

Globethics Repository



The Roman Catholic Church And African Ecumenism (102)

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Uzochukwu, Peter Uche
Publisher	Regnum Books International
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-09-24 09:08:45
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166453

(102) THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND AFRICAN ECUMENISM

Peter Uche Uzochukwu

Introduction

In many African countries today, inter-church relationships are fraught with mistrust. While the mainline churches tend to dismiss the new independent churches as dislocated and immature, the latter, for their part, tend to perceive the former as foreign (pro-West), too rigid and lacking in African concern, content as well as relevance. Each of them vehemently tries to outshine the other in winning public space and reckoning. So, the fear of losing the battle for socio-economic space in society, and the other conjectured fear of being swallowed up by another church in the event of Christian unity, tend to prevent many African churches from any meaningful engagement in ecumenism. The ecumenical movement in this continent is, therefore, in dire need of a strategy or tool that can help churches overcome such fears. To succeed in Africa, the ecumenical process must, therefore, be one that can assist the churches first to develop, in their particular Christian traditions, open-minded profiles and then a mechanism for mutual enrichment among the churches. Such ecumenical drives must assure participating churches that their particular identities will be preserved (even enhanced) as they jointly pursue their fuller collective reality as one Church of Christ.

The current chapter locates such a needed strategy in the Catholic Church's effort at reshaping its self-understanding as the *Family of God*, an image it proposed in 1994, as an ecclesiological tool for homogenising its African region. The chapter highlights the import of that spectacular ecclesiological insight; underscoring its strategic value as the much-needed panacea for ecumenism in Africa.

After highlighting the evolution and content of the preferred model of church for Africa, we shall next stress the model's special ecumenical features; and then argue, in the next two steps, the strategic importance of the *Family of God* model of church as the most apt platform or framework for promoting Christian unity in Africa. What follows, in the next three sub-sections, are the result of such repositioning; then some evaluatory remarks, after which this chapter will draw a tentative conclusion that, once every church achieves some level of inclusiveness and mutual enrichment in its internal structures; and once the churches embrace one another as distinct units of the same one family of God, their journey towards complete unity has begun.

Evolution and Content of an Ecumenically Enabling Catholic Ecclesiological Initiative for Africa

In its Special Assembly for Africa (1994), the global Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church set out to formulate, for its African members, a pertinent model of ecclesiology (namely: the church as the *Family of God*) which they believe could promote the church's enculturation and evangelisation drives in the new millennium and, most importantly, enhance ecclesiastical cohesion in the African region of the church. This preferred model of church takes its inspiration from the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and aims at building on the great value African cultures place on the sense of family. To actually formulate it, the Synod delved into biblical, patristic theological and cultural resources.

After depicting the church as the 'household' of God in which his family lives, the Second Vatican Council taught that it is God's plan to populate his family (the church) with human families.¹ Furthermore,

¹ Second Vatican Council, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*', in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. 2, Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990),

the Council taught that the church is a family of God² that is kept together by a common bond³ and fraternal unity.⁴ Deepening this teaching, John Paul II later taught that the human family is both a communion of persons and a domestic church.⁵ For him, since the church is the *Body of Christ*, it is kept united by its one head, namely Jesus Christ. Finally, he likens the human family to the Trinity,⁶ its originator; describing the family as the cradle of human life and unity since it forms the basis for the unity which God ordained for humanity. According to John Paul II, the family shares in the life and mission of the church.⁷ These insights came to the fore at the 1994 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops.

As it sought for a relevant tool that could promote strong cohesion among its local communities operating in varied socio-cultural spheres of life in Africa, the Synod arrived at the *Family of God* model of church. Presenting the result of the Synod's deliberations, Pope John Paul II had first to confirm that the family and its values occupy a fundamental and widespread position in the life of Africans.⁸ African cultures, he noted, embody an acute sense of solidarity and community life. In Africa particularly, he further noted, the family remains the foundation on which the social edifice is built.⁹ Indeed, community of life in African society is expressed in and through the extended family system.¹⁰ The document does not merely extol the family-like way of life in Africa; it also proposes a family-like form of being for the church and in her approach towards evangelisation.¹¹ By extension, the document proposes family-like dialogues in promoting Christian unity. As we shall shortly argue, this teaching has the potency to homogenize Catholic ecclesiological practices in Africa (and beyond) and then predispose the entire church for wider ecumenical engagement. For want of space, I discuss, in the next few paragraphs, two relevant features of the family way of life that make it a highly efficient tool for promoting Christian unity in Africa.

No. 6. Henceforth, this document will be referred to as *LG*. Again, the church is not only regarded as Christ's body but also a new communion of kinship in which all members are regarded as members of each other. (Second Vatican Council, 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*', in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 2, No. 32). For other aspects of the church's theology of family, see *LG* Nos. 6 and 51, and *GS* Nos. 40 and 92.

² *LG* Nos. 28 and 32 present the Second Vatican Council's foundational teaching on the church as family.

³ *LG* No. 32.

⁴ Second Vatican Council, 'Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*', in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol. 2, No. 2. Henceforth, this document will be cited as *UR*.

⁵ John Paul II, 'On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22nd November 1981', in *Vatican II: More Post Conciliar Documents*, Vatican Collections, 2, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1982), 815-98, No. 21. Henceforth, this document will be cited as *Familiaris Consortio*.

⁶ John Paul II, 'The Family is the Cradle of Life': address to the *Pro Familia* Institute of Brescia, Italy, 23rd April 1994, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, No. 21, 25th May 1994, 2. For him, the family, just like the human person, bears the likeness of God because it is a community of individuals who are united by common destiny and love.

⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, Nos. 49 and 50.

⁸ John Paul II, *The Church in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 'Ecclesia in Africa.'* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), No. 43. Henceforth, this document will be cited as *The Church in Africa*.

⁹ *The Church in Africa*, No. 80.

¹⁰ *The Church in Africa*, No. 43. This is a system whereby relationships of all degrees of sanguinity, marriage or other social affinity, maintain a very close relationship with one another as members of the same family.

¹¹ *The Church in Africa*, No. 57.

Special 'Ecumenical' Features of the Family Way of Life

In the following sub-themes (entitled: Unity in diversity and Unifying mutual enrichment), we try to highlight two features of the family as reasons we consider the family way of life an appropriate framework, or foundation, for promoting Christian unity.

Unity in diversity

The family is a system of intimate and multi-layered relationships based on oneness established between members who, in themselves, retain their distinct natures as individuals. It is the bedrock of loving communion within human community.¹² From the Christian perspective, the family represents a specific expression (though an approximation) of the Trinitarian communion, by which the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, share one being while still existing as three distinct persons. This is the prototype of unity in diversity, which is mirrored in the family. Likewise, members of the human family live in oneness (based, in this case, on their common root and destiny) while respecting the distinctiveness of the individuals and sub-groups that make it up. We consider this unity in diversity – the bedrock of Christian unity.

To nurture this feature, the family is also equipped with inherent mechanisms for resolving disputes as well as reconciling estranged parties within its fold.¹³ In Africa, the family not only galvanizes the unity of its members, but it seeks to foster relational ties with other families, and even tribes.¹⁴ The mode of living in the family entails an interplay of unconditional love, mutual growth and the healthy interdependence of members. The family promotes voluntary fusion and deep cordiality as well as harmony and unity among its members.¹⁵ Indeed, the family's dialectical and dynamic form of communion can provide the churches with naturally appealing principles for their ecclesiological and ecumenical considerations. Little wonder then that some churches in Africa found it so easy to start immediately to incorporate some family features in their ministries and liturgy.¹⁶ The unifying and galvanising roles of the family can constitute, if co-opted in the churches, viable principles of ecclesiological and ecumenical regeneration.¹⁷

¹² Nicholas Fogliacco, 'The Family: An African Metaphor for Trinity and Church', in *Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives*, eds. Patrick Ryan and Cecil McGarry (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001), 128.

¹³ Such mechanisms include family meetings and other occasions like ancestral rituals, funerals, marriage ceremonies, engagement rites, sacrifices, initiation-rituals, etc., where members of the family, led by their elders and heads, gather to discuss and resolve issues. John Mutiso-Mbinda, 'African Background for Community Building', *African Ecclesiastical Review* Vol. 19, no. 5 (1977): 301. See Emmanuel Orobator, 'A Church in Dialogue as the Family of God', in *What Happened at the African Synod?* ed. Cecil MacGarry (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995), 41.

¹⁴ One of the most solemn forms of social pact, through which such extension of ties is achieved, is the blood pact. Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar. *The Church as Family of God, Instrumentum Laboris and Pastoral Letter* (Accra: SECAM Publications, 1998), 65-70. Henceforth, this document will be cited as *Symposium, IL*.

¹⁵ One of the clearest manifestations of these cultural values in Africa is the practice of commensality, i.e. the cultural practice of sharing meals together. *Symposium, IL*, 59.

¹⁶ Citing two cases; that of a Protestant pastor (Willy Mnyagwata) and that of a Catholic diocese (the Diocese of Kasayi Zaire), Kabasele F. Lumbala demonstrates how easily churches in Africa started incorporating components of family life into their ecclesial and liturgical lives. He recounts how Mnyagwata integrated the role of 'elders by blood' in a Christian rite of reconciliation in his church, and how the diocese in Zaire assigned some liturgical roles to families of those to be ordained and those to be professed in their rituals for ordination and religious profession. Kabasele F. Lumbala, 'The Church as Family in Africa', *Concilium* (1995): 96.

¹⁷ Francis A. Sullivan, like many other theologians, is convinced that one way the church can build on what has been established in the Council is by stepping up its efforts to embrace a variety of perspectives to dialogue-in-love. Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (New York: Paulist, 1996), especially 1-11.

Another striking element of the family unity in diversity feature is its ability to hold the tension within its fold even in the face of religious pluralism found among some of its members. In some African traditional settings, for instance, each family or kinship system has its own particular deity to which it collectively pays homage. Yet individual members are allowed to pay allegiance to different deities (outside the family deity) according to their own needs.¹⁸ This inclusiveness in religious practice allows individual members of the same extended family to enjoy their distinctiveness while upholding family unity and common identity. Using the case of a 'kin-focused religion' in West Africa, Wiel Eggen opines that religion in Africa thrives on a deep awareness and respect for one another's destiny. He insists that religious hostility or division, traceable to over-centralization of religious systems, or religious absolutism, has little place in African religious traditions.¹⁹ These innate factors of some African families are viable ingredients for promoting unity among African churches since we have the background that does not extend human antagonism to the realm of the gods.

As we have seen, the family's ability to retain this unique feature of unity in diversity,²⁰ is strengthened by its inherent mechanisms for group management, conflict resolution and reconciliation.²¹ These and other numerous family values can be relied upon in trying to satisfy the contemporary yearning for borderless, participatory and healing communities.²² They obviously led the Catholic Church into adopting the *Family of God* model of church as a tool for promoting its internal ecclesiastical cohesion in the African region.

Unifying mutual Enrichment

The average African family embraces not only a variety of degrees of consanguinity²³ but also an expansive network of relationships and co-existences of individual members (some of whom belong to different religious traditions); yet its unity is not hampered. An outstanding feature of the African family matrix is the interdependency of many households who mutually build each other up towards one formidable family lineage. These elements of mutual complementarity could hold the key to the future development of the contemporary ecumenical movement in Africa. Up to now, some church members still perceive ecumenism as an uncanny development in Christianity that is capable of misleading them into betraying their particular traditions. They feel that, by venturing into any ecumenical collaboration, their own 'genuine' elements of Christianity will be mixed up together with the 'not so genuine' elements which they perceive the other churches to have. On the other hand, family members are given to making up for

¹⁸ Symposium, *IL*, 58.

¹⁹ Wiel Eggen, 'Mawu Does Not Kill: On Ewe Kinship-Focused Religion', in *Exchange*, Vol. 31, no. 4 (2002): 342-61, 359. Eggen argues that kin-based traditional religions have no absolutizing tendencies, and so they promote harmony and complementarities among a variety of religious perspectives.

²⁰ Symposium, *IL*, 61.

²¹ African families and communities have traditional rites for reconciliation which can be good resources for reconciling divided Christian communities in Africa. The Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria, as Uzukwu points out, term such ritual 'Igba-ndu', meaning binding life together or – in religious terminology – making a covenant of peace between quarrelling parties. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 86-87. In Igboland (eastern Nigeria), many Christian churches are increasingly drawing from this traditional tradition in settling disputes. Its features include anointing with oil, celebrating Christian services or the drinking of holy water to seal a common bond or to establish new life together between hitherto warring parties.

²² Elisabeth Raiser, 'Inclusive Community', in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3, 1968-2000*, eds. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 243-77, 243.

²³ This includes various layers of consanguineous relationships between grandparents and grandchildren; parents and children; siblings and step-families; uncles, aunts and cousins, as well as between in-laws and other social affinities. Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *The Church in Nigeria, Family of God on Mission: A Pastoral Exhortation to the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful on the First National Pastoral Congress* (Enugu: CIDJAP Press, 2004), No. 55.

whatever is lacking in each other for the sake of their common destiny. So, in a special way, the *Family of God* model can provide the churches and ecclesial communities with a generally acceptable framework for building each other up and embracing one another.²⁴ Such convictions obviously led some mainline churches in Nigeria to take initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s towards the establishment of 'ecumenical institutes'²⁵ in the cities of Ibadan, Lagos and Enugu. These institutes were run by pooling together lecturers from various Christian denominations. Such moves were an emulation of the earlier efforts by some Protestant churches that also began some joint programmes for education, health care, urban ministries and the training of pastors in eastern Nigeria.²⁶ These developments led to a lot of cross-fertilisation of ideas and mutual enrichment among the Christian denominations. Unfortunately, such efforts were not sustained, probably due to the lack of a full-blown development of this motivational insight – the family of God.

For their part, many African churches adopt the principles of the African family matrix in promoting their ecclesial outfits. For instance, Christian Pentecostal communities progressively feature family elements and values, such as the titles of 'brothers' and 'sisters', family-like fellowships, mutual interfaces etc., while many institutional outfits of the African Initiated Churches are becoming increasingly structured in the forms of close-knit groups or communions built around some charismatic figures.²⁷

Thus, to achieve the realisation of the full reality of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,²⁸ churches seem to have no other option than to complement one another. This could be one of the greatest sources of motivation for the churches in re-awakening their dormant ecumenical vision and zeal. Thus, the 1994 Synod of Bishops' efforts in embracing the separated churches and ecclesial communities as *households of faith*²⁹ remains a very promising move. This insight may not be new in Christianity but could be very catalytic in heightening the ecumenical momentum of our time.

Our goal in highlighting the *Family of God* model of the church is to encourage the churches to jointly embark upon the process of mutual enrichment of one another in order to realise their full (but not an all-absorbing) unity in the one Church of Christ. So, introducing this family principle of mutual complementarities into the ecumenical journey of the churches will surely help them overcome their hitherto prevailing fear of being swallowed up by one another. This is more timely since it has been argued that separation among the churches has not destroyed their essential unity.³⁰ Mutual edification, if embraced, could result into churches embracing each other's basic Christian tenets and structures, in their

²⁴ According to surveys conducted by the Faith and Order Movement, church union negotiations show increasing embrace of the organic pattern of unity among the uniting churches who are often referred to as 'family' or 'family of churches'. Thomas F. Best and Church Union correspondents, 'Survey of Church Union Negotiations 2003-2006', *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 58, issue 3-4, (2006): 298. See Edwin Uzochukwu Okonkwo, *Praying in Communion with the Saints* (Enugu, Nigeria: SNAAP Press, 2011), 44-45. According to these scholars, many of these negotiations feature the urge to give specific and, especially, organic patterns to Christian unity, which we argue that the family model can provide.

²⁵ Anthony Chike Idigo, *Ecumenism in the Wake of the New Evangelisation in Nigeria* (Enugu, Nigeria: SNAAP Press, 2002), 23.

²⁶ Idigo, *Ecumenism in the Wake*, 23. Such included moves to expound commonly the basic Christian (Nicene) Creed and the two sacraments of baptism and the eucharist by the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches in Nigeria.

²⁷ Laurenti Magesa, 'African Ecclesiologies', in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, eds. Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 71.

²⁸ John Paul II, 'On Commitment to Ecumenism, in *Ut Unum Sint*', *Origins* 25 (1995): 50-72, No. 78. Henceforth, this document will be cited as *Ut Unum Sint*.

²⁹ Symposium, *IL*, 124-27.

³⁰ Henk Witte, 'Building Ecumenical Community at the Local Level: A Case Study', in *Of All Times and of All Places: Protestants and Catholics on the Church Local and Universal*, eds. Leo J. Koffeman and Henk Witte (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Meinema, 2001), 216.

legitimate differences, while being open for mutual transformation.³¹ There is thus no doubt that the idea of mutual complementarity (which this notion of the church as the family of God embodies) can lead the churches to rediscover the common heritage of early Christianity and help them grow together towards unity as units or households within the same family of God.

Church as Family of God: New Catholic Self-Repositioning, New Ecumenical Vigour in Africa

A new wave of Ecumenical re-awakening in African Catholicism

Before the 1965 promulgation of the decree on ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*,³² the Catholic Church never officially belonged to any national, regional or even the World Council of Churches. Forty years later, however (as Brian Farrell also noted in his 2005 assessment of the impact of the decree on the life of the church), ‘the Catholic Church is now a member of seventy of the existing 120 national councils of churches, and takes part in three out of seven regional councils of churches, and in seven regional councils associated with the World Council of Churches’.³³ Farrell’s survey further notes that the Catholic Church has become ‘a member of fourteen national Christian councils or councils of churches in Africa, three in Asia, ten in Oceania, twelve in the Caribbean, twenty-five in Europe, one in North America, and five in South America’. As it pertains to the joining of national Christian associations in Africa, while some Catholic churches took early steps in pioneering and becoming full members (as in Nigeria where Catholic and Anglican church leaders jointly pioneered the formation, on 27th August 1976, of the Christian Association of Nigeria with the Catholic Cardinal Ekandem as its first president), others merely joined an already existing national councils of churches (as the South African Catholic Church did only in 1995³⁴). Again, Catholic dioceses in Nigeria, as in many other African countries, now have commissions both for ecumenism and also (fully or partially) trained personnel dedicated to the task of promoting Christian unity in their localities. Regarding ecumenical dialogue, Farrell’s report further reveals that 42 out of 83 Catholic Bishops’ National Conferences did declare, in their responses to the survey inquiry, that the Catholic

³¹ As Cassidy noted, the situation by which the spiritual richness of the Eastern monastic tradition ‘flowed over into’ the western church, in spite of the churches’ separation, could be described as one of such instances of mutual edification among the churches. Edward Idris Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2005), 17. Another instance of inter-church growing together relates to the evolution of issues of conciliarity and primacy among Anglican and Catholic churches. Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report, Windsor, September 1981* (London: SPCK, 1982), 98. Such emerging realities include ‘new forms of regional primacy’ in both traditions like the elective presidencies of Roman Catholic Episcopal conferences and certain elective primacies in the Anglican Communion. *The Final Report, Windsor*, 76.

³² Second Vatican Council, ‘Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*’, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. 2, Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), No. 8. Henceforth, this document will be cited as *UR*.

³³ Bishop Brian Farrell, ‘Ecumenism Today: The Situation in the Catholic Church’: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20041121_farrell-ecumenismo_en.html (accessed 12 July, 2015). This was a presentation made by Brian Farrell, as Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to the international meeting held near Rome to mark the 40th anniversary of the promulgation, on 21st November 1964, of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

³⁴ The Catholic Church in Southern Africa became a full member of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) only in 1995. Although the Second Vatican Council, which ended in 1965, had given an express mandate for the Catholic Church to join the ecumenical movement, the South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) preferred to maintain only observer status in SACC for the thirty years that followed such a mandate. SACBC, *Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: Department for Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue, 2003). Henceforth, this document will be cited as *DESA*.

Church, in these localities, now has permanent structures of dialogue with other churches and communities present in their territories; and that 38 among them have mixed commissions of dialogue.³⁵

Drawing heavily here from a pan-African empirical survey, which the present scholar conducted in 2005 while researching for his, now published, doctoral dissertation, one can affirm that Vatican II ecumenical teaching and directories did usher in among African Catholics an unprecedented awakening to the drive towards Christian unity. For instance, as a respondent from Kenya states, the fact that Kenyan Catholics do now come together and agree to erect common structures for ecumenism is, on its own, a positive sign of ecumenical growth.³⁶ The situation is not different in Uganda where, as was reported, 'we (Christians) are now able to act freely together in social events; where there is equal respect for church leaders and church properties, and there is growing understanding of each other's beliefs and practices.'³⁷ Again, the Catholic Church in Tanzania has come out to join other churches in commonly using the Swahili version of the Bible translated by non-Catholics without making any distinction or discrimination.³⁸ The same obtains in a diocese in Ghana where, as was reported, 'the only version of the Bible available in the vernacular is produced by Protestants, but Catholics appreciate it, in spite of its overtly Protestant orientation'.³⁹ On the other hand, one observes among Catholics a growing appreciation of other Christians more than in earlier times. Indeed, 'in the past', according to one of the respondents from Mali, 'Protestants were regarded as heretics by Catholics but now that has changed.'⁴⁰ Such initiatives do constitute a form of *dialogue of life*, which has the capacity to endorse the needed ecumenical culture in Africa.

Specifically, ecumenical growth in contemporary African Catholicism can be witnessed in three broad areas of life in Africa, namely: human development; socio-cultural rituals for life-enhancement; and sharing in Christian resources. A few insights can suffice here.

Once issues of human development arise, churches quickly put aside their differences. In some cases, the Catholic Church tends to take the lead once a common threat to dignified human existence crops up in society. For instance, after the war in the DR Congo, the Catholic diocese of Basankusu (working with Jesuit Refugee Services), joined the reconstruction of a Protestant hospital in Baringa. In like manner, through some open youth programmes (such as education, sports, reading and video clubs, Bible-sharing, evangelisation), for which the Salesian Fathers of Don Bosco are well known, the Congolese Catholic Church not only promotes community development, but it also fosters ecumenical thought and culture among the members of the churches concerned.⁴¹ In such circumstances, the need to promote human development often overrides denominational differences.

In Africa, life-enhancement rituals are non-denominational. So African Christians tend to overlook their denominational differences in matters regarding the marking (or accomplishment) of vital stages in human life cycles. From this background, marriages or the death of members often serve as occasions for Christians across denominational boundaries to cherish one another. Thus, funerals and wake-keepings are often embarked upon as legitimate opportunities for praying together and for providing mutual consolation among Christians of various traditions.⁴²

³⁵ Farrell, 'Ecumenism Today: The Situation in the Catholic Church': www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20041121_farrell-ecumenismo_en.html (accessed 12 July, 2015).

³⁶ Respondent from Kenya, *Doctoral Research Questionnaire*, Kenya: 2005, 6. I prefer to uphold the anonymity of the respondents, whose expert opinions may not necessarily be the official teaching of their bishops or dioceses.

³⁷ Respondent from Uganda, *Doctoral Research Questionnaire*, Uganda: 2005, 10.

³⁸ Respondent from Tanzania, *Doctoral Research Questionnaire*, Uganda: 2006, 3.

³⁹ Respondent from Ghana, *Doctoral Research Questionnaire* Ghana: 2006, 3.

⁴⁰ Respondent from Mali, *Questionnaire de recherche doctorale*, Mali: April, 2005, 11.

⁴¹ Respondent from Cameroun, *Questionnaire de recherche doctorale*, Cameroun: May 2005, 10.

⁴² Respondent from DR Congo, *Questionnaire de recherche doctorale*, March, 2006, 6.

On the other hand, the issue of sharing in the Christian heritage is becoming a welcome development among some emerging Catholic groups or movements. In a Catholic diocese of the Central African Republic, some religious movements or pious associations, like the Community of the Beatitudes and the Charismatic renewal movement, took some ecumenical initiatives, under the guidance and support of the local church, and organized common prayers with other Christians.⁴³ In some parts of Ghana, representatives of four main historical churches (Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian) started to meet, four times a year, to discuss issues of common interest such as Christian morality, the sacraments, funerals and marriage. They also embarked on some socio-cultural projects, like the Vocational Technical School, which they now jointly own and run.⁴⁴ Likewise, an ecumenical translation of the Bible and the common use of such versions of the Scriptures also help to make young Christians of different traditions feel more united with each other.⁴⁵ Renewal movements in various churches are increasingly imbibing inclusivity (or non-discrimination) in their forms of prayers and evangelical exercises. This posture, which the Charismatic renewal movement, among others, embodies in the Catholic Church, often helps to bring Christians of various traditions together in various parts of Africa.⁴⁶

At this juncture, it needs to be stated that most of the ecumenical structures, namely, commissions for ecumenism (assisted by experts and, where possible, a secretariat at global, national and diocesan levels) and even ecumenical directories, ecumenical institutes, church organs like pastoral councils, ministries and facilities, etc., are still either too weak or non-functional. To sustain the tempo of ecumenical revival in Africa, we contend that uninformed or prejudiced mindsets or behaviour (in the words of John Bluck) need to be addressed, or else they make nonsense of any global policy.⁴⁷ Also, African church leaders and the few experts in ecumenism need to teach more about the life-based and praxis-oriented values, structures and symbols of Christian unity that are available in the *Family of God* approach.

Development of Local Ecumenical Directories:

A vital working tool for Roman Catholic participation in African ecumenism

The Second Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism, *UR*⁴⁸ and the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism,⁴⁹ which are the global norms on ecumenism for Catholics, make provisions for local adaptations and complementarity. Thus, to address their differing contexts effectively, bishops at various local or regional levels are urged by Revised Directory (henceforth *RD*), 'to issue practical norms for the needs and opportunities presented by diverse circumstances in the light of the prescriptions of the supreme Church authority' (*RD* 39 §2). Diocesan commissions are, likewise, enjoined to adapt the decisions of episcopal conferences to their contexts (*RD* 44 and 84) just as Catholic centres of

⁴³ Respondent from a diocese in Central African Republic, June 2006, 9.

⁴⁴ Respondent from Ghana, *Doctoral Research Questionnaire*, Ghana, August 2006, 5.

⁴⁵ Respondent from Cameroun, *Questionnaire de recherche doctorale*, Cameroun, May 2005, 3. See also another respondent from Cameroun, in reply to *Questionnaire de recherche doctorale*, Cameroun, 2005, 6.

⁴⁶ Respondent from DR Congo in reference to *Questionnaire de recherche doctorale*, DR Congo, 2006.

⁴⁷ John Bluck, *Everyday Ecumenism: Can You Take the World Church Home?* Risk Books Series, No. 35 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 3.

⁴⁸ According to the Second Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism, the local church hierarchy can (unless where the statutes of the Bishops' Conference or the Holy See state otherwise), use its discretion in adapting to its local context certain elements in the general policy on sharing in the spiritual heritage of Christians, *Communicatio in Sacris*. *UR*, n. 8.

⁴⁹ Article No. 18 of the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* identifies some factors that call for and, indeed, make imperative the adaptation of the general Catholic policies on ecumenism, to the contexts of the various regions and situations, namely, the diversity of nations, differences of relationships between the Catholic Church and other churches or ecclesial communities on the levels of ecclesiology, collaborations and dialogue. Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City: s.n., 1993). Henceforth this document shall be cited as Revised Directory, or *RD*.

formation or institutes of education are asked to adapt the curriculum and programmes of their ecumenical formation to the actual situations of life of persons and groups undergoing training with them (*RD* 5, 44, 56 and 84).

Acting on these provisions, and being fully convinced that the local African context has its own local ecumenical needs (for which local tools are needed), many dioceses in Africa have issued their own ecumenical directives.⁵⁰ Taking, as a case in point, SACBC's local directory on ecumenism issued in 2003 under the title *Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa (DESA)*, I shall under this sub-section, attempt to highlight the importance of such vital⁵¹ ecumenical tools in Africa. Then I shall also, in the next few paragraphs, point out areas of continuity and discontinuity between the global Catholic document (*RD*) and its local African complements (in this case, *DESA*). Thereafter, I shall investigate how far *DESA* succeeded in exposing the particular ecumenical needs of the area. Then the quality or efficiency of *DESA*'s measures in addressing local needs will be analyzed. Our evaluation of *DESA* will focus on the need for such localized efforts to embrace larger African Catholic communions within a contextualised global Christian perspectives.

A correlation of the directives and policies of *DESA* and *RD* reveals that the former (which is younger) essentially preserves the universal Catholic ecumenical policies and praxis earlier produced by *RD* (an older document). Apart from its profuse references to *RD*, *DESA* also draws insights from a number of Second Vatican Council documents.⁵²

From the perspective of regional African Catholicism, however, it contains little or nothing of the larger African authoritative insights; not even from *Ecclesia in Africa* (rightly described as the most authoritative ecclesiastical document on African Catholicism within the time in question).⁵³ Again, *DESA* lacks inputs from either the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), or other local authorities in Africa. As such, one can argue that the central features of the continent's ecumenical experiences may have been lost on the Southern African document, which actually fails to draw from, or plug into, its surrounding regional ecumenical contingencies or experiences. Indeed, the generous leaning on *RD*⁵⁴ tends to present *DESA* as unduly focusing more on global Catholic interest or ideal with little

⁵⁰ Various local churches in Africa (namely, dioceses, vicariate apostolate / apostolic prefectures, and Episcopal conferences) have, in one way another, responded to the mandate of the Second Vatican Council by issuing some directives on ecumenism. One of the earliest among them was issued in June 1965 at the plenary meeting of the Zambia Episcopal Conference, whose directives to the clergy and laity of the country centred on intercommunion and sacramental or non-sacramental sharing with non-Catholic churches: Adrian Smith, 'Ecumenism in Zambia', *African Ecclesiastical Review* Vol. 9, no. 2, (1967): 103. From the replies to our empirical survey, we discovered that a sizeable number of local churches in Africa have issued some documents on the lines of an ecumenical directory, while the majority has not. We could lay our hands only on *DESA*, the directory from the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC).

⁵¹ South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), *DESA*.

⁵² Such documents include: *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *UR* (*DESA*, No. 8), *Dignitatis Humanae* (see *DESA*, No. 4.1.5) and *Lumen Gentium* (see *DESA*, No. 4.1.5). It also reflects in the Holy See documents like the 1981 document from John Paul II, On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris Consortio* (see *DESA*, Nos. 7.1; 7.3; 7.9) and the *Rite for Christian Initiation* (see *DESA*, Nos. 4.1.6.1).

⁵³ John Paul II variously describes *Ecclesia in Africa* (*EIA*) as a document with very far-reaching objectives. According to him, it is of 'decisive importance' (*EIA*, No. 1), of 'fundamental' relevance (*EIA*, No. 8) and of 'profound significance' (*EIA*, No. 19), first, for the church in Africa, as well as the universal church. Thus, it is difficult to understand why the opportunities offered in such an important document (which surprisingly features only once in *DESA*, and that is in the Preamble) could not be explored in the latter for the benefit of a more culturally relevant (yet universally authentic) local Catholic ecumenical model.

⁵⁴ With references to a total of 107 different articles from the 1993 Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, *DESA* is able to raise its 80 paragraphs of directives and recommendations. A thorough elucidation and local adaptation of *RD*, which *DESA* hopes to achieve by so doing, entails more than a recapitulation of

attention to local realities. With regard to approach, emphasis or orientation, however, while *RD* inductively pursues global ideals, *DESA*, for its part, could be said to be deductively addressing some local ecumenical exigencies of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa.

African cultures, according to Pope John Paul II's exhortation, are blessed with an immense sense of solidarity and community life expressed in extended family systems etc., which should be preserved as part of a priceless cultural heritage.⁵⁵ One of the best ways to preserve this is to apply and institutionalise them in the life of the church, so that Christianity can take deeper root in this part of the world. Apparently motivated by African family values, articles 7.10 and 7.12 of *DESA* urge that full use be made of opportunities afforded in the ecumenical celebration of mixed marriages, and that special consideration be given to spouses in such marriages, who may wish to approach the sacraments together. Such locally inspired directives can help to strengthen the drive towards incorporating, within the ecumenical thrust of African Christianity, typical African communitarian institutions, symbolisms and norms like the extended family as well as other ties or bonds of social solidarity. Nevertheless, *DESA*'s provision in this direction is insufficient.

Two of the greatest ecumenical challenges facing African churches, which are sorely missed in *DESA*, have to do with re-establishing mutual trust, or the healing of past memories,⁵⁶ among innumerable numbers of independent churches, and developing an effective ecumenical training programme. Indeed, mutual trust is a critical factor in deepening any relationship between two persons; hence forgiveness and reconciliation stand out as key factors in African ecumenism. Again, the kenotic spirit and skills entailed in Christian reconciliation cannot be imbibed simply from institutional mandates or theological dialogues, provided for in such directories. Rather, a sound and holistic ecumenical formation (both in classrooms and in real-life ecumenical contexts), is sorely needed. Such hardly yet exists anywhere in Africa and sadly does not seem to be well provided for in *DESA*. For instance, concerning ecumenical formation, while *DESA* nn. 3.4 and 3.5 instruct that it should be given to lay members and future priests, it seems, however, to make no clear provision for the training of serving clerics, let alone experts, or even bishops (whose impact on local ecumenism can have highly definitive results).

RD; it also involves a creative reading and application of *RD*, in such a way that can even enrich the general Catholic ecumenical tradition.

⁵⁵ *EIA*, No. 43.

⁵⁶ In the case of South Africa, for instance, it is obvious that many Christian denominations share in one form of guilt or another regarding the roles they played or omitted to play during the apartheid era. Jurgens Hendriks and Johannes Erasmus, 'Interpreting the New Religious Landscape in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 109 (2001): 65. See also D. Louw, 'The Healing Power of Forgiveness', in *Meeting the Future: Christian Leadership in South Africa*, eds. Duncan Buchanan and Jurgens H. Hendriks (Randburg, South Africa: Knowledge Resources, 1995), 149-156. In one case, quoting the church's resolution in a 1960 consultation. J.W. Hofmeyr, J.A. Millard and C.J.J. Froneman accuse the Dutch Reformed Church of having supported the apartheid policy as 'the only realistic solution for race relations in South Africa'. See J.W. Hofmeyr, J.A. Millard, C.J.J. Froneman (eds.), *History of the Church in South Africa: A Document and Source Book* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1991), 216. Tristan Borer, in the same vein, presents the Catholic Church, under the auspices of SACBC, as having dragged its feet both in joining the South African Council of Churches (SACC), and in bringing itself to overtly condemn apartheid or declare the apartheid regime illegitimate. For further reading, Tristan Anne Borer, *Challenging the State: Churches as Political Actors in South Africa 1980-1994* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998). Later in this work, this scholar also accuses SACC of having refrained from an outright condemnation of the new reformed apartheid constitution. T.A. Borer, *Challenging the State*, 80. So, in one way or the other, Christian bodies did not fully meet each other's expectations which, somehow, may still remain a barrier to smooth post-apartheid relationships. Thus, they need to embrace the option of asking for (or giving) pardon and forgiveness in the new dispensation, if their ecumenical advances to one another are not to be marred by old prejudices and grudges.

Overall, the current effort at raising local ecumenical directories remains not only a very useful means of exposing the interplay between local and universal exigencies and demands in the same church. It is also a way of exploring the church's rich diversity, whilst promoting its global catholicity. Such local African ecumenical directories could form the basis for a unique African contribution to the global ecumenical enterprise.

New thinking and forms of cohesion and co-belonging in Africa

Promoting ecumenism in and through the 'family of God' promises to make the following ecumenical inroads: evolving an inclusive ecclesiology and inserting the principles of Christian unity within the ambience of human reality. It also entails, in our view, the grounding of ecumenism in the living experience of Christians. By this provision, Catholics seem to have been awakened to the call to embrace Christian unity as a vital condition of Christian, as well as human, life.

Today, there have consequently emerged structural bonds (in the forms of pan-African Bishops' Conferences (or SECAM), Pan-African Roman Catholic Clergy Conference, the pan-African Congress for Catholic Laity, etc.), binding Catholic members, thoughts and structures in Africa together in a spirit of inter-connectedness and cohesion. Furthermore, as the global Catholic Church currently prepares for the Synod on the Family, theologians in Africa have also evolved a common platform for galvanizing African input at the Synod. It holds then, by extension, that global ecumenical movements can succeed, in the African Church and Christianity, suspicious as it is of the historical subjugation, paternalism, and haughtiness of western Christianity,⁵⁷ if it adopts home-grown African apparel and indigenous accessories such as those found in the *Family of God* model.

Within this approach, ecumenical structures, operational frameworks and values, as well as inter-church relationships, can be fed with the basic principles and values of the family institution. In a sense, just as evangelisation is said to be lifeless unless families radiate holiness,⁵⁸ so also, ecumenism would be sterile unless it promotes existential unity at the centre of which is the family – the acclaimed heart of human community. In the *Family of God* model, the church seems to have discovered a commonly acceptable and flexible framework for unity.

Evaluation

Every system has its own shortcomings. In the next paragraphs, therefore, we shall briefly identify as well as try to divest the African family matrix of its negative tendencies. First, as the Synod notes, families in Africa are faced with some challenges such as exclusivism, tribalism and parochialism, as well as the lack

⁵⁷ According to a recent survey of church leaders and institutions in the various regions of Africa, the western church and Christianity played a key role in facilitating colonialism, bigotry and slavery in Africa, and therefore cannot absolve itself of complicity in the historical injustices against Africans. So local African Christians are not so keen in partnering with any global ecumenical strategy unless proper forgiveness is sought from Africa and African interests and values incorporated in such a strategy. All Africa Conference of Churches, 'Report of the Study on African Ecumenical Engagement with the Consultation Process: Towards a Joint EU-Africa Strategy': [www.aprodev.eu/files/Africa_ACP/EU_Africa/Report%20of%20the%20Study%20on%20Joint%20EU-Africa%20Strategy%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.aprodev.eu/files/Africa_ACP/EU_Africa/Report%20of%20the%20Study%20on%20Joint%20EU-Africa%20Strategy%20(3).pdf). See also European Centre for Development Policy Management (2007) Outline for the Joint EU-Africa Strategy as Endorsed by the Ministerial Troika Meeting of 15th May 2007: <http://europafrica.org> (accessed 12 June, 2007); NEPAD (2001) *The New Partnership for Africa's Development* (Pretoria: NEPAD); NEPAD (2003) *A Summary of NEPAD Action Plans* (Pretoria: NEPAD); W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania: Tanzanian Publishing House, 1973).

⁵⁸ This is stated in Camillo Ruini's letter, as the vicar of the Pope, to families in 1994. Camillo Ruini, 'Unless Families Radiate Holiness, the New Evangelization is Lifeless', in *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, No. 23, 8th June, 1994, 7.

of some Christian ideals in the African approach to marriage and family.⁵⁹ The goal here is to analyse the weakness of the family (both as an institution and as a way of living), in the bid to strengthen and reposition it for better service towards the goal of Christian unity.

Africans tend to pay undue allegiance to blood relationships in such a way that they can go to the extreme of denying justice to non-relatives; claiming that 'blood is thicker than water'.⁶⁰ This misconception of the true purpose of family-relatedness, which arises from a somewhat exclusive understanding of love, justice and solidarity, leads to the vices of nepotism, tribalism and ethnicism in Africa. So does the other extreme, seen in the statements of Albert Obiefuna, who argues that a fellow Christian is more a brother or sister than a blood relative who is non-Christian.⁶¹ Both conceptions employ the same exclusivist logic of 'We and They', and are thus guilty of the same error, namely, exclusion. Both cases end up erecting, rather than breaking down, barriers. Such notions of the family contradict the universal ethos of Christ's love, which Christianity preaches and, if not corrected, can weaken the foundation of any ecclesiology or ecumenism that is based on them.

One can argue that the tendency of the family system to condone nepotism and favouritism⁶² can present the family model as less suitable for ecumenism since it can lead churches into taking closed and particularist postures⁶³ in ecumenical interactions. As a panacea, the values of objective solidarity⁶⁴ for which the African family is known, should rather be highlighted instead. A Christian approach, in correcting such negative traits, is to immerse the African family in the Christian mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Exemplifying the universal love of God the Father, Jesus Christ died to save and reconcile all. The Holy Spirit, who is generated from the Father and the Son, bring new life and growth wherever God wills. In a move that accords a higher value to the human family, into which he himself was also born at the Incarnation, Christ announced, for all, a new birth from on high (John 3:3) that is brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). Through Christ himself, the visible boundaries of the biological family expand to include all human beings (Eph. 2:13-14; 3:16). So now, irrespective of their biological family lineage, tribal or racial background, all believers in Christ have been adopted as God's children (Rom. 8:23; Gal. 4:5). These insights can reinforce the ecumenical value of the African Christian family.

The Christian family in Africa, thus inserted in the transcendent and universal love of the Christian God⁶⁵ becomes a veritable symbol for the unity of Christians. Indeed, instead of condoning ethnicism and exclusivism, such a transformed sense of the family rather helps to correct the said negative tendencies in the African family and empowers Christians to rise above the particularist tendency of the biological family.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ *The Church in Africa*, No. 50.

⁶⁰ Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *The Church in Nigeria*, No. 54.

⁶¹ Albert K. Obiefuna, 'Presenting the Church as a Family to Christians in Africa: A Presentation to the th General Congregation of the Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Africa', *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly edition in English, No. 17, 27 April, 1994), 9.

⁶² Mercy Amba Oduyoye, 'The African Family as a Symbol of Ecumenism', *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 43, issue 4, October (1991): 465-478.

⁶³ André Birmelé (ed), *Local Ecumenism: How Church Unity is Seen and Practised by Congregations* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1984), 35.

⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, *Africa's Commitment (Africae Munus): Post Synodal Exhortation of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011), No. 91.

⁶⁵ African Christians appreciate the universal nature of Christian love, which recognizes all human beings as not only lovable and equal but also interrelated: Eunice Kamara, 'Love as the Basis of Universalism', *African Ecclesiastical Review* Vol. 36, (1994): 380.

⁶⁶ Lawrence Nwankwo, 'From Power Christianity to Christianity that Empowers: Towards a Theology of Empowerment in the Nigerian Context.' Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Theology, K.U. Leuven, Leuven, 2004, 360 and 445.

All said and done, the fact that this proposal on the church as *Family of God* resonates well with the African context is unmistakable. Within a few months after its official articulation in the 1994 Synod, elements of family began immediately, as stated above, to spring forth in the ecclesial and liturgical life of local African communities of the church. Another reason the *Family of God* model (profiled with the African extended-family principles) enjoys widespread acceptance among the churches is that it presents the Church of Christ in a flexible mould, which can easily be embraced by the churches without fear of losing their distinctiveness. Thus, divested of its negative tendencies, the *Family of God* model of the church can help the churches realise their contemporary ecumenical dreams. What needs to be stated here, however, is that Catholic ecumenical growth and inter-church engagement seem to be uneven in some national or regional contexts in Africa; in some places it is very robust while in others it appears to be very weak. Again, in some areas, we see the Catholic Church fully joining in some inter-church ecumenical ventures, while in other areas, it is not involved.

This is due to various reasons bordering on differences in the ecumenical zeal and commitment on the part of some local ordinaries or episcopal conferences (under whose direct guidance local or regional ecumenism falls squarely on the Catholic Church). Other reasons include rough ecumenical terrain, unappealing or unclear objectives in some ecumenical circles, and the amorphous nature, as well as the un-ecumenical stance of some independent churches – and not forgetting fluctuations in ecumenical momentum.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that the *Family of God* model of Church has really had an effect on African Catholicism in a positive ecumenical manner. No doubt therefore that a further theological harnessing of the rich resources available in this model, first by the Catholic Church, and then by the Christian denominations and communities in Africa, can further promote new self-understanding and ecumenical repositioning in view of greater ecumenical growth among the churches. Also, a good embrace of this model by the churches will surely help them to develop ingenious and enduring capacities for promoting Christian unity in Africa. In fact, if African Christianity really hopes to generate a unique voice and momentum within the global ecumenical movement, it has to be along these lines. Thus, this presentation is convinced that anchoring Christian unity in the (family) existential realm of Christians could hold the key to unlocking the ecumenical regeneration of African Catholicism and Christianity. It could also be one of the best contributions Africa could make to the contemporary global ecumenical drive.

Bibliography

- All Africa Conference of Churches, 'Report of the Study on African Ecumenical Engagement with the Consultation Process Towards a Joint EU-Africa Strategy.' [www.aprodev.eu/files/Africa_ACP/EUAfrica/Report%20of%20the%20Study%20on%20Joint%20EU-Africa%20Strategy%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.aprodev.eu/files/Africa_ACP/EUAfrica/Report%20of%20the%20Study%20on%20Joint%20EU-Africa%20Strategy%20(3).pdf) (accessed 12 June, 2007).
- Best, F. Thomas, and Church Union correspondents, 'Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1992-1994.' *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 47, (1995): 70-130.
- _____. 'Survey of Church Union Negotiations 1994-1996.' *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 49, (1997): 223-61.
- _____. 'Survey of Church Union Negotiations 2003-2006.' *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 58, issue 3-4, (2006): 297-385.
- Birmelé, André (ed.), *Local Ecumenism: How Church Unity is Seen and Practised by Congregations*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1984.

- Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Final Report, Windsor, September 1981*. London: SPCK, 1982.
- Bluck, John, *Everyday Ecumenism: Can You Take the World Church Home?* Risk Books Series, No. 35. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987.
- Benedict XVI, *Africa's Commitment (Africae Munus): Post Synodal Exhortation of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011.
- Cassidy, Edward Idris, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate*. New York: Paulist Press, 2005.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *The Church in Nigeria, Family of God on Mission: A Pastoral Exhortation to the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful on the First National Pastoral Congress*. Enugu, Nigeria: CIDJAP Press, 2004.
- Eggen, Wiel, 'Mawu Does Not Kill: On Ewe Kinship-Focused Religion.' *Exchange* Vol. 31, no. 4, (2002): 342-61.
- Fogliacco, Nicholas, 'The Family: An African Metaphor for Trinity and Church.' In *Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives*, edited by Peter Kayandogo and Cecil McGarry, 120-58. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001.
- Idigo, Chike, *Ecumenism in the Wake of the New Evangelisation in Nigeria*. Enugu, Nigeria: SNAAP Press, 2002.
- John Paul II, 'On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22nd November 1981', in *Vatican II: More Post Conciliar Documents*, 815-898. Vatican Collections, 2, Austin Flannery (ed). Northport, NY: Costello, 1982.
- _____. 'The Family is the Cradle of Life'. Address to the *Pro Familia* Institute of Brescia, Italy, 23rd April 1994', in *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, No. 21, 25th May 1994, 2.
- _____. *The Church in Africa: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 'Ecclesia in Africa'*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.
- _____. 'On Commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*', in *Origins* 25 (1995): 50-72.
- Kamara, Eunice, 'Love as the Basis of Universalism.' *African Ecclesiastical Review* Vol. 36, (1994): 379-90.
- Lumbala, Kabasele F. 'The Church as Family in Africa.' *Concilium* (1995): 93-98.
- Magesa, Laurenti, 'African Ecclesiologies.' In *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, edied by Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Mutiso-Mbinda, John, 'African Background for Community Building.' *African Ecclesiastical Review* Vol. 19, (1977): 299-306.
- Nwankwo, Lawrence. 'From Power Christianity to Christianity that Empowers: Towards a Theology of Empowerment in the Nigerian Context.' Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Theology, K.U. Leuven, Leuven, 2004.
- Obiefuna, K. Albert, 'Presenting the Church as a Family to Christians in Africa: A Presentation to the Fourth General Congregation of the Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Africa.' *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, No. 17, 27th April 1994, 9.
- Oduyoye, Mercy A, 'The African Family as a Symbol of Ecumenism.' *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 43, issue 4, October (1991): 465-478.
- Okonkwo, Izuchukwu Edwin, *Praying in Communion with the Saints*. Enugu, Nigeria: SNAAP Press, 2011.
- Orobator, Emmanuel, 'A Church in Dialogue as the Family of God.' In *What Happened at the African Synod?* Edited by Cecil MacGarry, 33-50. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.
- Raiser, Elisabeth, 'Inclusive Community.' In *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1968-2000*, Volume 3, edited by John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Georges Tsetsis, 243-277. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004.

- Rodney, W., *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania: Tanzanian Publishing House, 1973.
- Ruini, Camillo, 'Unless Families Radiate Holiness, the New Evangelization is Lifeless.' In *L'Osservatore Romano*, weekly edition in English, No. 23, 8th June, 1994.
- Second Vatican Council, 'Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*.' In *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. 2, Trent to Vatican II*, edited by Norman P. Tanner, 908-920. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990.
- Second Vatican Council, 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.' In *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. 2, Trent to Vatican II*, edited by Norman P. Tanner, 849-900. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990.
- South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), *Directory on Ecumenism for Southern Africa*. Pretoria, South Africa: Department for Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue, 2003.
- Sullivan, A. Francis, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium*. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar: *The Church as Family of God, Instrumentum Laboris and Pastoral Letter*. Accra, Ghana: SECAM Publications, 1998.
- Uzokwu E. Elochukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Witte, Henk, 'Building Ecumenical Community at the Local Level: A Case Study.' In *Of All Times and of All Places: Protestants and Catholics on the Church Local and Universal*, edited by Leo J. Koffeman and Henk Witte, 207-231. Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Meinema, 2001.