sharing common information about their mission, or group. They are nonetheless separate, independent but working in the same institution, team or facility like the diocesan chancery with different offices and departments. The second level is that of communication. At this level there exist the deliberate effort, decision and determination to reach out and engage, to mutually interact and dialogue. This effort will ensure that there is a rich and fruitful working environment, where staff can interact, share information and values, thus enhancing their understanding of one another and cooperation. Meetings become an indispensable tool for maintaining the process, especially in avoiding disorder and discordant tunes, as programs and activities can be synchronized among the various units. The third level is cooperation, which is “a growing awareness that individuals and programs do not exist in isolation, but have an impact on each other, either positively or negatively”. The recognition of this fact necessarily leads to interdependence, but there should be a facilitator that put forward a project as mission of the diocese, all others now work to support the project. The fourth level, which is collaboration is where one arrives at with the conviction of the reality of interdependence of the above level. Here the “desire to collaborate than compete, arises as the driving force”. What distinctively characterized this

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<sup>1</sup> Theresa M. Monroe, “The Rhetoric and Reality of Collaboration”, 148

<sup>2</sup> Loughlan S – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration. Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*, Indiana, USA, 2000, 17

<sup>3</sup> Brian Lucas – Peter Slack – William d’Apice, *Church Administrative Handbook*, Australia, 2008, 47

<sup>4</sup> Roger Cardinal Mahony, *Pastoral Letter on the Role of the Laity in the Life of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles*, (December 3, 1986), 8

level, is that first of all, the participants acknowledges and feels they are part of the mission, and then secondly the desire by the actors to work together for a common goal.<sup>1</sup>

### **Practical Steps to achieving Collaborative ministry**

As inspiring as collaboration can be, it can be really challenging when the actors are not in the same page and do not share the same understanding of collaboration. For effective collaborative ministry in the diocese/ministry, focus is to be given to clarification, conviction, commitment, and capacity/capability.

#### ***Clarification***

It was highlighted at the beginning of this paper that collaboration in the ministry is about the mission of Christ and the harnessing of available gift in the realization of this mission. One factor that militates against collaboration in the ministry is for actors to have their own meaning of the term, this kind of situation can breed frustration and conflict. So what is needed in this step to having a sustained practical collaboration is to share and talk about what the expression means and the expectations, then developing a common understanding. The parties should always remember that collaboration is all about working together in partnership; shared responsibility, mutuality, and interdependence in a church of baptismal equality; empowering of people to recognize and use their gifts; in the community; shared and servant leadership. From these elements, Archbishop John Bathersby of Australia declares that collaboration is the utilization of “our gifts in partnership with one another to carry out the mission of Jesus in the world.”<sup>2</sup> It is not just okay to entrust a diocesan institution like hospital, school to any group without taking this first step of clarifying and defining who does what, how, and when things are to be done. It is also not appropriate to be making up as things unfold.

#### ***Conviction***

Experience and evidence clearly abound to show that working together can be very challenging because of its unpleasantness in grappling with the trouble of conflict, confrontation, quarrel, and hostility, and also sexuality, threats of job, contract termination. Without a strong conviction and commitment to the value of collaboration in the ministry, it will not last. To be able to overcome the challenges associated with collaboration, the parties should have reasons for their conviction in collaborative ministry, which in general terms have to be theological and practical. The theological is rooted in the theology of the Trinity, the nature of sacrament, and the gospel call to *communio*. The practical is all about the realization that with collaboration more can be accomplished, the awareness that no one person has all the gifts, the recognition that the synergy produced by the utilization of a variety of gifts is energizing.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Commitment***

Resistance is sometimes experience by those in collaborative ministry as a result of fear and obstacles. In this step the focus is to identify, discuss and try to surmount such fears and obstacles. It will not help the parish, or diocese and institution to, as it is common today to focus on the obstacles of others apart from themselves. The commitment to collaborate would only come when we – bishop, priests, religious men and women – become individually willing

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<sup>1</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 18 -19

<sup>2</sup> John Bathersby, *Becoming more Collaboration*, cited in Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 22

<sup>3</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 23 -24



to confront these fears and obstacles, such as low self-esteem, arrogance, burnout, hostility, inability or unwillingness to deal with conflict, loss, termination, separation, a lack of integrated sexuality, and among others a lack of knowledge of one's own gifts or the gifts of one's co-worker, that are internal and personal to each one of us. In fact among these factors, low self-esteem is the greatest obstacle that hinders collaboration, because with it comes hostility and excessive competition, both of which cannot allow collaboration to gather steam. The presence of self-esteem results in greater effective efforts in collaboration. When these fears, concerns and obstacles, are identified and discussed, commitment would require change, this word as we all know today is not an easy thing to do.

### ***Capacity and Capability***

Collaboration goes beyond the volition to do so; it demands that the persons or group involved in it possess the capacity and the capability to collaborate. Acquiring the capacity and capability comes from skills, spirituality, process and developmental readiness. The truth is that all should know that working together in collaborative ministry is a call to personal and communal conversion, for collaborative ministry takes root from the desire to work together because of our call by the Lord to be a company of disciples, not isolated individuals<sup>1</sup>.

### **A word on the relationship between Bishops and Religious**

The Code of Canon law establishes that the diocesan bishop has all the ordinary, proper and immediate power required for the exercise of his pastoral ministry in the diocese entrusted to his care (c. 381, §1), and yes listen to this, he also has general pastoral responsibility in the form of an oversight over all the faithful, all teaching and preaching, all sacramental and liturgical celebrations among other things in his diocese (cf. cc. 383, §1; 386, §1; 387). The consequence of this is that the bishop can visit churches, oratories routinely attended by the faithful, and visit schools, and other spiritual or temporal works of religion or charity entrusted to religious (c. 683). In fact all religious are under or subject to the authority of the diocesan bishop in matters relating to care of souls, public worship and works of the apostolate in his diocese (c. 578, §1). We have to also establish here that, religious institutes belongs to the life and sanctity of the Church (c. 573 – 574), that when they are legitimately erected / established, they assume a juridic personality, and possess what the law calls a rightful autonomy by which they follow their own internal discipline as well as preserve and protect their institute's 'patrimony', which is the nature, purpose, spirit, character, and sound traditions associated with their institute (cc. 586 & 578). Then the proper law of each institute is there to articulate the fundamental elements of life and discipline of members (c. 587), just as each member is expected to order his or her life in accordance with the all these provisions (c. 598, §2). Let us remind ourselves of the fact that all religious institutes and their members do not exist outside the church, they are part of the church (universal and particular) and as such are subject in some way to competent ecclesiastical authorities (cc. 576; 590-591; & 593-594). Regardless of the canonical rules concerning bishops and religious, the history of the church shows that "finding and/or maintaining a proper balance in the relationship between bishops and religious have often been delicate and elusive task, as well as not entirely successful one".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *The Sign We Give: Report from the Working Party on Collaborative Ministry*, September 1995, 17, cited in Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 41

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth McDonough, "Relationship Between Bishops and Religious: Mutual Rights and Duties", in *Selected Issues in Religious Law*, P.J. Cogna, (ed.) Canon Law Society of America, 1997, 69

### **Diocesan ministries entrusted to religious**

We perhaps need to make certain clarifications here. Even though there are several types of apostolic activities that can be exercised by religious in a diocese, some are put outside the interference of the diocesan bishop. A house of formation operated by a pontifical institute exclusively for the education of its members (novices or those in initial formation) is removed from a bishop's involvement (c. 683 §1). This aspect for me, constitute what is juridically protected under autonomy that need to be preserved (c. 586). But every other apostolate owned or entrusted to religious or joined endeavors to which the faithful of the diocese frequents regularly are subject to visitation by the bishop (c. 683, §1). The diocesan bishop is empower to take action should abuses be reported in which the superior of the institute after warning refused to take action (c. 683, §2).

To entrust an apostolate like a school, hospital, orphanage, or hostel that belongs to the diocese to a religious institute would require a painstakingly, a thoroughly crafted, mutually acceptable or agreeable written legal contract between the diocesan bishop or his representative and the competent authority of the religious institute or his or her representative (c. 520, §2). Often, and too many mistake in this situation is that even if the particular ministry to be entrusted belong to the parish or even some lay apostolic group in the church like a crèche, nursery/primary, or a secondary school, the religious institute should not just rely on friendship with a particular priest or authority to move into such ministry without a formal contract through the bishop of the diocese. Experience has shown that the moment there is a change of the priest the hitherto cordial working relationship turns toxic.

The contract to be signed by both parties would specify expressly and accurately the nature of the work to be done, the process of assigning persons to positions to do the work, as well as the remuneration for work done and other financial arrangements (c. 681; ES I, 30). A similar contractual agreement is necessary if an individual religious is employed by the diocese to carry out a particular work, and if the office conferred on the religious is an ecclesiastical one (c. 145) like a parish priest, the contract should reflect this with a proviso on removal/ termination of contract at the discretion of the diocesan bishop who made the appointment or religious superior as provided in canon 682. "For works of this nature members of the religious institute who are really suitably trained and available should be selected by the religious superiors after discussion with the local ordinary regarding what is needed the work and the people of God suffer when incompetent members of religious institutes are presented for assignment in the diocese."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Some observations***

In order to avoid confusion, the difference between the distinctive work of an institute and works entrusted to an institute within a Particular Church should always be kept in mind by local ordinaries, even though the former depend on religious superiors in accordance with their constitution, it is still due to pastoral practice subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop by law (ES I, 29). On this issue E. McDonough gives the following consideration:

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *Formation and Collaboration in Communion: On Mutual Relations Between Religious Institutes and Dioceses in Nigeria*, (June 20, 2009), 53 -54

First, in theory any apostolate of a religious institute which is proper to that institute or part of its institutional patrimony should be appropriately specified in its fundamental documents (cc. 578; 587, §1; 675, §1) and then there should be little question as to whether a member is exercising a ministry or function proper to the institute. So, for example, if education were an apostolate proper to a particular religious institute, a member might engage in this apostolate within the institute in an educational facility belonging to one's own religious community or entrusted by the diocese to that religious community or even in an educational facility owned or entrusted to another religious community; and he or she would still be exercising an apostolate proper to the institute. Second, in order to engage in ministries or offices outside of those proper to the institute, specific permission of one's legitimate superior is technically required (c. 672).<sup>1</sup>

There is a difficulty in stating explicitly what really constitute proper apostolate work of a particular institute due to the generally terms in which they are often written. Due to this general nature it is also a herculean task to attempt to determine works, which are not proper to an institute.

### **Task of Cooperation on the Bishop**

The bishop is the one responsible for apostolic activity in the diocese: consecrated men and women must according to John Paul II cooperate with him so as to enrich ecclesial communion by their presence and ministry. Consecrated persons are encouraged to welcome the pastoral direction of the bishop and strive for full communion in the life and mission of the particular Church in which they live. In this relationship due regard is to be given to the provisions of the document *Mutuae Relationes* and the Code of canon law.<sup>2</sup>

The Directory for the pastoral ministry of Bishops listed the principle of cooperation as one of the general principles the bishop needs for the pastoral governance of his diocese. The principle is premised on the ecclesiology of communion requiring the bishop to involve all Christian faithful, who have the right individually or collectively to cooperate in the mission Christ has entrusted to the Church and as such to recognize and respect this pluralism of responsibility of persons and associations.<sup>3</sup>

Canon 680 strongly requires cooperation between religious and diocesan clergy, and called on the diocesan bishop to ensure this, organized cooperation is to be fostered among different institutes, and between them and the secular clergy. Under the direction of the Bishop, there is to be a coordination of all apostolic works and actions, with due respect for the character and purpose of each institute and the laws of its foundation. In a more specifically taxing way, diocesan bishop is to open his arms in welcoming the various expressions of consecrated life as a grace by supporting consecrated persons to be fully part of the diocesan family in a way that the relationship is open to a more fruitful spiritual and pastoral cooperation in the areas the diocese needs their help.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth McDonough, "Relationship Between Bishops and Religious: Mutual Rights and Duties", 75

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, (16 October 2003) n. 50

<sup>3</sup> Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum Successores*, Vatican City, 2004, n. 59

<sup>4</sup> Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 98

When it comes to consecrated persons involvement in the life of the diocese, the bishop is to ensure that the members feel a sense of belonging and being a vital part of the diocese through his acquaintance with their charism and superiors. Secondly, that they are known and esteemed by the faithful, “and in particular that clergy and seminarians, through their respective methods of formation, receive instruction in the theology and spirituality of consecrated life. They should sincerely value consecrated persons, not only for the contribution they can make to diocesan pastoral work, but most of all for the strength of their witness of consecrated life and for the riches they introduce into the local and universal Church by their vocation and their manner of life”.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, a relationship that is permeated with a spirit of fraternal cooperation should exist between diocesan clergy and those who are members of institutes of consecrated life and society of apostolic life. In fact, the bishops are to encourage the participation of religious priests in diocesan clergy meetings at all levels, an act that can cement their friendship and mutual respect. Their involvement in the formation of diocesan clergy was also highlighted<sup>2</sup>. Fourthly, that the membership of diocesan consultative structures includes the different and various consecrated life and charism present in the diocese.

### **Diocesan clergy and Religious Collaboration**

In the 1989 Pastoral Guide for Diocesan Priests, Jozef Card. Tomko, the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples emphasized the promotion of collaboration as one of the fundamental trait a priest should have said: “Priests have a duty to fulfill their pastoral service in an ecclesial spirit, as part of the community, in union with and obedience to the bishop, and in collaboration with all the pastoral agents, avoiding acting in an independent, autonomous way, and fitting in with the pace of the community in achieving its goals, with patience and flexibility”.<sup>3</sup> Pastoral agents were listed as priests, deacons, religious and lay people. Parish priests were specifically called upon in the document to cooperate with them by making efforts to foster unity through frequent and regular meetings for information sharing, planning and evaluation particularly with those of them who work full-time at the apostolate.<sup>4</sup>

The Directory for the ministry and life of priests also focused on the subject of collaboration between diocesan clergy and consecrated person. The document calls it “a real spirit of apostolic collaboration”, which alongside sincere appreciation, respect and promotion of their charism will benefit the church as well as making that state of life attractive to new generation.<sup>5</sup> Despite the clarion call from these Curia documents, it still seems an uphill battle overcoming priests’ independent autonomous way of acting. We are however to be mindful of the words of Pope John Paul II who ask us to be thankful for the “gift of God” entrusted to

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<sup>1</sup> Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 99; John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, n. 50

<sup>2</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Christus Dominus*, n. 35; Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum Successores*, 99; The Congregation of the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, (31 January 1994), n. 92

<sup>3</sup> Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Pastoral Guide for Diocesan Priests in Churches Dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, (1 October 1989) Rome, n. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Pastoral Guide for Diocesan Priests*, n. 10.

<sup>5</sup> The Congregation of the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 31

every woman<sup>1</sup>, to consecrated women who through obedience and fidelity to the gift of God's love help the Church and all mankind, and also wants us to be open to the fact that women have a part to play in solving the serious problems of tomorrow, whether in the area of social services, health care, or ecology<sup>2</sup>.

***Values of Collaboration worth mentioning***

It is no longer news in mentioning that the Church itself has evolved from a centrally hierarchical Church to a new ecclesiology of the Church as communion, in which all the baptized are called to work together according to their individual gifts. Therefore as priests, religious and lay faithful, the time has come for us all to examine our behaviour to embrace the value of collaboration as a means for becoming who God wants us to be.<sup>3</sup> We are to internalize the fact that, "the church's pastoral ministry can be more effective if we become true collaborators, mindful of our weaknesses, but grateful for our gifts. Collaboration challenges us to understand that we are, in reality, joined in Christ's body, that we are not separate but interdependent".<sup>4</sup> Once the desire is present to work together, we subsequently grow in it through conversion and development.

Taking a look at the constitution of some religious institutes, I find some motivating and revealing statements. The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles for instance describes the nature of its institute as missionary, its spirit as essentially apostolic and its apostolate as education, medical, social, spiritual counseling and pastoral work<sup>5</sup>. The constitution clearly states in its mission of evangelization: "we participate directly in the mission of the Church by collaborating in the building of a new world in accordance with the plan of God".<sup>6</sup> Their presence in a diocesan Church is aptly described in teamwork: "Inserted in a particular Church, we work with its members and leaders to form Christian communities and help them to grow. In dialogue, in reflection and prayers, we discern with them the signs of the times and the response to be given to the most urgent needs of the Church and the world."<sup>7</sup>

In the Constitutions and Directory of the institute of the Sisters of St. Louis, the nature and spirituality is described among others as one rooted in faith, ecclesial, apostolic, and holistic. The apostolic mission of the institute is premised on the ground that they are called to serve in a broken and divided world, having the aim of being religious educators, engaging in medical care, serving in social and pastoral ministries.<sup>8</sup>

We maintain the breadth of vision and the mobility of an institute of pontifical right, while belonging to the local Church and serving it in ways appropriate to its needs

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, (August 15, 1988), n 31

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, "Letter to Women", (June 29, 1995), n. 2, 4

<sup>3</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, *From Words to Deeds: Continuing Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church*, Washington, DC, 1998, 19

<sup>4</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium: Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity and the Fifteenth Anniversary of Called and Gifted*, Washington, DC, 1995, 24

<sup>5</sup> Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, *Constitutions*, (Revised edition 1995), nn. 3, 7, 20

<sup>6</sup> Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, *Constitutions*, n. 13

<sup>7</sup> Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, *Constitutions*, n. 17

<sup>8</sup> Institute of the Sisters of St. Louis, *Constitutions and Directory*, nn. 1, 38, 42, 43, 45

and our resources. As religious, we are under the authority of our bishops in all matters concerning the external works of our ministry. We seek therefore through dialogue with them and mutual co-operation to create the conditions most conducive to effective ministry.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of working in oneness, *Sint Unum* is very pivotal to this institute.

A look at the purpose and charism of the Congregation of the sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus highlights its primary end as that of promoting the glory of God and sanctification of its members and bearing witness to Christ's love in the Eucharist. To make this happen, the institute is focused on educating African women to becoming missionary power, who will seek their own salvation, grater perfection, evangelization of neighbour but also "engage in educational, medical, social and pastoral apostolic activities. In addition, they will also look after sacristies and sanctuaries where Holy Mass is celebrated and Blessed Sacrament is reserved".<sup>2</sup> The charism is summarized as Love in Action<sup>3</sup> The recognition of gifts for the mission of the Church are clearly expressed in their fundamental laws, which aligns with what we have articulated thus far, that the call to mission is a universal one, hence for every baptized Christian, collaborative ministry is not a choice but a privilege and a responsibility<sup>4</sup>.

### ***A word on Gift***

This is very vital in the effectiveness of collaborative ministry in the church. This is actually its motivating force and essence, for it connotes identifying the gifts of the community and utilizing them for the good of all and the fostering of God's reign. With specific reference to working with female religious in the Church, the American Bishops acknowledges the crucial importance of appreciating gifts of both sides and reechoing Vatican II teaching that the Spirit gives different gifts for the well-being of the church and that all believers have the right and duty to use these gifts in the church and in the world for the good of humanity and the development of the Church (AA, 3). Collaborative ministry is rooted in baptism, based on the gifts of each believer, which is connected to the mission of the Church and to its nature as *communio*.<sup>5</sup> The Bishops of England and Wales sees collaborative ministry as a call to "work together on equal terms; the conviction that our different gifts are complementary and mutually enriching; an agreement that we are accountable to each other for how we work and what we do".<sup>6</sup> The Nigerian Bishops seeing the Church as a communion of charisms, where

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of the Sisters of St. Louis, *Constitutions and Directory*, n. 50

<sup>2</sup> *The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus*, n. 3

<sup>3</sup> *The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus*, n. 5, b

<sup>4</sup> "Ministry is the privilege and responsibility of the total Church, and everyone is called by baptism to exercise it, each in his or her own way and according to his or her own call and gifts" United States Catholic Conference on the Bishops Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Study Text III: Ministries in the Church: Commentary on the Apostolic Letters of Pope Paul VI, Ministeria quaedam and Ad pascendum*, Washington, DC, 1974, 20

<sup>5</sup> Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *From Words to Deeds: Continuing Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church*, Washington DC: US Catholic Conference, 1998, 18

<sup>6</sup> Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *The Sign We Give: Report from the Working Party on Collaborative Ministry*. September, 1995, 17

the charism of consecrated life and the charism of the hierarchy live in communion “encourages religious institutes and local Churches to work in mutual respect and in mutual understanding for the building up of the Body of Christ. To do otherwise would amount to living in a way that contradicts the fundamental intuition of the Council regarding the Church as communion”.<sup>1</sup>

We really cannot ignore what the religious, in particular the female ones are saying based on their experiences. They express satisfaction when their gifts, skills and talents are recognized by ordained leaders and appropriately used to serve in the mission of the church. The Nigeria Bishops rightly seems to have taken cognizance of this sentiment of expectation when it thank God for blessing Nigeria with vocation to consecrated life, for their heroic witness and who through their presence enables the church to be sign and instrument of God’s presence in our country. “In many cities and villages of our vast country, it is the presence of religious that offers hope to millions of Nigerians. The Church must never cease to thank God for the gift of consecrated life. Through them, and through their various apostolate, the Church is able to offer an ever fresh evangelical response to the new demands of the Nigerian society”.<sup>2</sup> However, we are not to disregard the disappointment, pain and hurt the religious feel when their gifts are not appreciated, rejected and not fully use. The challenge for pastors then is to use their office to appreciate the gifts of others and work towards eliminating all obstacles that do not allow the full utilization of gifts in the church<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Mission Orientation***

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated that the single intention of the church is that the “kingdom of God may come and that the salvation of the human race may be accomplished” (GS, 45). Pope John Paul II in his address to the Latin American Bishops in 1992 gave a thoughtful understanding of this teaching by declaring the proclamation of Jesus Christ to all cultures as the church’s central concern and the object of its mission, which in our time, demands the pressing need for collaboration among all those responsible to the work of evangelization.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore pertinent that our dioceses develop mission-focused concept of collaboration in their diocesan ministry, where the different parts harmoniously work for the good and development of the diocese. The ordain clergy and religious must know that the goal or aim of collaboration in the ministry is not about them, their persons, age of ordination or profession, it is more of a call to mission, to evangelization, and to the transformation of the world. An ongoing formation orientation about the mission and other interactive ways of enhancing effective working together should be encouraged.

### **Obstacles to effective Collaborative ministry**

***Low self-esteem:*** this particular obstacle seems to be a complex one due to the fact that it is sometimes coated in behaviour-related issues like competition and parochialism that breed

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *Formation and Collaboration in Communion*, nn. 15, 16

<sup>2</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *Formation and Collaboration in Communion*, 2009, n. 1

<sup>3</sup> Committee on Women in Society and in the Church, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *From Words to Deeds: Continuing Reflections on the Role of Women in the Church*, 6, 19

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Opening Address of the Holy Father, New Evangelization, Human Development, Christian Culture. Fourth General Conference of Latin American Bishops. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, October 12-18, 1992

hostility which does not allow collaboration to blossom. Competition arising from low esteem can be destructive, for it blinds the individual from recognizing the gifts of others and as well as makes it difficult for them to work with others. This attitude inevitably creates problems when the individual is forced to confront his/her humanness and lack of perfection; such persons adopt some form of compensatory behaviour to counteract the lowered self-esteem.<sup>1</sup>

The destructive reaction to this low self-esteem is the attempt to rebuild self-esteem by devaluing others. This creates a situation where some people knock others down, what we regard as 'pull him/ her down'. Anyone with a prospect of doing well, rising high is knocked or pulled down. Ministers possessing low self-esteem can become knockers, so rather than affirming the gifts present in others, they belittle, an attitude that hinders collaboration in the ministry. Some other attitudes that are associated with low self-esteem are rivalry, pettiness, arrogance and snobbish conduct all of which practically make collaboration difficult. Parochialism which is another trait of low self-esteem, is an attitude of narrow thinking, exclusiveness and apathy towards all those perceived not to belong. Low esteem is obviously a strong hindrance; it is also a difficult obstacle to surmount. Nonetheless, creating a climate that fosters and builds self-esteem is very necessary as it would lead to positive appreciation of who we are and the gifts we have.

***Arrogance and self-righteousness:*** just like the earlier factor, this can really stall any form of collaboration for such people always see themselves as superior and do not see the need to work with others, neither do they see the necessity for other people's talents, hence they are not enthusiasts of collaboration. The worry about people who are arrogant and self-righteous is that they do not recognize they have this problem. This is the case because arrogance is virtually impossible to perceive in oneself. Arrogance can affect anyone in the ministry as situations abound in which clergy and religious have put up this attitude toward each other and the laity. In fact

Arrogance and self-righteousness are related to low self-esteem. Like competition and parochialism, arrogance may also spring from the need to protect self-esteem, especially a fragile one. When a person feels inferior or insecure, adopting an attitude which conveys the opposite, one of superiority, can serve as a defense. Regardless of the cause, arrogance is destructive to collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

***Burnout:*** This is now being seen as a growing threat in our ministry. It is described as the result of unrealistic expectations of self, which can result in devastating consequence if not promptly addressed. Laity, clergy, and religious who engage and function in multiple and diverse roles and ministries exhibit this problem. Hence a priest or religious can move from being energetic and enthusiastic to one who is tired, stressed and burned out and as such has no energy or interest to engage in collaborative ministry, and attract others to work with them.

When one priest is made parish priest, chancellor, vocations' director, chaplain and member of four to six other diocesan committees, there is no way such a priest will not experience burnout. This is the same with a religious saddle with multiple responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 54

<sup>2</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 57 - 58



The different stages of burnout are as follows: First stage, one is obsess with his or her ministry – this exclusive and excessive preoccupation is such that the person have no time for other activities. They are just boring to work with. The second stage is when the person becomes exhausted and questioning. In their mind, they equate how tired one is, as a way to measure success in the field. The third stage is when burnout assume the form of depression, when the person withdraws from others and exhibits disappointment in his or her self, others and ministry. This is when you no longer see them participating in parish, diocesan activities and other functions. They become very judgmental of everybody and project their disappointment onto others. Collaboration in this kind of circumstance is not possible. The fourth stage described as terminal cynicism, is where a person experience a wearing away of self-esteem, manifested in hostility and the subjection of everyone as an antagonist. The service of a professional therapist is needed for those in this stage<sup>1</sup>.

**Hostility:** this is the behaviour that makes one to perceive others as enemies, thus preventing the possibility of collaboration. So rather than see others as partners, allies to work with, hostility which is an emotion of anger, a spur-of-the-moment reaction to frustration, or perceived injustice, or belittling of one’s self-esteem that could have been channeled towards constructive and creative collaboration is now used for the opposite. One certain fact we should not overlook is that: “anyone in ministry will experience frustration, blows to self-esteem and injustices. Feelings of anger are inevitable. The challenge is to discover constructive avenues of expressing anger rather than converting it into hostility which ultimately destroys any collaborative efforts taking place.”<sup>2</sup>

**Failure to deal with conflict:** the diocesan Church like every other community of persons is bound to experience conflicts and tensions. As the Nigerian Bishops succinctly puts it: “while we celebrate the many vocations to consecrated life in the Church in Nigeria, and the good works that the religious in our country do, we cannot overlook the fact that there have been instances of conflicts. At the same time, the gift of consecrated life invites and challenges us to work out issues of mutual relations between religious institutes and local Church. This task is to be assumed for the good of the Church and for a more credible and a more effective witnessing to the Gospel of salvation.”<sup>3</sup> Besides, the inevitability of conflict is well articulated in the scripture passages<sup>4</sup>, therefore suppressing conflict is not the way to go, it gives rise to apathy and tension, both of which get in the way of collaboration. So in the diocesan church, “if collaboration is to occur, conflict must be confronted and dealt with. Too many ministers are so fearful of conflict that they constantly function from a stance of “peace at any price,” not realizing that the price is really a steep one. Failure to deal with conflict condemns people to a state of non-collaboration.”<sup>5</sup>

It seems one serious cause of failure in collaborative effort is the myth that conflict destroys collaborative relationship, and ought to be avoided.<sup>6</sup> In short, the beliefs we hold about conflict

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<sup>1</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 59 - 61

<sup>2</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 64

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *Formation and Collaboration in Communion*, n. 2

<sup>4</sup> See Mk. 9: 3-34; Acts 15; Acts 15: 36-39; Gal 2: 11-14

<sup>5</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 65

<sup>6</sup> Theresa M. Monroe, “The Rhetoric and Reality of Collaboration”, 149

can really influence the way we deal with conflict. The truth is that conflict is inevitable in every Christian community, and it will be laughable to hold the view that Christian people do not experience conflict. Nevertheless, dealing with conflict is not easy, because it can often be unpleasant, painful and difficult. To overcome the common practice of suppressing and avoiding conflict, there is now the need to train and equip priests, religious and laypersons in the diocesan community with the effective skills to positively reduce, manage or resolve conflicts in the diocesan Christian community.

The importance of this is to be able to manage conflicts in the diocese by creating situation of “being able to live and work together even though the source of conflict has not been eliminated”.<sup>1</sup> When conflict is confronted and managed or resolved, it leads to a union of the parties. But when conflict is not managed or resolved, it leads to hurt, indifference and tension, all of which extinguish the flame for collaborative efforts to work.

***Lack of forgiveness:*** forgiveness is one of the defining characteristics of every Christian community. The lack of it can really hinder collaborative ministry. Compassion and forgiveness are the spiritual grease for collaborative ministry. Jesus Christ in the Gospel (Lk 6: 36) instructs us to be compassionate as our heavenly Father, and he exemplified this in the way he related with people of his days. Compassion is an act of the will, the ultimate criteria for determining our spiritual growth in our spiritual life. Forgiveness is also an act of the will, and is the very essence of Christian life. It is letting go of the desire to get even with or harm the person who has offended or harmed us. Not to forgive is to nourish and hold on to anger and resentment, which is self-destructive. Our world is in dire need of healing and unity, so we are to show forgiveness and reconciliation to our broken, hostile, depersonalized world. Whenever working relationship breaks down as a result of conflict, it is strongly recommended that attempt be made at reconciling the parties.

The important fact to accentuate is that it is not the presence of conflict that impedes collaboration, but the lack of forgiveness and reconciliation. Second, is the fact that a Christian community is not characterized by the absence of conflict, but rather it is distinguished by its openness to forgiveness and reconciliation. When conflict do arise in the diocesan Church between the diocesan hierarchy and religious, and the later is systematically not allowed to function effectively in the diocese; and when religious on account of misunderstanding too, remove their personnel and petitions become the first option, what chance are we giving reconciliation. The profound truth about reconciliation is that it is not simply an end in itself; rather it is for the sake of communion – communion with the Triune God and communion with each other. There can be no forgiveness and reconciliation without unity and communion with God and with one another.<sup>2</sup> In this Year of Mercy, let us be reconciled.

***Lack of an integrated sexuality:*** it is noted that where there is inadequate sexual integration, it can prevent participation in, and also work against collaboration. Sexuality is a gift that should be acknowledged, appreciated, and accepted as part of the total person. Fear of working with the opposite sex and obsession with sexual feelings are two clues of the presence of a lack of sexual integration. Both are destructive to collaboration. Dioceses,

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<sup>1</sup> Loughlan Sofield – Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration*, 125

<sup>2</sup> United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, *Jubilee 2000: A Year of the Lord's Favor: A Reflection on Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, Washington DC, November, 1998, 13

religious institutes and houses of formation should consider organizing regularly sexuality workshops toward having greater integration of this aspect of our life. The 1995 message of Pope John Paul II to all priests, with the title, “The Importance of Women in the life of the Priest” offers an interesting guide. The Pope argues that the dimensions of mother and sister are the two fundamental dimensions of the relationship that should exist between women and priests. And that if such a relationship is developed in a serene and mature way, women will have no particular difficulties in their contact with priests, and in undertaking various kinds of apostolic activities with priests. The Pope then reminds every priest of their responsibility of developing an authentic way of relating to women as a brother, which does not admit of ambiguity.<sup>1</sup>

### **Some directives towards overcoming collaborative challenges**

The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes in partnership with the Sacred Congregation for Bishops offers some useful practical directives and norms to facilitate mutual collaboration in the building of the Body of Christ. The directive calls Bishops, along with their clergy, to be convinced advocates of the consecrated life, defenders of religious communities, promoters of vocations, firm guardians of the specific character of each religious family both in the spiritual and in the apostolic field (VC n. 28). Bishops and religious superiors are task in the directive with the responsibility of promoting the doctrinal teaching of the Council and pontifical pronouncements on the subject of the episcopacy, religious life, the local Church and mutual relations among them. To achieve this, (a) bishops and religious superiors engage in regular meetings; (b) that there should be special courses for diocesan priests, for religious and for the laity engaged in active apostolate, in order to have new and more appropriate adaptations; (c) suitable pastoral documents should be prepared for dioceses, region or the nation, that addresses these subjects in a challenging way for the reflection of the faithful.<sup>2</sup>

Stressing the important role of the formative stage, the document instructs that, “religious, from the novitiate on, should be brought to a fuller awareness and concern for the local Church. While at the same time growing in fidelity to their own vocation; b) bishops should see to it that the diocesan clergy understand well the current problems of religious life and the urgent missionary needs...”<sup>3</sup> In his apostolic constitution on the formation of priests, Pope John Paul II even though did not used the term “collaboration” used the term “cooperation” as equivalent to indicated the working together in the building up of the Church; “awareness of the Church as communion will prepare the candidate for the priesthood to carry out his pastoral work with a community spirit, in heartfelt cooperation with the different members of the Church: priests and bishop, diocesan and religious priests, priests and lay people”.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Letter to Priest for Holy Thursday, 1995, “The Importance of Women in the Life of the Priest”, (25 March, 1995), n. 5

<sup>2</sup> Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes and Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Directives for the Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious in the Church*, (14 May, 1978), n. 29

<sup>3</sup> Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes and Sacred Congregation for Bishops, *Directives for the Mutual Relations*, n. 30

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (16 April, 1992), n. 66

Between diocesan clergy and the religious, there should exist a good and true communication serving as glue that hold their working relationship together. Designing a Diocesan Pastoral Plan (DPP) as a means of mobilizing the human resources of the diocese and establishing a participative communication network, that respects the diverse charisms present in the diocese with theme and objective can serve as a way of engaging all in an animating collaborative ministry in the diocese.<sup>1</sup>

To ensure stable and effective pastoral collaboration, I want to reiterate the propositions of the Nigerian Bishops Conference: a) bishops and superiors must engage on animating dialogue before any work is entrusted to the respective religious community and discussion formalized by written agreement/ contract to protect the institutions engaged in the collaboration; b) superiors should inform the local ordinary as required by the universal norms before they establish projects proper to their charism and distinctive work of their institute in a diocese; c) receiving Ordinaries should have an input in the type of persons being offered to them for pastoral ministry in the diocese. Superiors should present curriculum vitae of those they mission to allow the receiving Ordinaries understand their background and competence; d) constant turnover and transfers of religious member do not help stability in the execution of projects for the local Church. Superiors should consider the needs of the people of God as of prime importance while they carry on with their legitimate duties of designation and transfer of personnel; e) when a member of a religious institute is adjudged incompetent and or insubordinate, competent authorities/ superiors should take necessary steps towards finding suitable replacement as nothing hurts the Church as much as managing an obvious situation of incompetence and insubordination. However, the person in question should be given opportunity to defend himself/ herself before judgment is made.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In concluding this paper, I wish to restate the words of Pope Francis to all Bishops on the occasion of the celebration of the Year of Consecrated Life:

Finally, in a special way, I address my brothers. May this year be an opportunity to accept institutes of consecrated life, readily and joyfully, as spiritual capital which contributes to the good of the whole body of Christ (LG, 43), and not simply that of individual religious families. “Consecrated life is a gift to the Church, it is born of the Church, it grows in the Church and it is entirely directed to the Church” for this reason, precisely as a gift to the Church, it is not an isolated or marginal reality but deeply a part of her. It is at the heart of the Church, a decisive element of her mission... In the light of this, I ask you, the Pastors of the Particular Churches, to show special concern for promoting within your communities the different charisms, whether long-standing or recent. I ask you to do this by your support and encouragement, your assistance in discernment, and your tender and loving closeness to those situations of suffering and weakness in which some consecrated men and women may find themselves. Above all, do this by instructing the People of God in the value of consecrated life, so that its beauty and holiness may shine forth in the Church.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leonardo Z. Legaspi, “Munus Regendi: The Governance of the Diocese”, in *The Bishop and His Ministry*, Urbaniana University Press, 1998, 115, 119 -120

<sup>2</sup> Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *Formation and Collaboration in Communion*, 54 - 55

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, On the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, Vatican, 21 November 2014, n. 5

To us priests, the fatherly admonition of Pope John Paul II: “Yes, dear Brothers, the priesthood, which today we recall with such veneration as our special inheritance is a ministerial priesthood! We are at the service of the People of God! We are at the service of its mission! This priesthood of ours must guarantee the participation of everyone – men and women alike – in the threefold prophetic, priestly and royal mission of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> We are to know that, no society survives without a genuine and healthy collaboration of both men and women, for the progress of any society depends on the level of the womanhood in that society.<sup>2</sup> And rightly so, Pope Francis calls for greater collaboration with women in the Church and other sphere of life:

I readily acknowledge that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families and groups and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. Because the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures.<sup>3</sup>

It is very true that the many problems and the complexity of collaboration we have experienced, definitely makes it something to quickly avoid, but we must know that collaboration is not something that just happens; we must intend for it to happen and work hard to make it happen. Collaboration requires initiative; it calls for trust, understanding, communication and very importantly, a good deal of humility. As priests and religious, collaborative ministry brings us together with our gifts and distinctiveness to work in partnership in and for the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday, 1995, n. 7

<sup>2</sup> Cornelius Afebu Omonokhua, *The Joy of Service. Dialogue of Action*, Benin City, 2015, 65

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (24 November 2013), n. 103

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**“NO IMMORAL OR IMPURE HAS ANY INHERITANCE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD” (Eph. 5, 4-5): PAUL’S SEX MORALITY AND THE COURAGE TO BE CHASTE**

Being the Departmental Lecture of Theology on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2016

By

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**A: A Brief History Summary of Saint Paul**

From St. Paul himself we know that he was born at Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 21:39), of a father who was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:26-28; cf. 16:37), of a family in which piety was hereditary (2 Timothy 1:3) and which was much attached to Pharisaic traditions and observances (Philippians 3:5-6).

As a Roman citizen he also bore the Latin name of Paul. It was quite usual for the Jews of that time to have two names, one Hebrew, the other Latin or Greek, between which there was often a certain assonance and which were joined together exactly in the manner made use of by St. Luke (Acts 13:9: *Saulos ho kai Paulos*). As every respectable Jew had to teach his son a trade, young Saul learned how to make tents (Acts 18:3) or rather to make the mohair of which tents were made (cf. Lewin, "Life of St. Paul", I, London).

While he was still fairly young, he was sent to Jerusalem to receive his education at the school of [Gamaliel](#). [[Acts 22:3](#)], one of the most noted rabbis in history. The [Hillel](#) school was noted for giving its students a balanced education, likely giving Paul broad exposure to classical literature, philosophy, and ethics.<sup>1</sup>

Paul grew to be a man of firm convictions and fiery temperament. He always acted on his beliefs. Thus, when he was confronted with what he took to be a heresy to Judaism, he worked with all his might to quell it. This heresy would one day come to be known as Christianity and Paul was among the foremost of its persecutors.

He owed a large debt also to the training he received in the law and the prophets, utilizing this knowledge to convince his Jewish countrymen of the unity of past Old Testament prophecy and covenants with the fulfilling of these in Jesus Christ. His wide spectrum of experiences and education gave the "Apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13;] Gal. 2:8] the tools which he later would use to effectively spread the Gospel and to establish the church solidly in the Roman enclave.

Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen, (Acts 7, 58-60; 22, 20), and though he did not participate, he encouraged the violent act that destroyed the first of the martyrs. He then participated in a general persecution including, "going from house to house, he dragged out the believers, both men and women and threw them into jail."<sup>2</sup>

He then undertook a mission to Damascus. There he intended to continue attacking Christians. However, on the way, he had a vision. This vision is described several times in the

<sup>1</sup> [Paul the Apostle - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle)

<sup>2</sup> The Apostle Paul, *Encyclopedia Britannica*: Online, 2009.

Bible, three times in the book of Acts. Paul saw Jesus who asked why Paul persisted in persecuting Him. He then commissioned Paul to preach His message to the Gentiles.

### B: The Dawn of the New Testament

Before going into the New Testament, let us have a cursory look at the Old Testament. Generally, celibacy was not encouraged in the Old Testament. This is understandable judging from the Yahwist account of Gen. 2,4-3,24 that brings out the profound complementary relationship of man and woman. Again the Jewish love of children (Ps. 127) and family made it even impossible to contemplate on the idea of celibacy in the Old Testament. Since there was a blurred notion of after life, every man looked forward to a long life of prosperity. The core of prosperity itself lies in having numerous lovely children (Ps 144, 12). Later rabbinic teaching has it that failure to procreate was equivalent to shedding blood.

The Jewish tough stand notwithstanding, the prophet Jeremiah sanctified from his mother's womb, made a radical decision very contrary to the Jewish idea and practices, and embraced celibacy in order to consecrate himself totally to the service of God. Elijah and Eliseus were considered celibates. There were others among those loosely termed prophets in the Old Testament who had similar reputation.

Also virginity was expected of every Jewish girl provided it leads to a fruitful marriage. In Israel, the law discloses the esteem which the Israelites place upon virginity in the bride. The Israelite may incur the uncleanness of mourning for a virgin sister because she has no man to mourn for her (Lev. 21, 3). Virginity in and by itself without the hope of procreation was never encouraged, c.f. Jephtah's daughter who had to bewail her virginity before being sacrificed by her father (Jgs. 11).

Coming to the New Testament, we know Jesus was a revolutionary judging from his so many actions and attitudes in contraposition to the Jewish laws and practices. But it is interesting to note that throughout the gospels, Jesus does not seem to come out very forcefully when it comes to sexual morality and ethics. But we must understand this statement in the right perspective. Jesus offered a moral teaching which is unprecedented and unrivalled in that contemporary world. "Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart" (Mt. 5, 27-28). I know that whenever or wherever this is quoted, what comes into mind is the famous verse in *De Profundis* of Ps. 129, 3, "If you O Lord should mark our guilt, Lord who would survive?"

Other instances where Jesus spoke about sex and morality are, for example: When Peter observed that if the case of a man with his wife is so, it is not expedient to marry. Jesus response was otherwise:

Not all can accept this teaching but to those to whom it has been given.....there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made so by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven; he who is able to receive this, let him receive it.<sup>1</sup>

In another place Jesus advices,

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 19, 11-12



your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members, than that your whole body go into hell.<sup>1</sup>

There were other references to sexual ethics which implicitly point towards chaste celibacy, for example.....when Jesus teaches that the greater percentage of sins against chastity committed belong to the interior operations of the heart, “For from within, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts of fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, licentiousness” (Mk 7,20-23).

It was rather St. Paul who adopted tough and uncompromising stand against any form of sex immorality or misbehavior and insisted on it. We have to realize that Paul was a product of his own times. He was greatly influenced by his formation in Stoic ideals, coupled with Pharisaic ideas and observances. One of the main teachings of Stoicism is indifferent to pleasure or pain, insensibility and passiveness especially in matters related to sexual pleasure. Paul’s tough stand and unequivocal condemnation of any form of sexual immorality or aberration is something somehow unprecedented in that contemporary age. A look at some of his pronouncements or utterances in his letters can easily convince anyone of his stand when it comes to the question of sexual purity and morality.

- But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints (Eph. 5, 3).
- Put to death immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire...on account of this the wrath of God is coming. (Col. 5, 3-9).
- The body is not meant for fornication...Do you know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one in body with her, (1 Cor. 6,13)
- Neither the immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers, nor homosexuals will inherit the Kingdom of heaven, (1 Cor. 6,9).
- Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body, (1 Cor. 5,18),
- I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things such as immorality, impurity, licentiousness will not inherit the Kingdom of God, (Gal, 5,9).
- To Paul’s mind, people should get married for no reason than the “temptation of immorality, strong passion and lack of self-control”, (1 Cor. 7,1-4).
- Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man or one who is covetous has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5, 5).
- It is well for a man not to touch a woman...he who marries his virgin does well, he who refrains does better (1 Cor. 7,38).
- For from within, out of the heart of a man, come evil thoughts, fornication, adultery, coveting ....All these evil things come from within and they defile a man” (Mk. 7, 21-23).

But why did Jesus not come out forcefully like Paul when it comes to sexual morality? It was not because he was shying away from the subject, but rather he understands the human nature more than each one of his contemporaries and us. It was because he understands it that he was able to sympathize with men and women in their human conditions. He himself was tempted in every way like us but without sin (Heb. 4, 15). Look at his attitude to the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8, 3 – 11). He never said that what the woman did was right or that the

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 5, 29-30

Jews were wrong in trying to carry out what is written in the Mosaic Law. His only words during the whole drama were: He who is without sin should be the first to cast the stone on her. Each one must have looked inwardly at himself and had no alternative than to drop their stones one by one and disappear from the presence of Jesus and the woman. Jesus knew quite well that men and women are prone to temptation and sin, even those who may pretend that there are no sins in them, like these Jews and Pharisees. Jesus fully understands that man is flesh and flesh is perpetually weak.

### C: The Church's Checkered History

Let us now try to examine a little segment of the Church's history with regard to sexual discipline and woeful deviation from the rules and disciplines of the Church. It may be Saint Paul saw something or shall we rather say that he had a preconception of the canal lust that would shake up the foundations of the Church in the generations yet to come. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for example, were a very bad epoch in the history of the Church, with the problem of Avignon, the Great Western Schism and the hundred years' war. This was equally the age of Reformation. The secularism, materialism and individualism of the Renaissance period worsened the situation of the Church. The Black Death decimation had a very demoralizing effect on the populace with general morality and clerical standards declining drastically.

The morality in the papal court was nothing to write home about. Earlier in the early fourteenth century, there arose Pope Alexander VI, the worst Pope ever produced in the Catholic Church. His crime was many. He not only tried to murder a Cardinal with his son, he was a sexual bully of the worst kind. The so many children he fathered with his mistresses constituted a great nuisance around the Vatican as they begged for arms from pilgrims who came to Rome. In 1415, when the Council of Florence adopted to try and depose Balthazar Cossa (John XXIII) as Pope, there was a catalogue of crimes leveled against him: notorious incest, adultery, defilement, homicide and atheism. He confessed all these without defending himself. This only affords a curious insight into the notions of morality prevalent in the papal court.

Boniface the IX scandalized Rome by openly keeping his brother's wife as concubine. This ugly situation was remedied by creating him a Cardinal and sending him as a legate to Bologna while the lady was conveyed to his husband in Naples. While in Bologna, it is said that he gathered two hundred maids, matrons, and widows, including a few nuns who fell victim to his brutal lust. The last half of the fifteenth century scarcely saw a supreme Pontiff without the visible evidence of human frailty around him.<sup>1</sup>

Priests and monks were sacrilegiously getting married at will. The emancipation of the nuns excited a considerable public interest. All these events got the support and sympathy of the great body of the people. On Easter eve, 1523, a certain Leonhardt Kopp, who was a determined enemy of monarchism, succeeded in carrying off from one convent, eight young virgins of noble birth, all who were subsequently married, and one of whom was Catharine von Bora. Two years later, Martin Luther got married to Catharine von Bora on June 13, 1525, as the last and most unquestionable proof of his adhesion to the practice of sacerdotal marriage. The prime idea of Martin Luther and his Reformers was to abolish the idea of virginity as a meritorious work and supererogation, at the same time restoring the early Christian tradition of married clergy.

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<sup>1</sup> Lea, H. *The History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church*: New York, Russell & Russell, 1957, p.292

The moral character of the clergy had not improved during the busy and eventful years of which marked the first quarter of the sixteenth century. It is said that Luther once said, “that the movement would have made little headway against the papacy if clerical celibacy had been observed as it was in the time of Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose and that ‘celibacy was something remarkable in the eyes of the world, a thing that makes a man angelic’”<sup>1</sup>

Concubinage among priests was wide spread. Worst of all, the guilty ones were granting absolution to each other, and mutually dispensing themselves from confession. An example of the degradation of the priesthood was an incident in a town in Germany where three priests defiled the sacredness of Ash Wednesday by fiercely fighting over a courtesan in a house. There is a story of a good prelate who smiled at those who urged the propriety of celibacy, and declared his belief in the impossibility of chastity among men, who like the clergy, were pampered with high living and tempted by indolence. Those who professed to keep their vows inviolate, he denounced as hypocrites of the worst description, and he deemed them far worse than the brethren who sought to avoid unnecessary scandal by decently keeping their concubines at home.<sup>2</sup>

In 1512, a bishop complained that many of his priests maintained their concubines so openly, that it would appear as though they saw neither sin nor scandal in such conduct. In Switzerland, the citizens rebuked the incontinence of priests, whose numerous children were accustomed to earn a living by beggary in the streets. The dean of a chapter had to defy excommunication launched at him for buying a house near the Church in which he kept his mistress. Others had taken to themselves the wives of citizens and refused to give them up. The greatest grievance of which they had been guilty, was the injury which their competition inflicted on the public brothel of the town. In fact, sacerdotal immorality, whether of priests or monks, was not something hidden in the public mind.

At the Council of Trent (1563), the stand taken at the second Lateran Council was confirmed: “If anyone says that clerics with higher orders or religious with solemn vows can enter into valid marriage, let him anathema”; this solemn obligation of celibacy was finally included into the code of Canon Law (can. 132#1). Another canon similarly anathematized all who dared to assert that married state was more worthy than virginity, or that it was not better to live in celibacy than married.<sup>3</sup>

In 1959, Fr. Spiazzi, a renowned Italian Dominican cautiously published some objections to the celibacy law with an eye to the forthcoming Second Vatican Council. His article became a sensation. Not long afterwards, Pope John XXIII made known that no relaxation of the celibacy law was to be expected. During the Synod of Rome in 1960, with the sincere approval of all the clergy of the city, the Pope said, It deeply hurts us.....that anyone can dream that the Church will deliberately or even suitably renounce what from the time immemorial has been, and still remains one of the purest and noblest glories of her priesthood.”<sup>4</sup> Since then, many articles have been written in many countries and in different tongues which cast doubt on the desirability of of an automatic coupling of celibacy and priesthood, As Schilleebeckx concludes

Seen against the background of the church’s past, the present celibacy crisis is obviously not a new or exceptional phenomenon. It is only one manifestation of a

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<sup>1</sup> Saint Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* B48, quoted by Joseph Lacuyer. *What is a Priest?* New York, Hawthorn, p.87

<sup>2</sup> Herber A, *Priestly celibacy – Recurrent Battle and Lasting Values.* Houson, Lumen Christi Press, 1970, p.364

<sup>3</sup> Lea, H. *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy.* p.464

<sup>4</sup> Pope John XXIII, Second Allocution to the Roman Synod. AAS 52, pp. 235-36.

tendency which has been present throughout history of the church, at times latent and at other times more pronounced, and which exists alongside another tendency which has been predominant since the days of the early church. There is no need for alarm. The problem is certainly real and not in the least superficial.<sup>1</sup>

#### D: Our Contemporary Society – The African World

Africa since the time immemorial has been at the cross-road of history. It is because of this naked fact that European slave merchants embarked upon slave trade of Africa, resulting in the massive exportation of thousands of Africans to the Americas and the Carribean. This fact of history has equally remained the point of departure for all other ills and allegations and smearing of the black continent. For years ago, when the AIDS epidemic was first discovered, the Western researchers had to find a way of hooking the genesis of this “maladie terrible” to the black continent, and it stuck. And so, we Africans are at the origin of HIV/AIDS that has baffled researchers the world over. Even now, statistics has it that over eighty percent of the infected people of the world are Africans or people of African origin.

Just a few years ago, before the clergy sexual abuse came to light, exactly on March 16, 2001, the cover story publication of the National Catholic Reporter (NCR) in the United States alleged a massive and continuous sexual abuse of African nuns by African Catholic bishops and clergy. Vatican’s reporter supported this outrageous smearing of the hierarchy of the continent by admitting that the problem was known and restricted to one geographical area (Africa). This is coming at the heels of the great agitation in the United States for optional celibacy, ordination of women and when the clergy themselves are against any move to use increasingly multiplying African priests and religious to solve their own problems of decreasing number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The question is why all these? Why choose to announce this their own so called findings on the flaws of the Church in Africa at this point in time? As David Ihenacho rightly stated in his reaction to this defamatory article:

And the strategy is simple indeed: plant a poisoned pill in the mind of the West concerning the young African Church. And with wicked innuendoes incapacitate the African priests wherever they may surface in the world. Present them as professional sex-predators and ignorant clergymen. Showcase their nuns as naïve religious, hopeless victims of sex-obsessed and perverted clergy, and uneducated church groupies.<sup>2</sup>

#### E: The Reality of Our Present Times

Man has a wounded nature in himself. The guilt and effects of Adam’s sins are passed on to their descendants as they originate from their parents at conception. Baptism removes the guilt of the original sin, but the effects remain embedded in our nature, For example, our passions often rebel against reason. The body and its organs and senses are subject to disorders of all kinds, and in particular very prone to the enjoyment of sensuality. The passion of lust has now become a master passion which exercises a tyrannical sway over the entire human family and destroys its unhappy victims by millions: presidents have fallen, prime-ministers

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<sup>1</sup> Schillibeekcx, E. *Celibacy*. New York, Sheed & Ward, 1967, p.50

<sup>2</sup> David Ihenacho responding to the allegation of sexual abuse of African nuns by African bishops and clergy as contained in the National Catholic Reporter of March 16, 2001. (Note here that no one is saying that African bishops and clergy are free from sexual abuse allegations; the problem with the West is why notice the speck in the brother’s eye but do not notice the log that in their own eyes).

have fallen, Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, religious men and women and uncountable number of seminarians have fallen.<sup>1</sup>

The lust of our age has defiled every type of constraint, and in extreme cases has led men to desire animals. The temptation of lust incites a man to the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain at all costs to self-indulgence and hedonism, to live dominated by desire and fear rather by authentic meaning and value. In our members, there is a slumbering inclination towards desire. With its thundering effect, it causes a very ugly fire to be kindled in our flesh. Under this condition, God, heaven and hell are unreal, as all our attention is now focused on our victim of carnal desire. Such a lust blackens out the mind and the power of decision making is taken away. As a consequence, powers of the body, the mind and the soul seem to disappear and demonstrate equivocally that they are their own masters.<sup>2</sup>

Since the West made their defamatory allegation against the Nigerian Church and its hierarchy, the veil of their hypocrisy has fallen and it is now known they are even worse than their accused. It is not easy to keep count of how many of their church's dignitaries have been forced out of office. In fact many have been defrocked, some are in prison or in forced retirement. No one can say for certain how many billions of dollars the dioceses and Religious Orders and Congregations of men and women have paid out in compensation for the damages caused by the long term effect of sexual abuse. The news media, the Television and Internet are daily awash with ugly news of new discoveries and cover-up by the authorities. Actually, the authorities knew about the sexual records of those predators, but rather preferred transferring them from one parish to another.

Writing in the Newsweek Magazine of 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2016, on the topic of "Is the Catholic Church tarnished beyond repair", Brendan Canavan affirms that "while the headlines from child sex abuse by priests and the subsequent cover-ups have irreparably damaged the Catholic brand, there is a more fundamental threat: irrelevance"<sup>3</sup> He also adds that, "In a globalized and hyper-connected world, scandals, hypocrisy, lies, financial cover-ups and generally obfuscated moral messages are shared, picked apart and rejected faster than ever".

Thanks be to God, Our society in Africa and in Nigeria is a closed society, and not an open society like the West. Who knows what would have happened if our society here has been an open society? Perhaps, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, priests, religious men and women and even seminarians would have now been on the run for various scandalous activities and cover-ups.

I have had the opportunity of an office I held in the recent past to travel around Africa, and I have discovered the problem facing Africans in area of celibacy are the same problems facing other people throughout the world. There are numerous irresponsible sexual acts here and there. Accusations and counter accusations abound among the clergy and religious. At times, nobody is spared, not even the bishops, a sign that celibate life and the 'gift of celibacy' to which the Council often refers, are yet to be deeply rooted in many of us. The generality of the people, both Catholics and non-Catholics have come to know about the double standard and hypocrisy of the lives of some of the clergy and religious, and they are just tolerating us

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<sup>1</sup> Otuibe, C.A. *Why Am I tempted?* Lagos. Dominican Publications, 2000. p. 36, See also Benjy Ezulike in *The Thinker Magazine*, 2000-2001 edition p.4 where he says that along that line: "It does seem that sex instinct has remained one instinct in man where his mastery over himself is constantly subjected to trial. It remains an instinct so powerful that often, it seems to block the flow of right judgment".

<sup>2</sup> Otuibe, C.A. *Why Am I Tempted?* p.37

<sup>3</sup> Brendan Canavan, Is the Catholic Church Tarnished Beyond Repair? *Newsweek Magazine*, June 24, 2016

for the sake of Christ. They tolerate some of our priests because of what they represent, and irrespective of the moral life of the priest and irrespective of his sexual orientation. There are too many cover-ups, as long as we know the offenders and then continue to move them up and down. It seems we are all resigned to anything that might happen, and there does not seem to be any more willpower to try to reverse the adverse situation affecting most of the clergy worldwide now.

The age of innocence is gone, and we live now in a permissive society where sexuality is considered essential for the fulfillment of each person. Those who are not sexually active seem to be only half alive. We live in a society where sometimes celibates are looked upon with pity and other times suspicion. There are cases where relatives and friends easily suggest to a cleric to get out and live normal life. Sometimes, there is no sympathy for any form of default as Maurice Izunwa affirms in his article, "Sex and Love", when he says,

Celibates who default in chastity become wrongly presented as abominable and de-potentiated to the points where no theories of *ex opera operato* can salvage. Paradoxically, those who prevail in chastity like successful celibates are not more celebrated as philanthropists.<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting on the Seminary Formation and why men after five, ten or fifteen years of priesthood decide to get married, George Frein has this to say:

The seminary was largely a system of emotional interlocks that fenced them off from creating and acting on their own sexual maturity. As seminarians, they lacked the tools to decide anything psychologically important, because there was little in the seminary that helped develop their decisional powers regarding sexual choices.....But after these young men are ordained, they move away from shore and grow a little. They take responsibilities, they avoid one sentence answers; they risk being losers. It is at this point in their lives that they are psychologically and sexually ready to decide on something as critical as a life commitment to celibacy. After being out of the seminary for a few years, they are the persons they will be for the rest of their lives. They have kicked into the fund of their own personality, they have contributed to what Hegel calls, "the unity of the whole man". Further, they know their sexual needs as well as they know their physical needs<sup>2</sup>.

## F: The Courage to be Chaste

Chaste celibacy or chaste single life means the avoidance of all genital and pre-genital sexual behavior. It also implies a decision to avoid personal relationships of human affection which are likely to be genitally expressed. Chastity for Christians means avoiding sexual satisfaction from auto-eroticism or from deviant behavior. It does not mean isolation, rejection of human love and friendships, or refraining from non-genital behavior related to the expression of one's sexuality. Chastity implies a heroic effort at times to confront the dark and self-centered aspects of one's inner being.<sup>3</sup>

Let us take the example of Saint Paul. He was a man rescued from the depths of sin and death. His life was full of hatred for anyone who confessed the name of Jesus. His hands were equally full of blood from the same reason. At a certain point in his life of sin and hatred, the Lord intervened and made a dramatic and radical change in his life. Paul was converted and became an apostle *par excellence*. One would have thought that after his long ordeal of

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Izunwa, *The Thinker Magazine*, 2000-2001, p.6

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Radcliffe. A Letter to the Order in *IDI*, no. 361, April 1998, p.98

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Groeschel. *The Courage to be Chaste*. New York, the Paulist. 1985, pp.12-13

temptation and sin, Paul would have been saved from further ordeals for the rest of his life. It was not so. His new life in Jesus was that of continuous struggle with temptation:

I don't understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very things that I hate..... So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law that is at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members<sup>1</sup>

Paul explains further that this is a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, the opposition between the natural and the supernatural. One wonders here how despite his great holiness and high rank as an apostle, he was subjected in God's dispensation to what have been violent attacks to his chastity. This is somebody who has been washed by the grace of God and turned inside out. Here is somebody who has boasted of having the gift of chastity and according to him, "I wish all were as I myself am. But each man has his own special gifts from God, one of one kind and one of another" (1 Cor. 7,7).

And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this that it would leave me; but he said to me; 'My Grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.'<sup>2</sup>

We do not exactly know what this thorn on the flesh was for Paul. Commentators do not agree. Some suggest it may be sexual molestation, others, some serious bodily ailment, yet others something that makes him uncomfortable in his body. We can only concur with the generality of opinions here that it may be some sort of sexual harassment by Satan. At any event, the molestation was too sharp that Paul had to complain to the Lord.

From the experience of Saint Paul, we can say that temptation to unchaste actions assail both saints and sinners alike. There is no exemption from this molestation. Temptation of lust must follow us through life as our own shadows. No matter the degree of one's holiness, such temptations must accompany a person until death. Such temptations can become the source of agonizing martyrdom for some people especially for those who over-scrupulous. Let us bear in mind that great holiness and high rank are compatible with many and sever temptations of the unchaste sort. Yet, with all powerful help of God's grace, every man is able, despite his inherent weakness and inclination to sin, to be at all times victorious over his temptations and even to discover strength and power in the very source of his weakness: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12,9).

When you are therefore tempted to acts of un-chastity, at that crucial moment when Satan seems to be on your neck, when the laws of God make no more meaning to you, when you are fixated in going along with any acts of impurity and think there is no more escape, spare a little time to listen to the voice speaking to you in your inner mind. You will still here the same words as the Lord spoke to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you". What does that mean? It means that no matter the weight and severity of the temptation, over and above it, the Lord has given you sufficient graces to overcome it. If the temptation measures some

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7, 15ff)

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 12, 7-9.

eighty percent, you will be quite sure that the Lord has already granted to you some hundred percent to overcome temptation. If at the end you fall, it is no longer Satan, no longer lack of the grace of God, not even that man or woman that is responsible for your sin. You fall prey to sin, because it is a personal decision of your will. The instrument to overcome it was already put in place for you, but you decide to follow the foolish dictates of your mind.

Perhaps, there are no Saints in heaven today who has not had to fight day and night against temptation of all kinds. The life of Saint Augustine is an example of a long drawn out struggle and eventual victory over lust of the human flesh. The first thirty-three years of his life were spent wandering from one religious sect to another, and dabbling in every pleasure especially carnal pleasure. The situation caused so much anguish and pain to his mother, St. Monica that she offered up prayers night and day over many years for the conversion of her son. Through his mother's prayers, Augustine found strength to end an illicit love affair and be converted. Eventually he became the bishop of Hippo in North Africa and one of the greatest doctors of the church "for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12,9).

Dear friends, we all need the courage to be chaste. If you sincerely need this courage, whether you are a priest or priest to be, you must keep holy the rectory, keep holy the fathers' house. Many of these iniquities are committed in the fathers' house. We know now that in our age and time, there is too much bastardization of the priesthood and many bastards have found their way into the priesthood. The bastardization that we are talking about is only perpetrated by a tiny segment of our numbers, perhaps about three or four percent.

There are many priests out there who are trying their very best to live out chaste priestly celibacy. The fact is, according to a common adage, 'when one finger touches oil, it gradually spreads to the rest'. It is now becoming a common saying among priests and laity that many priests have fathered children and keeping mistresses. One thing you have to remember is that these mistresses will not always keep their silence. No matter how much you seal their mouths and lips with money and gifts and over-pampering, one day the veil of hypocrisy will fall and then we shall know you as you really are. One day they will confess especially when these bastard children start asking curious questions about their proper identity.

## G: Avoid Despondency

Despondency is the most effective and dangerous weapon that Satan the enemy of our Salvation can employ to prevent us from making any efforts to be chaste. By despondency, he attacks all the virtues and everything good in us. We feel that we are unable to carry on in our lives all the good deeds that God requires of us. The poor soul is unwilling most of the times to employ the violence against himself which is necessary for amendment. "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Mt. 11, 12). He never goes to the source of his difficulties in order to apply the remedy which reason and religion prescribe. Instead of him making some frantic efforts to remedy his spiritual situation, the person tries to quieten his conscience by the assurance he can do nothing to help himself. My friend, who said that you cannot do anything to help yourself? Who said you cannot conquer the lust of the flesh in you? This is the same ideology employed by great masturbators and fornicators. Deep within themselves, they feel disarmed spiritually and resign themselves to fate.

The greatest danger of a soul caught up with this quagmire type of situation is that he scarcely dares to pray for his own conversion, and forgets, in fact, that God is still full of



goodness and mercy. He forgets God's Almighty power to defend and sustain all those who appeal to him with confidence.

Convince yourself that you can do it and put it continuously in prayer, while at the same time, running away from such situations that have brought you down in the past. Try to avoid idleness which is one of the most dangerous occasions for the activities of the devil. It is only in idleness that a soul wanders into the world of pornography, which unfortunately is within one's reach everywhere now, even in your cell phones.

Do not forget the sacrament of reconciliation. The purpose of the Sacrament of penance is not only for the remission of actual sins, but also for the conferring of graces that fortify us against the passions which lead us into sin. Abstaining from the sacraments can deprive us of these graces and weaken our capacity of resistance. The more you approach the sacrament of reconciliation, the more it starts to dawn on you the enormity of your sins and true need for repentance. As Saint Paul says, "For it is while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation" (Rom. 5, 10-12).

To all the safeguards against this temptation of lust, we must add the exercise of penance both sacramental and extra-sacramental. It humbles the spirit and deadens the passion. It expiates our sins, our faults and negligence and redoubles our vigilance. We commend ourselves today into the protective hand of Almighty God and pray that we may always have the courage to be chaste, the courage to flee from circumstances where the spirit of lust may hold us captive.

## Conclusion

Reading through Paul's pronouncements on sexual morality in his letters, one may get the impression that Paul was shouting "wolf" "wolf" when there was no trace of wolf around. Yet, Paul's pronouncements are in order. They never contradict the Word of God or the commandments of God. Paul was just raising an alarm to help and guide true Christians to live in purity and in sexual discipline. There is a common saying that "to be forewarned is to be forearmed" Yet, there is another one, "In time of peace, prepare for war." A soul which is a frequent victim of temptations should use the intervals to prepare for resistance. A person who starts fighting back only when he is assailed can really have no hope of making it.

The words and pronouncements of Paul still stand the test of our times. They remain part of the inspired Word of God. And we believe that the God who spoke in the past is still the God speaking to us today. God does not change. The Word of God does not change. Despite the insinuations of the modern man and woman to modernize and re-interpret the Word of God to suit their longings and yearnings, the answer of the Church is that the Word of God is not something that changes with time. As it was some two thousand years ago, so it is right now in our present time and circumstances. Idea, mentalities and life styles may change, but not the Word of God. So, my dear friends, we cannot trivialize any of the pronouncements of Paul. The force of the sex morality of Paul still stands and it is for us to follow his guidelines and adopt a lifestyle that will guarantee a chaste celibate life for us all.

Paul was not a fanatic. He was only somebody filled up with the zeal of the Lord. It was still the same zeal that motivated him to do what he did as a fervent Jew. He is now motivated by the zeal of the Lord who has changed him and made him a worthy instrument to bring the light of faith to the Gentile world. Despite his cleansing on the part of Jesus, he

continuously noticed the “spirit and the flesh” was constantly at war in him. He made sure that the flesh never took an upper hand. As we equally face this daily war between the “Spirit and flesh” in our lives, we pray, despite inherent weakness, the Spirit will eventually emerge victorious so that we shall truly live the life that is pleasing to the Lord.

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