

# Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

## Catholic Social Teaching, Historical Overview and Application to the Challenges of Africa

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
Authors	Ike, Obiora F.
Publisher	Printed and bounded by BEW IT LTD
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-07-02 09:55:26
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166575">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166575</a>

# **Catholic Social Teaching, Historical Overview and Application to the Challenges of Africa**

**Obiora F. Ike**

© **Obiora F. Ike, 2016**

**ISBN: 978 – 978 – 53982 – 3 – 6**

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

***Printed and bounded in Nigeria by***

**BEW IT LTD**

19 Ibiam Street, Uwani,

Enugu.

Tel.: 08038946169, 08180869775

## Foreward

If Chinedu Chukwu of BEW IT LTD and JohnPaul Okolo of the CIDJAP did not get to the root of compiling these papers into a readable literature, the book you have in your hands would still remain in my library as an achieve material gathering dust.

I have therefore good reason to extend profound gratitude to these gentlemen for the painstaking effort in editing and collation of the various papers into one readable volume

The book and the various articles span papers presented in two decades. What our ancients teach is that *scripta manent* (what is written stays). Share the joys and spirit of this research and our effort in helping found our faith actions on sound reason, good conscience and common sense. It is a gift to you the reader on my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary and 30<sup>th</sup> year of priesthood.

**Msgr. Prof. Dr. Obiora Ike**



## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1:</b> A Historical Overview of the Social Teachings of the Church: Problems, Prospects and Possibilities for Adaptation in the Church in Nigeria	<b>I</b>
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Research, Teaching and Practice of Catholic Social Teaching on the African Continent through Communicating Faith in the Diversity of Cultures	<b>37</b>
<b>Chapter 3:</b> Church and Contemporary Nigerian Society: Social Teachings of the Church: past and present – enunciation of relevant theological principles	<b>53</b>
<b>Chapter 4:</b> Catholic Social Thought and the Context of Nigeria	<b>67</b>
<b>Chapter 5:</b> Jesus Christ: The Social Challenge	<b>73</b>
<b>Chapter 6:</b> The Jubilee, the Church and Social Transformation in Nigeria	<b>89</b>
<b>Chapter 7:</b> The Cross, Africa and Challenges on the Christian: A Social-Theological Reflection	<b>101</b>
<b>Chapter 8:</b> The Contributions of the African Church in Historical Perspective	<b>111</b>
<b>Chapter 9:</b> The Challenges of New Evangelization in Nigeria	<b>119</b>

<b>Chapter 10:</b> Evangelisation as Justice and Peace	<b>127</b>
<b>Chapter 11:</b> The Church and Unemployment	<b>143</b>
<b>Chapter 12:</b> Religion and Politics- Perspectives of the Social Teaching of the Church: The Case of Nigeria	<b>155</b>
<b>Chapter 13:</b> The Social Obligations of Property in the African Religious Traditions – Igboland as Context	<b>169</b>
<b>Chapter 14:</b> The Future of Growth, Economic Values and the Media	<b>191</b>
<b>Chapter 15:</b> Towards a Self-Sustaining and Self-Reliant Church: Theological Perspectives from the Social Teaching of the Church and Local Experiences in Development	<b>203</b>
<b>Chapter 16:</b> The Social Teaching of the Church and the Social Problems of Africa: A Historical Overview	<b>215</b>

## *Chapter One*

### **A Historical Overview of the Social Teachings of the Church: Problems, Prospects and Possibilities for Adaptation in the Church in Nigeria**

#### **Introduction:**

The basic summary of this paper shall show that if we have faith, then we must be concerned for justice; once justice is secured, we have laid the necessary foundation for the effective expression of Christian love. Our submission is that a "Living faith" leads directly to a "loving action" in the transformation of the world. Such a world view is to be found in the great wisdom embedded in Catholic Social Teachings (Doctrine), a great source of light and of faith. It has been said and we know it as capable of changing the evil intentions of man, and of retranslating the "structural" and "personal" evil abilities of mankind through the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ into an "adumbratio" (a foreshadow) of the "already" but "not yet" understanding of the kingdom of God. Under this light, the human person has a dignity and right. Society has order. Justice, peace and love are not illusions or pet talk. Freedom and responsibility have a meaning. Life has a goal.

#### **Guidelines of Catholic Social Teachings.**

In 1988, the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education produced the GUIDELINES FOR THE STUDY AND TEACHING OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE IN THE FORMATION OF PRIESTS." This guideline became necessary due to the emerging needs of conciliar renewal since 1965 and the need for the Church to bridge the frightening gap between FAITH and JUSTICE: the PULPIT and REAL LIFE; PRAYER and ACTION.

The guideline itself, divided into 6 chapters deals in each chapter with

- (a) The nature of social doctrine;
- (b) Historical dimension of social doctrine;

- (c) Permanent principles and values;
- (d) Criteria for judgement;
- (e) Directives for Social action and
- (f) Formation.

This is not the proper arena to go in detail on the guidelines.

Much of what is necessary for background information can be read up from the original document. I have introduced this latest guideline because it in essence deals with the topic I have been assigned to deliver a lecture upon during this annual academic — and — pastoral gathering of theologians, priests, social ethicists and concerned professionals which you are. My task is to present a lecture bordering on the history, problems, prospects, and possibilities for adaptation of the Church's Social Teachings in Nigeria. This topic assumes more interest for me as I have just arrived into Nigeria from a Scientific — Pastoral tour of Europe where for the past 6 weeks, I was attending, participating and delivering lectures in many countries and at the various organized centenary celebrations of the first Social Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" — written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891.

### **Commemoration of Rerum Novarum - Our Participation:**

This attendance and participation took place at the Institute for Christian Social Sciences of the University of Munster, Germany where over 170 social ethicists, professors, professionals and academics from over 50 Universities and social centres within Europe deliberated on Catholic Social Teachings from a worldwide perspective. I was privileged to represent AFRICA and to present a lecture on the topic: "Catholic Social Teachings and the Third World". Thereafter, I was guest of the city of Osnabruck Germany and the university there, where under the banner of the "Osnabrucker Friedensgesprache", the issues of development, poverty, Islamic fundamentalism and religious warfare in Africa among others formed the focus for enlightenment, discussion and participatory reflection urging remedial and immediate pastoral action.

From 7th to 10th March 1991, under the auspices and invitation of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in the Vatican City, several invited personalities and institutions convoked at the pontifical urban university,

Rome to share a work and reflection pilgrimage “to commemorate the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*” with the broad theme:

**“THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN IN A WORLD OF GLOBAL CHANGE.”**

This later forum paid a courtesy call and shared audience with the Holy Father Pope John Paul II at his Vatican residence on 9th March. It was a thrilling experience as the Holy Father used the opportunity to reiterate the message of the guidelines mentioned above: “Today social Doctrine is called upon with increasing greater urgency to make its own specific contribution to evangelization, to dialogue with the world; to the Christian interpretation of reality; and to the guidelines for pastoral action in order to enlighten the various initiatives on the temporal plane with sound principles. Indeed, economic, social, political and cultural structures are experiencing profound and rapid transformations which put the very future of human society at stake and thus they need a sure orientation. It is a matter of promoting real social progress which, in order to effectively ensure the common good of all men, requires a just organization of these structures. If this is not done, there will be a return of great multitudes toward that situation of a “quasi — servile - Yoke” which Leo XIII Spoke about in “*Rerum Novarum*”. (John Paul II; Address at audience 9.5.91.

For the study of Catholic Social Teachings in the Formation of Priests; (guidelines, Rome 1988 1:2; cf. *Acta Leonis XIII* (1891), page 90). Who would question the bold prophecy and clear language of this text? It is thus obvious, that the “grave drama” of the contemporary world caused by the numerous threats that often accompany human progress, cannot leave anyone indifferent. There is urgent and continued need for “the irreplaceable evangelising presence of the Church in the complex world of temporal realities which condition the destiny of mankind This “evangelising presence” led us to convocate in Harare, Zimbabwe a year earlier as AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS seekers. That meeting/seminar attended by many countries opened our eyes to the joys and sorrows of the continent of Africa. We have had several other opportunities to exchange ideas and reflect jointly on these issues bordering on the Social Teachings. Here in Enugu, the entire African continent and beyond responded to an invitation by Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) to join an inter-continental Symposium under the topic: “Catholic Social Teachings en-route in Africa.”

The fruit of that rich Symposium has already appeared as book and shows the broad theme, desire, relevance, depth and extent which these social teachings bear upon and can bear on the continent of Africa, especially in helping analyse and change the situation, the attitude of people with an urge-for-orthopraxis. In the next few weeks, we shall be guests of the Episcopacy of the Austrian Catholic World to share their reflections and to contribute our own views on the Social Doctrine of the Church at a seminar to be organized by the Theological Faculty of the University of Vienna under the auspices of the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Austrian Bishops' Conference. The broad theme is: Catholic Social Teachings on a world-wide perspective. It is therefore my pleasure and joy, after the foregoing experiences, to ruminate with you on our topic for this seminar here at Eke, elucidating on the theoretical aspects of the problem and considering the historical and practical dimensions of Catholic Social Teachings.

### **The Competence and Limitations of the Church:**

It is thus a heritage which must be preserved with fidelity and developed by responding gradually to the new emerging needs of human co-existence. We are very conscious of the competence and limitations of the Church in this field and pretence must not be made to provide a solution to the entire dramatic situation of modern world. In fact, the Church proposes no alternative ideology, no social, political or economic system. This is not the level of its action nor its competence.

On the other hand, the Church can and must, in "the light of the gospel" provide the principles and necessary guidelines for the correct organization of social life for the dignity of the human person and for the common good. "Its proper role is to interpret the moral value of social activities and to offer social guidelines which are in conformity with the Gospel's view of Human Dignity" (Carrier, H.S.J. *The social doctrine of the Church revisited* Vatican City, publ. by Institia et Pax, Rome, p. 12 cf. also JP. H. SRS.I (1987).

During the 1960's and 1970's a debate took place in some Catholic circles about the social doctrine of the Church, its meaning, its present relevance and even its existence. This "doctrine" for some critics, represented nothing more than an ideological option in front of more operational ideologies such as socialism and communism. Others viewed the social teaching of the Church as a compendium of Papal Encyclicals, whose literal quotation

appeared of little help for understanding the role of the Church in modern societies.

Pope John Paul II had reason to consider these critics seriously for he wrote:

*"The Church's Social doctrine is not a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather it constitutes a category of its own. Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behaviour. It therefore, belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology" (John Paul II; Sollicitudo rei Socialis; 1988, No.41).*

### **What is Catholic Social Teaching?**

"The Church has formulated particularly over the past 100 years, and through the efforts of a very well-informed body of priests and laymen, a social doctrine which points out with clarity the sure way to social reconstruction. The principles she gives are of universal application, for they take human nature into account and the varying conditions in which man's life is involved.

They also take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society and are acceptable to all" — POPE JOHN XXIII (Mater et Magistra, No. 220).

"This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so for men are by nature social beings. This fact must be recognised, as also the fact that they are raised in the plan of providence to an order of reality which is above nature" (Jn. XXIII MM (219).

"Rerum Novarum" written in 1891 has been considered as the birthday of Catholic Social Teachings. The document which spoke out against the inhuman conditions which were the normal plight of working people in industrial societies recognized the 3 key factors underlying a balanced economic life, namely workers; productive capital (property) and the state. The document insisted that their just and equitable inter-relationship forms

the principle which guides the formation for a humane economic and social order.

A hundred years is not a long time in the life of a Church which has lived through near two thousand years. Yet, the hundred years since Pope Leo XIII issued the first social encyclical letter "Rerum Novarum" (The workers charter), discussing social and economic changes in 1891 have probably seen more changes in the world and in the Church than any previous century. 1891 to 1991, saw the colonization by a few European countries of over 100 countries of the world including the whole of Africa (except Ethiopia), much of Asia and entire Latin America.

The turbulence in world history and in the Church over the last 100 years saw the hydra — headed effects of human horrendous tragedy expressed in 2 world wars (1914—1917) and (1939—1945). The number of the dead could never be known. These wars were followed by the cold war period (1950—1985); the rise, spread and fall of Communism; the growth of atheism; the incredible pest of hunger in the midst of plenty; the escalation of nuclear armaments; unbridled selfishness and materialism; the movements of migrant peoples; the unquantifiable destruction of moral values and culture; All these happenings proved the incredible but latent ability of the human mind to conceive and to do evil. What have historians not written down? For us therefore who are part of this century it has been a most frightening era.

That the Church should have a social teaching is nowadays taken for granted. Entire Christian history in some way did always have one. In Romans 13:1—7, St. Paul reflected upon the relationship between Christians and the State. St. Augustine far back in the 4th Century considered the just war theory. The ownership of property always gained the attention of the early Church Fathers (Charles Avila, *Ownership, early Christian teaching*, London. Sheed and Ward, W.Y. Orbis 1983). John T. Novaran in his book: (*The Scholastic analysis of Usury*, 1975) has discussed in detail the medieval school men and their views on the propriety of charging interest on loans. Further instances ~ abound. In the sixteenth century, Bartolome de las Casas and Francisco Vitoria, both of them Spanish Dominicans, wrote vigorously about the problems of colonisation and the treatment given to indigenous peoples in territories newly conquered by Spain. The entire Old Testament, the New Testament, the early

Church till our day has always had reason to reflect on social realities from the light of Faith. In 1864, Wilhelm Von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, Germany produced a Book: "The worker question and Christianity" and called for a just solution to the problems of society. All through 2000 years of Christendom, the church had gained experience of society and was constantly developing a Social Conscience, Social Teaching and moral criteria. It should have come as no surprise, therefore, when the Catholic Church, in the person of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, began to speak out on social issues. Yet it did. *Rerum Novarum* produced shock waves throughout Europe and became a landmark in the history of Christian Social principles. Not only has it proved to be the first in a long series, many later documents were composed explicitly to commemorate its publication, as some of their titles bear witness. Catholic "Social doctrine" or "Social Teachings" (the two terms are interchangeably used, 'doctrine' referring to the theoretical aspect of the problems, 'teaching' to the historical and practical aspects) constitutes a "rich heritage" which the Church has progressively drawn from biblical insights, the tradition of the early Fathers; Scholastic philosophy; theological reflection and the contemporary experience of the people of God struggling to live out faith in justice. (Ref. Schulteis, M + Henriot P., our best kept secret; The rich heritage of Catholic Social Teachings; CAFOD England. 1988, p.4).

### **Continuity and Identity:**

The documents are systematic and contain reference formulae that only could be peculiar to the unity and continuity of the tradition known to be Catholic, universal apostolic and Holy. The Popes hardly contradict one another. One truth is extended into another: one would be struck also, going through the various social Encyclicals (and there are over 10 of such now) to discover the tone, unity and variety of subject matter discussed as an organic whole. The Fathers of the Church maintain a common anthropological, ethical, theological and contextual view of man and history. Whether the topic of the Social Question be on the Family, property, economics, politics, culture, ecology, technology, capital, labour, armament, peace, Justice, Women, International trade, Aid, Development, Third World, Communism, poverty, war and Other global issues, the popes always had reason to recourse to earlier documents and to expand upon them. If there are changes in tone, this applies more or less to the distinctive character and personality of the Pope who is writing, Emphasis on a topic depends on the contextual historical reality of the place and time. Generally however, attempt has been made to look at the social question from a more global perspective.

In the words of Schulties and Henriot: "The body of Catholic Social Teaching is by no means a fixed set of tightly developed doctrine. Rather, it is a collection of key themes which have evolved in response to the challenges of the day. Rooted in the biblical orientations and reflections on Christian tradition, the social teaching shows a lively evolution marked by shifts both in attitude and methodology. What informs the teaching of John Paul II today differs from what informed the teaching of Leo XIII almost a century ago even though both ground their message in the same faith in the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ. This means that the approach taken in the Church's social teaching has been undergoing some significant shifting, to which we should pay attention in order to appreciate its contemporary relevance." (op. cit; p. 11).

With the second Vatican council, a new period in the life of the Church was introduced emphasising that "it is the task of the Church-to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of the age" (Gs. 44).

### **A Shift in Attitude and Method in Catholic Social Teachings:**

There has thus arisen a shift in attitude by the Church's central administration since the 2nd Vat. Council especially in matters affecting:-

- (a) Political apathy:
- (b) Responsibility for the world by a commitment to the humanisation of life;
- (c) The Search and work for more Justice in the world which is now "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel";
- (d) Preferential option for the poor, the weak and the under privileged of this world.

**Besides this shift in attitude, there has also been a shift in methodology of the Church's social Teachings, namely:**

- (a) The document *Lumen Gentium* of 1964 which emphasized the idea of church as "the people of God" corresponding to the original biblical Image but with consequences on our ecclesiological understanding, leading the church from a passive to a more active role in history.

(b) The document “*Gaudium et Spes*”, No.4 of 1965 introduced a new method of “doing” theology by reading the “signs of the times” and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.” Theology thus was to move beyond the deductive and speculative levels to a historical and contextual level where God is manifested in an on-going revelation as the true God of history.

In the words of Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* there are 3 stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into action. “First one reviews the concrete situation;

Secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; Thirdly one decides what in the circumstances are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act.” (n. 236).

(c) The methodology also implied a shift from the deductive to the inductive and historical principles implying a movement away from a rigidly interpreted, absolute definition of natural law ethic to a sincere search for the objectively true, which is seen also to be the objectively human.

“We must reaffirm most strongly that this Catholic Social Doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life” (Jn. XXIII MM, I. 222).

(d) The shift in methodology has moved from reason to the primacy of love. Reason is not discarded, no, not at all, but it is subjected to love which in this context has three meanings namely: “First love is at the heart of the virtue of justice and brings the actions of justice to their fullest potential, meaning and life. Second, love is the motivation to act on behalf of justice. Thirdly, the fundamental option of love, which the heart makes for God as the basis of our being produces moral action.” (Op. Cit. p. 13).

(e) Finally, the new methodology in Catholic Social Teachings shows a praxis — orientation. Action speaks louder than words. It is as such an orientation to pastoral planning and action.

“The earlier methodology often led to social idealism. It isolated reason from a relationship of dialogue with experience, commitment and action. But from the praxis side, the starting point of pastoral and social reflection is people in their struggle, in their need and in their hopes. Praxis thus becomes a true force for understanding and developing all authentic social teachings.” (p. 13) What this in effect means is that in the new methodology, Praxis is the action

that comes out of reflection, leading back to reflection and is the end result of an option which one makes in struggle for justice.

To put it in a direct way, acting correctly (orthopraxis) completes and complements believing correctly (orthodoxy).

Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra* made this point very clear: "It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church's social doctrine, the light of which is truth, justice its objective, and love its driving force" (n. 226, *mater et magistra*, Pope John XXIII), continuing on this matter, John XXIII adds: a purely theoretical instruction in man's social and economic obligations is inadequate. People must be shown ways in which they can properly fulfil these obligations," (No.230).

Looking back over nearly a century it is difficult to understand, not why *Rerum Novarum* was published at all, but why it had not been published much earlier. Nearly 50 years separated its appearance from the publication by Karl Marx of the communist manifesto in 1848. Yet when *Rerum Novarum* appeared the document thus because the *Magna Charta* for Catholic Social Teachings. In effect, Catholic Social Teachings is a developed body of teaching, guidelines, principles and applications developed in a rich fashion, especially during the past 100 years since 1891 providing a compelling challenge for Christian life and practical orientation.

### **Nature of Social Doctrine:**

In this section, it is important to focus on the nature of social doctrine, outlining its constitutive elements, its autonomy, theological nature, continuity and development. In the guidelines for the study and Teaching of the Church's Social doctrine in the formation of Priests, released by the Vatican in 1988, these topics are treated in detail. In this lecture effort is made only at summary presentation to afford the necessary background towards a better understanding and appreciation of the discussion. Detailed study could be undertaken from the original sources.

### **1) Constitutive Elements:**

On the constitutive elements and nature of social doctrine, "the Social Teaching of the Church draws its origin from the encounter of the evangelical message and its ethical requirements with the problems that arise

in the life of society. The needs that emerge from this encounter become the subject of moral reflection which matures in the Church through scientific research, but also through the experience of the Christian Community which must measure itself everyday against the various situations of misery and, above all, with the problems created by the appearance and development of the phenomenon of industrialization and of the socio-economic systems related to it.

This doctrine is formed through the use of theology and philosophy which give it foundation, and to the human and social sciences which complete it. It is projected into the ethical aspects of life, without neglecting the technical aspects of the problems, in order to judge them with more criteria. By basing itself "on principles which are always valid", it implies "contingent judgements" since it develops in relation to the changeable circumstances of history, and is directed essentially, toward "Christian action or practice." (guidelines, op. cit, p.9-10).

## **2) Autonomy — Social Doctrine:**

The autonomy of social doctrine has since its inception in the 19th century taken place. Its sources, its foundation and object, its subject and content, its end and methods have helped to make Catholic Social Teachings an autonomous subject within Theology, located near the complex field of the science of moral theology and social morality. It is thus in both theory and practice a distinct discipline (J P II: *Laborem Exercens* (4.9.81), n. 3, AAS 80 (1988) P. 57). "Thus it can be stated that social doctrine has an identity of its own with a well— defined theological profile" (guidelines op. cit. p. 10)

## **3) Sources, Foundation and Primary Object of CST:**

The Sources of Social doctrine are sacred Scripture, the teaching of the Fathers and great theologians of the Church and the Magisterium itself. Its foundation and primary object are the dignity of the human person with its inalienable rights which form the nucleus of the "truth about men." (JP. II, *Allocution Esta Hora* to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Jan. 28, 1979, Part I, n. 9=Ref. AAS. 71, 1979, 1979. P.195). This dignity of the human person and the complex problems it poses for man in society we call the "Social Question."

#### **4) Subject of Social Doctrine:**

The subject of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is the whole Christian Community in harmony with, and under the guidance of its legitimate pastors, of whom lay persons, with their Christian experience, are active collaborators. Thus, the subject begins with man in his total societal humanity.

#### **5) Content of Social Doctrine:**

The whole content of social doctrine: in summarizing the view about man, humanity and society, reflects the whole man, Social man, as particular subject and fundamental reality of Christian anthropology. (Ref. guidelines, op. cit, p. 10—11, Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, March 26, 1967, No.13, AAS. 59 (1967) p.263).

#### **6) Theological Nature of Social Doctrine:**

The theological nature of Catholic Social Teachings was already pronounced by Pope John XXIII where in *Mater et Magistra* he wrote: “this Social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life” (John XXIII, MM N222 AAS, 53, 1961, page 453).

In other words, Social doctrine has a highly developed theological character as it oscillates between the Gospel and real life and unites both as Paul VI rightly recognizes "in strong bonds of an anthropological, theological and spiritual nature such that charity, justice and peace are inseparable in Christian promotion of the human person (Paul VI Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Dec, 8, 1975, nn. 29, 31 (Ref. AAS 68, 1976 PP. 25—26). This theological nature concurs with the Church's three-fold task in every age, situation and society, namely,

- (a) announcement of the truth about human dignity and rights,
- (b) denouncement of unjust situations,
- (c) contribution to positive changes in society and real human progress (Ref. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 12ff, Ref. also John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, n. 1).

### **7) Three—fold dimension of Social doctrine:**

Thus, as a science of revelation (theology), of act (philosophy) and of practice (humanities), the social doctrine of the Church envelopes a three-fold dimension which at the same time make up its structure, namely: theoretical, historical and practical. These three dimensions are interrelated and one would also add inseparable. (Ref. guidelines, Op. Cit, p. 11 and 12).

### **8) Continuity of Social Doctrine:**

The term continuity is used to express the relationship between the documents, even if each one responds in a specific way to the problems of its times. In spite of differences in formulation, methodological procedure and styles, the documents do not compromise the substantial identity and unity of its teachings (guidelines p. 16)

Due to its character of mediation between the Gospel and concrete social and human realities the need for esp responsive updatment to new world situations is accepted. (Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p. 29).

The initial object of this doctrine was the so-called “Social Question,” or the whole series of socio—economic problems which arose in certain areas of the European and American world subsequent to the “industrial Revolution.” Today, the “Social Question” is no longer limited to particular geographic areas. It has a world—wide dimension (Paul VI *Populorum Progression*) and includes many aspects, including political ones, linked to the relationship between classes and the transformation of society which has already taken place and is still in progress. In any case, “Social Question” and “Social doctrine” are co—related terms. Thus, its continuity and development from Leo XIII in 1891 to John Paul II in 1991 shows that social doctrine preserves a substantial identity as a doctrinal “Corpus” with great coherency attentive to evolving situations and is not reducable to a closed system.

As an example, the “poor” which we refer to frequently are not the “proletarians” of Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, nor the unemployed in Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno*. Today, the poor have emerged as an international, inter-cultural and inter-religious “club”, largely great and found everywhere. They are in those rich Western and American Societies who until now are exclusively enjoying the goods of the earth with political freedom, societal liberalism and economic security.

They are also found in unquantifiable numbers in those parts of the Southern globe now etiquetted as Third World. In such areas, poverty has become systematized and almost Institutionalised. They are also found in the new emerging ex—communist countries where freedom, dignity and humanity until now were "foreign" concepts.

Futhermore, the problems of the "poor" no longer concerns only the unjust differences between classes, but today encompasses enormous imbalances between the so called rich and poor nations.

### **9) Permanent principles and fundamental values:**

Let me state from the start that these principles have not been formulated by the Church organically in one single document, but are found throughout the entire span of the historical evolution of her social doctrine.

These principles are not complete, but simply indicate the important ones, such as the dignity of the human person, human rights, person society relationship, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity, human structures and community of persons, the universal purpose of created things, etc.

#### **a) Human Person:**

The human person is a creature of God, made in His image and elevated to a supernatural destiny transcending earthly life. Man therefore as an intelligent and free being, subject of rights and of duties, "is the primary principle and, one can say, the heart and soul of the social teaching of the Church" (Vatican II, G5 n.17).

Continuing, the church Fathers hold that "according to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown" (G5 n.12)

No wonder, the congregation for the doctrine of the Faith in "Instruction Libertatis Conscientia": on the Christian freedom and liberation of March 22, 1986 (AAS 79, 1987, p.586) say: "The Church will never tire but will insist on the dignity of persons, against all slavery, exploitation and manipulation perpetrated to the harm of people, not only into the field at politics and economics, but also in the cultural ideological and medical fields.

**b) Human Rights:**

Christ showed that he was always attentive to the needs of people, especially, the poorest. Human rights derive by an intrinsic logic from the dignity of the human person. It is thus the challenge and mission of the Church to promote and fight for these rights whenever the evil head of human degradation raises its arm.

**c) Relationship between person and Society:**

The human person is a social being by its nature — that is by its innate need and its co-natural inclination to communicate with others. This human sociality is the basis of all forms of society and of the ethical requirements which are inscribed in it. Man is not sufficient in himself to attain his full development, he needs others and society. Igbo culture solved this dilemma in existential wisdom by maintaining as J.S. Mbiti Once formulated it: "I am because we are, and since we are, I am."

**d) The Common Good:**

The common good is a fundamental value governing social life. John XXIII defines the common good as "all those Social conditions which favour the full development of human personality" (MM, AAS 53, 1961, P. 417; Pius XII Christmas message con sempre nuova, Dec. 24 1942, AAS 35, 1943, P. 13). Philosophically speaking, the "common good" is higher than private interests although it is inseparable from the good of human person. It commits Public authorities to recognise, respect, regulate, protect and promote human rights and facilitate the fulfilment of the respective duties. In fact, public authorities and the state itself exist to fulfil the demands of the common good. The Church considers the common good as a value in the service and organization of social life and of the new order of human existence guidelines, P.40) and therefore stresses its human meaning and ability to animate social structures in their globality and in their particular sectors. The Church encourages in-depth transformations according to the criterion of social justice.

**e) Solidarity and Subsidiarity:**

Pope John Paul II in his recent Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* has particularly underlined the importance of the principle of solidarity, identifying it as a human and Christian virtue (J.P II SRS nn. 39-40). According

to the principle of solidarity, each person, as a member of society, is indissolubly linked to the destiny of society itself and, by dint of the Gospel, to the destiny of all men's salvation. (Guidelines, p. 40).

"The ethical demands of this principle require all men, groups and local communities, associations and organizations, nations and continents to participate in the management of all the activities of economic, political and cultural life while overcoming any purely individualistic conception" (Vat II, GS nn. 30-32; John Paul II. Discourse Je desire to the 68th session of the International Labour Conference (ILO) United Nations, June 15 1982; AAS 74, 1982 pg. 992ff). On the other hand a very important principle governing social life is subsidiarity which is to be considered as the complement of solidarity.

The principle of subsidiarity maintains that, the state or any other authority should not prevent or take over responsibility from a person, group, or community or the other former levels of action where these have the competence and ability to carry out such activities and achieve expected results on their own level of competence. (Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15 1931, AAS, 23, p. 203).

Subsidiarity principle protects the human person, local communities and intermediary bodies from the danger of losing their legitimate autonomy and competence.

The Church fights for subsidiarity in so far as this principle by reason of man's dignity, respect for what is most human in the organization of social life and the safe—guarding of the rights of peoples in relations between individual societies and universal society, (guidelines, op. cit; P. 41; John XXIII *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963, AAS, pg. 294; John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, AAS,76, p.616).

#### **f) Human Structures and Communities of Persons:**

In modern day societies, there is the danger caused by technical and mechanistic concept of life that tends to reduce man as a 'cog in the wheel' of the state. Such structural threats do not leave room for the development of a true humanism. In many nations the state is transformed into a huge, administrative machine which invades all areas of life and drags man into a state of fear and anxiety causing his depersonalization, threatening his dignity as person, reducing his personal and social freedom among others.

The Church teaches (John XXIII, MM, AAS, P. 46) that associations, structures, private corporations, public and state apparatus are legitimate in so far as they reserve proper space for the person and encourage the growth of collaboration under the common good. Organs of State and human structures approach persons and invite them to participate in the common tasks of promoting the economy, forming labour or capital unions and creating intermediate bodies (J.P. II, LEN. 14), good implementation of these principles relating to person and structures enables the overcoming of all tensions between socialisation and personalisation.

### **g) The Universal Purpose of Created goods:**

All through, the life of Christ and the witness of his followers on earth has shown that there is a universal purpose for all created goods, namely that all men and women share in them.

There is enough wealth for everybody but the distribution stumbles on unquantifiable greed, ignorance and egotism. The Church's social teachings affirms with this "characteristic principle of Christian Social Concern" (J P II SRS, n. 42) that the goods of the earth are for the use of everyone in order to satisfy their right to a life consonant with the dignity of the person and the needs of the family. The Vatican Council Fathers framed it this way: "In fact, God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created goods should abound for them on a reasonable basis." (Vat II GS, n. 69).

It follows that the right to private property, natural, valid and necessary in itself is not absolute and must be restricted within the limits imposed by its social function. John Paul II in *laborem Exercens* subordinates the unbridled claims to right of private property where unjust situations exist under the universal rights to property by all persons: "Christian tradition has never upheld this right to private property as absolute and untouchable. On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader contest of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole creations, the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone" (J P II LE, n. 14)

Finally Catholic Social Teachings shows that the values inherent in the dignity of the human person when lived show the sure path, not only a personal perfection, but also for putting a true humanism and a new social existence into practice. These values include truth, freedom, justice, solidarity, peace

and charity, which we call Christian love, extending to friends and enemies alike and seeing entire humanity as a global unity of brothers and sisters.

## SECTION II

### **(b) Historical Overview of the various, Social Encyclicals:**

**1) Rerum Novarum**, Encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII, May 15, 1891; Acta Leonis XIII Pope (1891).

#### **Historical Note:**

Industrial capital in Europe and America led to terrible exploitation and poverty of the working classes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The document was inspired by the work of the Freibourg Union, a Catholic Social Action Movement in Germany and by requests from the Hierarchy in England, Ireland and the USA.

#### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Care for the poor;
- Rights of Workers;
- Rejection of Socialism as a solution;
- Role of Private Property;
- Duties of workers and employers;
- Return to Christian Morals;
- Role of public authority/Church, State, Association).

## **PIUS XI**

**2) Quadragesimo Anno**, Encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI, May 15, 1931; AAS 23 (1931).

#### **Historical Note:**

Commemorates the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rerum Novarum. Pius wrote at a time of world - wide economic and social depression which eventually led to the Second World War. He criticized abuses of both capitalism and socialism and tried to update Catholic Teachings to reflect the changed conditions. He broadened the concerns of the Church for the poor and criticized structures of oppression.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Overall view of industrial society and
- Role of Public authority productions;
- Stressed the need for both Capital and labour to promote the economy;
- Subsidiarity Principle;
- Sets conditions for reestablishing the social order;
- Calls for freedom of Association and Action;
- Heightens the role of the Church;
- Condemns Capitalism and Socialism;
- Justice and Social Order.

**3) PIUS XII**

- Discourse on The Solemnity of Pentecost for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (June 1, 1914), AAS 33 (1941) pg. 195.
- Christmas Radio Message: on Peace and the International Order of 1939, 1940, 1950, 1955;
- On Democracy, 1944;
- Discourse on the dangers of the technological conception of social life and on the economic enterprise and order of June 3, 1950 and September 9, 1956.

**4) JOHN XXIII**

Mater et Magistra, Encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII, 15 May 1961; AAS 53 (1961).

**Historical Note:**

Pope John XXIII who became Pope in 1959 issued this Encyclical popularly called "Christianity and Social Progress" to Commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rerum Novarum and in response to the severe imbalances between the rich and the poor peoples of the world. Pope John "internationalises" Catholic Social Teachings by treating for the first time, the situation of underdeveloped countries. He articulates the role of the Laity in knowledge and spread of the Catholic Social Teachings world-wide.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Updating knowledge of existing documents;

- Just remuneration;
- Denounces inequalities;
- Subsidiarity;
- Denounces under-development and careless over-population;
- Agriculture;
- Economic Development;
- Role of the Church;
- Catholic Social Teachings;
- International Cooperation;
- Socialisation.

## **JOHN XXIII**

### **5) Pacem in terris, Encyclical letter of John XXIII, 1963.**

#### **Historical Note:**

Written during the start of the cold war (East-West) and 1<sup>st</sup> year of Vatican II. Addressed to all "people of goodwill" under the title peace on Earth. Issued shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the erection of the Berlin Wall. Highlights the dangers and threat of nuclear warfare. A document on legal Ethics, it develops a philosophy of Rights - international co-existence. Peace on earth can be established only if the social order set down by God is fully observed. Relying on reason and the natural law tradition, Pope John sketches a list of ought and ought not for everybody.

#### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Rights and duties;
- Role of Public Authorities;
- Common good;
- Christian world order;
- International Relations;
- Disarmament.

## **Vatican Council II**

### **6) Pastoral Constitution: Gaudium et Spes, 1965:**

#### **Historical Note:**

The overwhelming majority of the world's bishops have their opinions expressed in this document. The document, *Gaudium et Spes*, or the Church in the modern world is the most important documentation of the Church's social tradition. It announces the duty of the people of God to scrutinize "the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel." In doing so, it agrees that change characterizes the world. These technological, economic, social, cultural and political changes present ample opportunities for progress and for humanity. On the other hand, they can bring many worries and tragedies upon mankind. The work of the Church in the world of today is to promote human dignity and the common good.

Originally this document was not scheduled to be considered separately by the council. However, Cardinal Joseph Suenes of Belgium intervened at the end of the first session and urged for consideration of issues more "external" to the Church instead of only discussing the role of bishops or the use of vernacular in the liturgy. The document was produced by a commission and altered by a 2300 member deliberative assembly. In its final form, it represents a shift from the rigid traditionalism of the council's preparatory committee.

#### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Human dignity;
- Common good;
- Economic, Political, Social life;
- Signs of the times;
- Public Responsibility;
- Respect for Families;
- Right of Culture;
- Justice and Development;
- Peace.

## **PAUL VI**

### **7) Populorum Progressio. Encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI, 26<sup>th</sup> March. 1967 (AAS, 59 1967):**

#### **Historical Note:**

The document enlarges the scope of Leo XIII's treatment of the struggle between rich and poor nations. Here, Paul VI speaks of the challenge of development. He explores the nature of poverty and the conflicts it produces. He articulates the role of the Church in the process of development and sketches a Christian vision of development. The Pope calls for urgent action which respects the universal purpose of created things. He advocates economic planning and aid to promote development.

The development of peoples is the first encyclical devoted entirely to the international issue of development. He stresses the economic sources of war and highlights economic justice as the basis for peace, more than any other before him. Paul criticizes the basic tenets of capitalism, including the profit motive and the unrestricted right to private property.

#### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Human aspirations;
- Structural injustice;
- Church and development;
- New Humanism;
- Economic Planning;
- International Trade;
- Universal Charity;
- Development the new name for peace.

### **8) Octogesima Adveniens, apostolic letter of Paul VI, 1971**

#### **Historical Note:**

Octogesima Adveniens which is translated into English as a call to action is an open apostolic letter directed by Pope Paul VI to Cardinal Maurice Roy in 1971 who was then the President of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace in the Vatican. This document commemorates the 80<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, breaking new grounds with its call to individual Christians and groups to respond to situations of Justice and take Political action as a gospel option when appropriate.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Inequalities in international relations;
- Problems of urbanisation and modern societies;
- Christian Communities responsible for the future of the world;
- Political activity;
- World-wide dimensions of Justice.

**9) *Iustitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World) Synod of Bishops, 1971**

**Historical Note:**

The cold war period witnessed many local wars in the world. The document *Justice in the World* reflects the deliberation in 1971 of the Bishops Synod gathered in Rome to reflect on "the mission of the people of God to further justice in the world", to fight for peace; to criticize political and economic oppression which lead to war.

This document illustrates the powerful influence of local bishops Conferences in Asia, Africa and Latin America to settle problems on their doorsteps. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, the collegiality of the Bishops is once again reaffirmed. Justice issues are Gospel issues which express Christian love and must therefore be seriously taken. Structural sin is discussed and rejected. The role of the Church must be that of witnessing to the truth via a just lifestyle, doing education work and soliciting for international solidarity on Justice and Peace issues.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Justice demands related to the Gospel;
- Development as a Right;
- Relationship between Justice and Christian love;
- Education for Justice;
- International Action.

### **10) Evangelii Nuntiandi, apostolic exhortation of Paul VI, 1975**

It is also translated as evangelization in the Modern World.

#### **Historical Note:**

Written to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the closing of Vatican II. This Exhortation was requested for by the 1974 synod of Bishops which discussed the topic of Evangelization but did not produce a document on it. Paul VI is interested in new ways of proclaiming the Good News to reach modern 20<sup>th</sup> Century man. Preaching the Gospel is now the full duty of every single Christian. Combating injustices and preaching liberation constitute elements essential to evangelization of the secular world. The document emphasizes the need for both the Institutional Church and individual Christians to promote Justice and peace.

#### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Evangelisers: Christ and Church:
- Personal Conversion:
- Church and Culture;
- Justice and Liberation;
- Universal and individual Churches;
- Gospel and non-Christians

### **11) Laborem Exceecens, encyclical letter of John Paul II, May 15 1981, AAS 73 (1981) 577-647.**

#### **Historical Note:**

John Paul's 3<sup>rd</sup> Encyclical was written on the Commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* and discusses Human Work exclusively. The assassination attempt by the Turk Ali Agca prevented this for publication on 15/05/81. After his return from hospital, John Paul revised this work which appeared officially on 14/09/81.

The document is written almost entirely by the Pope himself. It does not even refer to *Rerum Novarum* in a footnote. Rare mention is made in this encyclical to other papal or conciliar documents. This Encyclical marks a new and more concrete style for social teaching, discussing the priority of the workers over the suppliers of Capital, structural injustice; nationalization of

certain industries to be controlled truly by the people: supports the rights of workers and unions; rejects any modified form of capitalism or marxism, refines the Church's teachings on property which absolute right is subjected to the universal ownership of all goods.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Man the subject of work;
- Dignity of Human work;
- Capitalism and Socialism;
- Property;
- Unions and workers Rights;
- Employment.
- Spirituality of work

**12) *Solicitudo rei Socialis*; encyclical letter of Pope (*The Church's Social Concern*); John Paul II; 1987, CF. AAS 80 (1988) p. 573.**

**Historical Note:**

Twenty years after the Encyclical letter *Popularum Progressio* (on the progress of peoples) by Paul VI, John Paul II celebrates that encyclical with a strong statement updating the social Teachings of the Church on international development in this Encyclical titled "The Social Concerns of the Church." This document is devoted almost entirely to problems of development the chief hindrance to which John Paul suggests, is the divisions of the world into the two power blocs of East and West. It is difficult not to see in the frequent use of the term "solidarity union to which John Paul gave considerable moral and financial encouragement.

The Pope emphasises the moral/ethical dimension of development: surveys the difficult state of poor countries; refers to obstacles to development which he calls "structures of sin" and picks up several Justice themes challenging the affluent world to action.

The Social Question can only be solved through-Justice, organization of work and a meaningful orientation to life and to the world.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Authentic development;
- North-South economic imbalances;
- East-West ideological confirmation;
- Solidarity and the Church's Social concern;
- Option for the poor;
- Structures of sin;
- Ecological concerns.

**12. Centissimus annus; John Paul II, Encyclical letter 100 years after Rerum Novarum; 15 May, 1991.**

**Historical Note:**

Written to commemorate the centenary of Rerum Novarum, the 1st of the Social Encyclicals:

Following global concern, world-wide interest and expectations on the future of Catholic Social Teachings, JOHN Paul II uses the opportunity of the centenary celebrations to launch the Church's Social Teachings in the fore-front for socio-economic-ethical, political and cultural progress for entire humanity and a good model for all times.

**Major Areas of Concern:**

- Reordering property ethics on the principle of Universal ownership of the goods of this world;
- Responsibility for the future of the world;
- Obligation to the third world;
- A new social culture (ecology, family, democracy,);
- A new value—culture.

**Conclusion:**

**Practical guidelines for action:**

Learning from the social Encyclicals”

Since this paper was delivered, several social encyclicals have been promulgated, for example, Deus caritas est and Caritas in Veritate of Pope

Benedict XVI and very recently *Laudato si* on the environment by Pope Francis in 2015.

### **SECTION III**

#### **PROSPECTS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR ADAPTATION OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHINGS IN NIGERIA**

In August 1990, an Inter-continental Symposium was organized under the auspices of the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP), Enugu, featuring participation of over 100 theologians, priests, politicians, social workers, civil servants, lay persons, academic staff and others from several African and European nations. This symposium is on record as the only significant and continental reflection organized for the celebration of the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*. A communique, of 38 points was issued at the end of the 8 days of serious socio—pastoral hard-work and brain — storming sessions.

In attempting to present the prospects and possibilities for adaptation of the Church's Social Teachings in Nigeria, we have adequate material from the Communique of that Inter- continental Symposium as response.

Those points bear repetition here:

##### **I. Lack of knowledge of CST**

We observe that there has been insufficient knowledge of these Teachings in our continent over the past 100 years. This sad discovery has challenged us to urge that these Teachings be incorporated into the curriculum of catechetical instructions of the laity and that they be made a compulsory discipline in the theological formation of priests and lay religious. We also urge that centres for the spread of these Social Teachings, like the CIDJAP, be established by local Churches. We also support the call by SECAM for the establishment, in all dioceses in Africa, of "strong Diocesan Commissions of Justice and Peace in Line with the thinking of the universal Church. We further urge that Justice and Peace Committees be established in each parish and indeed in every Community where Catholics are found" (Communique, Roma, Lesotho, June '88 Pan - African Justice and Peace Conference, N.21).

## **2. Challenge to African Theologians**

We also call on African Theologians to reflect on the contents of these Teachings in the light of our own peculiar faith experiences and circumstances of life with the purpose of drawing from their rich insights, deepening them in our thoughts and further elaborating them, with our background in view. This will help to provide a sound theological basis for healthy and edifying pastoral action.

## **3. The labour question is still valid**

It is regrettable that a whole century after the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, those inhuman conditions of work which the Pope so courageously denounced still exist as the normal conditions of work in most countries of Africa. Workers are still grossly under-paid, many have to earn their living by working under dangerous and sub—human conditions, while legitimate strikes are, more often than not, forcibly suppressed and trade union leaders harassed and incarcerated and their unions sometimes disbanded. We condemn these excesses and call for the respect of the rights of workers to just wages, humane conditions of work and legitimate union activities.

## **4. Poverty and dependence.**

We are grieved to see the wanton misery and suffering into which an increasing majority of our people are condemned to live especially through the implementation of certain forms of structural adjustment programmes by various African Governments. These economic reform programmes, however much they might appeal to foreign economic wizards and to the London and Paris Clubs, the IMF and World Bank, etc., are unacceptable because they subordinate the human person to other humanly defined goals of economic benefits. They thus contradict one basic principle of Catholic social Teachings namely that all economic and socio-political programmes find their justification as a service to man. In other words, the present sufferings are completely unacceptable because they lack a comparable justification.

We are scandalized that the suffering poor are taunted and their sensibilities insulted by the nouveaux riches who make a senseless and extravagant display of their often ill-gotten wealth. We appeal to the consciences of these rich brothers and sisters of ours that they should show mercy and

compassion toward their suffering neighbours, that they should show efficacious solidarity with the needy by sharing their wealth and good fortunes with them.

## **5. The Prophetic role of the Church**

At all times and in all cases, especially in these hard times, the Church must be clearly seen to be on the side of the oppressed and suffering masses of the people. Her voice must ring out, with prophetic courage and insistence, against all cases of oppression and injustice. In this connection, there is need for an effective form of solidarity and collective action between the Churches in Africa to enable them speak out jointly against blatant and brutal injustice. For example, the case of millions of people killed, displaced and forced to be refugees in Sudan.

## **6. Development is for man**

The issue of development, the quest for the upliftment of man, is of such a crucial nature that it deserves the support and active involvement of all members of society. We therefore call for the co-operation of individuals, societies, groups and institutions with governments in the great task of development.

It is sad to note that, despite the apparently spirited development efforts of various African Governments, most of our villages and towns show actual signs of retrogression in terms of increasingly unaffordable costs of staple foods, goods and services and general "poor-fare" state. The situation has not been helped by the volatile political instability of most African States. However, the development process does not have to wait for ideal conditions of economic, social and political institutions. It can and indeed must be started and sustained by those who take responsibility in all fields of society. The entrepreneurs and workers, especially, must co-operate in order to build-up the elements of a viable economy in the interest of all.

## **7. The Economy**

For the development of a just society, there is the necessity for a sound economy based, in the first place, on the human and material resources of the country, but especially on the people who take initiative, who are finding new ways of production. Initiative and responsibility are very important qualities.

The 1980s are written off economically as a lost decade for Africa. National debts, declining commodity prices in the world market, and decreasing aid to Africa from the West made it impossible for even the best governments to improve their economies. By 1987 sub Saharan Africa of 450 million people (more than double the population at independence) has a total GDP of around USD 135 billion, about the same as that of Belgium, which has a population of only 10 million people.

## **8. Rural Development**

In Africa, rural development is of the greatest importance since the rural population constitutes the productive hub of our economies. For it is only when production increases — in quantity and especially in quality — that one can fight hunger and misery. Rural development, therefore, must be pursued with vigour. It requires initiative and creativity - devising new ways of combining the experience of the area with new methods. A good way will be the co-operative basis. Here co-operators will need the assistance of agrarian experts.

## **9. Training of Youth**

Although a vast majority of our population still earn their living by working in agriculture, an increasing industrialization calls for many skilled workers. Therefore, it is very necessary to train young people not only in schools but also in a "dual-system" which combines school knowledge and professional practice-training. An industrialized society needs many small and middle undertakings in the artisan and handicraft fields and also many skilled workers in industry. There may be other innovative activities to be undertaken in this respect.

Continuous training in all professions is a must for everybody and for the entire life time. This is to enable one meet the demands of constantly changing and challenging world.

## **10. The Public Service**

The Public Service has to become much more effective and efficient. Our countries need not only trained personnel but especially the qualities of honesty, hard work, accountability and organizational ability.

## **11. Purpose of Economics**

In planning development, it should be borne in mind that the true purpose of economic activities is neither to increase production as such nor to make profits or to exercise power but to serve man as a whole - respecting his material, intellectual moral, spiritual, and religious needs.

## **12. The social market Economy**

As the economy is an integral part of society, the structure of society finally determines the growth and effectiveness of the economy. A modern Social Market Economy demands free and responsible entrepreneurs and, at the same time, freedom in the area of politics. The bankruptcy of the communist societies in Eastern Europe has proved it again in the past few months. Therefore, a Social Market Economy needs a moral framework which defines exact laws about the tax system, the right pay for labour, the role of trade unions, the importance of the Central national Bank, punishment of corruption, and guarantees fair competition, forbids monopoly, etc. A Social Market Economy can only be stable where there is a harmony in the ethical and religious fields.

## **13. Morality in public life**

We are concerned about the decline of morality in public life. We, therefore, condemn, in the strongest terms, all forms of corruption, bribery, nepotism, the cult of mediocrity and political irresponsibility.

## **14. Responsibility of African leaders**

African leaders and government functionaries must demonstrate in their actions rather than in their official statements their commitment to the principle of leadership by example. The prevalent practice in many countries whereby election or appointment to offices or positions of leadership is misunderstood and abused as a license for embezzlement of public funds is a negation of social justice and a great obstacle to the education of youths and future leaders in the ideals of probity and accountability in public life.

## **15. The negative role of multinationals**

We equally condemn, in sharpest language, transnational and multi-national companies and foreign interests which connive with corrupt local leaders for

the pillage of our national resources, thereby worsening the already deplorable living conditions of a vast majority of our people.

## **16. Refugees and wars**

We are greatly distressed by the unfortunate incidence of war and violence in many African nations, which has left many dead or wounded, ruined several economies and has brought an untold anguish and misery to a great many people. This situation, which keeps getting worse, burdens our continent with an unprecedented problem of 6 million refugees and 12 million displaced persons. We sympathize with our brothers and sisters who are unlucky to be caught up in the cross—fires of these regrettable conflicts and call on the warring parties to lay down their arms and seek the ways of reconciliation and peace.

## **17. The crisis of religious intolerance**

In several of our countries today, there looms the danger of a religious, warfare between the two missionary religions, Islam and Christianity - a situation which has been caused by the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. Sudan, for example is already caught up by a repressive, bigoted and brutal regime while Nigeria, in recent times, has come very close to a full blown religious warfare. We call for the exercise of restraint by these two religious groups.

## **18. Christian - Muslim conflicts**

The evidence of tension between opposing religious groups is one of grave danger which calls for urgent and remedial action. Leaders of governments must steer clear of purely religious matters and stoutly resist the temptation of exhibiting, in any manner whatsoever, a preferential option for any religious groups. .

Leaders of those two religious groups themselves must sincerely and honestly seek ways of improving relationships amongst their opposing members.

- Christians and Muslims can learn to be more tolerant of each other if their leaders would help to spread accurate, true, and edifying knowledge of the religious beliefs and practices of the opposing party among their followers.

- Another help will be to initiate formal dialogue between the two religions by engaging their scholars and theologians in jointly organized symposia, public lectures, and conferences. This will also be very useful amongst professionals like doctors, lawyers, and scientists.
- Regular forms of contact and exchange of ideas should be established between the two religious groups while areas of co-operation and joint pastoral action should be explored.

### **19. Partisan politics a vocation for Christians**

We deplore the prevalent tendency among Christians to shy away from partisan politics as both unfortunate and dangerous. It is a distortion of right order and therefore a serious wrong for Christians with God-given talents for leadership to deny society of their services. We thus call on all Christians to take keen interest and an active part in politics as the platform with the greatest leverage from which they can truly be the salt of the earth.

### **20. The Clergy and Politics**

While the clergy should not be involved in partisan politics, this exclusion does not exonerate them from the responsibility of taking interest in the actions of politicians whose decisions affect the welfare of their flock. Indeed, priests must help in the political education of the laity, conscientizing them to their responsibility for the improvement of society through a prudent, judicious and informed exercise of their political rights.

### **21. Rejection of Military coups**

We are saddened by the high incidence of military coups and counter-coups in our continent which have often been accompanied by senseless killings and summary executions. We protest this evident cheapening of the value of human life and call on all our military personnel to respect the people's right to an elected government.

### **22. Education towards Democracy**

In the light of recent and profound changes in the world political scene, we call for grass-roots education of the people in preparation for democracy:—sensitizing them to their rights and obligations before the law, to the power of the ballot, and to the importance of political choices, etc.

This all important political education must include the necessity of respect for the rule of law and for constituted authority. These are the two bases on which a firm democratic tradition can be established.

The quest for democracy in many countries today is a sign of hope. While the changes in Eastern Europe did not initiate the protests in Africa, they have certainly given support to the aspirations of concerned Africans. We note the efforts being made by Benin, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Zaire to have multi-party political systems. There is need now to initiate open discussions on the merits and demerits of one and multi-political systems.

### **23. Child Abuse and Neglect**

We are greater concerned about the high incidence of child abuse, neglect and child labour among our people. For the child, by reason of his great needs and tenderness, has a right to adequate care and attention. We, therefore, condemn all forms of child abuse and, consequently, call on all religious men and women, members of governments and all in various positions of responsibility to confront the broad constellation of human forces and failures which adversely affect children.

### **24. Signs of Hope**

There are, however, some signs of hope in the economic and political spheres in the 1990s. This hope is supported by the easing of East-West military tensions which might reduce armament and even bring in more foreign aid.

Besides, steps taken within regional economic blocks like ECOWAS, SADC, and the OAU show that there are serious talks about an African Economic Community by the year 2000. We encourage these initiatives.

### **25. The African Synod**

The on-coming Special Synod for Africa is another great source of hope and can be an occasion of race, renewal and inspiration for the Church in Africa. Our fear is that, owing to their very demanding pastoral duties, the Bishops might not have sufficient time for the preparations for the Synod and, consequently, their input might not properly address the problems facing the Church in Africa. Therefore, we encourage all groups (parishes, priests' senates, religious orders, theological faculties, etc.) to read the

LINEAMENTA (WORKING DOCUMENT) and respond to it. We also encourage the Bishops of Africa to meet with various groups and discuss together their ideas, so that the Bishops can have a clear idea of what the Catholics in their dioceses think and believe.

We call on institutes like the CIDJAP to organize regional and intercontinental symposia of Bishops, theologians and lay people in preparation for the Synod. And, it is hoped, that the Synod will be truly African both in planning, statements, executions and orientation.

## **26. A practical and concrete Action: The birth of AAACASOT**

Finally, this symposium has agreed and indeed hereby gives birth to an association for the promotion of Catholic Social Teachings in Africa which shall be known, called and addressed as: AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS (AAACASOT) with its head-quarters at the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) Enugu - Nigeria.



## Chapter Two

### Research, Teaching and Practice of Catholic Social Teaching on the African Continent through Communicating Faith in the Diversity of Cultures<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Catholic Social Thought at the Centre Stage of Intellectual Discourse

The background of this paper seeks to gravitate the Catholic intellectual and socio-ethical tradition towards the centre stage of discourse at a time when humanity faces fundamental questions of life and death. This urgent and dramatic situation refers to the apparent lack of meaning and the disorientation of values; of wars and the absence of peace; the growing abuse of the environment and the scandal of poverty in the midst of plenty. There is abundant evidence to show that whereas some people in some parts of our world are saturated with the advances made in technical, social, economic and political sophistication and have become ever more complex, some other parts of the world are still wallowing in horrendous superstition, physical and mental poverty, ignorance, incurable diseases and lack of access equivalent to a bazaar of deprivation of all sorts.

For those who aim at a humanity integrated in justice, equality, dignity, freedom, peace and progress, there is a belief that faith compels them to action. This in effect means to stand up with prophetic courage, armed with ethical, intellectual, rational, moral and spiritual strength to give hope, serve those in need, pursue peace, defend the life, dignity and rights of all peoples and maintain a fundamental option for the poor who are the most vulnerable in the society. Pope John XXIII wrote in his Social Encyclical "*Mater et Magistra*" that the "*Church owes the world the duty not only of preaching the Gospel and pronouncing Social Doctrines, but also of Social Action*" (n. 33).

Pope John XXIII far back in 1963 understood the challenges facing humanity and the Church. In the Encyclical Letter '*Mater et Magistra*', he writes: "*Though the Church's first care must be for souls, how she can sanctify them and make them share in the gifts of heaven, she concerns herself too with the exigencies*

---

<sup>1</sup> Ike, O. F., paper presented in Vienna, Austria at the Pontifical Theological University, Pope Benedict XVI at Heiligenkreuz Monastery in October 2011.

*of man's daily life, with his livelihood and education, and his general welfare and prosperity” (John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, n. 3).*

## **2. The Human Person is Central in Creation and in History**

The starting point of every reflection on the Catholic Social tradition, indeed on every Christian ethical foundation is the teaching about the centrality of the Human person in creation and in history. There shall be no fundamental human rights, no human dignity, no universal declarations on human rights and duties if the central position of the human person, as a unique being in entire creation is denied. Indeed, the focus of most African cosmological and philosophical traditions, alongside the other traditions of mankind at various times and places is the location of the unique identity of the human being as an image of God. Biblical records authenticate the substance of the human being as made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26).

Thomas Aquinas, the great scholastic of the middle ages, upon whose thought patterns and philosophical traditions the Aristotelian pagan philosophy of Greek antiquity seemed liberated, made the pedestal of Western Christian-philosophical and theological interpretation in schools, the dominant vehicle for the re-interpretation of human experience and history with his teaching on the human person, the Trinity and on Natural Law. He thus established for the Western rational scholastics, the model upon which cultural, sociological, philosophical, technological and scientific rationality relied upon until recently.

Thomas Aquinas' authorship of speculative works was in humble recognition that persons called to be responsible Agents working within the institutions of the '*Ecclesia*' and '*Societas*' must lead by responding to the world around us with rational approach. Thomas Aquinas settled for the simple theory that "*Grace builds on Nature*"; that "*God helps those who help themselves*"; and that "*there is a fundamental link between faith and reason, theology and real life founded on sound reason, natural law, common sense and the socio-ethical principles known as morality which is the knowledge and distinction of the good from the evil which is known and personally revealed and incarnate in each human rational soul*".

Today, globalisation has become a new buzzword uniting people across borders. On the other hand, its negative consequences are glaringly epitomes of this scholastic drive for a bridge between faith and reason, theology and life. One might state without fear of contradiction that humanity's attempt at healing the wounds and tackling the challenges posed upon mankind by horrendous poverty, ignorance, diseases, senseless wars, injustices and

conflicts, the lack of good governance, dictatorships, unfair trade, preventable violence and inhumanity experienced in virtually all the continents during his time, but even more so, in contemporary times has always been to defend the dignity of the human person.

### **3. I am Because We Are - the Challenge for Humanity**

The 21st century was ushered in by Pope John Paul II with an Encyclical letter titled: *'Tertio millennio Adveniente'* (1994), which gave an optimistic view of human history, founded on God as mystery of the world. For over 2000 years, the emergence of *'The Word became flesh'* (John 1:14) on the Areopagus of human history has impacted on theological teaching, cultural space and intellectual traditions. This had become the rallying moment or at some times the reason for conflicts for peoples of all ages and times, thus a new phase of human history had dawned with the phenomenon of the birth of Christ. The Encyclical letter created Hope and direction at a time when much of mankind in view of modern tendencies, materialism and its advances, the cult of mediocrity and relativism was evidently lost to its belief in itself and its technological advances, yet unsure of its future, identity, mission and teleology.

This is the origin and background of the recently acclaimed and very credible and relevant Encyclical Letter *"Caritas in veritate"* of Pope Benedict XVI, in June 2009. It is also a challenge of universal appeal for even in the deeply rich but yet unknown world of African cosmology and Cosmo vision, as found in the *Omenala* tradition of 'Igbology', the inherent wisdom thought is: *'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'*; it is understood in the wisdom of *"Onyeawuna ma ibeyaefula" Egbe bere Ugo bere*". (Cf. Mbiti, J., *African Religions and Philosophy*; Ike, O. F., *Understanding Africa*, 2001). Such thoughts are also deeply embedded in the biblical scripts as exemplified in the life and teachings of the *"Incarnate Word"* himself, Jesus Christ, who came *"that all may have life and have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

This social-theological and ethical-philosophical mission which was inspired by common wisdom has been inherited from the natural family, the ancestors, the inherent traditions and cultures which form the heritage of mankind in each race, time and place; it was driven by the passion for Justice (Amos 5:24); shaped by Catholic intellectual and Social Thought (Social Teaching as found in the Encyclicals, the writings of the Fathers, the contemporary events of society and the biblical foundations); and is lived out in the daily excruciating and practical reality of the people of God on Mission, at each era and in each place or clime.

Rising from the 1971 World Synod of Bishops, convoked under Pope Paul VI, the Fathers of the Synod concluded in their Statement that “*action for justice and peace and participation in the transformation of the world remained a fundamental and constitutive element in the preaching of the Gospel*”. This is the setting for the Mission and Identity of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition which finds its “*Sitz im Leben*” (context) in the interventions the Catholic Church makes since the time of the Apostles at each age and circumstance, “*to respond to the signs of the time and translate them in the light of the Gospel*” (*Gaudi um et Spes* 4). Such is carried out through the sharing of faith and strong hope in witness to what the good Lord has done and continues to do for humankind in and through the Church. It is the practice of theory, the influence of ideas on history and the action of working for peace and justice, freedom and reconciliation in order to restore the image of God in all humanity.

#### **4. We owe ourselves some reckoning**

From the aforesaid, we do really owe ourselves some reckoning as humanity enters a key stage in human history with its apparent claims of civilisation. We are witnesses to the manifold positive achievements that humanity was able to make in the past hundred years in the areas of the *sciences, art, technology, humanities, literature, economy, political and social life, spacecraft, medicine, agriculture, education, information and communication technology*. The list is endless.

The concept of ‘*space*’ and ‘*time*’ which in ancient philosophy was beyond thought and speculation, has received practical solutions by virtue of recent developments in science and technology. Consequently, distances previously believed to be ‘*beyond space*’ and issues thought to be ‘*beyond time*’ have been conquered, at least in the sphere of the phenomena. Mankind is able to master the external universe. But can mankind also show goodwill and acceptance of the universal and basic principle that all human beings are fundamentally equal with dignity, freedom and integrity?; That truth exists and that all are able to know and reach this truth, despite the attempts at relativism?; that faith and tolerance are virtues possible for human beings within the multiplicity and diversity of cultures?; and that imbued with an immortal soul, given freely by a supreme Being who is generous, kind, almighty and the universal judge of all that is created, all human beings have rights and duties imposed upon them by their conscience and would obtain salvation in their circumstances? These are questions which repeat themselves even as the project of intercultural dialogue considers the principles of ‘coherent pluralism’ as basis for being human in an interdependent world.

## 5. Globalisation and the Challenge of Catholic Social Thought

The achievements of mankind in our times have led to a greater integration of peoples, economic exchanges, cultural influences and technological advances, leading to the present understanding that the whole world has become a 'global village'. It is presumed to be a world for all, even though only a privileged few have the key to the door of this global village. Others must wait outside, treated as aliens, without rights and basic human dignity. This is the reality, increasingly so understood and practised. What does this mean for the African peoples and cultures, for humanity at large, both in the northern and southern hemispheres, and especially for vulnerable groups and the poor everywhere? This is the challenge to the project of *a world for everybody* which has several defining characteristics on the political, economic, cultural, environmental and technological levels.

- a) **The political climate** which shows that the winds of change (*perestroika*) triggered off in the late 1980s with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its effects blowing through countries of Eastern Europe, was not an exercise in isolation. What people have experienced within the past few years in the winds of change blowing worldwide including parts of Africa since the so called Arab Spring has surprised all. We have witnessed the arrogance of power disappearance and the hegemony of dominant minorities transferring powers to the will of the people, albeit, through people's sheer determination often without guns in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Syria to mention but just a few. In very remote villages of Africa, Yugoslavia, Asia and Latin America, these winds have come to blow with potentials for radical changes at all levels of human endeavour. It has brought with it some instability in systems and assumptions previously held as sacrosanct.

Military dictatorships and monarchies have changed into democratic governments. Political configurations have been broken up, sometimes peacefully, often by violence, of some states into smaller nations and countries (e.g. Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Czech, Slovakia). The Southern Sudan remains the greatest enigma after 42 years of war between native black Africans and immigrant Arab Sudanese. Countries like Rwanda and Burundi lost over 800,000 people in communal clashes in 1994, caused to some extent by the inability to break away peacefully from Belgian colonial structures imposed on various African peoples binding them to political configurations that took no cognisance of cultural originality, social expressions and authenticity. On the other hand, there is development of the merging of some groups of nations and

interest groups into unions, such as the European Union and the Africa Union for the purposes of regional integration for peaceful existence, market linkages, political strategies and collaboration for mutual benefit. The recent phenomenon in Nigeria, four decades after Biafra and the emergence of Boko Haram, a fanatical Islamic sect with terror tendencies recalls Biafra. Thus, the search for a workable constitution that guarantees national integrity, regional autonomy, a measure of true federalism as the only realistic solution to the Boko Haram jihadists and the unity in diversity.

- b) Economic realities** include cross-border trade on goods and services, capital flows and financial investments. Today, almost two trillion dollars move around the world every day, seeking not the best production but the best return on speculation. Of the hundred largest economic entities in the world, fifty of them are trans-national corporations (Cf. “The Rough Road to Globalization”, a CAFOD paper, December 2000). This is contrasted with the fact that poverty is on the increase all over the world, not just in the developing countries, but also, for countries until now regarded as wealthy, highly industrialised and developed. Rising poverty is followed by a rise in homelessness, hunger and lack of jobs especially of the youths. Poverty has assumed not only the forms of physical deprivation but has become worse in its spiritual manifestations as found in loneliness, emptiness, meaninglessness and escape from reality. Many people abandon their homes in forced or induced migrations, searching for a better state of life. They find instead in their new countries of migration, much of legal barriers, non-acceptance, prejudices and xenophobia that they are often cut between their desire for their original homes despite its problems, and the challenges of their new migrant addresses with its unfulfilled hopes, disappointments and exile spirit.
- c) Cultural influences** are obvious in the “westernisation” of so much of popular culture in music, clothes, lifestyles, arts, theatre, songs, technology, language, values and orientation. Today, the single largest export industry for the United States of America is not aircrafts, automobiles, computers, but entertainment - found in Hollywood films and television programmes. The globalisation of films has eroded the originality of self-determination for simple peoples in their cultural milieu, making the American dream and way of life a measure for civilisation worldwide. Money has become a world formula, a new value and the mighty author of all things. This culture exposes many flaws and

weaknesses. It is often based on a materialistic conception of the world, devoid of any spiritual meaning, thus the meaninglessness of the present time. Individualism is on the increase, leading to a “global crisis of values”. There is apparent lack of ethical and cultural ingredients in determining the global social and economic systems in the formulation of policies that guide peoples and nations as businesses carry on as usual, negating and neglecting people’s traditional ways of life, their history, indigenous rationality, social development and cultural values. On this, we could go on and on.

- d) Environmental issues** emerge showing defects in the recognised control mechanisms adopted among various societies, particularly by dominant western nations. Consumption patterns have increased. Specifically, one has to observe the horrendous waste of non-renewable resources; the dramatic and excessive burden on the environment’s capacity to absorb pollution, and manifest damage caused the global ecological balance. People are having more than they are becoming persons with integrity. Furthermore, there is the debatable matter of population growth in agricultural regions of the developing world. This is a source of strength but could threaten the already delicate balance of resources in these regions. According to Daniel Lynch of Notre dame University, Indiana: *“there is no technology to support 12 billion people at the current aggregate consumption rate; and there is no vision of a planetary ecosystem in equilibrium with this level of industrial metabolism”*. Environmental issues have assumed in the context of Igboland, West Africa, the albatross of development. Agricultural lands are used for housing, marketing or business without proper spaces for development, parks and human ecology. Waterways find their own pathways, thus, the growing erosions and gulley, the unplanned cities and mega cities often overpopulated but without access and he reduction in the quality of life for our people.
- e) Technological advances and industrialisation** have left their consequences on modern societies and systems which include the rapidly growing utilization of electronic communications, (internet, informatics, GSM telephones, telematics, e-mail) and the increasing ease of transportation. We live in an information age, a *“borderless age”* and a *very fast age*. With its many advantages, the explosion in scientific knowledge and technical knowledge and the availability of knowledge, capital and manpower shudders the imagination and questions the sustainability of the human family, for it makes it easier for people to

manufacture bombs in their sleeping rooms or in private libraries by just opening the relevant pages on the Google search engine of their personal computers. If this is conceivable, then we are living in a dream. Yet it does seem in the present circumstances that industrialisation will continue unabated worldwide. It is desirable. But can we have industrialisation based on some values? It has been said that sustainability demands of an integral vision of the universe which respects the integrity of creation. If this is not done, it does seem that what we are building worldwide may not work without a strong value orientation. Value disorientation and a missing emphasis on the common good is a critical factor which humanity cannot overlook without consequences for the soul of humanity. And this is the crux of the matter.

## **6. Catholic Social Thought in Africa through Research Teaching and Practice**

Catholic Social Teaching refers to a set of socio-philosophical and ethical-theological truths about man and human affairs, systematically developed over the last one hundred years, integral and multi-disciplinary in nature, with a Christian conception of the universe and determined to establish a true basis for the truth about man and society, their origin, destiny and moral grounding. The foundations for Catholic Social Teaching rest on some principles tested and applied across cultures and beyond time and place. These include – teachings on the Common Good, subsidiarity, solidarity, personality, Human rights and Human dignity.

The Encyclical Letters of the Magisterium focused the attention of the teaching office of the Church to social and practical issues facing mankind. Pope Leo XIII kick-started this style of reflection in 1891 with his letter titled: *‘Rerum Novarum’*. It x-rayed the injustices imposed by the ruling classes and property owners upon the working classes, the labourers and the poor of the late nineteenth century. His writings appealed for justice and fairness, the establishment of a just wage and the legitimacy of the State to guarantee equity and protect the working classes. This intervention unveiled the powerful potential of the teaching office of the Church to speak out, not only on matters of faith and morals, but also on the *Ordo Socialis* (social order).

Other encyclicals that followed carried equal dynamism, with great impact on world development and history. Some of these include: *‘Quadragesima Anno’* with its principle of subsidiarity; *‘Pacem in Terris’* with its teaching that peace is universal and humanity was indivisible; *‘Mater et Magistra’* insisted that the human person is the origin, aim and central subject within history for every

social development; '*Populorum Progressio*' which described development as another name for peace; '*Laborem Exercens*' expanded the concept of human work to mean every human activity calling for the overcoming of a communist ideology that thought of work as a tool in the objective sense, instead of its proper understanding of work in the subjective sense.

Thus, John Paul makes the human person, his rights and dignity central in every discussion around the theme of human work; '*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*' elevated the Church's social concern and her justification to intervene in human and international affairs; '*Centesimus Annos*' marked the hundred years of the Social Teaching of the Church and took a balanced scorecard of the various teaching positions the Church on themes around the environment, war, peace, the social order, family, communism, capitalism, work, women, human rights, life and a just international order.

In the year 2009, Pope Benedict XVI wrote his very celebrated document '*Caritas in veritate*' which emphasises truth as an act of charity. It also develops the virtue of love as a dimension of truth beyond the selfish limiting claims of a world that lives in self-deceit and wallowing illusion filled with the vice of materialism, hedonism, primitive accumulation of wealth, the lack of virtue in business relations which consequence is the division of mankind into those who have and the majority who have not. Until recently, knowledge of the Christian Social principles studied under systematic theological guidelines as enunciated through the Encyclicals was a rare study in African universities or even centres of Christian learning. The teaching, research and study including practice of the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching rested more on traditions of moral and cultural values, less from teachings obtained from theological studies. One fact is certain which is that Christianity in most African countries came within the last one hundred years to many parts of the continent.

The Christian message at the same time with the colonial incursion on the continent thus, its message was not essentially clear enough. Furthermore, Catholic Social Teaching in itself is new, just about one hundred and ten years, since the first encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in 1891. Even in Europe, only the hard word of such teachers which started in the mid-1950s such as Joseph Cardinal Hoffner, Oswald von Nell Breuning, Professor Lothar Roos, Anton Rauscher, Manfred Spieker to mention but a few made the popularization of this systematic school of thought noticeable. In Africa therefore, even in current times, only a few institutions offer the catholic Social tradition as a teaching course in the universities.

The few universities on the continent include the Catholic Institute of West Africa at Port Harcourt; the Catholic University of Yaoundé in Cameroun; the Catholic University of East Africa, Nairobi Kenya and the Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, which is Africa's largest centre for the training of priestly candidates. These institutions offer various philosophical and theological subjects of its largely clerical students. One institution however, which is specifically established for the research, training and spread of the knowledge of the Social teaching of the Church and its application in private and public the lives of the political and socio-economic class, the laity, men and women of various persuasions and the cultures of the continent is the Catholic Institute for development Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) founded at Enugu in 1986. One may simply say that at the moment, the knowledge and spread of the Social teaching is at a very slow and low tempo.

### **7. Communicating Faith in the Diversity of Cultures as an Expression of Catholic Social Teaching in Africa**

Some condition has to be fulfilled to communicate faith within the diversity of cultures therefore, some conditions are precedent without which the dialogue is yet to start. The prejudices and until now received and perceived attitudes of one people or group against another must give way for a “*dialogue of cultures and civilisations*” to emerge. This does not compromise the truth but it makes the Truth a vessel in the service of charity. The opposite, which is a “*clash of cultures*” does no one good and deepens the world view of intolerance. The clash of cultures promotes the fight for dominance and does not give room for intercultural dialogue which is the basis for peace and progress in the world of today. The condition for achieving this starting point towards a communication of faith is tolerance, mutual respect and the assumption that no one has the monopoly of the truth. After several centuries of inter human contacts, it is sad to witness how wars are carried out in the name of religion and martyrs are made to die for their beliefs even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

One lesson that humanity must learn is that we cannot communicate faith from the point of view of violence all in the name of fighting for one's 'God', 'Chukwu' or 'Allah'. The missionary superiority model of the past and the top down method of a group who knows it all, have all the answers and are better than the others must allow a meeting point of rational dialogue to take place. The Christian principle of the “*incarnation*” is that the “*Word became Flesh and lived among us*”. It is one humble but honest example of how faith, carried out in dialogue, brings the divine near to the people.

The essence of 'Emmanuel' is the principle of God communicating with humankind in understandable language and manner known today as "down to earth". This is the basis of tolerance, much needed in communicating faith in the diversity of cultures. Yet, in the last five years, over 10,000 people have been killed in Nigeria in clashes that have both cultural, social, political and religious bias as its cause. The tragedy of it all is that these clashes have nothing to do with the wisdom thoughts of these people, but is linked to the newly imported ideological differences from other countries, both in the West and in the Islamic countries which continues to trigger off the conflicts which Nigeria currently goes through. One would even assert that if Nigerians lived according to their original and indigenous beliefs and practices, communicating faith would be much more a matter of life than of doctrine, orthopraxis instead of orthodoxy. Nigerians like many African people believe that "actions speak louder than words".

### **8. Nigeria and the Challenge of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

Taking Nigeria as a model, this is a country of over 160 million people, speaking 350 languages amidst 400 ethnic tribes and ethnic groups. Britain forced the various nationalities into one state for its colonial purposes, a historical error that has continued to replicate itself elsewhere. With its many blessings, much of which is found in its human potentials, cultures, religions and mineral resources, Nigeria is a country that is thorn between hopes and hopelessness, possibility and limitations, yet with a potential to rise above the given and transcend. In the context of Nigeria, faith is communicated more through a convincing lifestyle than through preaching. In this society, orthopraxis is more cherished than orthodoxy. In one Nigerian family, one finds a Christian, a Muslim, a traditional worshipper and liberal thinkers, all living harmoniously in one family.

The Nigerian context thus, is a situation where tolerance and acceptance of the other is basic, not because of what one believes on the level of faith, but on how this faith is lived out in real life. The proverb: "Onyena chi ya" which means "Each with his or her own destiny" made any ideological fight on whose god is superior a principle of life. There was never a war over religion. Nigerian traditional values which are indeed African values show the importance of integrating cultural values into real life through pedagogy of practice which is lived faith than just a theoretical didactic method. The global outlook has shown a tendency to ideological socio-technological and economic paradigms which is a Western contribution to development.

African values are non-ideological; they are life, thus the Igbo saying that: “*Ezi Okwu bu ndu*”, literally meaning that “*Truth is life*”.

Africa’s traditional value systems provide a basis for a dialogue of life, not just a superiority of ideas, making communal living together possible. Through its communal philosophy which is the principle of the family, the large family and the clan consciousness made sure that all had a place and “*no one is an island*”. It encourages consensus building instead of individualism, promotes social responsibility, entrepreneurship, justice and fair play. “*Egbe belu Ugo belu*”, which means Co-existence, became a key principle of life: “*let the Kite perch and let the Eagle perch*”.

To conclude, communicating faith in the diversity of cultures is possible based on the African context where humanity’s most authentic and distinctive features nurture a cultural soil which makes for a fruitful and constructive dialogue. In this context, religion and its beliefs is not the point of departure. What counts is life and people’s behaviour. As in the letter of St James in the New Testament, the African would say to the theme under discussion concerning communicating faith in the diversity of cultures: “*Show me your faith and I will show you my works. For faith without works is dead*”.

## **9. Practical Applications of the Social Teaching of the Church to the Relationship between Faith and Life**

### **a) All Citizens are entitled to contribute actively to the Common Good of the State**

A government is not possible without the civil society, the private sector and the citizenry. These must play a proper role of self-determination. I recall minding the right to vote and the honorary collaboration in self-government, but also the right of criticism and control. Community services are another area that appears relevant as citizens could identify with the state and society in a voluntary manner.

“*We must be ready to donate a large part of our work without remuneration simply because we consider it meaningful and relevant, if not even commanded.*” (Oswald von Nell-Breuning).

### **b) All Citizens Have a Legal Claim to Equity before the Law**

In the Basic Constitutional Law of Nigeria, it says: “*No one may be disadvantaged or preferred because of sex, descent, race, language, homeland and origin, faith or religious and political views*” (Nigerian Constitution 3, 1). As the Second Vatican Council teaches, three different forms of apartheid can be

distinguished, namely, discrimination against a person because of his or her “race or colour, condition of life, or religion” (Nigerian Constitution 5, Declaration on Relation to Non-Christian Religions). Every form of apartheid violates the right and dignity of man. The Christian will therefore not limit himself or herself to protesting against a particular kind of apartheid, e.g. racial apartheid, as if religious apartheid were less evil. The Christian rejects all apartheid. He or she is also convinced that the overcoming of (the forms of) apartheid is an essential presupposition of peace within the state and among states.

### **c) The Right to Resistance**

Even if as it says in the Epistle of Romans, governmental authority “is instituted by God” (Roms. 13:1), it still bears the inadequacy of all earthly things. With more or less reasons, one will have one thing or the other to criticize in all laws and in all governmental measures. But more frightening is the fact that states and governments, as experience teaches, can exhibit not only this or that deficiency, but can also degenerate in a criminal way. Here it is usually not a question today, as it was antiquity, of an individual tyrant, but of movements or parties that spread terror at home and abroad. The “Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation” of April 5, 1986, branded with sharp words the “violence exercised by the powerful against the poor, arbitrary action by the Police, and any form of violence established as a system of government”.

As the original bearer of governmental authority, the people are entitled to the right of resistance with respect to the state. The above-mentioned instruction rejects, however, the “systematic recourse to violence” as a “destructive illusion” since it is not infrequently “opens the way to new forms of servitude”. The “myth of revolution” surrenders to the illusion that “the abolition of an evil situation is in itself sufficient to create a more humane society,” whereas in reality this myth fosters “the setting up of totalitarian regimes”.

The thesis that sees “in the class struggle the structural dynamism of social life” is also rejected as erroneous. An armed struggle can only be justified in “an extreme case”, when it is “a last resort to put an end to an obvious and prolonged tyranny which is gravely damaging the fundamental rights of individuals and the common good”.

Nevertheless, a “very rigorous analysis of the situation” is necessary whereby one must consider that “passive resistance” is a way more conformable to moral principles and having fewer prospects for success”.

#### **d) Love of One's Fatherland (Patriotism)**

In many countries of the world, love of one's fatherland or motherland has fallen into disrepute because of the past history of nations. In recent decades, it was almost tabooed to speak of the fatherland for example in Germany. Criticizing of one's fatherland took the place of love of one's fatherland. At the most, one still spoke of preservation of the countryside and protection of monuments, if the fatherland was not simply rejected as a "system of the ruling – classes". Yet, it is a healthy practice to love and defend the fatherland and motherland as our language, colour and identity come from him or her.

Franz Rudolf Bornewasser, wrote the last pastoral letter on love of one's fatherland on March 15, 1947. There he said: *"It is not open to man whether he wishes to love his fatherland or not. Love of one's fatherland is not a weighing of advantage, but a religious obligation. Neither is love of one's fatherland mere feeling, but a virtue of the will, a free, conscious self-surrender to the land of one's Fathers. Love of one's fatherland means rejoicing at the flowering of one's fatherland, suffering at its suffering, and always praying for its well-being. But love of one's fatherland also means deep pain at the blemishes that soil the image we bear of it in our hearts. Love of one's fatherland further means faithfulness. Whoever breaks faith is a traitor. True faithfulness proves itself when suffering and need come upon one's fatherland. Would it not be sad if, in times of need, one was to begin to calculate whether one could not live better if one were to separate oneself from one's fatherland? To abandon one's fatherland for purely egotistical reasons in flight before the required sacrifice contradicts the spirit of Christianity values faithfulness and willingness to sacrifice more highly than material goods"*.

It seems to me that the time has come to reflect again on the Christian message about the relation of man to his people, to his fatherland, motherland, to his or her state. According to the Christian understanding, love for one's fatherland is grounded in reverent dedication to those to whom we owe our origin: God, our parents, and the land of our fathers, the land where our cradle stood and to which we were bound by destiny through a common homeland, a common descent, a common history, a common culture, and a common language. *"Before man is thrown into the world, he is laid in the cradle of the home,"* says the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard (1884 – 1962).

Homelessness is a loss of identity. If "fatherland" disappears from linguistic usage, other important things in life are also lost. The Christian does not have a broken relation to his or her fatherland. The Second Vatican Council

summons Christians to “a generous and loyal devotion to their country” (no. 65). It exhorts the faithful, in loyalty to their country, to serve the common good. (Vatican II Decree in the Laity, Number 14).

The people of God of the Old Testament loved their homeland and the city of Jerusalem. In Psalm 137, it says: “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion... If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!” (Psalm 137:1-5). Jesus loved his people also. As he saw before him the disaster that would come upon the city of Jerusalem, “he wept over it” (Luke. 19:4). Christian love of one’s fatherland is not a mere feeling, nor an unctuous patriotism, nor a sentimental nationalism, and even less chauvinism. It is embedded in the love for all men and all peoples. For the limitation of being human to one’s own race, one’s own people, one’s own nation, or one’s own class leads to brutality. Love of one’s fatherland is, as the Second Vatican Council says: “without any being narrow-minded,” open to “the whole human family, which is tied together by the manifold bonds linking races, peoples and nations” (Gaudium et Spes no. 75).

#### **e) Willingness to Sacrifice**

Without the citizens’ willingness to sacrifice, the common good cannot be realized. The tight social intertwinement and the development of social and political relations since the beginning of the industrial age have greatly increased the financial needs of the state. The amount of taxes and duties, their anonymity, the complicated process of balancing costs, and not least the spread of that attitude which is usually called “*minimum morality*” (Grenzmoral) have weakened the consciousness of being morally obligated to pay taxes and social security contributions. The Second Vatican Council calls tax evasion “*fraud*” (Gaudium et Spes no. 36). If the citizens consider the tax laws to be in need of improvement, the solution does not lie in tax evasion, but in tax reform to be striven for in a democratic way.

#### **f) Obligation to form Civil Society Associations**

Gladly, we notice in Nigeria the rising number of registrations at the Corporate Affairs Commission of civil society, economic and public associations for the common good. Numerous interest groups have been formed, i.e. organized associations that conjoin the parallel economic interests of their members and seek to exercise influence and pressure on public opinion, the political parties, the chambers of parliament, the government, and the administration of public affairs and justice as well as on opposed interest groups in order to obtain their interests. The formation of organized associations does correspond to our understanding of society and

state. And it is also to be recognized that, in a certain respect, interest groups are the expression of the need for protection over against the ever expanding power of the state. Nevertheless, Catholic Social Teaching places the common good of the state above the special interests of associations. It appeals to the sense of responsibility of the associations and their functionaries to recognize the primacy of the common good in their programs and praxis in spite of the fully justified advocacy of their own interests.

### **10. Conclusion**

Permit me to conclude this presentation with a statement that it is a truly Christian challenge and a fundamental option in a corrupt society like ours to respond to the *“signs of the times in the light of the Gospel”*. The demands of modern society and the challenges of the present situation faced worldwide live humanity no other viable option than to seek a life that is just and integral, following in the footsteps of the teacher and master himself, Jesus Christ of Nazareth who urged his followers *“to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth”* (Matthew Chapter 5). This is not the time for the option of lethargy and apathy. It is rather the time to promote the common human heritage which is to be people of faith and reason.

John the Baptist in the desert, repeating the citation of Isaiah, made it clear that there is a call to positive action of conversion *‘metanoia’* for the committed and convinced citizen of our time, country and era. We are challenged to become: *“the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the ways of the Lord, make his path straight.* (Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40: 3). It is this ability to give voice, to enlighten the ignorant, to teach love of God and neighbour by example and communicating faith in the diversity of cultures that has made this conference a new beginning that it is, (especially for the oppressed peoples of Africa), for humanity at large and for the sustainable peace and justice which all people earnestly yearn for. Thus, universal values of solidarity are expressed as blessed Pope John Paul II himself stated in his World day Message of Peace in 2001, that *“the value of peace is the primary objective of every society; the value of life itself as the most sacred and inviolable earthly reality, for it is not possible to invoke peace and despise life; the value of education which enables regard for one’s own identity with an understanding of others and respect for diversity; the values of forgiveness and reconciliation necessary for building bridges over the barriers caused by non-communication and misunderstandings, thereby, nurturing the path which leads to peace”*.

## Chapter Three

### Church and Contemporary Nigerian Society: Social Teachings of the Church: past and present – enunciation of relevant theological principles<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The basic aim of this chapter is commitment to a faith that does justice. Following the opening of the windows of the Vatican through Pope John XXIII via the Second Vatican Council in 1961, we in the Church have come to understand more fully and to appreciate more deeply that a “living faith” leads directly to a “loving action” in the transformation of the world. This paper must be considered principally as a participation in the worldwide call for the knowledge and spread of the Church’s Social Teaching as Pope John XXIII has declared;

*“But today more than ever, it is essential that its doctrine be known, assimilated, and put into effect in the form and manner that the different situations allow and demand. It is a difficult task indeed, yet a most noble one. To the performance of it, we call not only our own sons and daughters scattered throughout the world, but also men and women of goodwill everywhere”<sup>2</sup>*

Concluding, the Pope calls for the unity of thought and action.

*“It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly the Church’s Social Doctrine, the light of which is truth, justice its objective and love its driving force”. (Mater et Magistra).*

We cannot convert and lead others rightly if we do not know the way. We cannot find the way if we have no faith. We cannot work for the unity of all Christians, if we are arrogantly frantic about our private affiliations or confessions and intolerant of other groups. We must open up to learn, to live and to love.

---

<sup>1</sup> At the Seminar by the Nigerian Association of Ecumenical Theologians at St Augustine’s Seminary, Jos in 1998

<sup>2</sup> Mater et Magistra.

I pray that the set goals of this seminar be translated into reality for the good of God's children on earth, the liberation of Africa, the salvation of souls and the glory of God.

### **The Problems**

Somehow, one is forced to believe that we have reached the end of time. Under present day events, hunger, industrial pollution, injustices of unimaginable extents, wars, moral disintegration, plagues of various sorts including HIV/AIDS, genetic manipulation and of course, an era that lacks belief in God, in man and in any meaning in human life, theologians are at the cross-road. There are many questions and little answers. In earlier times, namely; Old Testament and the New Testament times, the theologian arrogated to himself monopoly of ultimate answers to complicated questions since he was the "analytic student of the mind of God". Today, the theologian has joined the questioners to such an extent that instead of throwing more light to issues of faith and life, he has decided to accept the original human condition of ignorance and to join in a new search.

The situation is worsened when we discover the 'sophisticated' in-fighting among theologians as to who has the best and lasting answer to our problems, who is the heretic and the orthodox. There is thus an attendant crisis of a lack of orientation. Many are confused, and those who previously pretended to be strong have been forced, dragged or misled to join the faceless mob. Faced with an embarrassing and unacceptable situation where equality of all mankind is only "pep talk", where justice is considered an illusion, where human rights have no place and the rule of law a matter for the elite, one cannot but question the credibility and condition of our secular and spiritual leaders, who lay claim and authority, not only over bodies of men, but also over their consciences. The promises that things might be better and that the future is brighter have been considered historically fallacious and misleading. Hopelessness and absurdity seem to have taken the upper hand. The Promised Land is 'a doom' land.

Look around you, here in Nigeria and in most countries of the developing world and you will discover the brutal realities confronting many of God's children. They are hungry, they are poor, they are exploited and they die young. The phenomenon is incomprehensible, especially in a world where food, medicaments and clothing are burn off in alarming proportions, 40,000 children die each day for lack of water, medicine and food. 90% of the Nigerian population lives on "oil doom" while a marginal 10% enjoys "oil

boom”. People who do not preach it, while those who talk about the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) live in “earthly heaven” practice SAP.

It is in these context dear friends that I write this paper assigned to me. It is an unpalatable topic, taking into cognizance that the situation is not changing for any better. In the context of Nigeria, for example, corruption has come to stay with us as a “registered institution”. Believe it or not, the practice of giving and taking bribes have been accepted by many of our citizens as a “survival strategy” and a way of life, with the little exception of a “little rest” who might either follow the majority or be brutalized by the tragic human element of “*join them when you cannot beat them*”. Military dictatorship in Nigeria as elsewhere has replaced the God-given gift of self-rule and the value of democracy. The economic sphere leaves much to be desired as over 80% of the population of Nigeria lives in poverty and squalor, without drinking water, no light, no decent housing, no food to eat, no good jobs, no acceptable relevant and adaptable education and no reasonable content of a certain acceptable ‘quality of life’.

The responsible authorities in government have taken many false steps and the consequences will be felt for a generation to come. Religious bigotry and double morality have not made the people of our generation any better than the apostates of old who sought for God where there was immediate material result. Authentic and true religiosity seems to have been sacrificed at the altar of clever psychologists, dupes, charlatans and non-performers. At last, the saying of Jesus Christ in the Bible “woe to this generation... she seeks constantly for sign” appears to have come to pass. As far as ecumenism is concerned, many Christians have been grossly divided over cosmetics, but not over the substance of he who called us to his services. Ecumenism has been marginalized as an affair for the “talkative”, keeping in mind that for over 300 years, we have been talking. The results of over 300 years talking has not been seen in the unity of Christian, rather further divisions, even within the confessions and polarizations into progressive, conservative and orthodox have taken place. In spite of many single and group efforts by very sincere and honest people, the Christian search for unity cannot be said to be considerably positive. We have still a long way to go.

### **Introducing the Social Teachings of the Church**

Many Christians are not aware of the fact that the Church has some Social Teachings. Some are baffled and the direct question often is: “What has the Church to do with human Society”? Even today, it is a rare theology

department or seminary, which provides a course dealing specifically with the Church's Social Teaching. That the Church has developed a body of teachings on social, economic, political and cultural matters and what that body says seems to have been forgotten, or never known.

There are diverse reasons as to why ignorance exists and they include;

- The documents are long and the language too academic and theological. Oftentimes, the documents seem to be rather abstract, dry in content, and not very attractive to pick up and read for simple folks.
- They are not often preached about from the pulpit or taught Catechism classes.
- Most annoyingly is the fact that many Christians cannot get hold of this teaching. Where do you buy an encyclical? Thank God if our rural parishes have medals, crosses, rosary, pieta, bibles and 'Child of Mary' to sell.
- The topics frequently are a challenge, dealing as they do, with controversial social issues, and therefore they make some readers uncomfortable. Many readers think of '*Humane Vitae*' (on Human life, 1968) which forbade the use of contraceptive pills, and pre-marital sexual behaviour, which led to much debate over the Church's unchallenged authority over sex-life in Europe and America.

### **Signs of Hope**

In spite of the above, however, there has been a small resurgence of interest in the Social Teaching. New attention is paid to what the Church has to say on the political and economic issues of the day. The serious crises facing mankind on national and international fronts concerning the social order and the right order of values have challenged priests, politicians, teachers, workers, businessmen and professional people. Many are in search of answers and the Church's position seems to still weigh on people's consciences.

In the face of injustice, poverty, international debt, falling standards of living and economic and political disparities, accompanied by the threats of a world war and complicated by contemporary social events and issues, many honest citizens are now searching for explanations, guidelines and directions based on a Christian vision of the world. Catholic Social Teachings has been challenged to offer answer from theological perspective to some of these questions. What is the Church's position on war and peace, missiles and

arms race? What of economic justice for all, international development and racism. Have we any words to offer on human rights, apartheid, military dictatorships, the dignity and worth of all persons, the sacredness of human life? What of labour, trade unions, work, the poor, women etc? There is a growing interest for Christian responses to such questions. More and more people are discovering or re-discovering for the first time, the rich heritage of the social teaching of Christianity. Some respond with surprise, enthusiasm and astonishment. Others with suspicion and rejection. Especially guilty are politicians of the left or the right who feel challenged by these teachings and make noise if the views in a teaching do not favour their political lineage.

This way or that way, there are no easy answers to hard problems that would be found in these social teachings. What can be found, according to M. Schultheis and P. Henriot is “social wisdom” based on;

- Biblical insights,
- The Tradition of the Fathers of the Church,
- Scholastic philosophy,
- Theological reflection,
- Contemporary experience of the people of God struggling to live out faith and justice. (Ref: *The Rich Heritage of Catholic Teaching*, Washington, Centre of Concern, p.2).

We can do no better here than quote Pope John XIII from his social encyclical to the universal Church (1961) titled: “*Mater et Magistra*”, Mother and Teacher, where he writes;

*“The Church has formulated particularly over the past hundred years, and through the efforts of a very well-informed body of priests and laymen, a social doctrine which points out with clarity the sure way to social reconstruction. The principles are of universal application, for they take human nature into account, and the varying conditions in which man’s life is lived. They all take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society acceptable to all” (Mater et Magistra).*

The Pontiff calls for the knowledge and spread of this teaching where he says;

*“But today more than ever, it is essential that this doctrine be known, assimilated, and put into effect in the form and manner that the different situations allow and demand. It is difficult task*

*indeed, yet a most noble one. For the performance of it, we call not only our own sons and daughters scattered throughout the world, but also men and women of goodwill everywhere” (Mater et Magistra).*

Concluding, the Pope calls for unity in thought and action.

*“It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church’s social doctrine, the light of which is truth, justice its objective and loves its driving force” (Mater et Magistra).*

### **Towards a Contextual Theological Approach: A Challenge**

From the foregoing, are we not challenged as Africans and theologians to look inwards and to develop a contextual social ethics relevant to us? Are we not challenged to place our findings at the disposal of the Church? Today, in our search for a new theological attitude, or Africanness, we must influence our Christianity in the sense that morality becomes a liberating event, morality of the beatitudes in a political context, as the spirit of justice, love of neighbour, reconciliation. This is where marriage, childbirth, work, trade, economics, social organizations, war, love, and various dimensions of life make their impact on theology from the African traditional perspective. Theology talking to Africa must attempt to adapt, enculturate and fit into the situation of the African. In times past, various documents were completely taken over into the African world without seeking for the relevant points, which concerned the human person of Africa.

Today, as African theologians, we must be faced with challenges of unity and diversity. How can we in the unity of Catholicity seek for elements, which are relevant for our context from the bible and the social encyclicals without disrupting the unity of Catholicity? It is time for Africans to say what is and what is not ourselves. To redefine and reverse the frames of reference. To establish original African values and place them in the context of our behavioural patterns without denying the basic truths that guide man. This new movement must make changes in the entire process of assimilating teachings from outside by giving definitions which arise from an African framework. The voice of Christ talking to man in African has to be truly heard without the risk of alienation or over-watering. The ultimate essence of theology is of a mystical order, the encounter with God. In the context of Africa, this must involve the God of liberation, the God of the poor, the lonely and oppressed. One can assert that African spirituality has produced

its most valid and useful reflection. Like the Boff brothers, Clodovis and Leonardo have written on liberation theology;

- Conversion to the poor and to the evangelical poverty.
- A communion of sisters and brothers in a committed community.
- Hope in a kingdom of God in history in the form of a new society.
- Service to and with the oppressed.
- Incarnation among and solidarity with the outcast.
- The prophetic courage and freedom of proclamation and denunciation.

*The Cross of Persecution and Martyrdom, in the Footsteps and Discipleship of Jesus Christ.* (Boff. L, and C: *Liberation Theology: From Confrontation? To Dialogue*, Harper and Row, N.Y. 1986 p. 30).

### **Enunciation of Relevant Theological Principles:**

#### **Religious and Social Dimensions of Life are Linked:**

The “social” human construction of the world is not “secular” in the sense of being outside of God’s plan, but is ultimately involved with the dynamic of the reign of God. Therefore, faith and justice are closely linked together. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965 n.39).

#### **Dignity of the Human Person**

Made in the image of God, women and men have pre-eminent places in the social order with inalienable political, social, legal and economic rights. The fundamental questions to ask about social development are: what is happening to people?

(*Populorum Progressio*, 1968, n.8 – 26)

#### **Option for the Poor**

A preferential love should be shown to the poor, whose needs and rights are given special attention in God’s eyes. “Poor” is understood to refer to the socially and economically disadvantaged who as a consequence of their status, suffer oppression and powerlessness” (*Octogesima Adveniens* 1971, n. 23).

#### **Love and Justice are Linked**

Love of neighbour is an absolute demand for Justice, because charity manifests itself in actions and structures, which respect human dignity,

protect human rights, and facilitate human development. To promote justice is to transform structures, which block love. (Justice in the World, 1971 n. 16 and 34).

### **Promotion of the Common Good**

The common good is the sum total of all those conditions of social living, economic, political and cultural which make it possible for women and men to readily and fully achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good. (*Mater et Magistra*, n. 56).

### **Political Participation**

Democratic participation in decision-making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people. The government is the instrument by which people co-operate together in order to achieve the common good (Christmas Message, 1944).

### **Economic Justice**

The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth are to be equitably shared by all. Human work is the key of contemporary social questions. Labour takes precedence over both capital and technology in the production process. Just wages and the rights of workers to form trade unions are to be respected. Women and disabled people, migrants and unemployed people share fully in the profits of the production process in solidarity. (*Laborem Exercens*, 1981).

### **Stewardship**

All properties have a “social mortgage”. All people are to respect and share the resources of the earth. By our work we are co-creators in the continuing development of the earth (*Laborem Exercens* 1981).

### **Global Solidarity**

We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the development of all people across the world. In particular, the rich nations have responsibilities toward the poor nations and structures of the international order must reflect justice (*Populorum Progressio*, 1986)

### **Promotion of Peace**

Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among humans and among nations. The arms race must cease and progressive disarmament take place if the future is to be secured. In order to promote peace and the

conditions of peace, an effective international authority is necessary (*Populorum Progressio*, 1986).

### **The Church and Politics**

Paragraph 76 of the Vatican II document on the Church in the Modern World states that it is highly important, especially in pluralist societies that a proper view exists of the relation between the political community and the Church. The role of the Church being what it is, she must in no way be confused with the political community, nor bound to any political system. In their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and autonomous. Yet by different titles, each serves the personal and social vocation of the same human beings. The more they cooperate reasonably, the more effectively they will perform this service to everybody's advantage. Man is not confined to the temporal order. The Church, rooted in the redeemer's love, helps to make justice and charity flourish more vigorously within nations and between nations. She preaches the gospel truth and brings the light of her teaching to be on every province of human affairs with the witness of her faithful. Thus, she respects and promotes political liberty and responsibility. Always and everywhere the Church must be allowed to preach the faith with true freedom, teach her social doctrine, carry out her task among men unhampered and pass moral judgments even on matters concerning politics when fundamental rights or the salvation of souls require it.

The Church has also been urged by the great sons of Africa to fulfil this role and to keep the state faithful to the laws of God. The late Jomo Kenyatta, speaking to the Catholic Bishops of East Africa, said:

*“One of the services you give to others is to help them keep going in the right direction. We have many distractions and can wander off the path. We need constantly to be put back on it again; we may not even know that we are going astray, that we are taking the wrong direction. That is why we need the Church in our midst to tell us when we are making a mistake. The Church is the conscience of society, and today society needs a conscience. Do not be afraid to speak. If we go wrong and you keep quiet, one day you may have to answer for our mistake”.*

### **The Bishops of Africa**

Recently, the Bishops of Africa at their general assembly reviewed the situation on our continent. We have good reasons to be glad and hopeful in

considering the many efforts made by the sons and daughters of this continent in general and by our leaders in particular to promote and rehabilitate fundamental African values. We are particularly happy about the recognition given to various countries. It must however be admitted that it is for other reasons that Africa finds herself at the centre of the world scene. We would be betraying our mission; we would be seriously failing in our duty, which we owe to the men of this land, if we were to remain silent. We denounce all that which constitute a violation of human integrity and everything that offends human dignity, such as sub-human conditions of life, arbitrary imprisonment and deportations. We condemn all crimes committed in the name of the security of the state, as if the state was absolute and not at the service of the citizen, that is to say the human person.

### **Teaching of the Church**

In this statement, the Bishops of Africa are re-echoing and applying to the present situation the social teaching of the Church and the Pope. Despite the time that has elapsed, the message of Pope Pius XII to the world (Christmas, 1942) retains its validity and even reflects our situation today.

*“Never has it been so important to understand clearly the true foundations of all social life as in these days when humanity, diseased by the poison of social errors and tossed by a fever of conflicting desires, doctrine and aims, has become the unhappy prey of disorder created by itself, and is experiencing the disruptive effects of false social theories that neglect and contravene the laws of God”.*

### **The Original Reason**

The original and essential purpose of social life is to preserve and perfect the human person. Reason enlightened by faith assigns to each person and to each particular association in the social organism a definite and noble place. Above all, it tells us that the purpose of the whole of the state's activity, political and economic, is the permanent realization of the common good, that is to say, the provision of those external conditions which are needful to citizens as a whole for the development of their qualities and the fulfilment of their duties in every sphere of life, materials, intellectual and religious.

*“If social life, such as God wills it, is to attain its end, it needs a juridical constitution in order to secure the balance. The security and the concord of society have also the right restrained within the honourable discipline of life. But no exercise of this right, and*

*anxious sense of responsibility in the sight of the eternal judge, before whose tribunal any established principles, will receive inevitable punishment and condemnation. The ultimate, deep-rooted principle which lies at the foundation of society cannot be abolished by any effort of human ingenuity; they may be denied, ignored, disregarded or disobeyed, but they can never be deprived of their juridical validity” (Radio Message, published in Acta Apostolicae Sedis, January 1943).*

### **The Second Vatican Council**

The second Vatican Council in its document: “The Church in the Modern World” observed that:

*“A keener sense of human dignity has aroused in various parts of the world an eagerness to build a juridical, political order in which personal rights affecting public life are better protected. Such are the rights of free assembly, free association and, freedom of expression. Many are voicing disapproval of any kind of government which blocks civil or religious liberty, multiplies the victims of political crimes wrenches the exercise of authority from pursuing the common good to serving the advantage of a certain faction or the rulers themselves. The exercise of political authority, whether in a community as such or within the framework of the moral order, in pursuit of the common good, dynamically understood and according to a lawfully established juridical system. The citizens are then bound in conscience to obedience.*

Where citizens are oppressed by public authority which exceeds its competence, they should not on that account refuse what is objectively required of them for the common good, but it is allowable for them within the limits of the law of nature and the Gospel, to defend their rights and those of their fellow citizens against this abuse of authority. When the exercise of rights is temporarily curtailed on behalf of the common good, it should be restored as quickly as possible after the emergency passes. (The Church in the Modern World, Para 73, 74, 75).

### **Human Rights**

The most recent formulation of the teaching of the Church on human rights is that contained in the encyclical letter of Pope John “Peace on Earth”. In it, the Pope enumerates and explains the rights and duties of individuals and the state. Dealing with the individual and the political community he states:

*“Man has a right to freedom in investigating the truth and, provided no harm is done to the moral order or the common good, also to freedom of speech and publication. He has likewise the right to be accurately informed about public events. Man’s personal dignity involves his right to take an active part in public life, and to make his own contribution to the common welfare of his fellow citizens. As a human person, he is entitled to legal protection. In consequence of the juridical order willed by God, man has his own inalienable right to juridical security. To him is assigned a certain, well-defined sphere of law, immured from arbitrary attack. Those who have authority in the state must exercise that authority in a way which is not only morally irreproachable but also best calculated to ensure or promote the state’s welfare. The attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of the state rulers. Hence, every civil authority must strive to promote the common good in the interest of all without favouring any individual or group. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore, be to ensure that the rights of the individual are recognized, co-coordinated, defended and promoted. Thus, any government which refused to recognize human rights or acted in violation of them, would not only fail in its duty; its decrees would be wholly lacking in binding force” (Peace on Earth, Paras 12, 26, 27, 53, 56, 60, 61).*

These and other rights of individual formulated in the encyclical letter of Pope John “Peace on Earth” find their echo in the universal declaration of human rights of the United Nations, to which Switzerland is a signatory, in particular articles 3, 9, 11, 18, 29, 30.

### **Pope Paul VI and the 1971 Synod of Bishops**

Representatives of all the Catholic Bishops of the world met again in 1971 to review the constitution made throughout the Catholic Church, the application of the teaching of Christ and his Church to the actual situation in the world today. His holiness Pope Paul VI confirmed and published their conclusion in the document entitled; *Justice in the World*. The Bishop writes:

*“We see in the world a set of injustice which constitute the nucleus of today’s problems and whose solution requires the understanding of tasks and functions in every sector of society. Therefore, we must be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of human activity”.*

Among these, mention is made of migrants, refugees, those persecuted for their faith: Justice is also violated by forms of oppression both old and new springing from restrictions of the rights of individuals. This is occurring both in the form of repression by the political power and violence on the part of private section. The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the gospel message, which contains a call to man to turn away from sin to the love of the father, universal brotherhood, and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right indeed the duty to proclaim justice on the social, national, and international level and to denounce instances of injustice when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it. Her mission involves defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.

### **A Yearning for Justice**

“By the dark corners of the Ghetto;  
 There we sat and wept, when we yearned for justice;  
 Against the walls there we leaned;  
 We declined to bow to the vows of silence and conformity;  
 For daily our oppressors required of us a new loyalty;  
 They demanded of us to drink from the cup of slavery;  
 But how could we stand the sour taste of forced loyalty?  
 If I forget to fling open the gates of freedom;  
 I shall have betrayed her greatness;  
 If I do not set freedom above my highest joy;  
 Let me be silenced forever;  
 If I leave you, O Ghetto;  
 Let me be human forever”<sup>3</sup>.

### **List of the Social Encyclicals**

1. *Rerum Novarum* (The condition of labour) Encyclical letter of Pope Leo XIII, 1891.
2. *Quadragesimo Anno* (The reconstruction of the Social order) Encyclical letter of Pope Pius XII, 1961.

---

<sup>3</sup> Canaan Banana; *The Gospel according to the Ghetto* Mabo Press, Gwelo, 1980  
 Page 10.

3. *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress). Encyclical letter of Pope John XXIII, 1961.
4. *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth). Encyclical letter of Pope John XIII, 1963.
5. *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World), *Second Vatican Council*, 1965.
6. *Populorum Progressio* (The Development of Peoples), Encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI, 1971.
7. *Octogesima Adveniens* (A call to Action) Apostolic letter of Pope Paul VI, 1971.
8. *Justice in the World*. Statement of the Synod of Bishops, 1971.
9. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World) Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, 1975.
10. *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) Encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, 1981.
11. *Sollicitudo rei Socialis* (The Church's Social Concern), Pope John Paul II, 1987.

## Chapter Four

### Catholic Social Thought and the Context of Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

*“The Church has formulated particularly over the past one hundred years, and through the efforts of a very well informed body of priests and laypersons, a Social Doctrine which points with clarity the sure way to social reconstruction. The principles she gives are of universal application, for they take human nature into account and the varying conditions in which man’s life is involved. They also take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society and are acceptable to all”* (John XXIII Mater et Magistra, 1961, No. 220).

#### **Nigeria – Historical Background:**

History cannot be divided into watertight compartments. The realities of one epoch have their influence on the next. One event precedes another. To understand the situation of Nigeria today and offer perspectives on Social Thought from this context, a historical insight into Nigeria’s pre-colonial and colonial history would suffice, even if in a cursory manner to offer some background information much needed to understand the focus of this contribution. In the year 1884 and 1885 at the height of European colonial conquest over the rest of the World, and following the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807 which shameful business of trading on black human beings had lasted for over four hundred years, the scramble to take what belongs to others followed with a greed to partition the continent of Africa among European powers for the purposes of colonization. This led to series of internal European conflicts resulting in rivalry among the active participants namely, Britain, Germany, France, Portugal, Holland, Denmark, Brandenburg (Ref. Fage, J.D., A History of West Africa, Cambridge, London, 1969, p. 68).

The convocation of the Berlin Conference by these European powers to settle politically their spheres of influence in Africa led to the “Berlin Act” which provided that: *“any European Power which could show that it had a predominant interest in any African region would be accepted as the administering power in that region, provided it could show that its administration was a reality”*

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O.F.; preliminary remarks at an International Conference at the Brottier Centre, organized at the Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu, Enugu State in 2004.

(Forsyth, Frederick, *The making of an African legend; The Biafra Story*, London, 1969, p.15). Britain participated and thus got the large geographical territory, which is today's Nigeria under her colonial domination. In 1914, a British Soldier Lord Lugard in an act of "*administrative convenience*" amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates of this territory. Britain had gained a colony with a large landmass of 923,768 square kilometres. It had not been conquered, it hadn't really been explored. It had no name, so Lord Lugard's girlfriend gave it one – NIGERIA (Forsyth, F., op. cit., p. 14 – 15).

According to the founding fathers of post independent Nigeria, "*since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper... it is still far away from being united. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country*" (Balewa T. Abubakar, First prime minister of Nigeria at Independence in 1960). One of the outspoken politicians of Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo at the height of colonial Nigeria said in 1947: "*Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English or Welsh or French. The word Nigeria is merely to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not*" (Awolowo, Obafemi., 1947, Published in "The Punch", Nigeria, Friday, 12 December 1982; Vol 8, No. 13, 819; pp 12-13).

### **Nigeria since independence- social, economic and political issues:**

Nigeria gained independence from colonial Britain in 1960. There are an estimated 374 different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, each speaking their own language and contributing to an interdependent society rich in culture and diversity. The traditional African religions are strongly existent but have given up their edge to the religions of the Book, Christianity and Islam, which today are approximately 40 % each of the total population. Nonetheless, values emanating from traditional African religions and cultures persist somehow, despite modern trends, competing cultures and technological novelties. Nigeria is richly endowed with physical, human and natural minerals and resources that largely remain untapped. The country provides a range of tropical climatic, vegetation and soil conditions which can be found all over the continent of Africa. There are an estimated 120 – 130 million people (National Population Bureau and Statistics of the Central bank of Nigeria, 2002); occupying an average density of approximately 124 persons per square kilometre, allowing Nigeria to compete as one of the most populated countries in the world. It has been argued that one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian.

In global terms, Nigeria is said to constitute 2% of the world population and is estimated to be one of the 5 - 6 most populated countries in the world by 2025 (Ref. UNDP World Report, 2001). This is a potential strength. Alongside the Republic of South Africa, modern Nigeria is no doubt not only the most economically important, but also the most politically significant country in Africa. However, the contrary is the case as we witness large-scale poverty among the generality of the citizens of this country. Poverty which is the absence of means to maintain and enjoy the basic needs of life, a deprivation and lack of access to education, health services, food, social services and productive assets affects the most vulnerable part of the population, mainly women and children. The poor do not participate in decisions that touch their own lives.

Poverty has remained a plague afflicting peoples and countries all over the world. It is considered one of the symptoms or manifestations of underdevelopment. Poverty is “*complex and multidimensional*” and has “*various perceptions*”. One could go beyond physical poverty to describe spiritual and psychological poverty. Yet, the high incidence of poverty in Nigeria is the failure of man’s ability to take his destiny into his own hands. Nigeria is blessed with large scale human and natural resources. Poverty is not God determined. In Nigeria, it is manmade. The human operators of the political, social, economic spheres have failed the people and to a large extent are responsible for the high condition of poverty in this territory. The national economy is heavily dependent on an unpredictable oil exploration and oil exports sector (63% of public revenue in 1998), to the detriment of the many other natural resources yet to be fully exploited. In the past, these revenues have been used to finance large scale projects in the industrial, infrastructural or agricultural sectors and to enable the elite get richer through corruption.

Nigeria is highly vulnerable in terms of food security; her relentless burden of balance of payments and a legacy of excruciating external debt repayment demands impede development. The poor economic base and political instability of the country has pushed out many of the country’s skilled and professional members leading to a “*brain drain*” of the population. Nigeria has thus been described as a society in “*transition*” situated “*halfway between the traditional world of the pre-capitalist, pre-colonial past and the modern world of urban life, industry and global communications*” (UNICEF/FGN document, p. 13).

The state health and education systems are quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate, the former even being considered one of the worst in the world. There exists a large regional divide between the North and the South, as well as a divide between urban and rural areas. To offset these deficits at least partially, and to guarantee some sort of broad basic provision especially for the poorer sections of the population, the Christian Churches, particularly the Catholic Church have become heavily involved in this sector. Nigeria is one of the few countries in the world where people's health status has barely improved in recent decades. Life expectancy is low, being only 53. Communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and to an increasing extent HIV/AIDS, along with infant and child diseases, as well as high maternal mortality are amongst the major health problems faced by a desolate health system. Often the sick cannot be treated because important medicines or instruments are not available or are too expensive, or because the staff are inadequately trained, or because patients are unable to pay hospital's fees.

The education sector shows a similar picture. The illiteracy rate is 28.7% amongst men, and 45.8% amongst women. Although education is compulsory, and despite the high official rate of primary school enrolment of 95%, it is questionable how many school children actually regularly attend school. The number of dropouts is extremely high, and the average period of time spent in secondary schools is short. Besides, the quality of school education is poor. Due to their low level of school education, for most people the informal sector remains the only alternative. Here, potentials for vocational training and income generation are very limited. The formal labour market provides very few jobs in relation to demand, and most people are threatened by unemployment.

Time and again, the internal stability of Nigeria is threatened by religiously motivated violent conflicts. The introduction of the Sharia legal system in many states of the north limits the constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom of the Christian population in those areas and violent conflicts abound costing innocent human lives, not to include the wanton destruction of goods and properties. Nigeria is thus constantly standing on the brink of a civil war that to this day has only been averted thanks to the sensibleness and presence of mind of some responsible politicians and clergy. As compared to other countries on the continent, Nigeria has experienced the greatest number of violent changes in government since its independence from colonial rule in 1960.

The country has suffered nearly 28 years of military dictatorship that denied the country its full potential in democracy dividends, the rule of law, political, human and civil rights and the guarantee of a life of security and prosperity for the citizenry. The gross mismanagement and theft of government resources has deteriorated Nigerian society and economic wealth, plunging its people deeper into poverty. In overall terms, the social reality since the colonial and post-colonial incursion has led to a regress in the quality of life of people considered from the social, political, environmental, economical and technological situation. Nigeria's performance in terms of social indicators is increasingly amongst the worst in sub-Saharan Africa and throughout the developing world (UNDP World Report 2001; UNICE/FGN 2001 Report). This is the situation where the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Church's Social Doctrine is being applied to transform people and society from within. This Gospel carries with it a message of hope.



## Chapter Five

### Jesus Christ: The Social Challenge<sup>1</sup>

*"If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples you will come to know the truth and the truth will set you "free" (John 8:31)*

#### **The Context:**

This paper has an urgent and practical purpose. It desires to respond to the search by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria "in view of the pressing needs and challenges which our nation laces to search for credible and alternative solutions" (*letter of the President of the CBCN inviting the presenter to the Conference, dated 02.12.1996*). It is concerned further with the questions raised by many well-meaning Nigerians, young and old concerning the abandonment, disorientation, exploitation, violence, apathy and manipulation faced by millions of the great people of our country, many of whom are really malnourished, sick, poor, ignorant, uneducated, frustrated and depressed, denied their God-given dignity and worth, living daily in an indescribable suffering, fear and anxiety without enough indications that there is a "fight at the end of the tunnel".

What can we do about it individually and collectively? As we draw near the close of the twentieth century, history dictates that we take notes and records to survey where we started, where we stand and where we are going for we owe ourselves a reckoning. Actually, Nigeria's problems cannot be taken in isolation. We live in a global village. As you very rightly know, there is a growing universal cry and worry acknowledging certain threats to the entire survival of humankind on this planet. Not only is this cry loud in Virtually all countries of Africa, it is louder in the Western, Asian and American countries. It is not only a cry about hunger, we now know that it has to do with the apparent lack of meaning and the spectacularly wrong underlying philosophy of life of peoples of our century. An age wrong about God is almost certain to be wrong about man. There is increasing loss of moral and spiritual values and the mounting

---

<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the First Annual Plenary Assembly of Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) at Eucharistic Heart Generalate, Ikeja, Lagos on 18 -21 February, 1997.

loss of faith in God, a loss of faith in life itself, its meaning and the possibility for any change for the better.

Our starting— point, then, is the urgent reality of our present historical situation. This awareness is characterized by problems concerning life and death in a world that has grown too sophisticated and has developed weapons of mass destruction capable of killing each of the almost six billion inhabitants of this world several times over.

The spirit of our age and of this century was aptly described in poetic caricature by the Briton W.B. Yeats Who was very much influenced by the 19<sup>th</sup> Century German nihilist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in the following lines:

*"Turning and turning in the widening gyre; the falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart, the Centre cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world"*  
— (W.B. Yeats)

No other age has witnessed so much bloodshed, so many wars, too much inconsistency, deceit, crisis, brutality and death, as our own, no other century knew about the A—Bomb, H-Bomb and N-Bomb, the long screech of falling and raining bombs over humans cost more than 70 million lives alone in World War II, not calculating those who died in camps, homes, under the cold, in anxiety and excruciating situations. Virtually, many people, whether innocent or not have been victims of this vicious circle of violence perpetrated at the service of political, economic, socio—cultural and religious idiosyncrasies. We are witnesses to some of these brutal and traumatic wickedness.

Yet, our century has seen so many exciting and encouraging developments worthy of reckoning, such as the invention and development of the aero plane and of space travel. We have seen the widespread use of electricity, not just for lighting, heating and cooling but also for making possible other revolutionary inventions like the telematics, informatics, computers and television.

Our century has conquered many diseases and through the discovery of the DNA has begun to understand the nature of life itself by contributing to the greater happiness and fulfillment of many ambitions of peoples all over the world. For those living in Africa, ailments such as malaria, typhoid, elephantiasis, tuberculosis, sickle cell anaemia and other diseases once

shrouded in superstitious stupors have been brought into medical and curative possibilities.

External colonialism has been gradually dismantled but we have seen the enthronement of neo-colonialism and all forms of local and international exploitation. We have witnessed various irrational ideological resentment to the left and to the right, to the extent that the dignity of the human person depended on which tribal, religious, socialist or capitalist colour one professed. Post-colonial Africa for example sacrificed millions of her children in Mozambique, Benin, Ethiopia, Angola, South Africa, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Chad, Guinea, Algeria, Uganda, Nigeria and Biafra (now defunct), Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Congo, Zaire, to mention but a few for ideological and manipulated reasons. The Victims were in the majority children and women.

What is worse, the system is vicious, perpetrating the crisis, creating new differences, producing wealth and poverty at the same time. The system talks about competition, the free market economy, profit and self-actualization but everyone in fact does not have an equal chance within the system to compete. The poor lose from the onset.

Like Father Albert Nolan has shown:

*"the system is a monster which devours people for the sake of profits... worse still, the system is now pressing its demands and defending itself with more and more violence... the system was not even designed to solve problems... what we are up against are not people but the impersonal forces of a system which has its own momentum and its own dynamics... How often one hears the cry of hopeless resignation: "You cannot fight the system". (Jesus before Christianity, London 1992, p.10).*

There would be no point in attempting to exaggerate these problems. They exist. We have new insights which expose the magnitude, complexity and insolubility of some of these problems. Actually, there are many reasonable and serious people who assert the great fear that many of humanity's problems are no longer solvable and the headlong plunge towards the foul destruction of the human species appears imminent. This is not the so-called prophecy of doom. Scientific theories and experimental analysis based on facts are used to buttress this disastrous picture.

Environmental pollution happens to be on the increase, in rivers, seas and the very air we breathe, causing large geo—physical changes in the ozone layer and the climates of several countries and leading to over flood, desertification overheat and over cold as was never known before. Many have died under these new situations. The environmentalists say that if drastic changes are not introduced very soon, we shall all be killed by the by-products of our own progress.

These are new threats though, and we must be honest to accept them as threats. The world's population increases at the rate of about 80 to 100 million people annually. In concrete terms, this corresponds to the size of the inhabitants of all the fifteen nations of West Africa (excepting Nigeria) and coinciding with the population of the entire landmass of Europe. The population of Nigeria itself gives room for guesswork and some laughter because our governments cannot tell us in all honesty how many we are. The matter has been politicized beyond repairs.

We moved from 78 million in 1974 to anywhere between 120 to 150 million in the late 80's and are now back again to 88.8 million in 1991. The big city combos are highly populated, and what is worse, shanties and slums create such a devastating psychological damage on the children who grow up there that often, all our morality and accepted decency are gone in their vocabulary, added to this scenario is the fact that natural resources and food supplies are diminishing. In the context of many countries of the world, it is noticed that the desert is encroaching on us as soil erosion increases and more and more forests are destroyed. Brutality and wars have mounted in a world where the leaders of nations have sworn that there shall be “no more wars” to the extent that this century was history's bloodiest.

The crisis in our changing times especially in the African countries and Nigeria specifically ranges from basic lack of humanly acceptable and universally acclaimed standards often called “basic needs” such as water, food, shelter, education, health -care, to the need for a more humane and spiritually conducive environment for majority of the citizens. We are told that more than 1.5 billion people, that is, about one out of every four persons in this world as at 1996 experiences excruciating hunger at least on daily basis. Poverty is real. An example with Nigeria's economy shows that “in 1970, the per capita income was 170 USD, it rose in 1980 to 1000 USD, declined sharply in 1990 to 230 USD. In 1994, it was down to a mere 100 USD” Wosa Iglebor, *Tell Magazine Editorial Report, Lagos, 20. February 1995, p. 3*).

Vices and evils persist and there is apparent cultural degradation, the breakdown of morals and traditional lifestyles, materialism of all sorts which rejects God and replaces Him with Gold, institutional violence, bribery and corruption which now are endemic and have become part of the system within the Nigerian social fabric to the extent that sermons against corruption or police touting are taken as a big joke.

We have in our society, the worst forms of dictatorship perpetrated both by the military elite and supported by some civilian politicians who betray the people and their mandate. We are subjects of a society that is unable to control certain oppressive structures as bad leadership, increase in crimes, the growing breakdown of the family and its attendant values, continued dilapidation of almost every essential structure needed for humanity as daily survival in a decent environment.

Currently, new diseases such as the scourge of AIDS, new plagues and uncontrollable and incurable diseases face our outstretched resources which already cannot cope easily with the burden of external trade, the arms trade, the violation of human rights and the general disorientation of values whichever way one may try to look at. Many have given up! Others who had hoped for a better day in their lifetime have had these hopes crashed because of the seeming futility of it all. What is the purpose of it all? Some ask. "You cannot beat them so why not join them or check out? Others ask!

The basic questions many ask are: How did humanity come so low? Why has it been difficult to achieve social justice, political participation, cultural dignity and national liberation for the people? Why is it that our intellectuals and leaders praise and prefer ideological models that have failed to produce economic and social welfare for the people? These systems have in fact continued to undermine the developmental process of our countries through the wild fluctuation in the so-called world market of our exports, through the unequal exchange value of our products in comparison with the industrial products of the technologically advanced countries; through the low investment rates of our export-oriented private enterprises and their evasion of internal capital investment, and lately through the unbearable burden of external debt.

How come that a country as rich as Nigeria in every imaginable sense has been reduced to apparent poverty so that its citizens have now to travel and escape to other countries virtually as beggars for every imaginable mean job, discrimination and inhumane treatment?

In a global context, how come that despite the grand progress in humanity's technical and information machinery, with a new wealth of resources both in educational and industrial dimensions, we are not yet able to arrive at the new world order which could guarantee the much desired self—respect for all, human dignity, coexistence, self-determination, cultural integrity, political participation and international collaboration and sovereignty which the new globalization could offer and actually pretends to offer?

These questions and more are being asked by people everywhere. The Bishops of Nigeria have also consistently asked them in their very many public statements and reflections and have actually come up with answers in the past.

*"The Conference observes with deep concern the prolonged distress of the Nigerian nation and is moved by the misery and agony of the individuals and families in Nigeria who are unable to live worthwhile lives and fulfil their obligations and aspirations" (CBCN Communique, 1609/1994, Dracc, Enugu).*

But have they been heeded and adhered to? Are these answers known? Are they followed up in pastoral guidelines? The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II in the document "Ecclesia in Africa" exhorts the Church of Africa to serve as the watch dog" for justice and Human Rights by establishing Justice and Peace Commissions throughout the continent. He opined:

*"The Church has the right and the duty to advocate respect for human rights in Africa including denouncing conditions imposed by structural adjustment programmes, arms sales and unjust trading". (Pope John Paul II, EIA, 1 995).*

In this exposition, we have not tried to exaggerate these problems. There is no need to do this for the facts are real. What is the use of keeping up the facade or trying to save face when everything threatens to collapse around us? The present situation seems to force us willingly or unwillingly to be honest. Many people are concerned both the high and the low. In this moment of truth, we cannot "fiddle while Rome burns".

Hyacinth Cardinal Thiandoum, Archbishop of Dakar Senegal at the opening session of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Africa in April 1994 in the Vatican asked the now very famous question:

*“In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message Good News for our people? In the midst of an all pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?” (In Relato Ante Disceptationem, n2).*

We are challenged to *"consider the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (GS, n. 1)*. Solutions of course can be found. Solutions actually exist. But they would require such radical and dramatic changes in the values, concerns, lifestyle, thought patterns and general orientations of our people generally. Such solutions would call people to make sacrifices and accept alternatives which might lower their standard of lives but enhance the quality and in fact improve the meaning of their lives. This is the challenge facing the people of Nigeria. It is the duty of the Conference of Catholic Bishops to remind all of this responsibility and to lead the way.

We might say with some measure of rectitude that in the past, “organized religion helped very little in this crisis. In fact, it has sometimes tended to make matters worse. The type of religion that emphasizes a supernatural world in such a way that one does not need to be concerned about the future of this world and all its peoples, offers a form of escape that makes it all the more difficult to solve our problems” (Nolan, A. Ibid, p.11).

With the emergence of the First Social Encyclical in 1891, Pope Leo XIII courageously took a bold step by championing the cause of the workers in “Rerum Novarum”. That initiative and prophetic stand in the confused and disoriented world of the industrial revolution and mercantilist society of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century enabled the Catholic Church and the Bishop of Rome to credibly assert both the authority and the knowledge to lead people to their own secular and eternal salvation. The Church established her relevance in the secular and spiritual domain.

From our knowledge of history, it so happens that Jesus of Nazareth faced comparatively the same socio—political, economic religious and cultural disarray which so many societies including Nigeria today face. Many people, who lived before, during and after the time of Jesus, believed very strongly that with the trend of events, the world was on the brink of an apocalyptic catastrophe, it was the “end of the world” syndrome. The Romans colonized Palestine in 63 BCE. In accordance with their policy of appointing native rulers in their colonies, they eventually made Herod, the most powerful claimant, King of the Jews.

Jesus was born during the reign of this King Herod, whose death brought the political turmoil of a divided Kingdom among his sons (Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip). The epoch began with a rebellion inspired by Judas the Galilean who on religious grounds refused that Jews should pay any taxes to the Romans. With direct Roman rule, the last and most turbulent epoch in the history of the Jewish nation entered, leading to the almost total destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the entire nation in 70 CE. and their final and complete destruction in 135 CE, a time during which Jesus lived, worked and died and during which the Christian Communities grew and spread.

All sorts of groups flourished with several theories and conflicting tendencies like we find in today's Nigeria. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Zealots, the Scribes, the Priests and Elders, the Qumran community, the simple citizens among the several other groupings developed various strategies to the threat of Roman imperialism and the news concerning the world's close ending.

There was search for a way out, a new leader, preferably a King whose reign shall lead to the temporal and perhaps eternal salvation of the people of Israel. This was the background of John the Baptist and of Jesus of Nazareth.

John the Baptist challenged the people with harsh words:

*"Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming retribution? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance... Yes, even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire"* (Luke:3, 7ff; Mk1,4, ff). *"Repent for the Kingdom of God is close at hand"* (Matt 3:1 ff).

John appealed for social morality, not just for a change of ritual purity or petty details of Sabbath observance. He challenged the people including the mighty Herod for immorality and injustice. He lost his life for daring to speak out against the mighty. But his message spread thus:

*"If anyone has two tunics, he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same... To the tax collectors he said;" exact no more than your rate" ... To the soldiers he said" no intimidation! no extortion! Be content with your pay!"* (Luke 3:11—14).

Jesus may not have agreed with John in every detail. But he used John as his own point of departure, calling people to repentance and change of lifestyle:

*"The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mk. 1:15).*

Jesus read the signs of the times and gave his message. He made himself relevant and made sure that in fulfilment of the Will of the Father, he was faithful to the end, even to the excruciating passion and shameful death on the Cross. Those who followed him and his message have seen his power, capable of changing entire human history.

Those who neglect him and his message have done this but not without some repercussions on their world view, general happiness and lifestyle as we have tried to portray in exposing the context of our reflection above. Things would never be the same again. The consequences worldwide are there for all to see.

### **THE CENTRAL QUESTION: JESUS CHRIST?**

The American weekly, NEWSWEEK, published sometime in 1977 the results of a wide investigation under the heading: *HAS THE CHURCH LOST ITS SOUL?* Twenty years later, this question still seems very relevant and is being asked directly, even though, it could be reformulated in different forms for different groups – politicians, nations, associations, churches, economists, various professionals, to mention but a few. Put in other words: Has humanity lost its soul? The controversial theologian Hans Kung had reflected on this question in a lecture he delivered at the St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin sometime in 1967, questions which because of their relevance and urgency bear repetition here (refer: Kung, H., *what must remain in the Church*, Collins, 1977).

Against the background of the Asian continent with a population of 65 percent of the world's population, made up mainly of religious groups such as Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Muslims, Taoists etc., what is the point of Christianity and why do we still need Christian missionaries? If today we affirm all the religious values of the world-religions in Asia as valid (and there are many of them, namely, peace, love, justice, truth, tolerance, compassion), and make them our own, where does Christianity still have a relevance or a mission?

Such a question can still be asked as we approach the year 2000 as well as reflect upon within the context of Africa in general and concretely Nigeria, a multi-cultural and multi—religious society. In other words, what is the

essence of mission? And what is our response faced with the challenges posed by the very many competing Pentecostal and commercialized religious groupings, associations some of them Charlatans and road side preachers whose messages are essentially dubious and or money making spree?

The central question could also be reflected upon within the reality of today's western nations in Europe and America who have come up with modern humanistic theories, focusing on human dignity, human rights, human values, discipline, order and equality of all before the law but without God as the point of departure, religion as its ideal, or the Church as the motivating factor for its modern humanism. If already we affirm the entire human values of the modern secular world, what have we of our own that we could call the specific Christian reality? Has not Christianity made itself superfluous?

One more serious question that cannot simply be dismissed as conservative, reactionary or even progressive, raised by both the old and the young, and raised within the Churches and especially in the Catholic Church, in view of widespread upheavals, liturgical adaptations, innovations both in morality, teaching and discipline, namely, the question about what is there that must certainly remain when all is gone?

We have witnessed since the Second Vatican Council the various forms of "*aggiornamento*" as introduced and how some fasting rules, pious devotions, the use of Latin, the modernization of the sacraments, the liturgical calendar, the roll call of the saints, the role of women, democratic behaviour even within the Church hierarchy and the very many positions of the Church on issues of ethics, the economy, political developments have changed or rather adapted to insinuations of a dynamic and changing society. In the context of all these changes, has the Church lost its soul?

Even if we say that none of these things belongs essentially to the soul of the Church and therefore none of them must necessarily remain, the stage is cleared for the concrete question: What then is the soul of the Church? What is its principle of life, the basic message on which the Church is built, the specifically Christian reality? What is it that must remain in the Church? Since Church's history is so full of changes, what really holds together the twenty tangled centuries of the history of the Christian Church?

Put otherwise, since the New Testament is so heterogeneous, what really holds its twenty-seven very diverse books together? Actually, by knowing the distinctive feature of Christianity, we know also what must necessarily

remain as a permanent factor, an axiom and the Christian reality, put simply and solely in one word, a person: THIS JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF. For there can be no Christianity without Christ.

Following the entire tradition of the Church and the teachings of the Fathers even into our own times:

*"The Christian reality must remain. The Church must remain Christian, otherwise it is not the Church of Jesus Christ but just another respectable club or association, Christian self—awareness must include modesty, and Christian certainty tolerance. "Christian" does not mean everything that is true, good and beautiful. Truth, goodness and beauty also exist outside Christianity. But everything which has an explicit reference to this Christ can be called Christian (a challenge both for individuals and for parties calling themselves Christians).*

*"A Christian" is not just any human being with sincere faith and good will. Sincere faith and good will exist also outside Christianity and will hand salvation there. But someone for whom in life and death this Christ is decisive, ultimately decisive, may be called a Christian. "Christian Church" is not just any group of people with good intentions who try to lead a decent life in order to gain salvation. A decent life and salvation can be found also in other groups outside the Church, since God is greater than the Church. But any human community for whom this Christ is ultimately decisive may be called a Christian Church. "Christianity" does not exist wherever humanity is realized. Humanity is realized also outside Christians among Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, among secular humanists and even downright atheists. Christianity exists only where the memory of this Christ is activated (Kung, H. Ibid, p. 17).*

## **JESUS CHRIST: THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE FOR NIGERIA**

*"Many millions throughout the ages have venerated the name of Jesus, but few have understood him and fewer still have tried to put into practice what he wanted to see done. His words have been twisted and turned to mean everything, anything and nothing. His name has been used and abused to justify crimes, to frighten children and to inspire men and women to heroic foolishness. Jesus has been more frequently honoured and worshipped for what he did not mean than for what he did mean. The supreme irony is that some of the things he opposed most strongly in the world of his time were resurrected, preached and spread more widely throughout the world—in his name" (Father Albert Nolan, Jesus before Christianity, Chapter 1).*

Actually, it is not sufficient like the so—called Jesus-People claim simply to sing and say "Lord, Lord or *"Jesus, Jesus"*. Nor is it sufficient simply to quote the words of the Old and New Testaments or sing pious songs presuming thereby that the great problems of the world and of our society would be solved thereby. The bible records that Jesus *"began to do and to teach"*.

The historical Jesus of Nazareth lived in first century Palestine. He had some very good and strong convictions about himself, his mission and his mandate and he was willing to die for them. His concern and response to the questions of the people of his time on the issues concerning the "end of time" and "end of the world" prophecies which were stumbling blocks for the people and age in which he lived made him of particular interest to our age and time.

Jesus saw a way out of the vicious circle of sin, hopelessness and resignation into which humanity had estranged themselves. He had an insight into what could be done and how it could be done and he empowered his followers to do likewise. Having conquered death and fear, he showed that apathy, hopelessness, passivity and neutrality could not lead humanity forward. He had an agenda which we cannot ignore safely and still remain his faithful followers. In a word, Jesus' entry into the human plane is by virtue of the incarnation:

*"And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14)* has become the point of departure for all theology, and for any meaningful discussion or practice about human folds' relationship with God and the right order of things in the universe. We live on the Word "through whom all things were made" (Jn.1:3). In our desire to love God, search for the truth and grow in the knowledge of Theology, the incarnation becomes that critical historical moment where God becomes the subject and object of history.

Thus theology assumes the scientific ordering of the data of revelation. The articulation of what we believe. If the incarnation is nullified, Christian Theology would cease to exist. There might still remain magic and all sorts of religious syncretism. There would be idolatry and horrendous paganism, including spiritual voodooism bordering on the margins of pantheistic polytheism of irrational dimensions. But there would be no knowledge of the "Truth in Full".

The Emmanuel therefore of the Prophets, who in the fullness of time became the Jesus of Nazareth is the basis for our ontological insistence that "No Christ, No Salvation" of himself Jesus once said: "I am the way, the truth and

the life" (Jn. 14,6). Our High Prayer at Holy mass places this Christ Event as the summit of our Eucharistic celebration for:

“Through Him, with Him, in Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all Glory and Honour is yours, Almighty Father forever and ever”.

Jesus Christ is the Social Challenge of our times and place. He was not a man of the establishment. He was not simply a political or social revolutionary. He was not even an ascetic monk who would withdraw himself from the world and cut himself off from secular matters. Was he then finally a man for moral rearmament, a kind of devout moralist? But Jesus did not teach any technique of piety and had no taste for moral or - still less - juridical casuistry; nor was he interested in questions of legal interpretation, Actually, the Pharisees were competent for this more than we have reputed them to be so.

Let it be said loudly and clearly as the New Testament bears testimony and the Teachings of the Fathers confirm that this Jesus cannot be fit into any scheme or formula. "He is provocative both to the left and to the right: apparently closer than the priests to God. At the same time freer than the ascetics in regard to the world. More moral than the moralists and more revolutionary than the revolutionaries."

His message was not as complicated as our Catechisms and certainly far less complicated than our theological textbooks. Some are scandalized when told that Jesus was a "lay man", not even a priest in the Jewish calculation of his epoch, and I add, not a professional theologian who produced grand theories. He preached the early advent of the kingdom of God, in an unscholarly way, in the simplest words, with comparisons, stories and parables.

He proclaimed that God's cause will prevail, that the future belongs to God. He preached only one supreme norm for man's action. This supreme norm is the Will of God, This Will would not be identical with any rule, dogma or law, for God's will is actually the well-being of humankind completely faithful to the law, and the Jesus of the New Testament does not hesitate in particular cases to act contrary to the law for the well-being of humankind.

In his teachings, “not ritual correctitude but purity before God bestows purity of heart. Not the pretence of fasting matters but the secrecy of the act performed in freedom which elevates”. He is not scrupulous about Sabbath observance for God has made mankind the measure of the Sabbath and the

Law, yet he goes regularly to the Temple and observes all the rituals of the Sabbath which promote human dignity.

In a scandalous way, Jesus relativizes the Jewish traditions and institutions of his time, placing the dignity and worth of human beings at the centre, for “God created man and woman in His own image and likeness” (Genesis 1:27), Here is someone who proclaims, instead of unconditional fulfillment of the law, a remarkable freedom for God and mankind. By so doing, he introduces into the social arena, the thinking and belief in a God who is also there for the irreligious, the sinners as well as for the devout.

For the sake of human beings, he radically relativizes the temple and the liturgy making reconciliation between man and God and mankind among one another stand higher than the demands of the temple priests. With a new authority, he speaks of God, for God and in God’s place, making clear to his listeners his peculiar relationship with the Father, for “I and the Father are one”. He makes himself greater than Moses (the law), greater than Solomon (Temple), and greater than Jonah (Prophets).

Jesus initiated the changing of society by radically changing the individual. He calls people to repentance as the point of start for societal renewal, a call which in our times and age is not only relevant but crucially urgent. Therefore, he stands for the love which permits a person to be both devout and reasonable, but which is proved by the fact that it excludes on one, not even opponents. By this teaching and action, ultimate commitment and renunciation points to one sure way of social reconstruction, there should be no discrimination on the basis of language, sex, status, colour, background, language or religion. In his relationship with the Jews and Samaritans, with the rich and poor, Jesus lived a life of universal charity, a call, which in our Church and our times has very vital relevance, urgency and application.

In his life, Jesus shows how much God loves his creatures in spite of themselves and teaches that conversion and forgiveness is possible even among the worst of broken relationships. To the scandal of the devout, he identifies himself with all the poor, the wretched, the "poor devils", the heretics and schismatic (Samaritans), the immoral (prostitutes and adulteress) though firmly giving them a chance and calling them to repentance; Jesus had a place for the politically compromised (tax collectors and collaborators), those outside who are virtually neglected by society because they are lepers, destitute and sick; He gave direct sympathy to the weak many of whom were

and are women and children stating that the Kingdom of God is meant for people like this.

In the life of Jesus, the Good News of salvation became real and incarnate. Not only that the preacher lived it convincingly as he proclaimed it, he challenged his followers to be his witness in the world by following in his example, not minding the difficulties and failures. In Jesus the Christ, theory and practice were inextricably confirmed and has remained the mark of true discipleship. He once taught them: *"By their fruits you shall know them"*. *"For not those who say Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of my Father but those who do the will of the Father"*.

Only now does his person acquire a definitive and unique significance for all who commit themselves to him in faith. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God, the Incarnate Word, the Son of God, God's final and definitive revelation.

*"Only now is the Church formed as the community of believers who profess their faith in him, the Church which bears his name and is sustained by his spirit, the Holy Spirit: The Church set apart through baptism in his name, united at the meal in his memory. Thus the proclaimer of the message has become the proclaimed. He himself is the summary and concrete content of the message of God's Kingdom, he is himself the Christian message, he is himself the soul of the Church: he himself and all that come with him is that which must remain in the Church."*



## Chapter Six

### The Jubilee, the Church and Social Transformation in Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

#### Jubilee

This is a topic of very vast significance. For jubilee as we know is a subject that goes into antiquity and continues into our own time. Jubilee signifies freedom, debt remission, reconciliation, and renewal of life, forgiveness, the promotion of justice and peace and the ushering of a new dawn. Jubilee is time to start life anew. It is a year of grace and favour, accepted to the Lord. It is one of those words in the vocabulary, which remains fresh and admired by all.

According to the Jewish Law (Leviticus 25), a Jubilee Year occurred every fifty years when Jewish slaves regained their freedom. During this period also, land reverted to its former owners. In the Roman Catholic Church, Jubilee, also called a Holy Year was a year during which the Pope grants a special *Indulgence*, to all who visit Rome on certain conditions. Pope Boniface VIII, who meant it to be celebrated every 100 years, instituted it in 1300. The interval was settled at 25 years in 1870.<sup>2</sup>

One of the ceremonies is the opening of the Holy Door by the Pope before the first Vesper of Christmas and its walling-up a year later. A Holy Year was celebrated last in 1975. The Year 2000 is considered a Great Jubilee Year, not only within the Catholic Church but also within the wider world of politics, economy, social life, art, culture, religion and indeed internationally.

#### The Church

Talking about the Church, someone has said that:

*“The Church was conceived, brought to fruition, and nurtured by the missionary activity of the very first followers of Jesus Christ. That the Church was and is*

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O. F.; paper presented in Bonn, Germany at the Theological Faculty organized by Prof. Lothar Roos for a collection of Essays on the Jubilee Year 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Livingstone, E.A., (Ed); The Concise Dictionary of the Christian.

*committed to preaching, teaching, and forming communities of faith has been, and continues to be well documented”<sup>3</sup>.*

Concerning the history of the universal Church, no other Institution is left standing since 2000 years ago which carries the mind back to the time when smokes of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon in ancient Rome, and when Leopards and Tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre to amuse the pagan audience and devour the lives of believing Christians through torturous Martyrdom and death for the sake of the Gospel. Nero, Decius, Diocletian, Semperus and Julius Caesar are but a few names in the long list of Roman Emperors who propelled the demise of several citizens because of their faith in the Church of Christ. And today, the Church and her members continue to soar in numbers. The history of the Church exposed the fact that the proudest royal houses are but of yesterday when compared to the long line of the Supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back in an unbroken series from the Pope who crowned Napoleon in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Pope who crowned Pepin in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, and far beyond the time of Pepin through three black Popes until St. Peter into the time of Christ himself. As we usher in the new millennium, the papacy remains and grows, not in decay, nor a mere antique like the Republic of Venice, Antioch, Babylon, Persia, ancient Greece, Egypt, Sudan, but ever full of youthful life and vigour.

### **Social Transformation**

Discussing the topic of Church and Social Transformation is therefore a joyous excursion into ancient, medieval and modern history spanning over 2000 years of human history. The Church saw the commencement of virtually all the governments and the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world. She was great and respected before the Saxon set foot in Britain, before the Franks passed the Rhine River, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were worshiped in the Temple of Mecca, (600 years before Prophet Mohammed was born and Islam established) a time when much of black African was revealed in undiluted tradition and cultural seclusion.

The Church gave birth to and nurtured the great innovators of the ages of discovery, the renaissance, the middle ages, the enlightenment, the modern times and children of the post-modern era of history. It was the Church's contribution to history which led to the major discoveries of all times such as the printing press, electricity, steam engine, the voyage of discovery, the

---

<sup>3</sup> Church, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, 1977, p. 245 and 281.

architectures of the divine and human milieu as we observe their ruins all over the great cities of human achievement. One would rightly point out that civilization is a product of the Church, which empowered her children to initiate and to achieve creative greatness.

Which great name and achiever in the long history of 2000 years of Christianity was not a son or daughter of the Church? St. Paul, St. Peter, the long list of the saints and martyrs, confessors and doctors of the Church, including the achievers who might have been grossly misunderstood during their own time such as Galileo, Copernicus, James Watt, Scott, Florence Nightingale, Shakespeare, Mozart, Martin Luther, Henry VIII, Prince Henry the Navigator, Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King Junior, Karl Max, Engels, Freud, Einstein, and an endless list of names until our day.

With these vast names of the sons and daughters of the Church much of whom enjoyed the education and moral influence which religion bestows, the Church showered humanity with its every present glow through humans in all societies and at all time, all products of the Church's evangelizing mission in the world. One could even conclude that the Church exists to transform human societies into a civilization of love, knowledge and progress; to use the caption of the much quoted Pope John Paul II. Through Jesus Christ and the Church's missionary activities over the centuries, globalization had already started. "*Go into the whole world proclaim the Good News of salvation*" (Matthew 25:19).

The history of the Church therefore, for which we celebrate the Jubilee year 2000 is one which saw the conception, initiation and execution of immediate and remote social, political, economic, religious, cultural, institutional, ideological, revolutionary, and technological transformations worldwide. The tendency has not stopped but has continued today on a more intensive level as the Church has ventured into the remotest parts of the world in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America, in the distant Islands and cultures everywhere in the human universe. The Catholic Church is still sending forth to the farthest ends of the world, missionaries as zealous as those who landed in 400 AD in Kent with St. Augustine or those who landed in 1884 with Father Lutz, C.S.Sp in the Onitsha riverside of South Eastern Nigeria.

These missionaries still confront hostile kings with the same spirit with which the Church confronted Attila and the Huns or the traditional priests and medicine men of ancient Bini and Igala kingdoms to mention but a few. The

enthusiasm does not seem to dampen but has continued on a worldwide scale. “He is alive, Jesus is alive Amen” seem to be popular songs among the youth and elders of virtually every nation and tribe and people who profess the Christian religion and inhabit the world today. The Catholic Church still has a growing member of children, greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the new world had more than compensated for what she lost in the old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries where humanity is found, and her populations are certainly not fewer than a billion people. It would be difficult to show that all other separated Christian brethren united amount to a half of its population, nor we see any sign which indicates that terms of her long dominion is approaching.

### **The Church in Nigeria**

It is the Church, which has now set foot on Nigerian soil, which attracts our focus in this reflection. The question is to ascertain how the Church in Nigeria can assist the process of a positive social transformation for the benefit of the people of this great country and indeed of the whole world. Nigerian sons and daughters now adorn the Church from the College of Cardinals, through the Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and the large number of Christian faithful. Blessed Michael Iwene Tansi, among many other million unknown ancestors, has joined the long list to assume his position among the blessed in paradise. Some even assert that the Ireland of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century has been transformed into the Nigeria of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, especially in Igboland.

We are the witnesses, the agents, the beneficiaries and the heritage. It is this dynamism that we see as we reflect on the mystery of the Church founded by Christ, on the Rock called Peter, a Church that the founder of Christianity called mustard seed, the smallest of all the seeds but which in our own eyes has grown to become the tallest of all trees. With more than 250 ethnic groups, about 400 languages, with a vast cultural and heterogeneous plurality, Nigeria has become and represents in the language of various disciplines, “the best, the worst and the ugly”. It is a country rich in human and material resources and contains the greatest blessings which heaven could ever grant to one nation or territory.

Nigeria harbours large quantities of water, food, natural resources, land mass, human potential, plants and animals, and the specie of virtually all known and unknown creatures of an almighty and all merciful God who loves mankind abundantly. Whichever way we speculate, the nationalities that make up the Nigerian state contain the seeds of unlimited progress but also of destruction; there is potential greatness threatened by the risk of fall and

failure; This is the dialectic of the Nigerian context on three colonial fronts, namely: Western colonialism, Arabic colonialism and the internal neo-colonialism of Nigeria's own, their sons and daughters who prefer the ignoble way of betrayals instead of nobility. This is the dilemma. But it is also the context into which this paper concerning Jubilee, The Church and Social Transformation would apply and be applicable.

### **The Context of Jubilee and Transformation in Nigeria:**

I desire to subdivide the topic into three subsections to cover the theme, namely:

1. The Jubilee and Social Transformation
2. The Church and Social Transformation
3. The Challenges of Social Transformation in Nigeria

### **The Jubilee and Social Transformation**

In a country like Nigeria where poverty and man-made deprivations cover the lands, the laws of the Jubilee year offer a blueprint for bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots within the country but even beyond to the committee of nations. Poverty is a scourge, which the Jubilee agenda can assist in ameliorating. No wonder these days, it is common to discuss the topic of poverty alleviation and even its eradication. Leviticus 25 verses 23-24, states the basic postulates of the Jubilee, thus:

*“Furthermore, the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is mine; you are but resident aliens under my authority. Therefore, throughout the land you hold, you must provide redemption for the land.”*

“Land” here in Canaan, is the Promised Land and “you” refers to the Israelites. The Israelites are to remember that God is the Landlord and they are tenants ordered not to sell the land “beyond reclaim”. Each Israelite clan's assigned plot of land must always remain in its possession. Even if it is sold, it can always be reclaimed, a process called redemption, and every fiftieth year, Jubilee Year, it must be restored to its original owner. Cancellation of debts and return of forfeited land was also known in the ancient near east. It usually occurs when a king ascended to the throne. Its purpose was to “prevent the collapse of the economy under too great a weight of private indebtedness. However, it was generally limited to the king's retainers and subject to his whim.

The Jubilee has become the rallying cry for the oppressed people of today, as the Exodus theme was for their counterparts in previous decades. This time, however, they are not enslaved politically (except where colonial rulers have been replaced by their own oppressive governments) but shackled economically. The global market economy has generated unprecedented growth and prosperity but not to them. Moreover, “three quarters of countries in sub-Sahara Africa have suffered declining per capita income and in Latin America the declines were at least as bad. The impoverishment of the third world has brought attendant injustices relevant to the Jubilee theme.

Global pollution, such as the depletion of Costa Rica’s rain forests in the interest of the timber and mining industries, have caused irremediable losses, especially in third world nations. As a result, debtor nations have issued the following demands to creditor nation (who operate through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and similar agencies:

- Cancellation of debts;
- Restitution of land and resources of their original owners;
- Cessation from pilfering natural resources and from pollution. In Genesis 2:15 -God leased us the earth “to work it and tend it” but not to despoil it); and
- Termination of economic) slavery (as in the atrocious example of democratic India) by universally raising wages to a subsistence level.

The four demands correspond to the jubilee remission of debts, restoration of land, Sabbath rest for land and person, and release from economic servitude. Obviously, large-scale resistance met their implementation. Some demands would have to be modified. For example: wouldn’t the simultaneous remission of debts inhibit creditors from lending at all as understood in a modern society with banks and financial institutions? Indeed, this very problem faced Hillel, the spiritual authority of the first century. He found that loans were not being made because of their automatic cancellation at the Sabbatical year (Deuteronomy 15:1-2). As a solution, he issued an edict of Probul, a Greek legal term meaning “before an assembly”. It empowered the court, in place of the creditor, to collect a debt from the real property of a debtor if the bonds were delivered to it in advance of the sabbatical year.

Nonetheless, some countries employing Jubilee provisions have experienced spectacular economic growth. For example, in just two years, from 1952 to

1954, the percentage of South Korean farmers owning their land instead of working as tenants jumped from 50 to 94%. Something similar happened in Taiwan. Thus the Jubilee laws, *Mutatis mutandis*, offer a realistic blueprint for bridging the economic gap between the haves and the have-not nations, which otherwise portends political uprisings that can engulf the entire world.

### **The Church and Social Transformation**

Jesus Christ the word made flesh is the greatest social transformer of all times. “Through him, with him, and in him” the entire universe since creation till the end of time experienced an unrepeatably incarnation, the mystery of the God head taking on human nature, born of a woman, in the power of the Holy Spirit for the salvation of mankind. This is the mystery of which the ancients and the mystics tell us transcends all human comprehension. Jesus according to the authors of the New Testament stated that his agenda was to give life, protect life, enhance life and save life. In his own words. “*I have come that they many have life and have it in full*” (John 10:10).

Whatever and whoever therefore promotes life, protects life, enhances life and saves life acts in the spirit of Jesus, the greatest social transformer of all times. This phenomenon of the Jesus’ event transformed and still transforms everything that lives in time and space from the beginning of creation even into our own times as the testimonies of our individual lives portrays. He remains both the paradigm and the measure of any worthwhile societal and individual progress. With a peculiar and unique but very simple authority, Jesus transformed the concept of time, he transformed the understanding of gender, he transformed the meaning of a Sabbath, he transformed the tradition of the ancients, he transformed the meaning of the temple; he transformed the understanding of sickness, the devil, of pain, of suffering and of death. Jesus transformed the meaning of love and marriage, of friendship and of solidarity. He transformed the law and the understanding of the prophets. He transformed the understanding of religiosity and piety.

Jesus radicalized the categories of class, race and prejudices inherent among human beings. He transformed the political economy of his time and regulated that Caesars coin be given to Caesar but that himself is given to God who is in charge of all that is created. Jesus transformed the meaning of wealth, poverty, mercy, justice, compassion, peace, faith and all the values which society during his time turned upside down. Jesus translated the meaninglessness of life and gave direction to the causes of events making it clear that; “*The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*”

In transforming the world and its content, Jesus particularly liberated human beings from sin, from wickedness, from aberration and error, stating clearly as John records that Jesus is;

*“The way, the truth and the life, the door, the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the Light of the world; the True Vine; the Bread of Life.”*

At his ascension Jesus commanded his disciples to; *“Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news of salvation”* (Matt. 28:20).

He sent them his spirit to accompany them on his mission: *“I am with you all days even to the end of time.”* It is this spirit of Jesus Christ working within and through the Church that has continued to transform entire societies and re-evaluated history. No other institution, religious or power had ever had an influence on the cause of events like the Catholic Church. In following Jesus Christ, the Church becomes the greatest social transformer in thought and deeds of all times. When Christianity arrived into Nigeria in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a multi-cultural and dynamic society like Nigeria could only explain the consequence of the Gospel, which is capable of changing anything with the power of God. Although British colonialism had replaced slavery with a market capita economy, the vestiges of injustice were still prevalent under the yoke of British imperialism. Everywhere, there still remained on the land the cry of bondage, injustice, ignorance, inhumanity, superstition and division.

It was missionaries, not the colonizers, who brought the people of Nigeria a message, capable of giving them solace, meaning, comfort, future, foundation, trust, reconciliation and Truth, which alone was able to make people Free. Talking therefore of the Church and Social Transformation, it was the Church that first brought education, emancipation, leadership, knowledge, hope, love, tolerance, openness and the liberating message of the Gospel to Nigeria and Nigerians. The Church was in the forefront of anti-colonialism and anti-human practices, whether found in tradition and culture or in the introduced Euro-Asian Arabic and American worldviews competing for the African soul. The products of the mission schools of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century challenged colonialism and led to its abolition. Example abound in such great Nigerian sons and daughters such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Awolowo, Mbonu Ejiike, Herbert Macaulay, Akanu Ibiam, Francis Akintola, Joseph Tarka, to mention but a few out of a host of others. The result of this encounter is manifold. Political Independence was assured and freedom from colonial

bondage followed. Racial equality replaced the white man's superiority complex in the colonial context.

- The quality of the live of the people was enhanced
- Liberation of slaves was enforced;
- Slave trade; human sacrifice, cannibalism, superstitious practices ceased;
- Liberation from ignorance, education work, skill centres, and empowerment interest;
- Health work care and cure for the sickness; the orphan, women etc, was carried out.

Other activities were carried out some of which include:

- Gender promotion and equality;
- Conflict resolution among intertribal warring factions;
- Establishment of administrative structures;
- Training of local personnel in a leadership cadre;
- Establishment of community development projects;
- Basic Christian community was formed;
- Youth education and character formation;
- Employment opportunities created; and of course the
- Care for the environment, planting of trees, building of social centres, houses, and many more tangible and intangible.

The Biafran-Nigerian war of 1970 opened up a new era for Nigeria and dramatically changed the geographical and political landscape which the colonial British left behind.

### **The Challenge of Social Transformation in Nigeria**

What are the lessons to learn for the Nigerian Church and its people from the challenges, which the Jubilee 2000 poses for us as a people and as a nation? During his visit to Nigeria on the eve of this great event, the Holy Father Pope John Paul II challenged all Nigerians to a new reconciliation.

*“Like the various voices in a choir, these differences in Nigeria can exist in harmony provided there is a real desire to respect one another. This reconciliation is not weakness or cowardice. On the contrary, it demands courage and sometimes-even heroism. It is a*

*victory over self rather than over others. It should never be seen as dishonour. For in reality, it is a patient and wise art of peace”<sup>4</sup>*

The Nigerian context needs to undergo the influence of the Jubilee, and in the spirit of the Jubilee Passover, the agony and suffering which any nation must endure, a new beginning and a new dawn, characterized by the Jubilee of the Pentecost, which is the fruit of the resurrection. Jesus Christ is now our Jubilee. Like Pope John Paul II wrote in his speech at Oba near Onitsha in Nigeria;

*“Christ is thus a part of the history of nations. He is part of the history of your own nation on this continent of Africa”.*

Thus, in the various remote and immediate documents of the Jubilee celebrations and in the event itself as we celebrate over 25 Jubilee items in the Year of the Lord, 2000, series of document are presented to the Church and all men and women of goodwill to reflect on. These include the pontifical writings of John Paul II;

1. Tertio Millenio Aveniente
2. Ut Unum Sint
3. Incarnationis Mysterium

With the African synod of 1994, a new agenda was set up by the Bishops of Africa to prepare for and usher in a new millennium and the Jubilee year. Taking the Church as family, the Bishops of Africa determined in a five-pronged programme to evangelize the continent and continue the work of making Africa free and self-governing. The Bishops confirmed their belief in the five major agenda, the fruits of the synod of Africa that are: <sup>3</sup>

- a. Proclamation of Jesus Christ as the Gospel in Africa
- b. Enculturation of the Gospel in our local cultures
- c. Dialogue with entire creation
- d. Justice, peace and Integral development
- e. The promotion of the means of modern communication.

The Bishops as pastors and leaders united with all people of goodwill everywhere, under the Holy Father Pope John Paul II handed over this

---

<sup>4</sup> Arthur J. Dyck, Human Rights and the Global Mission of the Church; Bostoniv Theology Institute Annual Series Vol. 1, 1805, p.1.

document to the African Church in the form of an apostolic exhortation in the new famous document “*Ecclesia in Africa*”. This in our own opinion remains the challenges to a truly understood agenda for the Jubilee in Nigeria in the context of Church and social transformation.

### **Conclusion**

From all that have been said so far, one can conclude that the Jubilee is indeed a time for social transformation for the Nigerian people. This could be achieved in the public sector through;

- Creating a framework for improved protection of Human Life and human rights.
- The promotion of legal certainty and the rule of law.
- The promotion of participatory and decentralized structures in the public sector.
- The knowledge, spread and practice of Christian social principles.
- The rejection of apathy and the renewal of our common faith and determination in what is good and noble for Nigerian humanity.

Exactly in this moment of implementation do we have reason to resort to the large body of materials, teaching and social principles, which Christianity has continued to unfold in her long history of 2000 years. Catholic Social Teaching and doctrine appears therefore the guiding document for social transformation in Nigeria. These documents are systematic and contain reference formula that shows unity and continuity.

In the words of Pope John XXIII in the famous document *Mater et Magistra*:

*“The Church has formulated over the past 100 years, and through the efforts of very well-informed body of priests and laymen, a social doctrine which points out with clarity the sure path to social reconstruction. The principles she gives are of universal application, for they take human nature into account and the varying conditions in which man’s life is involved. They also take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society and are acceptable to all.”*<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 15 May 1961, AAS 53, (1961), no. 220.

There is a common anthropological, ethical, theological and contextual view of man and history. Whether the topic of the social question be on the family, property, economics, politics, culture, ecology, technology, genetics, capital, labour, armament, justice, women, international trade, aid, development, poverty, war, health, globalization, finance, communication, art, and other pertinent issues, Catholic Social Teaching sets out to offer an adaptable, relevant and truthful response and guide for practical action.

*“This teaching rests on one basic principle, individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so for men are by nature social beings. This fact must be recognized, as also the fact that they are raised in the plan of providence to an order of reality which is above nature”.*<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 219.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **The Cross, Africa and Challenges on the Christian: A Social-Theological Reflection<sup>1</sup>**

In addressing the topic of the cross, the African predicament and challenges on the Christian, one has enormous resources for reflection. Whichever way we direct our attention, the reality and phenomenon of human pain suffering and the cross is ever present. From antiquity, through the various philosophies and cultures, in biblical and historical times, up to contemporary period, the cross possesses great challenges on humanity. For some it is a tragedy, for others it is destiny. In Christian philosophy and thought, the cross is seen as redemptive.

This paper shall seek to explicate the topic on three levels:

- The Phenomenon of the Cross.
- The African situation and the Cross.
- The Challenges on the Christian.

#### **I. The Phenomenon of the Cross - an inevitable reality**

Look around you and the faces speak a language of pain. They are hungry, they are poor, unemployed, homeless, and they die young. This is the reality facing people of every age, continent and country at this time. They are found amongst all classes of people and unfortunately, the cross with its sufferings cannot be escaped for mortals. Take for example the situation of refugees. The world has currently over 21 million refugees. These are people who are displaced, living outside their original homes, not welcome in new territories, and not sure of where to call home. The children among them and their mothers live without an address, and yet the world speaks of Universal Human Rights as contained in the United Nations Charter. Situations of war found as a human experience in all ages and times depict the cross as a bazaar, a shared pain that cannot be escaped by any. it comes in manifold forms, to victims and offenders.

The millions who died in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> world wars and the tragic experience of traumatized citizens in war zones as found in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan,

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O.F.; paper contribution to a research collection by Prof. Dr. Ursula Notheller in Germany, 2014

Liberia, Congo, Sierra Leone, the Balkans, Biafra to mention but a few, trigger off questions about the cross beyond human explanation. As we write, half of the world's population of 7 billion human beings, live in abject poverty described as less than 2 dollars a day. Prisoners in Enugu prisons, live on 30 cents a day. Pregnant mothers die delivering their babies and the cases of maternal and child mortality in modern day Nigeria is put at 10%. And those who live in wealth, opulence and material comfort still feel the cross, the presence of pain and even suffering despite their seeming comfort. What has not been experienced by the wise ancients in the thousands of years of human history concerning the cross? What has not been said about the cross in the holy books, the ancient traditions, the teaching of Jesus Christ and the writings of modern theologians and philosophers? What is new to be said on the cross?

The various dimension of the cross includes in our times: youth employment, abuse of women, denial of rights, desire of our times, homelessness, sickness, poverty, deprivation, internal pain, despair, anxiety, loneliness, calumny, oppression, hunger, lack of necessities of body, mind and soul, sin, and the absence of a well understood and practiced orientation and knowledge of the divine, the triune God made manifest in Christ.

## **2. The reality of the Cross**

Permit me to quote from the book of Genesis in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible "to the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pains in child bearing, with pain you will give birth to children... to Adam he said; because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you "you must not eat of it", cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken: for dust you are and dust you will return" (Gen. 3: 16 - 19).

The above Biblical quotation corresponds to the Hebrew interpretation of suffering as God's punishment upon the sin which has wounded humankind since its beginning. Sin in the above description is a consequence of temptation and the disobedience (fall) of man and woman to God's command. Death and suffering (Cross) are the consequences.

In 2005, various countries, nations, peoples and continents of the world celebrated 60 years of the end of the Second World War, a most brutal and fatal event that caused the early death and sufferings of millions of people

worldwide. Whether in Hiroshima nor Nagasaki, whether in Auschwitz or Mauthausen, whether in Dachau or Unidentifiable concentration camps, on battle fields, abandoned homes, dying children and their families, people living in fear, insecurity and harassments, arbitrary arrests and entire breakdown of law and order, the reign of the survival of the fittest, the regime of terror and the complete feeling of abandonment, alienation and sure death. All these form part of the anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Nations resolved: “no more war”. Unfortunately for humanity, while the said celebrations were going on, and preachers, politicians, statesmen and women, writers and people of goodwill everywhere were shouting, no more war, no more terror, no more inhumanity, suffering and brutality, exactly the opposite was happening in Rwanda, Burundi, Chechnya, Bosnia, some desert areas of North Africa like Somalia and Sudan, some regions of South America, faced with drug Lords and legitimate but corrupt government, to mention but a few.

The evil arms industries continue to produce weapons of repression, death and suffering in the United States of America, Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. It is ironical that these weapons are purchased by the poorest nations who buy weapons instead of bread.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the Christian axiom of the existence of the cross in the human domain. The reality of the cross starts from the moment of conception for humans and at birth, the new born child, gasping for air, cries to announce its arrival to the world and to fight for daily survival in what the prayer books call: “this valley of tears” – humanity’s pilgrim journey of struggle through life. The human person experiences different kinds of cross on this pilgrimage, want, lack, sometimes a superfluity of material possession. How then do we define this cross?

### **3. Why the Cross?**

The question of the cross which is suffering derived from evil, is a profound mystery, not something that we can wish away or answer in an easy of glib manner. (Ref. JohnPaul II, Apostolic Letter on the Christian Significance of human suffering, CF also James Walsh SJ and PG Walsh (ed.), *Divine Providence and Human Suffering*, Willington, Del., Michael Glazier, 1985).

The new Catholic Universal Catechism poses the question about the cross, pain and suffering and agrees that it is something which reaches beyond the capacity of man to answer on his own.

To this question, as pressing as it is unavoidable and as painful as it is mysterious, no quick answer will suffice. Only Christian faith as a whole constitutes the answer to this question. (Catholic Catechism, No. 309).

A sense of national solidarity influenced some writers in recent times to see in suffering, the divine retribution for personal and communal sin, the evil deeds of one member of the community, could draw down suffering upon the family members including the nation and even future generation (Num. 12:15, Deut. 9:28, 2 Sam. 24:10-17).

In many African cultures, this attitude to communal suffering as a consequence of evil of one member of the community still persists as among the Igbos of Nigeria “*ofu mkpisi aka metu mmanu, o zuo ora nile*” (If a finger touches oil, it spreads to the whole hand).

In Hebrew thought and development especially in the post-exilic prophet Ezekiel’s view, a corrective attitude was developed namely, that sin was the cause of punishment for which the specific individual who caused it was personally punished with suffering (Eze. 31:29-30). But how can we explain the suffering of innocent people? All through the psalms and in the recorded or even oral history of peoples and nations, the suffering of the innocent had no rationality, no logic, and no justification. The author of the wisdom book of Job could only counsel silence before the inscrutable wisdom of God.

Other post-exilic scriptures found the answer to human suffering in a conception of God’s eschatological justice which would mete out eternal reward for the good and punishment for the wicked (Dan. 12:1-3, 2 Macc. 7:9, 11, 23).

The exile experience also led several of the prophets to see suffering as a means of individual and national conversion (Isa. 25:8, 35:4-11; Jer. 31:15-20). Isaiah’s servant’s songs (Isa. 42:1-4, 49:1-7, 50:4-11, 52:13-53) further interpreted the Israel’s suffering during the exile as a vicarious atonement for the sins of the nations. The Christian proclamation of the risen Lord thus centres on the power of his spirit enabling us to live a holy new kind of resistance, the life of communion and compassion, not isolation and oppression. The long tragic history of human kind, a history marred by never ending violence against the natural goodness of God’s creation in individuals, communities and the whole cosmos, is what should not be and what God does not will to be for his creation.

The suffering caused by the evil choices of God's creation is truly evil. It is in a real way, pointless. Evil choices create ecologies of evil in which the horizons of new generations become ever more distorted and the image of what it is to be a human being becomes corrupted.

We see this tragedy when we observe how children from deprived and abusive backgrounds face life with a terribly diminished sense of the value of themselves and of the world. The doctrine of original sin explains to us how we are all in a situation something like this. Centuries of sin and evil causes caused by this have conspired to warp our consciousness so that the fear of death and the flight from an inner emptiness drive us to a destructive escapism. We flee to material things for comfort; our relationship with others are infected by the selfish desire to look after ourselves. It is as if we have all been reared in some global concentration camp, where our image of what it could mean to be human is confined to the limits of a corrupted experience.

The darkness of evil and suffering in the world is, then, in some way, explained as something which should not be by the teaching of our faith in original sin. But that perspective on the darkness is only given to us because our faith enables us to see the darkness for what it really is; a shadow fading before the splendour of the rising of the sun of God.

It is only in the Christian faith that the mystery of evil and sin which reaches beyond the human capacity to understand is surpassed by a mystery far greater; God's incarnation and His redemption through the loving acceptance of the suffering caused by human evil.

#### **4. The Cross and Africa**

Alongside all that has been said above, the people and continent of Africa exemplify the cross in all in its dimensions. Africa is the cross and the cross has a home in Africa. BUT, and this is a big but, Africa stands on the shores of redemption through the cross.

The reality of poverty is present in many countries and in manifold forms. Concerning the continent, President Julius Nyerere once said: Africa is an economic mess (ref. Ike/Igboaja/Ani: Towards an indigenous African Church, CIDJAP, Enugu, 1996, P.82). Africa, clearly accepted by historians as the "origin of mankind" and the cradle of civilization, the epitome of culture, religion, art and human values is today treated as a child in international matters. Others speak for and stand in for Africans in their own affairs. Of

Africa, especially in the sub-Saharan part, physical poverty and lack of basic needs is real in the lives of children who cannot be born and whose mothers die at child birth.

The statistics of United Nations Development index place the figures at 1 death per 10 children and same for the mothers in a horrific child and maternal mortality reports. They die because they are sick and do not have access to medical care, doctors, hospitals, sanitation, money and nurses to save lives in the many villages, hovels and remote places where peoples of the continent still live in horrendous and primitive situations.

The scourge of HIV/AIDs has in Africa, its largest clientele, more than the world's cases of over 40%. In the entire villages of Uganda, Kenya, the Congo's and Central African Republic an entire population of youths have been wiped away. Lack of access to food and water remains a major concern and the parlance by young university students for food intake in many cases is '0-1-0', meaning that of three meals per day, two fall off. Poverty is real in the absence of basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water, housing and basic infrastructure which are basic for civilization to emerge. In the midst of plenty, with abundant mineral and natural resources, many African nations are endowed, yet human weakness and the reality of sin make corruption, greed, violence and power struggles entrench poverty and deprive people of their abundant wealth, throwing them into unimaginable forms of deprivation, hunger and want.

There is persistent poverty caused by ecological, and environment degradation in the landslides happening in the various valley and plains of the region, occasioned by heavy wind, torrential equatorial rainfall, human invasion and deforestation and even lack of rains for many years, causing famine stricken zones of the Sahel regions. Africa experiences daily a situation of women and widows, youths who are unemployed, in some cases, up to 70% of the workforce of the country are without jobs, and children, many of them street children who have no homes, without family support and therefore without identity. Wars caused by internal and external factors since the slave trade, the colonial period, the neo-colonial structures, the world trade and imbalance of economic relations, the arms trade and "cold war" "which was really hot in Africa", has effects which continues to impoverish the continent. Due to these factors, poverty is not imagined, it is real in the lives of many people worldwide, but particularly of peoples in Africa who merely exist physically but do not live, are not regarded, not respected, and not registered.

African nations still have the largest number of the world's 21 million refugees, about 60% of displaced people forced to live outside their homes from the continent. They come from countries such as Mali, the Sahara and Maghreb regions, Chad and Niger republic, Somalia, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Libya, to mention but a few. These refugees are abused, debased and denied their rights. Some of these make it to Europe but land in the prisons, prostitute professions and asylum centres.

Poverty rears its ugly head in the teeming numbers of illiterates and uneducated people, adults as well as children, who watch classrooms from the outside as many have never entered into them to learn or to be certified educated or trained. Thus, girls in the majority and due to some cultural practices as in the northern parts of muslim Nigeria, are married out young, without education and skills to make a living; boys are sent to hawk on the streets during the day when others are in school and have no education. The lack and abuse of human rights remains a reality in many African nations without democratic dispensation, ability for self-assertion, required freedom of movement, speech or even religion as is the case with attempts to impose the sharia legal system in 12 states of Nigeria since year 2000. The prisons and detention centres are filled with stories of police and state brutality, misplaced justice and the cry for liberation from oppression.

It is this background that made Hyacinth Cardinal Thiandoun of Dakar Senegal reflects in his speech at the first plenary assembly of the Bishops in Africa 1994 with his rhetoric "in a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message good news for our people? In a situation of all pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?" (Africa Synod 1994, Vatican, relation ante disceptationem No.2). The blessed Pope John Paul II himself read during the apostolic exhortation, the fact of poverty in Africa and called for solidarity and human compassion: "Africa is a continent where countless human beings – men and women, children and young persons – are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. They are in dire need of the good Samaritan who will come to their aid (JP II, EIA, n. 41).

## **5. Challenges on the Christian**

*"Carrying one another's burden and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).*

As we come to the conclusion of our reflection and its relevance to the broad theme of the cross, Africa and challenge on the Christian, a socio-theological reflection, a few closing observations need to be made as

theological and spiritual orientation motifs in dealing with inscrutable mystery of the cross we find daily in our lives.

**a.** Suffering will take place as we go beyond the present selves that we are towards the selves that Jesus Christ would have us be in him. That this suffering is really Christian suffering may be seen if it is marked by that deep hope and joy that are a gift from God. At the centre of our faith however, is the belief that through the suffering born in love by Jesus, the son of God, mankind is redeemed. This means that our suffering is not only experienced as part of our own growth but can be united to that of Jesus in order to become redemptive suffering. If we offer up our daily crosses, and the larger ones in life, in love for other, then we will grow in helping them. The crucial point is that all our prayer and self-denial must be done in love, and done in a spirit that knows that these gifts of ours only come about as gifts of God to us. Our attitude needs to be like that of a child who wants to draw a beautiful picture for a parent, but who must rely on that parent to provide the materials and constant help on how to draw this or that on the paper.

**b.** A Christian understanding of human suffering is aided also by increased awareness of the inseparable interplay between spirit and body between spiritual, mental, and emotional deprivation and bodily illness. Contemporary advances in the medical, social, and theological sciences have helped to direct Christian attention to the need for healing the wounds caused by suffering in the human soul and psyche. The modern re-discovery of the healing power of spirituality, the restorative power of the sacraments and prayer and the help offered by psychological counselling and medical and economic aid, can do much to lessen the weight of suffering. A holistic lifestyle that encourages inner peace, emotional autonomy, creative activity and loving supportive relationships also fosters human wellbeing. Yet suffering (Cross) co-exists in all its forms with life itself, invite the Christian to a lifelong process not only of personal healing but also of commitment to the healing of Christ (Cf. Fatula, MA: suffering: Loc cit. P992).

**c.** Finally when all available helps have been exhausted and we are powerless before a specific suffering, cross or pain, this is the moment we confront a mystery which pushes us to the very brink of the entire mystery of human existence. Suicide cannot be an answer at this time. For the believing Christian and every person of goodwill, the only recourse that may remain open is the prayer of the powerless one begging God for relief and for the heart to surrender ourselves in union with the passion of Jesus (Lk. 22:42-43). In yielding ourselves to this part, we may hope to experience God's own

closeness to the broken hearted (Ps. 34:18 & 147:3) and continue in the midst of suffering that cannot be alleviated, to grow more compassionate, wiser and stronger.

The lives of those who suffer in this way unveil to the world, the inherent beauty and dignity of the human person. They reveal as well, to the eyes of faith, a God who has responded to our human suffering by plunging into its depths. with; a God who now invites us to labour together for the healing of the world.

They disclose to us a God whose love has robbed even the most unspeakable tragedy of its power to destroy us; a God finally whose love is strong enough to transform even our debts into an unimaginable future where he himself will wipe away every tear from our eye (Rom. 8:28-39, Rev. 21:14).



## Chapter Eight

### The Contributions of the African Church in Historical Perspective<sup>1</sup>

*“I am a black and beautiful daughter of Jerusalem... Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun has tanned me: The sons of my mother disliked me, made me to work in their vineyards. My own vineyard, I could not care.” (Song of Songs 1:5-6).*

#### Prologue

John Bauer, a European missionary has ably demonstrated that Africa is his pride. At an early date Africa had to experience the lovelessness of the sons of her mother, the white men who devastated her vineyard and forced her to work in the vineyards of the other people, to live in slavery.

At an early date, it was believed that one should translate accusingly, as did Jerome: “I am black but beautiful”. However, the first Christian writing on Africa, insisted on “black and beautiful”, for it is the Church of Africa that her majority has chosen the fellowship of Christ, for the first time in the history of humanity. The black bride of the Songs sings her joy of life in all its human forms, but she also cries out her anguish when she has lost her bridegroom. It seems that in the present years, the joyful face of the African bride has become the sorrowful face of the black mother, who cries over so many of her children that languish in misery, victims of injustice, exploitation and oppression, who mourns those who died in famine and fraternal wars. But the song ends with the bride’s unshakeable faith: “stronger than death is love” (8:6-7).<sup>2</sup>

#### The Apostolic Period: Historical Background and Developments

*In a way Africa is also the second homeland of Jesus of Nazareth. Persecuted in his own fatherland, Christ sought the hospitality of*

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O.F.; paper delivered in Maternus Haus, Cologne, Germany at an event of the Church in Need in 2002

<sup>2</sup> Ref. Baur, J., 2000 years of Christianity in Africa Pauline Nairobi, 1994, p.5.

*the Egyptians. It was there where the little child sought refuge from the cruelty of Herod.*<sup>3</sup>

(Christianity in Africa is not a recent happening, nor is it a by-product of colonialism. Its roots go back to the very time of the Apostles. It is true that the evangelization of Africa has its beginnings at the very period of the birth of the church; witness of this is the baptism by Philip of the Ethiopian Eunuch, of Queen Candace, narrated in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>4</sup>

### **Jewish Christianity: Link with the Apostles**

A group of Christian Jews, living in Jewish settlements between 50-100 AD, constitutes the link of the Church in Egypt with the apostle. The unanimous Egyptian tradition venerates Saint Mark as the first Bishop of Alexandria (62 AD). Historians often dismiss this assertion because it is found only in the Church History of Eusebius (320 AD), and not in the earlier, extensive non-historical writings of Clement and Origen. But the authenticity of this tradition is supported by the fact that Mark was the companion of Peter to whom the mission to the Jews had been entrusted. Alexandria was the home of the greatest Jewish Diasporas; why should Peter and his spiritual son not have visited it? (I Pt. 5:13).

We may therefore with good reason refer to the year 62 AD as the founding date of the first Christian Church in Africa.<sup>5</sup> This is when the Church began in that old and venerated part of African continent. This is followed by the period of martyrs. The period of the first council, that unforgettable activity of the Alexandrian Church, with their great theologians and saints who became the pillars of the universal church such as Athanasius, and a little later Saint Augustine, Saint Anthony the Hermit and the great ascetic tradition of the Fathers of the desert. All this is Africa. As you can see, the day of Africa in the Church has been going on for almost 2000 years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> JP II, Inaugural Homily at Africa Synod on 9-4-94, Matt. 2:12-21.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8:27-37. Tomko, J., *Auditio I on Synodus Episoporum Coetus Specialis Pro Africa*, 14 April 1994, Vaticano, in: Documenti of Africa Synod, Reprinted by SNAAP, Enugu, 1995, A CIDJAP Publication, p.21.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Baur, J., *2000 years of Christianity in Africa*, Paulines, Nairobi, 1994, p.21.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Inaugural homily at Homily at Africa Synod in Rome, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 1994, in Africa Synod docs, op. cit. p.8.

### **Link with the Universal Church**

During the first six centuries Egypt and North Africa formed one great communion with the other countries around the Mediterranean Sea: a common wealth of nations bound together by the Roman empire and still more deeply by the Christian faith. For a long time, the two regions held a leading position of the universal Church: Egypt in the Greek-speaking eastern part and North Africa in the Latin speaking western part. Nubia and Ethiopia, deeper in the African heartlands, received missionaries through Egypt and were dependent on the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, whom they defended with the power of their arms in times of danger. Recall the African synods of the first centuries, the activities of Origen and Saint Cyprian, the ecclesiological controversies that then divided Christianity. But those events were concentrated above all along the northern coasts of the continent.

From the very beginning of the Christian era, and even before that, Rome has felt united to Africa. Sons and daughters of Africa were already coming to Italy in the time of the ancient Roman Empire, just as they come today. It is not possible to recall all the historical details from the times before Christ, but it must be mentioned that from the beginning of the new era the children of Africa were present in the Church and exercised various ministries within the Church. There were also Africans among the Popes.

### **The Islamic Invasion and Development**

The Church had been flourishing on the northern shore of this continent for six hundred years before Islam was born. A turning point in the development of ancient Christianity in Africa was the advent of Islam. It almost dried up the whole flow of Christian life: in time, the Church disappeared entirely from North Africa and Nubia. It was also heavily oppressed and restricted in Egypt, isolated and often attacked in Ethiopia. According to Church historian John Bauer, the subsequent history of Christian presence in Africa is for many centuries like a tricking stream through the desert. Yet God's providence never let it dry up and in our days it has become a great flood watering the whole continent

When Carthage, the last Christian stronghold in northern Africa, fell to the Arab assault in 697, there arose in the same year King Mercurious in Nubia who built up a Christian kingdom that reached from Aswan to the Blue Nile. When that kingdom succumbed to Turkish-Island attacks in 1270, there was a rebirth of the nine-hundred-year old Ethiopian Church. The restoration of the Solomon dynasty under Yikunno Amlak and the religious reform by Takla Haymanot, the great father of monasticism, brought new life to this unique

African Christian kingdom. There was a flourishing Christian culture on the mountains of Ethiopia, equalling that of medieval Europe, until much of it was destroyed by an Islamic jihad, which began in 1527.

But by that date, there was already another monarch carrying on the torch of faith: Afonso, King of the Congo, the first Christian ruler south of the Sahara. For twenty years he worked untiringly to establish a Christian Kingdom and in 1526, together with his son, the first native black African Bishop consecrated in Rome in 1518, Bishop Henrique, outlined a programme of evangelization to be carried to all the provinces of his realm. For over three hundred years, his successors were eager to maintain links with Rome; they brought as many as four hundred and forty Capuchins into the country in the course of a century and a half.

The Congolese kings were still desperately calling for new missionaries from Rome, when in 1792 the first permanent mission in South Africa was erected by the Moravians and in West Africa the first Church was established by emancipated slaves returning from America: Freetown in Sierra Leone, thus inaugurating the modern era of Christianity in Africa. Indeed, it was in so many places repatriated or liberated slaves who laid the foundation stones of the present Africa Church. Their settlements formed the bases from which concerted efforts were made to bring the good news of salvation in Christ to the tribal communities and into the very heart of the continent.

### **A Century of Rapid Growth**

In reality the systematic evangelization of Africa began during the last century 1880 - 1990, through the work of some missionary institutes and the great advocates of the African mission: Cardinal. Lavigerie, founder of the Missionaries of Africa (formerly known as the White Fathers); Bishop Comboni, a future Blessed, the founder of the Comboni Fathers; Fr. Libermann of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit; the Capuchin Card. Massaia; the Vincentian St. Justin de Jascobis and others, such as Monsignor de Bresillac, founder of the Society of the African Missions, with the Jesuits, the Franciscans, and many congregations of women religious.

Abundant fruit was produced through their sweat and blood. The land of Africa has responded generously to Christ's call. In recent decades' various African peoples have just celebrated the first centenary of the beginning of their evangelization. The growth of the Church on this continent during our century is something of a miracle. The Holy Spirit is guiding these ecclesial communities rapidly in their maturation process.

Let it suffice to say that in the last 40 years the number has been increased. It is true, however, that the numerical growth of Catholics is also affected by the general population growth as a whole, from slightly more than 100 million in 1900 to 634,967,000 in 1993. It is also true that there is similar growth also among the other Christians who now account for 16.56% of the population, while Islam is flourishing with 41%.<sup>7</sup> Adherents of the traditional religions represent 12.3% of the population.<sup>8</sup> Today, Catholics account for 13.9 of the population. An undeniable, remarkable increase.

### **African Priests**

Although growing rapidly in numbers, the growth rate of African priest is constant but slightly lower than that of the faithful as a whole:

- In 1927: 127.
- In 1933: 281 plus 3,539 foreigners for a total of 3,820.
- In 1949: 1,096 plus 6,366 foreigners for a total of 7,642.
- In 1955: 1,583 plus 8,757 foreigners for a total of 10,340.
- In 1959: 2,072 plus 9,931 foreigners for a total of 12,003.
- In 1969: 3,623, 11,477 foreigners for a total of 15,100.
- In 1975: 4,131, 11,172 foreigners for a total of 15,303.

In 1989, in Africa and Madagascar, we find 18,008 priests, 8,562 of whom are indigenous (7,655 diocesans and 907 religious) and thus the proportion of native priests was close to 50%. Today that ratio has already reached more than 65% of the total of 20,768 priests, 10,903 of whom are diocesan and 9,865 religious (*CF. Agenzia Fides of 2 October, 1993*).

However, the total of native priests and missionaries is far from adequate: in 1988 the ratio of priests to the general population was 1: 25,303 and the ratio of priests to Catholics was 1: 4,149 (Asia 1: 1,152; Europe 1: 1,270).

### **Women Religious**

There has also been a noteworthy growth in the number of women religious. In year 1933 there were 10,109 including 1,982 Africans, and in year 1949 there were 14,346 including 4,202 Africans, almost 30% increase. After that

---

<sup>7</sup> The data on Islam has been provided by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Section for Islam.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. World Christian Encyclopedia op. cit. According to this source the Orthodox in Africa would account or 6.8% of the population.

there is a growth in the total number of women religious, but there is also a growth in the proportion of indigenous sisters, to the point of reaching in year 1989, 37,421 women religious including 21,986 Africans, almost 60%, and in year 1992, 43,976 women religious.

### **Institutions of Consecrated Life**

In Africa today, there are nine indigenous institutes of consecrated life of Pontifical right; eight are women's and one is a congregation of brothers. There are also 110 Institutes of women religious and 22 men's Congregations of diocesan right. Except for the "*Filles du S. Coeur de Marie*" in Dakar, the first African religious institute, which was founded in 1858, all the others were founded in this century.

### **Major Seminaries**

Major seminarians have been growing in number at a greater pace, especially in the last decade.

- In 1927 the 27 major seminaries had 336 students.
- In 1988 the 92 major seminaries had 8,149 students.
- In 1989 the 113 major seminaries had 10,892 students.
- In 1991 the 115 major seminaries had 11,415 students.
- In 1992 the 121 major seminaries had 11,951 students.
- In 1993 the 128 major seminaries had 12,391 students.

### **Catholic Universities**

We should also mention the five university-level institutes in Africa, situated in Kinshasa, Nairobi, Abidjan, Port Harcourt and Yaoundé and one in Madagascar, Antananarivo.

### **Local Catechists**

Africa has the great tradition of local catechists as pioneers in evangelization, and they deserve a great deal of the credit for the rapid spread of the gospel as follows;

- |           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| • In 1933 | 44,886  |
| • In 1949 | 63,498  |
| • In 1957 | 80,101  |
| • In 1980 | 132,578 |
| • In 1990 | 256,903 |
| • In 1993 | 285,526 |

### **Increased Number of Indigenous Bishops**

However, the most significant change for the Church in Africa and Madagascar concerns the Bishops. Today there are 412 ecclesial jurisdictions, in addition to the 18 circumscriptions, 19 of which are currently vacant; 66 are still under the jurisdiction of missionary Bishops or of other missionary Ordinaries for example; the Superiors of the “*Missions Sui Iurisdictionis*”), while 327 are being governed by indigenous Bishops. To this number we must add the three Coadjutor Bishops and fifteen Auxiliaries, all of whom are indigenous, and a growing number of retired African Bishops so that the proportion of indigenous Bishops is close to 90%.

This growth, which had increased in pace since Vatican II, is all the more impressive if we consider that after the first but little-known Bishop of the Ethiopian Rite, Monsignor Ghidane Mariam Cassa, appointed to the See of Eritrea in 1930, the first two Latin-Rite African Bishops of our century are still recalled by many people. They were the Uganda Bishop J. Kiwanuka and the Bishop Ramarosandratana of Madagascar, consecrated on 29 October 1939 by Pope Pius XII. In 1959, the first English-speaking African Archbishop was appointed, Monsignor J.K. Amisah, and in 1960 the first Archbishop of Francophone Africa, Mons. B. Gantin. The first African Cardinal Cardinal Rugambwa, consecrated Cardinal by Pope John XXIII in 1960, is still among us, but now he has fourteen colleagues from his continent, including the adjacent islands.

### **Evaluation**

In the face of these remarkable ecclesial realities there is only one possible explanation and one response: no human effort alone could have performed such a work in the course of a single century. Nevertheless, this is no cause for human triumph, rather the whole Church is to thank God and celebrate his wonderful kindness, because “*Fecit Nobis Magna Qui Potens est et Sanctum est Numen Eius!*”<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the world can see that the Church in Africa and Madagascar is a young, dynamic Church filled with life and potential, although fragile because of its youth. On the African continent too, it is a divine and human institution, with its light and dark sides, positive qualities and risky aspects due to its maturity level and to human weakness as well. Africa is economically poor, but has a

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Tomko J. *Auditio I* at the Africa Synod in Rome, 1994, 14<sup>th</sup> April.

wealth of values and priceless qualities, which it can offer, to the other Churches and to humanity.

## Chapter Nine

### The Challenges of New Evangelization in Nigeria

#### The Nigeria Situation

After forty years of independence, the facts on ground are that Nigeria is yet incapable of creating a virile atmosphere for conducive living of her citizenry. The Nigeria national image within and abroad has become a cause of concern for many. The attendant problems are multi-faceted. In the area of New Evangelization, it is the fact that Nigeria is currently facing *“both external problems and internal discrimination among the denominations... The most serious error in it as it is practiced in this country consists in the inheritance of the imported enmity from Europe, mutual suspicion and distrust of one another, the segmentation of faith and the inability to reunion. This internal disunity creates the problem which makes it difficult for the various denominations in the faith to stand together and deal boldly with any external enemy of the faith.”* (E. Asuquo Akpan: p 102).

Owing to this absurd situation, the Christian faith often falls victim of external aggressions and thereby loses the prestige that it deserves. *“Recent developments on the national level calls for a re-examination of the compatibility of Nigeria’s two major religions with the national aspiration of peace, concord and progress for the citizenry.”* (Mbefo; L p.111). The Moslems and Christians now forget that there has to be a nation, a country, a Nigeria.

The early missionaries to Nigeria brought with them a handful of changes in the lives of the populace. It became a new form of evangelization that had an admixture of religion with other social factors. It was better known to have the attributes of civilization, industrialization, and the evolution of a monetary economy; while the pastoral functions came to be exercised under the patronage of the military arm of the British administration.

Due to the rivalry and stiff competition among different Christian denominations then for supremacy, the Christian evangelizers left too many loopholes that are today causing a lot of rift in the lives of Nigerians. For Asuquo Akpan:

*“The current weakness of Christianity and the superficiality in the practice of it in the country together with the multiplicity of Independent African sects which broke*

away from the mission churches are the direct result of the reactions here under considered.” (Op. cit).

It is from here that other intractable problems of Nigeria emanated from. Today, it is no longer the case of rivalry and unhealthy competition but the monster of religious indifferentism that is plaguing the entire nation. John Paul II sounded this note of warning when he said; “How can one not notice the ever-growing existence of religious indifference and atheism in this more varied forms particularly in its perhaps most widespread form of secularism?”<sup>1</sup>

While the foregoing events were taking place in different churches, the general life outlook of Nigerians continued to slide down the precipice. A lot of ideological currents started to find its relevance in the people, the religious life kept depreciating, as secularism and materialism now become the life principles of most Nigerians. There is a replacement of religious ideologies with personality intentions. What matters most for Nigerians of today is simply the person and not so much his relationship with God. Though the churches are filled to capacity every Sunday; what then is the impact of the Good News of Jesus Christ; “to a people who have lost almost completely their national pride” (*Ehusani G. O: p.250*). Because of the ignorance of the majority of our countrymen and women, in the sense of the high level of illiteracy, the small group of the educated tends to take advantage of the ignorant.

*“What is wrong today is not only the manifestation of gross social inequalities, but the fact that dubious values now form the predominant aspiration of people in the society (Ibid. p. 12).”*

Evidently, this degradation of the *homo religious* is being well projected by the distressed situation in the country’s educational sector. In the word of Mbefo Luke;

*“The school system that should be used to educate future citizens to the demands of making Nigeria great has been in shambles. Academicians themselves who should know better have succumbed to the epidemic called materialism. The usual justification for dishonesty is that everybody does it: this is Nigeria” (op. cit. p. xii).*

---

<sup>1</sup> Christi fidelis Laici n.4.

The worst is that, God and religion have been totally deleted from our educational system. The situation according to John Paul II:

*Adversely affected by the impressive triumphs of continuing scientific and technological development and above all, fascinated by a very old and yet new temptation, namely, that of wishing to become like God (cf. Gen. 3:5) through the use of a liberty without bounds, individuals forget the religious roots that are in their hearts; they forget God or simply retain him without meaning in their lives, or out rightly reject him and begin to adore various “idols” of the contemporary world.<sup>2</sup>*

Politically, the country has not fared any better. Let us all consider this fact: that one of the bewildering things about the state of religion in the final quarter of the twentieth century is its impact upon politics. In the 1970s we were made to believe that religion was losing its stronghold and that secularism would be the prevailing world-view within a couple of generations.

This prediction seems to have come to the limelight with the prevalent political situation in Nigeria. Fr. Ehusani compares the situation thus: “*The multiple problems of the masses of Nigeria have no doubt been compounded by long standing military rule and command culture in the country.*” (op. cit. p. 13).

Statistics show that we have been under this forced rule for a better part of the country’s independence. What then can be said of the politicians who always burgle the mandate entrusted to them by the nation? They have simply gone out to exhibit a show of shame. Most of their records are not worth keeping for posterity. Majority of them lack in essence the Christian values of honesty and hard work embedded in our traditional moral code. At this juncture we have to ask this imperative but also pertinent question:

*“Is there a place for the Christian in political debate? What happens to a person’s soul when one can honestly no longer take sides in most political debates because one feels the force of both sides of the argument?”<sup>3</sup>*

---

<sup>2</sup> Christi fidelis Laici op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Holoway p. 8.

The economic sector has some corollary with the debased political situation. The favoured politicians have utilized the economy of the nation for their personal aggrandizement. Within the social structure, the economy has been designed by the *nouvouriche* to satisfy their idiosyncrasies. Ehusani puts it in this form:

*“Millions of the unjustly acquired Naira are squandered daily in a life of vanity and debauchery by our military dictators, political chieftains and economic fraudsters.”<sup>4</sup>*

The ignorant and the poor are so disadvantaged that they usually tend to forget the dignity that belongs to them as humans. They are accustomed to acclaiming as “benevolent” somebody who throws at them a few coins to buy food. *“That is why many of them crumble before the powerful, and are ready to grease the machinery of their own oppression in the hope that it would keep them and their families alive for one more day.”* (Op. cit. p.13).

Cut out in these mind-boggling words, the Vicar of Christ has this to say;

*“When the individual is not recognized and loved in the person’s dignity as the living image of God (cf. Fgen. 1:26), the human being is exposed to more humiliating and degrading forms of “manipulation,” that most assuredly reduce the individual to a slavery to those who are strong. Those who are stronger can take a variety of names: an ideology, economic power, political and inhumane systems, scientific technocracy or the intrusiveness of the mass media.”* (Op. cit. n. 5).

### **Pope John Paul II Call to the Nigeria Hierarchy**

When we take up such issues like the ‘New Evangelization’; the deplorable nature of our society today, it will not be because theorists have discovered some fine new principles of salvation. On the other hand, it will not be because they are pointing angry fingers at this problem or the other. Neither is it because we are excited and have demanded that something must be done. But that the Church must come out openly to fight *“all those institutions and power groups, which contribute to the existence and maintenance of the physical and spiritual slums.”* (Nyerere J. p.1).

---

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit. p. 12.

His Holiness further elaborated on the issue thus:

*“The present-day phenomenon of secularism is truly serious not simply as regards the individual, but in some ways as regards whole communities. At other times, I myself have recalled the phenomenon of de-Christianization which strikes long standing Christian people and which continually calls for a re-evangelization.” (CL op. cit).*

How? His Holiness John Paul II pointed the way for the Nigerian hierarchy during his Papal visit in 1982. He proffered an *Instrumentum Laboris* for Nigerians in his address, when he said: “... Your people are enthusiastic, hospitable, and full of faith.”<sup>5</sup>

He finally declared a new lease of religious life for all Nigerians with the proclamation of “*New Era of Evangelization.*” He further enjoined the Bishops to undertake the task of evangelizing the nation with these exhorting words:

*“... Christ has sent me and Christ has sent you. And together with the rest of the College of Bishops throughout the world we are sent to announce Christ, to proclaim Christ to communicate Christ and his Gospel to the world. In this pastoral visit I expressed the hope that it would initiate a ‘new era of evangelization.’ This is my earnest prayer; that zeal for evangelization will envelope the church in Nigeria.”<sup>6</sup>*

What then happens if these Christian listeners or even preachers in another pulpit disagree with themselves? Are they disagreeing with God, or are they opposing the mind of Christ? What are going to be the criteria for deciding when a statement is a genuine declaration of the Good News, and when it is just the passionately held opinion of another human being, who happens to wear a ‘collar’? How do we know when a preacher is preaching not himself, but Jesus Christ as Lord?

The fact is that preaching Jesus Christ, expounding the mind of Christ and not just some human opinion, presents us with what the theologians would call a *heuristic problem*. Then, where do we find this Jesus Christ, how do we

---

<sup>5</sup> Address to Bishops at the Nunciature in Lagos, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> op. cit.

discover his mind? The exhorting words of Christ in Acts 1:8, which was reiterated by Pope Paul VI in the 'Magna Charta' on Evangelization "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*" says:

*"a new stimulus which would introduce the Church, now more thoroughly imbued with the strength and power of Pentecost, into a new and more fruitful era of evangelization."*<sup>7</sup>

Finally, the words of St. Paul serve as a panacea for the foregoing questions. "*Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God.*" (Roms. 12:2).

Pastors should therefore bear in mind that the heart of evangelization is to proclaim, and bear witness, in the power of the Holy Spirit, (cf. Acts 1:8), to the Incarnate, Crucified, Resurrected and Living Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:32), as the only Saviour and Divine Lord of all mankind and of the whole person and to contribute to building the church as God's kingdom of love, justice, and peace, by making Jesus Christ known, loved and followed, to the ends of the earth.<sup>8</sup> The end result of evangelization is that the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize to others (EN.24).

### **Catholic Bishops Conference Response**

Unless Nigerian Christians (*Catholics*) have some pride in the legacy of their early missionaries and unless they take appropriate means to develop and to foster this legacy (*Evangelization*), they will continue to be vagabonds and labourers in their own land. As long as they fail to stand their ground on the basis of their inheritance, (*The Good News of Jesus Christ*), so long will they be despised and used by a more aggressive religious sect.

It is glaring that times and situations have tremendously changed in the Nigerian society. What is abundantly clear to the hierarchy in Nigeria today is the obvious fact that Catholic Church is losing members in droves to other religious groups, and must do something expedient to win them back to the fold. There are too many frontal challenges suffocating the progress of the Church, the African Christian Churches, the non-Christian believers and Islam. The worst is the attack it gets from the Moslem nationals.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*" No. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid E N Nos. 22 – 27, 32

*“It is now very clear that the struggle to win Nigeria to Islam is real, well planned and is being pursued effectively and vigorously (sic). The Muslims aim at both political, economic and religious domination.” (Emmaus p.150).*

They have cleverly executed their mission by the secularization of schools, through masterminding the government takeover of mission schools. Thus making sure that the Christian values are completely scraped from the school system; thereby leaving a generation of Nigerians without a proper knowledge of God. It is equally no gain saying the fact that the Muslims now dominate the political and economic scene in the country. The Bishops believe strongly that the evaluation strongly shows the lop-sidedness of Catholic Church in Nigeria today. What then is the cause of this lukewarmness and faint spiritedness amongst Catholics in Nigeria, even the Pope acknowledged the fact that; *your people are enthusiastic, hospitable, full of faith. Your seminaries are full, your religious congregations have a steady flow of candidates, and your lay apostolate organisations are dynamic. You promote orthodox doctrine and approved liturgical practices, and you encourage priestly discipline...* (Nunciature 1982).

Have Catholics gone back to the Upper Room (Acts 1:13) for fear the Moslems may attack them? Are they still expecting the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), or awaiting a renewal or reawakening of the outpoured Spirit of God on Pentecost? (Acts 2:1 – 4). In response the Bishops affirm that:

*The Church sees all these factors as challenges to be met with the saving message of Christ. Although many of these developments have created problems in the past for the mission of the Church, the council insists on the need to re-adjust our methods and attitudes so that the message of Christ may reach a world that is so much in need of it. This readjustment is what Pope John XXIII called *aggiornamento* bringing up today.<sup>9</sup>*

Simply put; a new era of evangelization is opined for because of readjustments in many aspects of the life of the Church. The method is to retain in concrete terms the content of the faith, which is proclaimed, but revised its formulation and expression in other to keep abreast with the changes of time. From the forgoing we can reform our strategy for the New Evangelization, to incorporate the lay people, “often known as the sleeping

---

<sup>9</sup> Era of Evangelization, p. 44 – 45.

giants in our Church, and mobilize them for evangelization.” (Rome ACCSE/2000 p.1). The words of the parable, “you go into my vineyard too...” (Mt. 20:1 – 16), connotes a mandate for all Christians, both men and women, young and old to go and work in this vineyard.

### References

1. Akan Asuquo Emmanuel: *Canon Law and Missionary Apostolate in Nigeria: Dissertio ad Lauream in Lure Canonico*. Rome 1982.
2. Holloway Richard: *The Sidelong Glance: Politics, Conflicts and the Church*. U.S.A., Cowleg Pub. 1986.
3. Ehusani George: *A Prophetic Church*: Ibadan 1996.
4. Mbefo Luke Nnamdi: *Christian Theology and African Heritage*: Onitsha 1996.
5. Mbefo Luke Nnamdi: *Coping with Nigeria’s Two-Fold Heritage* Onitsha, 1996.
6. Mozie Michael Ifeanyi: *New Evangelization and Christian Moral Theology: An African Perspective*: Ibadan, 1994.
7. *New Vision for a New Millennium: ACCSE/2000 Meeting Rome*.
8. *Emmaus New Evangelization in Nigeria*.
9. *Era of Evangelization*.
10. *The Holy Bible RSV London*: Catholic Truth Society.
11. Nyerere Julius: *Poverty, Christianity and Revolution: Social Thought*. Ottawa: Canadian Press. 1972.

## Chapter Ten

### Evangelisation as Justice and Peace<sup>1</sup>

In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message good News' for our people? In the midst of an all-pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings. (Cardinal Hyacinth Thiandoum of Dakar, at the opening of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. *Relation ante disceptationem*, 2).

*“Africa is a continent where countless human beings- men and women, children and young people- are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. They are in dire need of good Samaritans who will come to their aid.”<sup>2</sup>*

#### **Introduction and Theological Foundations of “If you want Peace work for Justice”.**

The second Vatican Council has asserted that;

*“the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to arise an echo in their hearts.”<sup>3</sup>*

In 1994, the Church of Africa led by her Bishops gathered in Rome under the Holy Father for the special assembly for Africa of the synod of Bishops. That great occasion which has severally been called an event of grace focused on the multi-dimensional aspects of evangelisation in the new millennium in Africa. It addressed the “Church as Family” and gave methodical and profound reflections on integral Evangelisation”, focusing as it were on

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O. F.; paper presented at the Enugu Diocesan Priests Annual Seminar (EDPAS) at the Pastoral Centre, Ugwu di Nso, Eke in 1994.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Vatican 11 Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

proclamation, dialogue, enculturation, Justice and Peace and the means of social Communications. Hence:

*“It is impossible to accept that in evangelisation one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world. This would be to forget the lesson which comes to us from the gospel concerning love of our neighbour who is suffering and in need.”<sup>4</sup>*

The issues of Justice, Peace and Development were given a great attention by the Synod Fathers. Justice is the Foundation for Peace.

The African Synod emphasized that; *“the proclamation of justice and peace is an integral part of the task of evangelisation”* (Ecclesia in Africa, 107). It is in the light of the Synod’s emphasis, and the emphasis of the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, and in the spirit of the Lesotho Pan-African-Seminar on Justice and Peace (1988), that we now respond from our experiences in Enugu Diocese.

*“A commitment of peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed towards integral human development.”<sup>5</sup>*

This is so because; *“the liberation and salvation brought by the Reign of God come to the human person both in his physical and spiritual dimensions”* Jesus’ many healings clearly showed his great compassion in the face of human distress, but they also signify that his mission, from the very beginning, is meant to free people from these evils.

An integral concept of evangelisation necessarily includes promotion of human development in justice and peace. In this matter, Pope Paul VI recalled in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangeli Nuntiandi*, Paul VI, 31: AAS LXVIII (1976) that there are;

*“Close links exist between evangelisation and human advancement, that is development and liberation. There is a connection in the*

---

<sup>4</sup> Paul VI, *Evangeli Nuntiandi*, 31: AAS 68 (1976), 26

<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 42, AAD 83 (1991), 289.

*anthropological order because the man who is to be evangelised is not an abstract being but a person subject to social and economic factors. There is also a connection in the theological sphere because the plan of creation cannot be isolated from the plans of redemption, which extends to the very practical question of eradicating injustice and establishing justice. There is, finally, a connection in the evangelical order, that is, the order of charity, for how can the new law be proclaimed unless it promotes a true practical advancement of man in a spirit of justice and peace.”*

### **A Fresh Look at Africa’s Signs of Hope**

Africa is a youthful continent: two-thirds of the population are below thirty years and on the whole are better educated than their elders, more urbanised and more knowledgeable about the international scene. The crisis of confidence and the broken psychology of the African after the colonial trauma seem to have disappeared gradually with the rebirth of self-confidence, new African art and a mass of literature. People now think of their continent as the prime mover rather than the object of its own development. Many people prefer to take an internalised critical view rather than copy other people, or always blame other people for their problems.

Africans are waking up to the fact that Africa has to develop not just to survive with outside help. The Masai, the Igbo, the Bini, the Kikuyu, the Fulani never believed in self-pity or defeat. There are signs of cultural revival in many countries. Local music is on the increase. African dresses and attires are in vogue. The use of local languages, aesthetics, art, advertising and various forms of culture is everywhere noticeable. In the Christian Churches there is a call to indigenisation and acculturation to elevate the African identity by means of local church music and rites, in spite of seeming official opposition from the central authority of these churches.

The economic record is more varied than is often imagined and fortunately does not always reflect decline and drift, except for war-ridden zones. Improvement in living standards such as housing, feeding, education is taking place, even if new problems in the same areas are coming up due to inadequate policies, rising populations and official mismanagement. Nonetheless, resources abound if only they could be well utilised. Signs of economic recovery, using Western indices, are there and resetting their priorities alongside economic reform.

Enterprise is a popular tradition in Africa as is the market economy. Some more effort should be channelled to move from *'private survival to collective take-off'*. Africans have to wake up to the fact that self-development and self-reliance are the only guarantee for a long-term economic survival, rather than surviving solely or the charity of the outside world. As a result of this mal-adaptation, this paper has joined the call by many well-meaning researchers and social scientists in Africa and elsewhere to conclude that a long-lasting and effective development in Africa must work out its own development models from our local civilisations.

No matter how *'sub-standard'*, *'under-developed'*, primitive and slow it may be, African and Africans, as things stand now, cannot make long-term progress, if we do not move at our own speed, learn from our past, slow as it may be, and gradually build a progressive, constructive and authentic Africa. Thus, religion, ethics, technology, culture, social-structural organisational patterns existent in Africa's local cultures will grow to become taproot models of development which can last and lead to the much needed integral development of the continent. Even amidst problems, we recognize great hopes among our people that give promises for a better future. These include:

- Experience in the African Synod of a truly African church, acculturated and dynamic;
- Increase of interest in and commitment to justice and peace as part of the evangelical mission in our society;
- Growth of the Small Christian Communities;
- Hard work of the people, especially women and peasant farmers;
- Efforts of democratization, at great sacrifice, and the miracle of Nigerian's transition to civil rule in 1999;
- For the African people, life is sacred and there is great respect for the earth.

John Mbiti's famous saying still holds in Africa:

*"I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am."*

The family had the essence of community, sharing, live and let live.

### **Respect for Elders**

African societies generally respect the elderly and care for them.

### **Land**

In pure African society governed by a humanistic community spirit, land belongs to no one. Land belongs to the people.

*“Land is seen as God’s gift to man for use as a sacred heritage, transmitted by the forefathers as a bond between the living and the dead, to be held in trust by each generation for the unborn who will transmit it to the next generation.”*

### **Property**

In African societies, property was a gift of God to someone. Property had no meaning if somebody accumulated too much for himself. The wealthy shared their wealth with others: in other words, property was a “social mortgage”.

### **Values**

In African cultures there was evidence that virtually the entire creation had a meaning, known to mankind. Creation was not meaningless. The universe had a purpose in the mind of the creator.

### **Love for Children and Procreation**

African societies love children and still do. The childless are very sad.

### **Human Rights and Ethics**

The right to life, to movement, to freedom of speech and otherwise, to religious practice, all these were possible within the ambience of the immediate cultural existence and were fully guaranteed.

### **The Ancestors**

Humanity had continuity and history. Ancestral worship expressed the respect and debt of the present generation to those who lived before, and this respect guaranteed to the present that the yet unborn would honour the dead.

### **Faith Worship**

Because the earth provides the good of this world, food, trees, sand, water and also consumes the goods of this world, burial, decay, human beings taken back to the bowels of the earth, the earth was worshipped and respected.

### **Social Roles**

The gender issue determines the roles of people in traditional society. In agriculture, in trade, in economy, in social life, in politics, in every aspect of

culture, there was clarity as to the roles of men or women and their interdependent functions.

### **Celebration of Birth and Death and Events**

The phenomenon of life, whether in birth or in change of life through death was highly celebrated and an occasion for feasting.

### **Political Organisations**

In all, the principle of palaver or communal debates for consensus was possible. Government and the affairs of the village concerned everyone.

### **Major Problems Affecting Our People**

Every work of evangelisation has to take into account the concrete situation of the continent, if it does not wish to lose an aspect of great importance for the work of the Church in Africa. In advocating human dignity, the Church should announce the good news especially to the poor. Christians should live together with Muslims in the hope to build with them a better world, in spite of difficulties the Muslims raise against the Christians. In this situation, the Church is called to give witness of love towards the poor and to advocate their human rights. There is bad leadership on social, political and economic fields. Nevertheless, the African people are getting up from the paralysed situation they were subjected to by dictatorial governments. They now demand responsibility and transparency in political and economic activities.

These transformations are deep and fast, and we can mention just few among many of its causes namely: dissatisfaction of the majority of people and frustration over the inefficiency and irresponsibility of the leaders. In the context of Enugu Diocese and the national and regional reports we share, we hear the cries of our people reflected in many common problems, including the following:

- Immense poverty of the people that is an offence against human dignity;
- Economic policies that intensify this poverty, such as elements in Structural Adjustment Programmes;
- Unfair treatment of Africa in a globalised economy (e.g., debt, trade);

- Human rights violations, including violation of freedom of religion and of expression, oppression of minorities, and dehumanising cultural practices;
- Violation of the dignity of women;
- Hopelessness of youths, caused especially by unemployment and lack of education, and the tragic plight of street children;
- Human, social and economic consequences of HIV/AIDS, including increasing numbers of orphans and single parents;
- Destruction of the natural environment;
- Political instabilities due to undemocratic structures and attitudes, abuse of power, corruption, ethnic strife and lack of civic education;
- Wars and ethnic conflicts fuelled by trade in arms, supplied mainly by the First World, with the diversion of funds urgently needed for human development;
- Ethnic conflicts and economic hardships leading to huge numbers of refugees and displaced persons;
- Dangers arising from extremist Islamic groups;
- Lack of serious commitment to land reform and equitable land distribution;
- Inhuman conditions in which many prisoners find themselves;
- Widespread illiteracy and lack of access to adequate education especially for girls;
- High child mortality rates, sad condition of people's health, and disastrously low level of health care services;
- Destabilizing influences on the family and widespread incidence of abortion.

### **Special mention of the condition of Women in Africa**

- She is in a very vulnerable situation with many evils.
- She belongs completely neither to her clan nor to her husband's family.
- Women are the majority among the illiterates.
- She takes all the blame in the community.
- Nevertheless, she is the backbone and the stability of the family.
- The church should be beside her and find ways of liberating her of this marginalization. -Women should be given the opportunity of participating in decision making in the Church.
- African women should not allow themselves to be affected by exaggerated feminism as it happens with women in some parts of the world.
- There is a mentality and tendency to consider women as inferior to man, even in the Church.
- There is an understandable wave of vindication of her dignity and rights.
- Women are the victims of sexual discrimination.

The religious women should be given the opportunity, according to their capabilities, of sound human, intellectual and professional training, especially in Catholic universities and other centres of formation so that they can perform their role as qualified persons.

### **Obstacles Hindering the Church's Effective Response to these Problems**

We acknowledged that within the Church, in individuals, communities and structures, and within the larger society, we experience obstacles and hindrances to effectively meet these serious problems and they include:

- Lack of clear vision and understanding of the social mission of the Church;
- Lack of integral spirituality, leading to fear and shallow commitment;
- Inadequate formation of agents of evangelisation- laity, religious and clergy in this social vision and spirituality;
- Inadequate social analysis of the root causes of our problems;
- Poor witness of the church in its own attitudes and structures, e.g., wages paid to church workers, treatment of women, lack of due process and respect for rights recognized by Canon Law.
- Lack of financial resources, a constraint that is likely to increase in the future, and at times over-dependency on outside support.

### **Pastoral Recommendations to Promote the Social Thought and Action of the Church in Our Land**

In order to overcome the obstacles and to move forward in the task of integral evangelisation for justice and peace, we must commit ourselves, as individuals and as representatives of church bodies, to concrete action. We will deepen a spirituality of justice and peace; operate in any way possible in promoting reconciliation and the rebuilding of trusting and durable relationships.

### **Healing from the Roots**

Can one forget that the basic cause of this sad situation is human weakness and the wickedness of the heart of man, his egoism and greed? This is found all over the world, but the effect is more damaging in a society, like ours, which is poor in resources and where the sense of public responsibility leaves much to be desired.

### **Awakening Moral Conscience**

In the face of these realities, it is of paramount importance that the church at all levels plays her role of awakening the moral conscience of all in view of healing the ills, which afflict society. She does this by means proper to her mission: the teaching and courageous stand of the pastors, the living witness of the lay faithful and the prayers of the Church.

**Necessity of Good Government**

In more specific terms, the most serious social problems of the continent derive also from bad government, economic mismanagement and corruption. Hence the importance of the political engagement of Christians. The church in Africa has responsibility in this matter, which it cannot abdicate without failing in her mission.

**Denouncing Evil and Acting as Reconciler**

The Church cannot fail in her prophetic role of denouncing and condemning in clear terms the social vices of the nation, especially of its leaders. In recent times, during major national crises in some countries, esteem for and confidence in members of the hierarchy have led to some of them being called upon to act as impartial mediators and prudent peacemakers. The Holy Father spoke on this matter to the Bishops in the past. It remains actual even till date.

**Promoting Social Teaching of the Church**

The Social Teaching of the Church shows the same interest in looking for solutions to social issues and their importance. It can contribute to promotion of Justice and Peace in Africa. So it should be taught in the seminaries, in the Institutes and in Catholic Universities.

**Promoting Social Action**

Practical encouragement should be given to various individual groups, institutional, local, national and regional initiatives, which work for the articulation of these teachings. It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. The several areas of application of these teachings in Africa include: democracy, economy, lay participation in politics, education, agricultural resources, social and development projects, work, industrialisation, church and cultures, liberation, refugees, wars, the burden of the international debt which led to currency devaluation in many countries, to mention but a few.

**Overcoming Difficulties to Catholic Social Teaching**

It is relevant at this point to indicate some of the difficulties related to the knowledge and spreading of the Social Teaching of the Church in Africa. One must address the lack of adequate knowledge of these teachings. This problem needs deeper study and evaluation for a proper contextual adaptation of the teachings. The documents are not available in simplified texts, or in local languages for the several rural populations in African societies. In fact, many of the documents are written in professional language

and “jargon”, a point, which needs some form of considerations. Perhaps, local theologians could be challenged to translate the documents into simple language for the lay faithful.

In many African countries like Nigeria, the documents of Catholic Social Teaching are not easily available in bookshops or libraries. Where can you easily obtain an Encyclical? Knowledge of the contents is not clear to the priests, who could use them in sermons, let alone to the faithful.

### **The Laity**

The laity in general should be trained in the knowledge and practice of the Social Teaching of the Church. In any case, direct involvement in the political arena is the proper duty of the lay members of the church. What is the value of the participation of many Catholics in politics at all levels? It is not enough to count the members we have in key positions. How can they be trained, formed, motivated and spiritually equipped to promote Christ’s kingdom of justice and peace in the community? Here the Social Teachings of the Church, especially in the areas of politics and public life, need to be brought more systematically to the knowledge of our Christians. They will thus be better prepared to confront and participate in the democratic experiences all over the continent.

### **Justice and Peace is Evangelisation**

It is necessary for the Church in Africa to give its contribution in building up Justice and Peace as expressions of evangelization, or better said to promote evangelical values where they do not exist. Thus, the church will commit the sin of omission if it does not denounce the violation of human rights. The promotion of Justice and Peace is the basis for evangelisation.

### **Solidarity at All Levels**

In addition, we recommend the development of a practical solidarity at all levels within the church in Africa, e.g. sharing of information and material resources, mutual support and encouragement. We recommend increased ecumenical collaboration in social thought and action.

### **Social Analysis**

We ask our sister and brother Christians outside Africa to be in solidarity with us in advocacy for justice and provision of on-going support.

### **Cultural Pluralism and Democracy**

We feel there is a need now of a new cultural politics which accepts pluralism, diversity and dialogue-democracy.

### **Teaching by Doing**

The church on one hand should also practice justice, especially on the salaries of its personnel, responsibility on the use of money, on the respect of women rights, on dialogue and consultation, and priority should be given to the poor. In whatever case the present situation in Africa is a moment of risk and grace. The church as family, fraternity or communion, leads us to justice and peaceful issues. Christian communities are privileged places to practice Justice and Peace.

## **Questions for the People of God in the Lineamenta**

### **Question One**

***What are the Priorities common to the People of God in Enugu Diocese?***

- Eliminating extreme poverty because of Structural Adjustment Programmes and external debts;
- Addressing issues of injustice; promoting human dignity, human rights, and responsibilities; denouncing violations of human rights within and outside the church;
- Furthering the Social Teaching of the Church and promoting Civic Education;
- Caring of Refugees;
- Fighting corruption and mismanagement;
- Empowering women and youths;
- Creating structures to promote responses and creative initiatives;
- Making effective use of already existing structures;

- Developing a spirituality of justice to help us overcome fear;
- Witnessing to solidarity among conferences in facing problems.

**What are the major obstacles in pursuing these priorities?**

- Dialogue and solidarity actions;
- On-going formation at all levels on human rights, on duties and responsibilities;
- Better information sharing, cooperation among regions;
- Strengthening of structures that already were in place;
- Improving the concept of priesthood among our seminarians and priests;
- Being closer to the poor;
- Showing greater solidarity among Bishops' Conferences, for example, organising delegations to visit and show support, and evaluating what actually is being done and needs to be done.

**Question Two**

**What role has the Church to play in a Context of Violation of Human Rights**

- Pastoral letters and verbal denunciations;
- Concrete steps to redress the injustices by organising peaceful demonstrations;
- The Church has to put its house in order first;
- Mediation with regards to conflicting parties;
- Provides legal aid if possible; talks to Catholic lawyers who are prepared to help;
- Gross violations to be addressed urgently;

- Educates people about their rights, duties and responsibilities; Training in social teaching should be mandatory for all formation institutions;
- Needs to foster a spirit of disconcertment that requires conversion, repentance, reconciliation;
- Promotion of dialogue; human rights within the Church so that we could overcome talking about human rights in society at large but neglecting them at home:
- Salaries of Church workers;
- Lack of clear contracts;
- Authoritarian's styles and lack of team spirit;
- Lack of due process (following of proper procedures) in the handling of cases;
- Needs to educate people about their rights within the church;
- The oppressors are themselves part of the church (Military, Police, Politicians, Business People);
- Great need to educate people about their basic human rights, to inform government officials of their responsibilities, and to develop structures to help people fight against abuse of their rights;
- Human rights should be understood to include economic and social rights also, so that governments should be called to task for implementing harsh Structural Adjustment Programmes;
- There should be more connection with our friends in Europe and elsewhere, to get their assistance in advocating for justice and human rights, for example, lobbying the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

### **Question Three**

***What should be the attitude of the church in relation with other religions and especially with Islam?***

- The Church should educate people about the need and value of dialogue through witnessing with other religious, Christian and Non-Christian, especially Islam influences government, not to choose a specific religion;
- People should be taught mutual respect for one another's religion towards peaceful co-existence;
- Dialogue should be based on the acknowledgement of the neighbour as created in the image of God;
- The Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, in co-operation with the World Council of Churches should form a delegation to facilitate regular contacts with Moslems at an international level; It is important to deepen the Catholic Faith through prayer.

### **Question Four**

***What are the best Means to Promote Ecumenical Collaboration with other Christian Churches in Africa?***

- Encouraging Bishops to be within ecumenical bodies;
- Working together in social services and justice matters, such as refugee's orphans, widows, home-based care for AIDS;
- Organizing joint seminars and workshops with all the others;
- Churches to solve issues of social injustice and to engage in joint developmental projects;
- Involvement with local councils of Churches.

### **Question Five**

***What are the most appropriate Methods of Education to Prevent the Spread of HIV/AIDS?***

- Our Diocese should form health commissions, which should be supported by the pastoral body of the diocese;
- The Health Commission should meet and discuss with groups and medical specialists;
- Look into the discrimination of HIV/AIDS infected people;
- Focus on Christian teaching of marriage and family life as well as Christian sex education;
- Give pastoral care and support to HIV/AIDS victims and their dependants.

### **Question Six**

#### ***What Ways are to be utilised to Spread and Implement the Social Teaching of the Church?***

- Formation of agents of evangelisation of the Catholic Social Teaching namely; the Laity, the Religious and the Clergy;
- Carries out an evaluation of what has been done in the past and present; documents don't have the impact of actions and witness; regular preaching at Advent and Lent should be done on the Social Teaching, linking it to Scripture;
- The Small Christian communities should be the place of learning about Catholic Social Teaching; Catholic professional groups such as in Tanzania, can be very effective if instructed in Catholic Social Teaching;
- Seminaries need better information programmes, especially using the training for transformation approach which is rooted in experience;
- Catechetical programmes to include Catholic Social Teaching;
- Need to market the Catholic Social Teaching at every occasion;
- Total evaluation needed with national, regional and continental strategies.

## Chapter Eleven

### The Church and Unemployment<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The paper addresses the theme of human work and the role of the Church in encouraging a culture that sees in human work a fundamental dimension of man's life on earth; work and therefore gainful employment is the key to the whole social question, that is, to all problems which have arisen for each one of us, for our society, and for the world at large with the advent of industrial civilization.

Surely the right to work stands as the most fundamental of all rights in the world of labour. To be out of job means to be out of means of livelihood. And this is the case in many African countries, where the end of unemployment implies a negation of existence. For not only is the working and able person unemployed, there is no social security to guarantee solidarity and livelihood except the culturally rooted extended family. And where the extended family is hampered by problems or where many members of the same family are unemployed, poverty seems the sure path and reality. This is the crux of the matter. Unfortunately, we are witnesses to the fact that basic right to work is not always guaranteed. In fact, it is sold or granted and people have to bribe their way to get a job in the modern society.

Many young people keep on searching for jobs, several years after graduation with specializations in various fields of endeavour, while their parents and sponsors may have perhaps lost their last jobs. Many look at work from the outside. The phenomenon is the same everywhere and virtually in countries of the developed industrialized nations as well as the emerging economies and the developing world. Closed factory gates, laid off workers, staff without salaries for many months, maltreatment of workers and their rights, computers and technical equipment replacing human labour, abuse and disrespect for the dignity of the worker, slave labour and in some cases the sale of one's body to earn a living.

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O. F.; paper presented at the JDPC "Church and Society" organized conference of Abuja Archdiocese under Archbishop John Onaiyekan in October, 2000.

The consequence of all this is growing poverty of body, mind and soul. And it affects virtually people in all countries of the world. They range from corruption to injustice, exploitation, ignorance, bad governance, alienation and cultural degradation, hunger and the mounting loss of moral and spiritual values, a loss of faith in God, in the church, in national institutions and even in the meaning of life itself. Many worried, honest and truth-seeking persons have called upon the discipline of theology to intervene. Theology has delegated this function to the systematic study known as Catholic Social Teaching to give the guideline. Catholic Social Ethics therefore assumes the rational platform upon which attempts towards elucidation of the problematic solutions are offered.

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II has written extensively on the topic of human work. In the document "*Laborem Exercens*" (1981), he writes that human work is "a fundamental dimension of man's life on earth". It is through work that man can renew the face of the earth, because through work, man creates, builds and organizes the society and the world. Human work is the key through which all political, social, economic, religious and cultural aspects of life are co-ordinated. Everything that is, is a product of work. The food we eat, the clothing we wear, shelter, roads, vehicles, books, education, family, culture and religion, technology, defence mechanisms, even our spirituality. Behind all these stand the reality of human work.

Work is a participation in the mystery of creation and redemption, its characteristics being that work is necessary, painful, corporate, redemptive and creative, and all these give life meaning. Work in its subjective dimension is therefore the key to the social question, that is, the great social and economic transformations, for behind every work is the human person. Work is a human participation in God's creative activity, the means of man's fulfilment as an image of God.

The issue of human work is fundamentally linked up with the theme of human rights. Not to work, that is, being unemployed is a denial of a basic right. It is a lack of access to means and therefore a threat to life and to any meaning in life: not only does work guarantee to citizens a means of livelihood, it guarantees also the necessity for human respect, self-fulfilment, self-realization, corporate and historical linkage with mankind, past and present and leads to salvation- temporal and eternal. An absence of work or gainful employment for a qualified person is likeable to a threat to existence, and therefore a negation. For us in Nigeria, there are hardly available and reliable statistics to buttress the exact number of employed or unemployed citizens.

Majority of our people, whether skilled or unskilled are thrown out of jobs by both the private sectors, the public sector and the government jobs. The world of work and unemployment is compounded by recent trends in globalization which show:

- The increase in the cost of energy and raw materials.
- The fact that the world is being intolerably polluted by industries.
- The emergence on the political and economic scene of peoples demanding for a fair share in the world's resources and their rightful place among the comity of nations.
- The undervaluing of the vocation of motherhood.
- The development of informatics and telematics and the culture of technology.
- The relation of labour issues to dogmas of contemporary market and profit ideologies.
- The vicious cycle of deflation, inflation and unemployment.
- The loss of a sense of culture and corporate work style.
- The marginalization of the agricultural sector and the massive exodus of people from the rural to the urban areas.
- The separation of work from its relation to the family.
- The identification of money as an idol.

### **Structural Problems: The growing gap between the Rich and the Poor**

There is obvious agreement throughout the world by experts of the growing gap between the rich and the poor and many are denouncing the inequalities, which produce the present development model, with studies and statistics to support them. One of the most flagrant manifestations of injustice is the growing gap which shows that the poor are growing in quantity and multiplying in number, whereas the rich are getting narrower and superlatively rich. Resources are not equitably distributed both within individual countries and between the north and the southern hemispheres. The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria and the Bishops of Canada have separately issued statements in this regard:

*“true development will only take place if we eliminate the barriers and change the structures, institutions and attitudes which maintain flawed development and the gap between classes, stop exploitation and oppression, and replace them with new structures*

*and relations likely to foster human development and integrity of all.”<sup>2</sup>*

The widening gap and the resulting social alienation are increasingly recognized as undeniable facts. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that the “*development models which are perpetuating the present inequalities cannot be maintained and do not deserve to be maintained*” (UNDP 1994, World Report on Human Development).

The widening gap between the rich and the poor is acknowledged even by the major proponents of neo-liberalism, as this also even impacts negatively on the wealthy. Unemployment is the hardest proof of this structural problem. The youths are most affected.

### **Market Forces and Unemployment**

We are told that market forces are virtually absolute economic laws. Demand and supply determine both prices and people living standards. Neo liberal capitalism seems to be the dominant force. Communism has crumbled and there does not seem to be another alternative. Neo liberalism is moving ahead at high speed, together with economic globalization. It is essential to take a critical look at this economic system and to guarantee people participation in decisions which affect their lives. By emphasizing short-term gain and the unlimited accumulation of profits, neo-liberalism, the current economic model, neglect people’s needs. While it is true that neo-liberalism produces wealth, it distributes it inequitably. The teeming numbers of unemployed people especially youths and women are the consequences.

More than ever before, multinational corporations are scouring the planet in search of cheap labour and low production costs. Parallel to the growth of multinationals is the ability of investors to instantly move billions of dollars from one part of the planet to another, with the sole objective of speculation and without government regulation of any sort. In fact, governments have become increasingly vulnerable to the whims of financial markets, competing with one another to attract foreign capital. This development model is deeply flawed. It represents poverty, unemployment and marginalization of people. To achieve human development, we must move beyond symptoms and examine the root causes of today’s problems.

### **Putting Profits before People**

---

<sup>2</sup> Development and peace, Basic Principles and Orientations, 1982, p. 10.

Unemployment has so many causes some of which include unjust relations between nations and within nations. We summarize but a few macroeconomic indices in this context namely:

### **Exploitation of Resources at Cheap Labour**

- Monoculture as economic forms in some countries where peasants spend time only on cocoa, tea, oil, coffee, and other goods for export, so that the state may import goods for the elite and pay its debts in the international market for technical advice received from the raw material buyers.
- Migrant labour situations and seasonal farming problems due to climate and poor agricultural soil yield.
- Imbalance in import and export relations between nations.
- Poor people who have resigned their fate and accepted the inhumanity and humiliation in which they find themselves, thereby internalizing their poverty as a normal course of life, together with the system that produced it.
- Many industrial nations frown at technological transfer because they fear to lose their power over the poor nations who must remain consumers if the market is to remain stable.
- Scramble for the sea, air, water and land by the strong continues unabated in our times with much greater aggression as we witness the monopoly of tele-space and informatics, elements which belong to all peoples as a natural right.

These, among many others strangulate and stifle meaningful efforts by people towards self-survival, self-effort, and self-reliance. The systems work in a spiral binding effect and the victims continue to grow, thus increased marginalization. All these, among others are realities in post-colonial and post-industrial modern era which we face. But did we have alternatives in the past of our history?

### **Employment, Work and Traditional African Society**

In original African societies, there were two sole inducements to work, namely: to provide food for the family and sustain livelihood as well as to provide shelter and access to basic needs for the family. Work was a part of life and nobody was called a worker because everybody worked. It was taken for granted. Unemployment was unknown. Everybody did some useful work and most of it was in the rural areas, agriculture being the most prominent. Traditional Africa considered every work as noble and respectful, once it

served the purposes of existence. There was nothing like “*mean job*” for the slaves and “*white collar jobs*” for the big people. All work had dignity, because behind the work was a subject, a human being.

The climate in traditional African society such as Nigeria allowed for two main seasons in wet and dry, nature playing a dominant role on the plantation, the style, the timing and the harvesting. People were occupied with life’s demands. The lazy person was abhorred and disciplined. Sometimes, sanctions were imposed. Hard work was encouraged and rewarded with titles. The material needs in traditional society, were not generally flamboyant. People had just the minimum for existence, as a strong sense of materialism, unnecessary accumulation of wealth was generally absent and discouraged.

The needs of the family and needs of life were generally on the whole easily satisfied. The farms, supplied daily needs of foods and crafts. Food such as cassava, vegetables, cocoyam and fruits were seasonally available. Meat hunt was there and consumption patterns were generally modest. There was a technological limitation to what wealth could bring about to cause a class struggle among the people. There was therefore a marked absence of rich and poor classes since people were generally farmers, self-reliant and subsisting. There is a vacuum today between the nation state called Nigeria and Nigerians as the attitude of people show on national matters. (*Ike, Church and State, 1990 p. 131 and 133*).

### **Attitude to Work under Colonial System**

With the end of the slave trade in the 1840s and the introduction of colonial administration in Nigeria in the 1850s Britain maintained a policy which remained exploitative and orthodox to exploit available resources of the natives for the purposes of trade:

*“Maintain law and order, stimulate the production of raw materials, create demand for British exports; raise taxes to pay for colonial rule.”*

The colonial heritage led to a crisis of values because the local people did not identify with the new nation state. The consequence is that government work is looked upon only as a source for getting one’s share of the “national cake”, and therefore many people are prone to look at what is government’s as “no man’s serious business or property” and people render unsatisfactory service to it. The reasons are clear like Cardinal Francis Arinze tried to show while reflecting on *Laborem Exercens* sometime in 1982:

*“The colonial power was not loved and was served with less than total dedication. Government business was regarded as nobody’s business. Government funds were considered to be limitless. This mentality had a damaging effect on work mentality”. The Nigerian still sees in government work the vestiges and remnants of colonial imposition. Colonialism eroded local institutions and established its foreign power primarily for British interests and not simply for the good of Nigerians or its workers.*

If we take the agricultural fields for example, the colonial administration arrived and brought with it the exploitative nature of business which implied the following:

- Cotton a basic crop grown in Northern Nigeria, was no longer to be grown exclusively for home use and manufacture but for export primarily. The people would thus be conditioned to produce cotton in large quantities and neglect other forms of the local economy, and if for any reason, cotton ceased to be demanded by the colonial economy, all those in the cotton industry would become victims.
- Export crops were being emphasized in every part of Nigeria such as groundnuts, cocoa, beans, cashew and peanuts. It meant that people became dependent only on export and neglected even the simple things they would grow for their own survival.
- New roads, railways and transport possibilities were constructed in a way that disregarded the old links in traditional communication systems. In spite of appreciable advantages, new systems of transportation and water ways were brought into existence so that the Nigerian economy could easily be directed into channels directly leading to Europe. These roads connected only the areas where there were raw materials for European markets.

Lastly, a discontinuity emerged between the old economic system and the new colonially imposed administration. In modern Nigeria, the stigma has remained. People distinguish between government and themselves. They abhor government and see in it an imposition which may be undermined. Work is considered alienating, especially paid jobs. There is no personal engagement or interest in the work done for the nation. What is

government? It is “no man’s land” and people render unsatisfactory services to her.

There is strong utilitarian motive in national service and government work. Behind this assertion is the view that work which serves the good of foreign powers primarily, and not that of the native workers run the risk of being haphazardly done. Cardinal Arinze rightly observes:

*“There are reports that schools and hospitals run by government are inefficient. Airways, motor transport, banks, mines and power, furniture companies, construction companies, and other such public corporations accumulate heavy yearly deficits. But similar companies run by private individuals and communities in the same towns render good services and make good profit. The reason has to be sought in the people who work and in the conditions under which they work.” (Arinze, F., op. Cit., p. 214).*

Virtually everything national has grounded: The Airways, the NEPA, the NITEL, the Railways, government banks, parastatals, name it. They belong to Nigeria, but Nigerians consider them “government business” and they stagnate one after the other.

It is therefore time to search for culturally rooted models for sustainable development. This could also solve the problems of unemployment.

### **The Church and Unemployment**

*“Though the Church’s first care must be for souls, how she can sanctify them and make them share in the gifts of heaven, she concerns herself too with the exigencies of man’s daily life, with his livelihood and education and his general welfare and prosperity.”<sup>3</sup>*

The Vatican document “Gaudium et Spes’ has very clearly elucidated the role of the Church in the modern world on virtually all topics that are relevant to the man and woman of today. And these teachings promote the principles of respect for the human person, the principle of subsidiarity, the teaching on solidarity, action for the common good, human dignity, human rights and participatory democracy anchored on the rule of law with sound economic principles as a sure guide. In the Church’s social teaching, man, the image of God, redeemed in Jesus Christ and saved forever is elevated above all

---

<sup>3</sup> John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, no.3

creation and accorded sacred respect, which is his due in the mind of the creator. According to the Church's Social Teaching:

*“man is a person. He is the subject of work. He takes decisions about himself. His work must serve him and make him better. His work is for him, not he for his work. The dignity of his work comes primarily from himself. The primary basis of the value of work is man himself, who is its subject.”*<sup>4</sup>

A truly developed society is one in which the human person is respected, his talents acknowledged, work made available and wealth is equitably distributed. Each person has a fundamental right to the resources and conditions essential to human development. Because man, is the subject of work, the Church teaches that: *“unemployment is an evil”*. Unemployment deprives society of the contribution of other members of society. It creates a gap. It marginalizes many, it causes disharmony and frustration. It does not progress genuine development. What this implies is that through work, man becomes more human, develops himself and participates in the fruits of creation and redemption.

*“Development is a multi-dimensional people centred process. It aims to create conditions whereby each human being can realize his or her potential for political, social and economic fulfilment, in harmony with the common good. The rights, obligations and participation of individuals are central to this process and its objectives. The first priority is the eradication of poverty. This involves empowering people to gain control over their own lives and obtain the resources required to meet their basic needs, without destroying the environment. Genuine development is some grassroots bottom up process, where local communities are the key players. Economic activity should be managed by people, and should respect the limitations of a fragile and non-renewable environment. The market may be a means to achieve these goals, but it is not an end in itself.”*

(Ref: Adopted at June 1994 “Rethinking Breton Hoods”, conference held in Washington DC and attended by theologians, economists, historians, lawyers, sociologists and Church organizations from 27 countries).

### **Practical Applications of Catholic Social Teaching to Nigeria**

---

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*

The Church does not expect government of course to employ everybody. Even if the government wished, it could not accomplish this. Therefore, the Church complements the efforts of government like other non-government sectors in the public and private sectors, the communities, the stakeholders of any society to participate in the work of creating jobs for the populace. The challenge is for everybody. Therefore, the private sector and self-employment must be encouraged to absorb all capable and qualified persons in the world of work. People must not always wait for government.

The 'best help is self-help' and self-reliance is the option to be taken towards the right of all to unemployment. People should not always read to possess a degree or a certificate just for the sake. They must realize other potentialities in them such as the acquisition of career and skills for creativity. God helps those who help themselves, according to an ancient wisdom found in Igboland. Micro enterprise development, micro credit and small and medium skill entrepreneurs appear a veritable opportunity in the fight and campaign against unemployment. SMEs are particularly useful, because they are culturally rooted and are adequate alternatives to the formal banking sector where access to capital is often based on credibility not on security availability.

There is urgent need to change our complete attitude to work and to identify oneself with the work one does. The categories of the labourer and the worker or employer may have to disappear so that the subjective dimension of human work may emerge. Behind all work is the human person with his dignity and worth, as the Pontiff, John Paul II writes in *Laborem Exercens* and Catholic Social Teaching insists. The ideological conflict between capital and labour may also have to disappear. As long as people look at the work they do as belonging to another and not primarily to them, they may always run the risk of working as "mercenaries" and "ghost workers" or at the simplest, alienated beings who do not identify themselves with the fruits of their works. Sustainable development teaches that foreign elements and categories in the world of work which have no culturally rooted ingredients may not survive for long.

In traditional African societies, it was taken for granted that everyone did some useful work for himself and for his family or village or town. The attempt by many in modern society to insist on only doing one peculiar type of white collar job, or nothing may continue to increase the numbers of unemployed workers. Every work has a worth and dignity, not only medicine, law and accountancy or banking. Work in traditional society had elements

which were human, communal, religious. These could be usable in today's world of work. Every worker is a co-owner and there was nothing like, I am working for another.

One was at once united with the work one did. Cheating, alienation, laziness and the syndrome of lateness to work or even demanding for money for a work not rendered were unknown in traditional society. Besides, the rural area still had its attractions. Why should the rural areas be totally abandoned today for everybody to emigrate to the cities? The Church urges therefore that every effort be made to improve the standards of life of people in the villages and that infrastructure be provided to make rural areas worth desirable even as we face the threat of globalization and urbanization.

Mobilization of public opinion and public interest is important in this new agenda of wealth generation and job creation. Much cannot be achieved without engaging the people themselves. The horrendous damage to the environment done by bush burning annually may have to obtain strict legislative backing with sanctions so that people may stop the unbridled burning of the bushes where they would normally plant.

The consequent erosion is still another matter. The preservation of creation and the promotion of life are important teachings of Catholic Social Thought which needs to be revisited as we discuss the issues of unemployment. People's updating, retraining programs and willingness to adapt to new trades, new skills and other challenging interests in the modern world seems an imperative of the present, especially, where the economy so determines.

This is part of the awareness which corresponds to the Christian contribution towards an emerging world networking of cultures in an interdependent and global economic and social order. Not all old trades shall survive the trend and there is need therefore for the youths to be ever ready to adapt new technologies. For example, people should learn more about the computer, even though they were initially trained simply as clerks and typists.

There is an added call with urgency for collaboration and the co-operation of NGOs, the Churches, the government, the private formal and informal sector, the activities of community based organizations and international donor agencies for a united fight against unemployment. This is the hour of solidarity and the period where the philosophy of "united we stand" makes sense. It is the call for a coalition for good. In this way, efforts are not dissipated but rather complemented.

This also means that inter-governmental networking both on the national and on the international scene seems urgent. Such collaboration already exists among churches but could be strengthened further. There is in this connection the call for more ecumenism and inter religious dialogue like the Vatican II and the Pontiffs since this period has challenged mankind.

The failure of economic institutions and banks, local, national and international, including institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to mention but a few, to assist the citizenry with advice, funds, collateralised or non-collateralised through the delivery of soft loans and comprehensive economic recovery of the nations is a scandal. Catholic Social Thought challenges the banking and finance sectors of the country to fulfil the demands of corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy as a social concern. Banks, financial institutions, governments and international agencies and their likes must learn as the Popes and the Magisterium insistently demand to place human beings before profits. Upon this rests the sure path for a new alliance against unemployment which is an evil, in fact, a scourge to modern society.

The claim has been made and the facts are buttressed by the social conditions in Nigeria that the Catholic Church of Nigeria is the largest employer in the country. With its large numbers of priests, the religious, catechists, pastoral agents, and a large number of lay faithful who are engaged in Church and mission institutions, working as teachers, nurses, doctors, social workers, animators, technicians, cooks, house help and so on, the Catholic Church of Nigeria has emerged as the single largest employer with more than one million, two hundred thousand staff force. This is by far, more than all the employees of the Federal Government of Nigeria, there is no state throughout the federation with more than fifty thousand paid staff, the totality of employees considered. In over 46 dioceses, the Church has emerged as the strongest most organized and better managed institutions in the country. Like the master, the Catholic Church spread all over the country remains “the light of the nations and the hope of the future” in Nigeria. We must listen if the Church teaches.

## Chapter Twelve

### Religion and Politics- Perspectives of the Social Teaching of the Church: The Case of Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

#### I. The Christian Challenge and the Mandate to Transform Society

*“You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”<sup>2</sup>*

The aim of this paper is to show that the *Christian Churches* have a role to play within *Civil Society* in influencing a constructive and positive social change in the world. This affects values on the cultural, socio-economic and political levels of nations. Such change is necessary towards transformation of society for the common good. It follows that this is the challenge facing many developing countries such as Nigeria in the genuine search for credible and sustainable systems that can maintain efforts put into building credible institutions and partnerships. If this is done, the polity can be stabilized to guarantee peace and promote solidarity in our fragile communities.

It follows, therefore, that the basic questions for my presentation as already conjectured are: *How can the Christian Churches contribute to the establishment of civil societies? To what extent are Church institutions recognized as participants in civil societies? And do they take any political responsibility and what kind of political influence do they exploit?* The answers to these questions are manifold, different and contentious as they form the thrust of this paper.

I argue, however, that Christian Churches especially the Catholic Church have both a mandate and mission based on their essence, organizational, institutional, personnel and technical capacity and with their many years of local and international experience founded upon credible human and spiritual values to assist in this search for answers to these questions. Christian Churches have a role to play in transforming the social order. As the position of the leadership of the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria in the past has shown, there is agreement that:

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O. F.; paper contribution at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Conference in Berlin, Germany, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Mathew 5:13-14.

*“The churches, as well as other religious groups, have continued to play a part in the ongoing process of societal modernization and have contributed to the concurrent discourses on civil society. In some instances, the churches have actually gained importance and have reached a new level of significance... Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that within the Christian Churches there are also a lot of different movements, and their influence on society needs to be fully evaluated at the present time”.*

Within the Christian Churches, there are also various movements from the moderate to the fundamentalist and extreme that may suggest that one cannot give a blanket response to the thematic without clarification of concepts, for if not properly qualified, religion could even impede people's active participation as citizens and hinder their rational economic behaviour instead of supporting it. The theme “*Church and Civil Society*” comes to straighten the position of the churches as active and dynamic agents within the society, which, although “*faith based*”, have a capability and momentum for social mobilization, value creation, prophetic engagement and concrete action. The Christian Churches have the potential to transform and complement the efforts of government in achieving these aims.

## **2. Focus on Nigeria**

Nigeria is Africa's most populated nation, with 140 million people (Statistics of the census figures held in Nigeria in June 2006). With a large Christian and Muslim population of over 50 million people each had a strong presence of adherents of indigenous and traditional religion. Nigeria, remains a country, which has diversity of religions, cultural settings, language groups numbering over 350 and ethnic groups of over 400. What holds Nigerians together is surprisingly a belief in their deep religiosity founded on traditional African and cultural values of co-existence; ability to reconcile and interest factors. What could also split Nigeria is the inability to manage the great positive potentials which these values of religion and religiosity bring.

Nigeria, and indeed much of Africa, is blessed by a benevolent creator with abundant human and mineral resources, with rich varieties and diversities in situations of both Church and society. Yet, there is abject poverty and the general misery of the people, traceable to human factors such as failed leadership, colonial and neo-colonial past, oppressive structures of injustice and sin. These include a myriad of vices uncountable to mention, such as, bad governance which has been teleguided and promoted by successive military dictatorships and bad civilian governments; the exploitation and

degradation of the environment as has never been known before; desertification of large areas of the country; deforestation of the mangrove forests; oil spillages and the destruction of the Niger Delta and other solid minerals of Nigeria, sometimes without social or corporate responsibility by businesses and corporations to the people or the earth; the mismanagement of scarce resources; ethnic bigotry; corruption and the economic disparities of a people so richly endowed, yet so unable to manage these resources due to other global and international aspects of a world unjust economic and political order and the religious fanaticism which hopelessness drives people into when all hope is lost. This is the background of the growing Islamic religious tensions in Nigeria leading often to violence and destruction.

On the topic of religion and what it means for Africans generally, we chose the wise and true words of John Mbiti who writes in his book on the *'Religions and Philosophy of Africa'* that African peoples *"eat, dress, live, think, work, dance and breathe religiously. Indeed, every activity of these people is founded on religion, be it name giving, food, dance, celebration to mention but a few"*.

For our context in this work, this *"Religiosity"* is important as a point of departure as it is fundamental to the reality of the Church as an organization. Religion brings with it spiritual wisdom and meaning which has content and vision about God, the world, morality, man and society. This is what Nigeria needs at this time, to have people and organizations with rational religious faith and belief in Nigeria, its people, its resources and, therefore, its future. It means the gifts of patriotism, the ability to fight corruption, the ability to govern oneself and promote good governance, the rule of law, transparent economic practices, respect for human rights, promotion of freedoms of both individuals, groups and women, the encouragement of education and health initiatives, counselling of the aged and disabled. Following the Africa Synod, the Catholic Bishops of Africa pleaded for a collaboration and partnership of the Church and the State in African countries as the Synod conclusions contained in the document *'Ecclesia in Africa'* of Pope John Paul. These Synodal conclusions include an agenda to promote: *Proclamation, Enculturation, Dialogue, Justice and Peace and the means of Social Communication.*

### **3. The Church and Civil Society**

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in 1965 reflected in deep detail on the role and place of the Church and the Christian in the

modern world. In its statement published in the last document of that Council known as the decree “*Gaudium et Spes*”, the Church determined that it had a Mission from its founder and a role to play in the life of world. The document states very clearly that the Church must “*consider the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel*” (GS No. 2). In this understanding, events, situations and aspirations of people have a direct link to faith and the role of organized religion in offering a response that is concrete and healing. In this approach, scriptural passages long neglected make new sense. The demands of the Gospel are applied to the massive injustices prevalent on modern society, both national and global and are translated to reflect on their relevance on how a better life can be achieved. Thus, faith and life are linked. Far back in 1963, Pope John XXIII understood this challenge for in the Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, he writes:

*” Though the Church’s first care must be for souls, how she can sanctify and make them share in the gifts of heaven, she concerns herself too with the exigencies of man’s daily life, with his livelihood and education and his general welfare and prosperity.”*<sup>3</sup>

Applied on the universal level, therefore, there is a challenge for participation in the world wide call for institutional and individual engagement especially of the Christian Churches in actions that lead to societal transformation. These include activities that border on areas where the State is a competent provider of goods and services. Thus, the promotion of education, social services, health issues, healing wounds, reconciling divided people with the ingredients of justice development and peace, promoting the rule of law, support for the demands of accountability and transparency, good governance and the principles of democracy upon which the stability of a nation depends.

Christian engagement on these matters could be effectively done through the knowledge and spread of the Church’s Social Teaching which anchors the need for Church and Civil Society to promote the ‘Common Good.’ This is the practical ambient for realizing the ambition of the role of the Church and Civil Society in the transformation of Nigeria from *poverty to wealth, ignorance to knowledge, apathy to action, backwardness to progress, disease to health and exclusion to an all-inclusive society*. No wonder, the document of the Synod of Bishops on the theme “*Justice in the World*” in 1971 states very clearly that:

---

<sup>3</sup> *Mater et Magistra*, no. 3.

*“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the teaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church’s Mission for the salvation of the human race and its liberation from oppressive situation”.*

Earlier, the great Pope John XXIII had declared that achieving such aim was possible on the conditions of knowledge and spread of the Social Doctrine of the Church:

*“But today more than ever, it is essential that this doctrine be known, assimilated, and put into effect in the form and manner that the different situations allow and demand. It is a difficult task indeed, yet a most noble one. To the performance of it we call, not only our own sons and daughters scattered throughout the world, but also men and women of goodwill everywhere”. (Mater et Magistra).”*

Concluding, the Pope calls for the unity of Thought and Action. *“It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church’s Social Doctrine, the light of which is truth, justice its objective and love its driving force” (Mater et Magistra).*

#### **4. The Church Transcends Civil Society and the Political Community:**

*“You are in the world but not of the world (John 15: 18-25).”*

Since this is the thrust and the understanding of the issues, the current debate in some circles should actually not be focused on whether the Christian Churches and Faith Based Organizations as well as religious groups and indeed religion as such could play a role in the positive transformation of the world and society at large for here they belong as citizens. There are civic obligations and it is clear that they must be engaged. The debate at all is on whether the Christian Churches could in themselves be described as part of Civil Society. This of course is a debate that is difficult to conduct for it touches on areas that deal with the mandate and Mission of the church and are beyond the competence of temporal authorities. They are accepted as given in many societies since they are transcendent and affect the self-understanding, identity, essence and Mission of the religious organizations involved themselves, beyond what external factors may want them to be or

attribute to them. Of course this point of view is an expression that may not be generally shared, thus the debate.

Paragraph 76 of the document of the Second Vatican council “*Church in the Modern World*” states that it is highly important, especially in pluralist societies that a proper view exists of the relation between the political community and the Church. The position of the Catholic Church is such that:

*“She must in no way be confused with the political community, nor bound to any political system. In their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and autonomous.” Yet by different titles, each serves the personal and social vocation of the same human beings. The more they co-operate reasonably, the more effectively they will perform this service to everybody’s advantage. Man is not confined to the temporal order. The Church rooted in the Redeemer’s love, helps to make justice and charity flourish more vigorously within nations and between nations. She preaches the gospel truth and brings the light of her teaching to be on every province of human affairs with the witness of her faithful. Thus she respects and promotes political liberty and responsibility. Always and everywhere the Church must be allowed to preach the faith with true freedom, teach her social doctrine, carry out her task among men unhampered and pass moral judgments even on matters considering politics when fundamental rights or the salvation of souls require it.*<sup>4</sup>

From the above, it is clear that the Catholic Church does not understand its destiny or see its existence as one that clearly a part of the Civil Society. The Church is a global player and has remained so even before the birth of virtually all the modern nations and civil society organizations that exist today. This historical role and the core of its Mission to heal, to sanctify and to lead and to reconcile all things in Christ places the mandate of the Church as one that has even a Mission to bring back to the heavenly Father the gift of both the State, Civil Society Organizations, the Private sector, communities and individuals most of whom are fragile and are broken into a reconciled whole. The Church in her self-understanding stands as the agent of Christ in the service of evangelization to entire creation and mankind.

---

<sup>4</sup> Gaudium et Spes, para.76

*“Go into the whole world proclaim the good news of salvation to all creation”  
(Matthew 28:20).*

Indeed, the Catholic Church (and some other Christian Churches) understand its Mission as one that is moral and transcendental, hence, a divine mandate that is before the State, beyond the State and yet in service of the State for the salvation of the State, its peoples and all humanity. Because of this claim to transcendental origins in God, who in Christ has given the Church its Mission, mandate, end and means, the Church cannot be easily be called a part of Civil Society. Yet, the Church collaborates and partners very closely in an integral manner with State, the private and public sectors and all people of goodwill in building up a sustainable human society.

This position, clear as it is, could pose problems if not well understood. It is the task of the current debate to make reasonable propositions to find a proper balance in the advanced views so that a correct understanding and role for the Christian Churches is found. The purpose of the Church is Mission for the ‘Integral Salvation of Mankind.’ It is not just a Mission that targets simply the temporal satisfaction and provision of people’s needs and freedom that is meant. That would be too limiting. The Church works towards the total salvation and liberation of mankind – body and soul and the reconciliation of entire creation with God in Christ.

But does this imply that the Church is beyond the State and the civil society? A response to this question is not easy for this is a question that has universal appeal. Religion and religious values and institutions have affected virtually every nation, people, cultures and races on earth. The experiences may be different but people see ‘Religious Institutions’ as God’s mission that is even beyond the State. In some instances, from the historical point of view, the State was even placed under Religion. God was considered the absolute maker and creator of the universe upon whom all power depends: “Power and Might are in his hands” as the Psalmist writes. In our time and age, it has become very urgent to make a proper balance between the roles of the Churches and religious organizations and re-assess their competence *vis-a-vis* the State. Collaboration, joint partnership and inter-dependence appear as the right concepts to apply in this connection.

##### **5. Challenges and Activities of the Christian Churches in Nigeria**

Christian Missionary enterprise started in Nigeria in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, around 1850 with various Christian denominations involved, particularly, the Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Evangelicals and other Protestants engaged in the work of evangelization. Later, the African Christian Churches

emerged with their emphasis on enculturation and the mixture of the Western-received-euro-centric Christian faith and their traditional practices. The phenomenon of the Pentecostal Church's in Nigeria is very current and, therefore, falls outside the scope of this work. Just for the sake of reference, Islam had been in Nigeria particularly in the Northern parts for centuries earlier. In Nigeria, the Catholic Church with other confessions and religious groups, often acting separately in the past, contributed differently and on various levels towards building up a genuine foundation for the emergence of Nigeria, a country that is struggling to emerge within the international community as a nation that guarantees human freedom, the satisfaction of human wants and the preservation of the integrity of its peoples. Christian Missionaries especially have championed and contributed to Nigeria's development in the past and present historical epochs expected to continue into the future by engaging in many activities:

- **Fight Against Slave Trade and Abuse of Human Dignity:** The fight against slave trade and other manifold abuses against human worth which according to history records was an abhorrent and nefarious denigration of human dignity. Slave trade was the business of selling human beings from various African nations through the North Atlantic Ocean axis to Europe and America; but also on the trans-Saharan axis to Arabic nations; as well as on trans-Indian Ocean axis to Asia. The slave trade was fought against and stopped by humanists, philosophers, free thinkers, groups of enlightened people acting with a Christian and human conscience. Much later on, the work of Christian missionaries within Nigeria itself made the complete stop of this trade possible. By fighting against the slave trade and stopping it effectively, the Christian Churches both in the West and in Nigeria who collaborated, fulfilled their mandate to enhance the sacred dignity and worth of individuals and indeed the black race. Missionaries such as the Anglicans and the Catholics set up centres where ex-slaves were received and rehabilitated, given education and guaranteed protection. They also purchased and paid the price due on ex-slaves whose slave masters demanded for the original price paid on them, to mention but a few of the activities related to this traumatic and shameful practice of slave dealings and the trade of human beings as goods.
- **Decolonization:** The fight for decolonization was also championed by various interest groups, humanists, politicians, some Christian persons and the indigenes themselves who came to realize the monumental injustice which colonialism brought with it. Today, the Christian Churches are leading in the decolonization campaign as we witnessed in the case of

South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Biafra (which did not survive then) and many other nations the promotion of education for all.

- **Health:** The promotion of health, social institutions and welfare homes in the pre-nation-state of Nigeria was mainly a primary method of evangelization by the emergent new Christian missionaries. Orphanages were built to cater for the socially disadvantaged in many rural areas by Catholic Missionaries; hospitals were constructed in the urban and peri-urban centres since under colonial rule, the British in Nigeria did not care for the rural areas and the lives of people there but focused on infrastructure within some urban towns of pre-colonial Nigeria. These hospitals and the training of adequate personnel both within and without Nigeria and the supply of equipment and drugs helped in no small measure to guaranteeing the foundations of a healthy nation. Today in Nigeria, the Catholic Church remains the largest and strongest health services supplier amongst all the Christian and religious denominations in the country.
- **Education:** The promotion of educational institutions such schools, evening bible classes, centres for learning at the primary, secondary, tertiary and skills acquisition levels. Through the schools, people were empowered and encouraged with the capacity to fight for their own liberation, engage the oppressor, gain independence and self-reliance which education brings with it; cultivation of culture, morality and conscience as ingredients of good character and the overall impact of education in nation building. It is on record that the best schools in Nigeria till date are those with Christian origins and background. With meagre resources that is much less than what the State has, Mission and Christian Churches have built up massive training programmes and educated millions of Nigerians at all levels from childhood to adulthood. This is an area where collaboration and partnership is called for, instead of the hostile State attitude to Mission schools and even the complete takeover of such schools at a certain period of the nation's development, at the end of the Biafra war. Education is key to a nation's development. In Nigeria the products of Christian missionary schools participated actively in nation building as politicians, teachers, administrators, entrepreneurs, civil servants in both the public and private sectors and community leaders. Upon these products of Christian Mission Schools rest to a great extent, the human and social capital which the people of the nation can showcase as their strength and asset. Christian Churches made this possible and this has continued in the absence of European

missionaries as the local priests and educated elite have continued to see education as one key area where the Nigerian State has failed and where they, the Christian Missions themselves cannot fail.

- **Social Mobilization Potentials:** The power of mobilization of people and the reality of grassroots support and control of the churches on their believers is a factor which is critical in Nigeria. African peoples believe their religious leaders and respect the impact of religion on their own personal life and destiny. Not to be religious is to be un-African and indeed un-Nigerian. Christian Churches have a potential as social organizations to influence their followers, not just in a prayer or faith encounter but even on social and political matters. Through this mobilization, people were encouraged to go out to vote and to effect changes in their society on the social, economic and political levels of the society. This element of grassroots mobilization is highly relevant and critical in today's Nigeria. Even though the Churches did not found political parties or make their members join the political parties as these were more ethnic at the onset as religious, they could with the present state of things at least influence the process of a credible election by election monitoring, call for a boycott of elections, influence candidates for political post and indeed, they do influence who gets what post in some relevant government and political postings.
- **Leadership Roles:** The Nigerian Christian Churches seem to be assuming greater responsibility in leadership roles. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) writes public statements often much of which are orientations of the State and the citizenry towards higher values and the position to take on matters where one demands to take a stand. This leadership role makes the Bishops and priests to be consulted by various stakeholders in matters concerning the common good and public good.
- **Missionary Awareness:** The country with the largest number of seminarians and persons entering the seminary to become priests in the Catholic world of today is in Nigeria. Statistics from the Vatican show that this is followed by India and Poland; Nigeria is now ready to send missionaries to other countries of the world including Europe, America and Asia, which are countries that once sent their own missionaries to Africa. In assuming this internal God given gift and role as a missionary producing country, Nigeria is now gaining respect from the Catholic

Church as a leader in the provision of trained agents of evangelization who work, not only in their own countries, but even abroad. No one shall doubt the great effect of a country known as a provider of missionaries. Placed besides countries that produce technology, ICT merchandise and other goods, this is a notable achievement and a worthy contribution of the Nigerian Church to universal Christendom at this age and time.

- **Constructive Criticism of the State and Advocacy:** The country where the Christian Churches are both loyal to the State, yet are the greatest critique of the State. Because of the weight of the opinion of the leaders of Christian religious groups, the Christian Association of Nigeria which is a union of all the five major groups of Christian religious denominations has emerged, besides the singular voices of the Bishops or their positions in plural as is often noted under the Catholic Bishops conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and other voices which attract both international and local audience and attention. What religious leaders matters to the State, the adherents of these religions and the citizenry.
- **Promotion of Dialogue:** The promotion of dialogue of life and of religions especially with Islam and traditional societies, with the modern world and technology and with the various levels of society is one that falls squarely into the portfolio of the Christian Churches. Dialogue is all about finding a common ground in the search for truth without necessarily compromising one's own position. Dialogue minimizes the urge for the use of violence and other means in the settlement of issues. With a large percentage of Muslims and Christians, numbering on either side over fifty million people, Nigeria has the largest population of these religious groups more than any other country on the continent. Its challenges, therefore, in maintaining religious peace and harmony are a must, difficult as it may be.

#### **6. Moving Nigeria Forward - The Role of the Christian Churches:**

There are definitely challenges that face Nigeria at this period of its search for unity and progress as a great nation within Africa. With the background of several years of attempts and failures caused both by historical, contingent, human and natural factors, the Christian Churches cannot stand aloof and watch as the nation goes apart and its great mission of reconciliation and announcing the good news of salvation thwarted. It has become clear that with many years of military dictatorship, the Nigerian State became a failed experiment which fabric and architecture had to be re-done. This is the

challenge of the present times. Making this possible demands enormous sacrifices of all and sundry including individuals, NGO's and civil society organizations, local and national actors, private sector led organizations, communities, the international community and of course religious and traditional leaders. The Churches fall into this category.

Thus, the entire attempt towards nation-building to which the Churches are called to act together as stakeholders and salvage the nation cannot be achieved through prayer and preaching alone. This is good but not enough. It has to be followed by concrete action as is currently carried out by the various agents of the Catholic Church in Nigeria in the commissions for Development, Justice, Peace and Caritas. These activities have to be intensified. Such action can be played out by articulate programmes that address and support the national and public efforts of the politicians in the following areas:

- *promotion of the rule of law,*
- *support for economic stability with programmes for sustainability,*
- *enhancing good governance,*
- *assisting the State in the monitoring of elections to avoid rigging,*
- *advocacy work which makes the Church the voice of the voiceless,*
- *supplying assistance in education, health and other social projects,*
- *collaborating with government in the fight against poverty at the grassroots levels,*
- *maintaining high ethical profile and calling for justice, peace and reconciliation,*
- *building communities for peace and educating its own members in tolerance,*
- *leadership and focused action,*
- *Helping to build inclusive and integrated societies.*

Using the agenda of the **Eight Millennium Development Goals**, the Secretary General of the United Nations **Mr Kofi Annan**, recognized the role religious and Church leaders can play in building the civil society and the nation. According to him:

*“The eight Millennium Development Goals are a set of simple but powerful objectives which, together, make up the world’s agreed blueprint for building a better world. They have been embraced by donors, developing countries, civil society and major development institutions alike. Enlightened religious leaders and scholars of all faiths also have a key role to play. Their advocacy can influence*

*political leaders and ordinary citizens alike. Their teaching and guidance can inspire people to new levels of responsibility, commitment and public service. And by their example, they can promote interfaith dialogue and bridge the chasms of ignorance and misunderstanding. The decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit, and the mobilization of Civil Society groups throughout the world, offer encouraging signs of gathering political will to reach the Goals. I encourage religious leaders and scholars to do their part in defeating poverty and hunger, and in delivering the world's poorest and most marginalized people from despair."*

### **7. Catholic Social Teaching and Guiding Principles:**

We come to a conclusion of this reflection and offer some suggestions on the fundamental values and choices which the Christian Churches and indeed all religious groups may need to emphasize as crucial for the survival of society. These values are of priority in the promotion of core principles that sustain the nation. They stem from the Christian conception of life and society as envisaged in Catholic Social Thought and even find parallel in the wisdom of traditional Nigerian wisdom thought and practices in ancient culture, therefore, they are not necessarily borrowed principles.



## *Chapter Thirteen*

### **The Social Obligations of Property in the African Religious Traditions – Igboland as Context<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:**

In the ongoing dialogue and universal conversation towards finding a proper balance between individual freedoms and community welfare, discussions have arisen around the 'use' and 'abuse' of the concepts of "God, Money and Credibility" vis-à-vis the problems of "Property Rights", often torn between mounting individualism with accumulation by a few, and the horrendous poverty of the generality of the population in many countries with barely enough to survive. History shows that such situations give rise to upheavals, rancour, revolutions and disquiet. Thus, the desire and search for finding a proper balance of Property Rights, Individual Freedoms and Social Responsibility is necessary.

This paper puts forward the traditions of the Igbo people of Nigeria with its religious and cultural values known as the 'Omenala (cultural values)' and 'Umunna (Brethren-Community) Concept', as a practicable philosophy and African contribution towards building a more sustainable and humane economy. In discussing the Social Obligations of Property in an African cultural context, a message is given to the rest of the world to consider.

In 'Igbology', the individual exists, with property rights, as a fundamental human quality which gives respect and dignity to the person. Yet, the individual exists as part of a community, a social group, beginning with the family and the clan or village, not outside of it, thus giving rise to the basis for Social Responsibility both of the individual as a person and of property which is an instrument owned. This responsibility is grounded in the past which is the domain of the ancestors, the present which is the historically contingent existence and the future which belongs to the yet-unborn for continuity. In Igbology, this is the foundation for the principles of Subsidiarity, Solidarity, the Common Good and Sustainability all of which serve the purposes of social peace, tolerance, and justice.

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O. F.; paper presented at Konrad Adenauer Foundation Conference in Cadennabia, Milan, Italy in 2014

### **I.1 Igbo 'Omenala' and African Wisdom 'I Am Because We Are'**

The African philosophy and culture, which is one of community, is well expressed in the phrase 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.'<sup>2</sup> This is a cardinal point in understanding an African view of the relationship between private and public interests, or between individual, personal priorities and the common good.

According to J. S. Mbiti, the African communal consciousness means that:

*"Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his or her own being, his or her own duties, his or her own privileges and responsibilities towards himself or herself and towards other people. When he/she suffers, he/she does not suffer alone but with the corporate group. When he/she rejoices, he/she rejoices not alone but with his/her kinsmen, neighbours or relatives whether dead or living. When married, he/she is not alone neither does the wife belong to him alone; so also the children belong to the corporate body of kinsmen even if they bear only the father's name. Whatever happens to the individual, the individual can only say 'I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am.'"*<sup>3</sup>

In other words, any young person who consciously cuts off from the community and develops as a successful individual personality in the western European sense, is no longer a person in the African sense no matter the degree of individual prowess.<sup>4</sup>

If such an individual is to survive to some degree, the person must quit the village and begin existence somewhere else. No matter how prosperous such a person eventually becomes, one is presumed to miss something in one's personality when existing apart from the community. It is only in re-

---

<sup>2</sup> Mbiti, J. S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann, 1975, p 108-9.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Note the thoughts of F.H. Bradley in this regard: 'The will of the whole knowingly wills itself in me; the will of the whole is the will of the members and so in willing my own function, I do know that the others will themselves in me. I do know again that I will myself in the others, and in them find my will once more as not mine, and yet as mine.... I am morally realised, not until my personal self has utterly ceased to be my exclusive self, is no more a will which is outside others' wills, but finds in the world of others nothing but self.' Bradley, F. H., *Ethical Studies*, Essay li: Why Should I Be Moral? Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2nd Edition, 1927.

establishing the link with one's kith and kin, which is actually part of oneself, that one can once more be a person i.e. the 'full self'.<sup>5</sup>

According to F. H. Bradley's reflections, deriving from Hegel's, and published as 'Ethical Studies' in 1927, it is the ability to 'Realize yourself as the self-conscious member of an infinite whole, by realizing that whole in yourself' which best captures the essence of a moral person. His essays 'Why should I be moral?' and 'My Station and its Duties' were referred to by John Rawls in his 'Theory of Justice'.<sup>6</sup>

Bradley writes: 'when that whole is truly infinite, and when your personal will is wholly made one with it, then you also have reached the extreme of homogeneity and specification in one, and have attained a perfect self-realization.' Bradley's thoughts align with African thought when he says: 'I am morally realized, not until my personal self has utterly ceased to be my exclusive self, is no more a will which is outside others' wills, but finds in the world of others nothing but self.'<sup>7</sup>

This argument establishes somehow, the moral consciousness of the individual in his/her existence as a part of the community. It is this communal sense and attitude to life of the Igbo which Nzomiwu describes thus: "Man becomes who he is only through his relationship with others. His individuality can be understood in and through his social relations. Being in a community is a constitutive element of the human make-up."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Ike, O. Tradition, Toleranz und Diskurs', Kongress Paper: Ethik in der Demokratie – Demokratie in der Ethik, der Internationalen Vereinigung Deutsch-sprachige Moraltheologen und Sozialethiker, Muenster, Germany, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Rawls's theory of justice revolves around the adaptation of two fundamental principles of justice which would, in turn, guarantee a just and morally acceptable society. The first principle guarantees the right of each person to have the most extensive basic liberty compatible with the liberty of others. The second principle states that social and economic positions are to be (a) to everyone's advantage and (b) open to all. Both principles are asserted in traditional Igbo society and economy cf. Rawls, J. A Theory of Justice, Oxford University Press/Harvard University Press, 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Bradley, F. H., Ethical Studies, Essay II: Why should I be Moral? Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2nd Edition, 1927, p 80.

<sup>8</sup> Nzomiwu, J. P. C., The Moral Concept of Justice Among the Igbos, 1977, Lateran University Rome, p 39.

The African wisdom thought 'I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am' forms the core of the African communalist philosophy herein considered. In considering the relationship between the individual and community in the context of Igbology, three elements are noteworthy:

1. The typical African wisdom thought "It belongs to me but I belong to the community"<sup>9</sup> ensures that property and ownership rights, which existed and were respected, were limited by overall social concerns and communal purposes which profited every member of the community, beyond the immediate family to include the kith and kin. This sense and recognition of community found expression in the daily lifestyle of people where loyalties of kinship, clanship, language, culture, politics, religion and economy converged to create social groups recognized as stakeholders;

2. This principle or sense of togetherness extends to include both the temporal and the spiritual sphere: "Not only the living but also the living dead, the ancestors, the Supreme Being, and the entire spiritual world. There is no room for rugged individualism as every person is related to the other, making possible a deep common solidarity and loyalty. Even natural objects are seen as interrelated as symbols of each other."<sup>10</sup> Igbology typically recognizes three levels of existence which refer to the past, present and future generations i.e. the past ancestors, the present living and the future yet unborn generations; as well as nature, the environment, in its concept of stakeholders.

### **1.2. Introduction & Context**

The three levels of existence in 'Igbology' offer an important principle and philosophy in understanding the interplay between community and individual; forces of nature and nurture; religion and business; the environment and humanity; and generally helps us better understand various factors and values that ensured sustainability and stakeholder participation among the traditional Igbo people. It continues to provide a valuable foundation for problem-solving in modern times.

According to 'Igbology', sustainability would be defined in the continuity of historicity, understood as past, present and future. Looking at the past as the

---

<sup>9</sup> Ike, O. Freedom is more than a Word; On Potentialities for Development in African Culture; CIDJAP Press; 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Gaba Publications, Human Response to the Call of God, in Spearhead 1979, no 58, p. 27.

guarantor of the present and the basis for the future, provides strong arguments and long term foundations for a more grounded and rational basis which seeks to promote a sustainable world for everybody. In this context, sustainability is defined as: building upon the resources and heritage of the past generations, to meet needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>11</sup>

This is 'Igbology' derived from the Omenala, linking the past, present and future in one continuum. 'Igbology' thus offers a basis for considering cultural (past), social (present) and ecological (future) dimensions of sustainability. This corresponds to the findings of the Frankfurt Hophenheim Guidelines and the work of other rated and respected schools of thought.<sup>12</sup>

### **1.3 Ownership & Management Structures in Traditional Igbo Business**

The Igbo<sup>13</sup>, of Eastern Nigeria, are recognized amongst the most entrepreneurial in Africa. As a people and culture, the Igbo believe strongly

---

<sup>11</sup> Nnoli-Edozien, Ndidi, Doctoral Thesis 'Ownership and Management Structures of Traditional Igbo Business with inherent values of solidarity and subsidiarity: African Values Applied to Modern Issues of Sustainability and Corporate Governance, August 2006, Frankfurt University, Germany. Printed by CIDJAP Publishers and Press, Enugu, 2008. cf also, for the sustainability definition without a 'past' dimension, World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> Project Group, Ethical-Ecological Rating/oekom Research AG (eds.), Ethical Ecological Rating: The Frankfurt–Hophenheim Guidelines and their Implementation via the Corporate Responsibility Rating, (Schriftenreihe zur oekologischen Kommunikation, 8), 2nd extended edition, Oekom Verlag, 2003, Responsibility to yet un-born. 'I' am part of present living Individual with Property Rights.

<sup>13</sup> The Igbo people are of Bantu stock, share a contiguous geographical area, speak variations of the same language and share a common culture, occupy the area known as Igboland. Located on the western coasts of Africa, Igboland exists within the Nigerian polity, politically carved out by the British Empire at the height of its colonial might. Archaeological evidence suggests that this Negro race may have originated in the area along the latitude south of Asseler regions and Khartoum in Sudan, and migrated to their present location in the third millennium before Christ. Evidence has it that for over 4000 years now, the area referred to as Igboland has been inhabited by these people. The Igbo people number about 50 million people worldwide. cf Afigbo, A, in: 'Ropes of Sand, Studies in Igbo History & Culture', Oxford University Press Ltd, 1981, pp 6 ff; cf Ike, O & Edozien, N.N. Understanding Africa

in the right of private and communal ownership of property as a way to connect people to their Creator, to their economy, to their community, to their workplace, environment and to each other. Ownership was understood in a sustainable manner, such that the interests of the ancestors, the future generations and the present living members of society were considered integrally and concurrently.<sup>14</sup>

Among the traditional Igbo, land, human resources and material wealth (capital) signified more than just factors of production. Land, for instance, was a goddess 'Ala' 'Ani' – "the Earth Deity". It was the earth deity who determined customs and traditions ('Omenala'), a transgression of which ('Nso Ala') was punished by 'Ala'. This was an intrinsic element of Igbo culture that has been carried over to the present-day. In the case of the Igbo, the ancient African wisdom 'I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am' is embodied in the concept of 'Omenala', meaning the laws and customs of the land. The Igbo people, one of the many ancient African cultures, is used here as a case study to demonstrate the practical translation of African communalism into the world of business and how this served the purpose of ensuring the sustainable and socially responsible ownership and management of factors of production and natural resources including land, capital and labour.

### **1.3.1 Communal Ownership Concept**

One of the most fundamental cultural, social and economic realities in Igbo culture, as is found in many other African societies, is the basic concept of property understood as: a natural right and therewith a human right, for the satisfaction and protection of the needs of the individual, the family and the clan as a whole. Property is seen as the basis of wealth and the Igbo tradition of communal ownership makes everybody a stakeholder and not just strangers in their own community.

Although an individual has the right to own property, and in fact does own some property, it is the family and the entire community which ultimately owns the individual because he or she is tied to this community in an intrinsic manner. In traditional society, whatever the individual acquired as private

---

Traditional Legal Reasoning, Jurisprudence & Justice in Igboland; 2001, p 20 ff; cf Isichei, E. A History of the Igbo People, The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1976, p 3ff; cf Uwalaka, J. Igbos, to be or not to be; 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Ike O. & Nnoli-Edozien, N., Understanding Africa, Traditional Legal Reasoning and Jurisprudence, 2001, CIDJAP Publications.

property (farm products, animals, skills, utensils, clothing) was based more on the right of 'access' and of 'use' in a proximate but not ultimate sense.<sup>15</sup> Igbo culture and tradition understood ownership to mean the possession, authority and control of and over something by an individual, a community and the ancestors, which implied a spiritual bond. The destiny of the individual and the community was often interlinked.

Several important elements of traditional ownership principles emerged:

**a)** All natural resources belong to Chukwu (the Supreme God) who ceded management thereof to 'Ala', the earth deity. The ancestors were thought to have obtained the 'traditions and customs of the land' (referred to as Omenala) from 'Ala'. A modern interpretation of this may be the acknowledgement of nature and natural resources, including air and water, as a gift to be used, managed and held in trust. This is an important element often lacking in modern business management where the pursuit of private interests inadequately recognizes responsibilities towards the use of natural resources. There is an urgent need for businesses to manage with greater responsibility the natural resources which actually belong to the entire human community.

**b)** Property relations in traditional Igbo land were guided by a philosophy that supported the common good. As such, absolute ownership of land and other means of production was discouraged. This was an important factor in ensuring the sustainable use and management of natural resources, and the protection of the stakeholder interests at three levels of existence

- The present-living (stakeholders in the community and society in general),
- The living dead (cultural heritage passed on through the ancestors),
- The yet-unborn (future generations).

**c)** The Igbo 'Omenala' was handed on from generation to generation like the earth 'Ala' upon which the Omenala was anchored. As such, the responsibility to preserve and sustain the tradition of the Igbo and natural resources, including land, for future generations was taught and understood as an intrinsic part of being a community member with the rights of usage of

---

<sup>15</sup> Ike, O & Nnoli Edozien, N. *Understanding Africa* op. cit. p, 106.

land: that is the conduct of business and daily life. Modern businesses often neglect their responsibilities as members of their immediate communities and the global community. The rights of usage of natural, human and capital resources should be accepted together with implied responsibilities towards the providers of these factors of production, whom we call stakeholders. The stakeholders of a business include the host community, the host country and associated society, culture and environment. In an increasingly global world, it is easier for companies to shirk responsibilities being 'foreign' business. This has had significant and disastrous consequences and there is need to emphasize the moral obligations of capital, and address the increasing imbalance between the three factors of production: land, labour and capital. Business decisions should not be taken solely in the interests of rewarding the providers of capital with a higher rate of return at all costs.

**d)** Since private property was necessary for the security, life and survival of the family it was understood as a "social mortgage", emphasizing the right of access to which every member of the community was entitled. This meant that in traditional society, ownership had an intrinsically social function, which it has retained till date. The division of 'haves' and have-nots' in society was avoided by ensuring every member of the community had access to factors of production, including land, according to their need and entrepreneurial ability. The exclusive usurping of property rights by a few lucky, enough to access capital, and corresponding marginalization and exploitation of the rest of society was generally not possible.<sup>16</sup> This ensured equity in economic affairs, since opportunity and access for all was guaranteed.

**e)** The individual was recognized as deriving his/her existence and relevance as a member of the community. In other words, wealth had significance when it was used responsibly to further community interests and not hoarded only for individual use. This furthered social responsibility at the individual and corporate level.

**f)** The concept of communal ownership of land by the Igbo did not usurp individual ambitions, entrepreneurship and skill. Rather individual enterprise was promoted among the Igbo and business prowess was recognized by a large number of titles including that of 'Di Ji' awarded to highly successful yam farmers. Titles, such as the "Ozor Title", Di Mgba (warrior), Di Nta

---

<sup>16</sup> Rawls, J. *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford University Press/Harvard University Press, 1971.

(successful hunter), Di Ochi (successful leader), Di Mkpa (brave man), "Aku Lue Uno" (Wealth Brought Home) were also awarded in recognition of an individual's social responsibility, acclaiming the person as a valuable member of the community. This ensured a healthy balance between individual freedom and enterprise, with overall progress of the community and its members.

**g)** Finally, the Igbo cosmo-vision had an attitude to wealth and capital, to life and the environment, to the firm and business which made all members of the community stakeholders; yet respecting individual enterprise, initiative and reward for hard work.

### **1.3.2 Participatory Management Concept**

Traditionally the Igbo practiced Subsistence Agriculture and each family farmed enough to feed themselves. The excess produced was traded in the market, processed or used as raw material for manufacturing or other enterprise. As such, despite being a primarily agrarian economy, the scope of Igbo enterprise included manufacturing, trading, arts and craft, and food processing. Other important vocations of the Igbo include medicine, religion, public speaking, dispute resolution and traditional jurisdiction. In all of these, a purely individualistic or western liberal capitalist cosmology was absent. The family, in its extended form, was the co-owner, with the individual, of specific goods in the community and therefore acted and co-managed on behalf of the individual in matters of specific ownership such as land, a primary factor of production other than labour.

Capital was understood as a factor of production that evolved out of human work, transforming natural resources such as the land in agriculture. The entire way of life of the Igbo reflected a communal approach including marriage rites, child birth or the upbringing of children, name-giving ceremonies, religious rites, age-grades, women groups, education, human work, polygamous families, clan and lineage traditions. Even the art of war and peace-making, traditional political organizations and environmental matters, trade relations, commerce and enterprise, skills acquisition, communal agriculture and harvesting of products of the land, rituals of prayer and ancestral worship, oral literature and proverbs, tragedies, sickness and death – all appeared to be moments of community sharing, partnership and interrelationship.

Some features and advantages of the participatory management approach of the traditional Igbo include:

**a)** Members of the extended family were empowered as stakeholders and co-owners of the individual and his/her enterprise, and participated actively at different levels in the management of the political, social, cultural and economic life of their community. As stakeholders, they were co-responsible for the business success alongside community life, ensuring that both business interests and public interests were upheld by persons who had a stake in both.

**b)** In a traditional context, employees of the business were usually members of the host community or the extended family. Given the recognition of the community as a stakeholder of the business, every worker was also stakeholder and co-owner of the business in which he/she worked. This implied certain rights, as well as responsibilities, including to the fruits of one's labour, other than the agreed wages. With a certain sense of ownership, productivity and innovation was increased for the good of all.

**c)** All work had value in this traditional community. There was no great distinction between the employer and employee, for indeed, the employer was at the same time an employee. Usually all ate and lived together. The worker was not simply a factor of production, but recognized as co-manager and co-owner of the business. This had a significant impact on regard for the dignity of the worker who was first and foremost a human being, not just an asset or liability to be acquired or discarded at will or for a price.

**d)** The recognition of stakeholders, as well as practice of communal ownership and participatory management, did not undermine individual rights and enterprise. Abhorrent is a Marxist interpretation of the Igbo as collectivistic in terms of ownership or management. The big yam farmers 'Di Ji', for instance, were individually recognized and highly respected in Igbo society, and also retained all their rights as individual entrepreneurs. This recognition of individual prowess, ensured respect for entrepreneurship and hard work, yet co-management principles kept the rich and powerful with their ears to the ground, close to the people and responsible to the community due to their daily interaction and active involvement in the business with other stakeholders.

**e)** The "we" consciousness and the "I" consciousness was interchangeably used and management was on the whole participatory. The mentality of working in an enterprise where one is co-owner, and therefore co-manager, increases commitment and long-term thinking as opposed to the short-term

thinking of a worker who is 'following orders' or pursuing selfish interests regardless of consequences to the public good.

**f)** As a member and part of the community, social responsibility of the business is assured. The individual does not exist apart from the community and would not harm himself, and therefore the business should not harm the community which is an extension of the individuals managing it. Often, modern business is alienated from the community and environment in which it operates, and thus feels no responsibility to it.

**g)** Win-win scenarios are created between private and public interests when stakeholders are recognized and actively involved in management at different levels. One of the advantages is a better understanding of the key and necessary business issues at all levels, including social, cultural and environmental issues which could escape an internal business perspective. Other gains include knowledge of best practices as to how to go about solving local problems and the assurance that one has co-workers and stakeholders beyond the business interested in its long-term sustenance.

**h)** There was a clear division of roles in traditional society. The communal spirit and solidarity among the Igbo society ensured that none went hungry. The elderly who were unable to work due to poor health or generally reduced energy levels and had no-one to care for them (e.g. an elderly widow with no children) were taken care of by the community.

**i)** The Igbo word 'Ogbenye', translated into English as meaning 'poor' ('ogbe' 'nye' meaning 'neighbour give'), denoted persons who were unable to support themselves and thus were supported by 'neighbours' or community members. This was a popular and accepted practice among the Igbo. Thus effective social welfare systems existed to cater for the marginalized, recognized as the responsibility of the community.

**j)** Laziness was abhorred as every able bodied was expected to fend for themselves. If persons were not entrepreneurial they were expected and able to fend for themselves by labouring on someone else's farm to earn their keep, which included some of the produce of their labour, or they were allowed to 'harvest' the left-over crop from farms after the 'official' harvest had been completed. Productive workers were able to obtain capital and land from the community in order to establish their own enterprise after proving themselves. This applied to persons without the initial means of production, including immigrants e.g., people who had fled to (or been captured by)

neighbouring villages due to warfare in their town. Thus everyone, able-bodied, was empowered with the means to care for themselves and their families, and the opportunity for personal development and entrepreneurship.

**k)** The traditional Igbo practiced communal harvesting and pooled labour for the execution of various economic activities. This meant that different groups assisted each other in business assignments that were too much for the owner(s) of the farm to handle alone. These fostered sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity: I'll do this for you now in the expectation that down the road you or someone else will return the favour. Such generalized reciprocity breeds trust, which in turn lubricates social life, promoting the values of co-operation alongside competition, to serve the greater good of all.

**l)** The possibility and practice of pooling labour where required among the Igbo increased productivity and created a healthy interdependence amongst economic actors in the community. It also provided a safety net for the poor harvest of some, who were paid with some of the produce harvested from larger farms where they worked, as well as opportunities for the exchange of know-how and the development of best practices. Pooled savings also ensured that as groups of entrepreneurs saved together, access to larger amounts of capital was possible to boost entrepreneurial activities. Finally, a sense of solidarity was fostered in the community through opportunities for shared work, co-ownership and co-management.

### **1.3.3 Solidarity and Subsidiarity Values**

The Igbo attitude to the ownership and management of wealth and property exposes a deeply spiritual, yet secular understanding of the interconnectedness of the 'universal destination of created goods'. The traditional Igbo interplay of the secular and sacred, ensured that ethical considerations were an intrinsic part of economic life for the Igbo. Deriving from the traditional Igbo ownership and management traditions are the humanist principles of solidarity and self-reliance (subsidiarity), which manifest as guiding principles and as the starting point for a modern economy. In traditional society, there was a profound sense of the sacred intrinsically woven into society's communal way of life. This is a characteristic generic to Africans, who are said to "...eat, drink, work, bathe and dress religiously."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Mbiti, J. op. cit.

The Igbo view life as a continuum that extends beyond the demise of the material self. Central to this religious world view is the belief in Chukwu (Chi Ukwu – the great God), who is the author of life and is the absolute owner of all things that exist in all creation. Chukwu sometimes described as Chineke, the 'Creator', Osebuluwa – 'who fashions and carries the world'; owns and sends the rain, makes the crops grow, owns all things and is the source from which people derive their Chi (destiny, soul, luck, identity).<sup>18</sup> Since the Igbo believe in Chukwu as merciful, they believe Chukwu allows lesser spirits, the dead ancestors (living dead) and mankind manage the created universe.

What emerges from this Cosmo vision is interconnectedness between the spiritual realities and the material; between the sacred and the secular; between the past, present and future. It is an integral worldview where although God is the absolute owner, human beings and other spirits are delegated to act on behalf of Chukwu in the ownership and management of worldly goods. As such, the communal ownership structures and corresponding participatory management practices of the Igbo were embedded in specific ethical value propositions. These can be found in the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, which provide for us an overlap with Catholic Social Thought in the body of which these principles are expressly defined.

According to these ethical principles of subsidiarity and solidarity as embedded in the Igbo worldview: Subsidiarity implies that each person (private interest) exists individually and that small groups or levels of authority have competencies of responsibility at that level. The classical definition of this principle is found in the Papal Encyclical 'Quadragesimo Anno' (QA) of Pope Pius XI as:

"Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the social body, and never destroy or absorb them... Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of 'subsidiary function', the stronger social authority and

---

<sup>18</sup> Ike, O. & Nnoli Edozien, N.; *Understanding Africa*, op. cit., p, 22/23.

effectiveness will be, the happier and more prosperous the condition of the state." <sup>19</sup>

**a).** The principle of subsidiarity presupposes the principles of solidarity and the common good, but is not identical with them. That society must help the individual is a clear statement of the solidarity principle which emphasizes mutual connection and obligation. The distribution and delimitation of the competence to be considered in this fall to the subsidiarity principle.

Igbo names and sayings which express the principle of subsidiarity include:

*Nkem di rim* – May what is mine be left to me;

*Nke onye diriya* – May each one's rights be accorded to him/her;

*Ya bara onye, bara onye* – Let each person have his/her own progress and wealth;

*Egbe bere ugbo bere* – Let the kite perch, and let the eagle perch also;

*Nke si ibe ya ebela nku kwaa ya* – If anyone refuses the other the right to perch, let its wings break;

*Isi kote ebu ya gba ya* – The head that disturbs the wasp should be stung by the wasp (and no other).

**b).** Solidarity implies that the individual exists in a community, and being its member, is indissolubly linked to the destiny of that community and society (public interest), thus, matters not solvable at the individual level would be carried to this level. This infers the principle of solidarity, as the unanimity of attitude or purpose between members of a group or class captured in the slogan "all for one, and one for all". It expresses the reality of one human family, whatever the national, racial, religious, economic or ideological differences in an increasingly interconnected world of global dimensions.

Actually, Pope John Paul II in one of his writings<sup>20</sup>, projects the image of a global society based on solidarity. Thus it refers not only to the "internal level of every nation" but, analogously to the solidarity between nations and peoples as well. This, it says, calls for a fundamental ethical concept of a human culture in which the quality of the whole can only be derived from respect for all individual persons, societies and peoples. "...There must be complete respect for the identity of each people with its own historical and cultural characteristics... Both peoples and individuals must enjoy the

<sup>19</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931, (AAS 23, 1931).

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Solicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1988, No 33, paragraph 7 (AAS 80).

fundamental equality which is the basis for all to share in the process of full development."<sup>21</sup>

Igbo names which express the principle of solidarity include:

*Igwe bu Ike* – Community is strength;

*Ibe ji ako* – Wisdom lies in the community;

*Ife adi ka ora* – There is nothing as good as the community;

*Nwanneamaka* – Kinship (brotherhood and sisterhood) is beautiful;

*Uba di mma* – The more people we are, the better;

*Azu bu Ike* – Strength comes from supporters behind us.

#### **1.4 Ethical Challenges of Modern Business**

According to Igbology Theories of economic development, the cultural and spiritual, dimension of the human person is often neglected. In the complexity and sophistication of our modern economy it is possible to have lost track of the basic and simple values that give life meaning, including ethics. One of the principles thus violated in modern business structures is the principle that the economy does and must exist for the human person, not vice versa.<sup>22</sup> Here, the simple values of solidarity and subsidiarity as practiced in the communal ownership and participatory management structures of the traditional Igbo offer practical insights:

1. The human person is the centre, purpose and end of all economic activity. As such, wealth and property rights could exist within the context of a social function. On the contrary, industrialization processes reduced the human person to a cog in a giant wheel of so-called 'progresses'. Today, computerization, mechanization, cost-cutting and profit-seeking renders the human person dispensable as 'labour', a factor of production like any other asset, when considered to be 'redundant'. This is a problem that must be addressed.

2. Through more equitable access to factors of production and opportunities for personal development at all levels, people could be encouraged to accomplish more using their own initiative and energy where possible. For example, Microfinance has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting wide scale development, with credit repayment rates of 98 percent, a testimony to the potential impact of this principle. In traditional Igboland, co-

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, n. 24-26.

ownership implied co-management responsibilities, so also did co-management imply co ownership, with positive implications for all concerned. The possibility of managers becoming genuine stakeholders and co-owners in the business could significantly improve the congruence between private (manager) and business interests.

**3.** In Igbo business, the fruits of labour recognized and rewarded a host of stakeholders from co-labourers who obtain a portion of the yield; the community members all of whom partake in the celebration of harvest; young entrepreneurs and hardworking labourers who may obtain capital to start their own enterprise; nature which is identified with Creation, worshipped and allowed to regenerate, and natural resources sustained. As such, business can function effectively as a community of persons, working in solidarity towards a greater good. In modern businesses the same principles could apply if workers and managers could be regarded as co-owners (stakeholders) in the business.

This concept of co-ownership could be extended to other stakeholders who would reap their 'benefits' as 'royalties', 'miles', 'bonuses', 'discounts', etc.

This is a practice already successfully implemented at a superficial level today. Those recognized as stakeholders, identify with the business interests, and the business better understands its stakeholders' interests. This clearly serves to align business and public interests, including social, cultural and environmental issues that arise in the short, medium and long-term.

#### **1.4.1 Corporate Governance Issues**

Corporate Governance is the modern term used to define the way businesses are directed and controlled.<sup>23</sup> In modern corporations today, even the question of balancing the private interest of business is being called into question, namely between the interests of the shareholders (owners) and the managers (employees of the owners with the task of managing the business). Scholars have identified that the establishment of modern corporate structures, such as the limited liability and public liability companies, led to the separation of ownership from control i.e. from management.<sup>24</sup> This in

---

<sup>23</sup> Cadbury, A. *Corporate Governance and Chairmanship: A Personal View*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992 cited in Solomon, J. and Solomon, A. *Corporate Governance and Accountability*, John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2004, pp, 2ff.

<sup>24</sup> cf Berle, A. and Means, G. *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, New York, 1932; cf also Smith, A. *The Wealth of Nations*, Ward Lock, London, 1838; Solomon, J. and Solomon, A. *op. cit.*

turn precipitated the issue of aligning managerial interests with the interests of 'shareholders' typically understood as the 'owners' of a business.

This problem was referred to as the 'agency' problem by the authors Berle and Means, who referred to a situation where the true owners of the companies, the Shareholders, lost control due to the wide dispersion of ownership of the business.<sup>25</sup> Adam Smith, recognized as the 'father' of capitalism, himself noted in his discussion of joint stock companies, that directors would be less concerned with someone else's investment than they would be about their own and that this situation could easily result in 'negligence and profusion' in the management of company affairs.<sup>26</sup>

Case studies of failed businesses that abused shareholders and public trust abound, including the famous examples of Enron, Maxwell and Barings.<sup>27</sup> Since corporations need funding to grow and given the potential capital requirements of corporations today<sup>28</sup>, the owners of firms may not easily be realigned with the managers of firms. However, as the Igbo traditional ownership and participatory management structures show, the following practical possibilities exist:

- a. Managers may be empowered to become co-owners of the businesses they manage;
- b. Owners and managers alike may be encouraged to recognize the existence of stakeholders other than themselves, and to engage these stakeholders, which include employees, consumers, suppliers, host communities and the environment, to identify interests that serve the interests of the business and the general public.
- c. In balancing business interests with public interest, stakeholders may be recognized to exist at three levels:

---

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Solomon, J. and Solomon, A. *op. cit.*, pp 31ff.

<sup>28</sup> The budget of Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (SPDC), for instance, exceeds that of the entire West African national budgets combined; cf. Bread for the World Publication, 2003.

- i. The present-living, meaning the community in which the business operates, the employees who work within the corporation, the suppliers, the consumers, the environment, and the entire world community.
- ii. The living dead, meaning the cultures and ancient traditions of the people in whose communities the businesses operate, as well as where they market their goods and services. This would mean recognition of our heritage from previous generations, and include respect for the diversity and plurality of the world.
- iii. The yet-unborn, meaning responsibility towards future generations, particularly in the use of the world's natural resources and therewith a recognition that ownership of these natural resources cannot be absolute. It would also recognize the responsibility of every business to the sustainable management of nature's gifts.

#### **1.4.2 Sustainability Issues**

The core idea of sustainability was originally applied to natural resource situations, where long term environmental preservation was the focus. Today, the term is applied in many disciplines including economic development, environment, food production, energy, consumerism and lifestyle. Basically, sustainability refers to doing something with the long term in mind and decisions made with a consideration of human activities into the future.

The goal is typically towards preserving quality interactions with the local environment, the social system and the economy. An example is where communities seek economic development approaches that benefit the local environment and quality of life. Thus 'sustainable development' provides a framework under which communities can use resources efficiently, create efficient infrastructure, protect and enhance the quality of life, and create new businesses to strengthen their economies.

On the other hand, a 'sustainable community' is achieved by a long term and integrated approach to developing and achieving a healthy community, by addressing economic, environmental, social and cultural issues. Fostering a strong sense of community and building partnerships and consensus among key stakeholders are also important elements. Gradually, policies of nation-states and activities of the various levels of any society, including corporations, are measured against their sustainability – a term that raises

controversy<sup>29</sup> as well as challenges present generations to meet the needs of today without the ability of future communities to meet their needs. This involves taking account of the costs to the environment and depletion of natural resources, to the economic cycle of production which is the use and disposal of products that can be maintained indefinitely without denuding resources or damaging the environment or society.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature had initiated, since 1980, the development of the concept of sustainability which was later to be taken up by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. In these schools of thought, sustainability is defined as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>30</sup> A new dimension in sustainability discussions is the impact of decisions and actions by practitioners on the cultural and religious aspects of people's lives<sup>31</sup>, which may have consequences in terms of guaranteeing the harmony and balance of society. This has led to a fundamental recognition that respect for the cultural rights of communities and individuals are a necessary ingredient for sustainability.<sup>32</sup>

This is an area where the traditional Igbo recognition of three levels of existence, referring to the present, future and past generations, offers additional insight into developing a more comprehensive concept of sustainability. The Igbo acknowledged the living dead, the ancestors, as the source of language, laws, ancient wisdom, symbols and other intangibles which provided society with its characteristic cultural values and which gave life meaning. These norms, structures, behavioural patterns, attitudes and ideal formed the basis upon which society developed, and the present generation rightly acknowledged its debt to past generations for this.

The challenge of such a thought pattern to the various western philosophical schools of thought, such as idealism, rationalism and empiricism, is to position the life experience of the Igbo against the abstract theoretical and logically conceivable notion in western cultures by individual philosophers. Herein lies a difference in the search for the foundation for ethics in universal

---

<sup>29</sup> Hoffmann, J. *Nachhaltigkeit – Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, Oxford/New York/Toronto, April 1987, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Project Group, *Ethical-Ecological Rating/oekom Research AG* (eds.), *Ethical Ecological Rating*, *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Laborem.35 Exercens (On Human Work)*, 1981. n. 14.

categories vis-a-vis the concrete historical experience of life in Igbo society – past, present and future.

### **1.5 Conclusion**

"I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am" <sup>33</sup> describes the typical wisdom thought of the African people. In terms of property, this meant "It belongs to me but I belong to the community." <sup>34</sup> As a result, property and ownership rights were limited by overall social concerns and communal purposes, which profited every member of the community. Among Igbo businesses, ownership and management structures are carried on through such principles that encourage the dignity of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good. In other words, communal ownership structures allowed individual usage and access, so that no member of society was disenfranchised, while participatory management principles ensured that the employee was a co-owner of the means and factors of production. This resulted in a balanced attitude to property which emphasized both private and public rights and responsibilities.

The African philosophy of "I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am" thus clashes with the values of a world economy dominated by the liberal capitalist worldview, where the human person has become a factor of production, labour; a cog in the wheel of the production process, where the interests of stakeholders other than shareholders- are neglected and sidelined. The many questions raised by the latter disposition, include 'what is the responsibility of businesses and their managers to shareholders, and stakeholders?'; 'what mechanisms could be put in place to guarantee a balance between the pursuit of private interests of management or shareholders and public interests including those of the environment, society, host communities, employees, etc.?', do not arise as such where the responsibility of businesses and individuals to stakeholders is recognized and acted upon. In recognizing the existence of stakeholders to include shareholders, employees, host communities, customers, suppliers, the environment as well as society and humanity at large, businesses could and should realign their private interests to ensure that sustainability (at the cultural, social, environmental and economic levels) becomes an agenda alongside that of profit-making.

---

<sup>33</sup> Mbiti, J. S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Ike, O. *Freedom is more than a Word; On potentialities for Development in African Culture*; CIDJAP Press; 1998.

Finally, traditional African economies, with communal structures, implied certain ownership and management structures which promoted social responsibility, equity and sustainability. These structures, which promoted equitable access instead of accumulation of wealth, have been criticized as being the cause for why Africa has not been able to launch herself economically on the world stage. Refuting this critique is not the object of this paper. Rather it is to say that the African concept of communal ownership and participatory management structures put forward a business model that promotes sustainability and balances private (business) and public interests. It would be seen that there was a tension between the individual and the community on matters of ownership in the Igbo culture. Indeed, this tension did, and does still, exist.

However, a balance was sought for and achieved in such a way that individual ownership of property was a natural, valid and necessary expression of the right to acquisition. Possession and control did not however assume an absolute dimension but were restricted within the limits imposed by their social function. This original African tradition of communal ownership does in fact correspond to a Christian conception of the world and of life. Writing in *Laborem Exercens* in 1981, John Paul II states that "Christian tradition has never upheld the right to private property as absolute and untouchable. On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right to common use of the goods of creation. The right to private property is thus subordinated to the right to common use and to the fact that goods are meant for everyone."<sup>35</sup>

The Igbo understanding of ownership is practically demonstrated in the life of its people centuries before this Christian teaching was formulated. In summary, this research examines ownership and management structures of traditional Igbo Businesses based on ethical values of subsidiarity and solidarity. It understudies and promotes African traditional values which, applied to modern issues of sustainability and the corporate governance function, offer a solid basis to establish a fair and sustainable future for individuals, communities and societies.

---

<sup>35</sup> Nnoli-Edozien, Ndidi, Doctoral Thesis 'Ownership and Management Structures of Traditional Igbo Business with inherent values of solidarity and subsidiarity: African Values Applied to Modern Issues of Sustainability and Corporate Governance, August 2006, Frankfurt University, Germany. Cf. also, for the sustainability definition without a 'past' dimension, World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 *ibid*.



## Chapter Fourteen

### The Future of Growth, Economic Values and the Media <sup>1</sup>

#### **I. Power - The Dominating Factor in World History:**

Experience of human history has shown the dominance of power by the powerful over the powerless. Experience and the wisdom of the ancients have also shown that power is driven by greed and selfish interest. Africa's relationship with Europe and America since 1472, when the British slave dealer John Hawkins Landed on the shores of Guinea and took black slaves off the coast of West Africa, has remained that of conquest, slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, exploitation in unimaginable forms.

#### **Energy and Drive for Resources - Reason for the Conquest of Africa**

The drive for energy and resources from Africa and elsewhere for Europe's use was guaranteed through forced slave labour of millions of blacks to work in the plantations of the white masters in the West, the Indies and then Americas. Over 10 million slaves were exported out of the African continent from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. With the abolition of the slave trade and the arrival of the industrial revolution of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century in England, necessary resources required for powering the engines of locomotives and industrial machines were available in Africa. this discovery formed the beginning of colonialism to exploit mineral resources including, cotton, uranium, cocoa, palm oil, palm nuts, potassium, feather, zinc, coal, iron, oil, gold, silver to feed the needs of the factories of Europe. This made the scramble and partitioning of the African continent possible as the 1885 Berlin Conference prescribed.

#### **The Era of Independence and the Beginnings of Globalization:**

With the end of the Second World War in the mid 1940's, traumatic challenges worldwide and a new climate of accommodation and forced respect of people's rights had initiated the birth of the United Nations which spoke of a Universal Charter for Human Rights and Freedoms for all peoples. The sudden but unprepared decolonization process of the post war period led to the independence of many African countries from nations from

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O.F.; paper presented at the DW Global Media Forum organised by Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Deutsche Welle (DW), Bonn, Germany in June 2013.

colonial rule powered by France, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany. In the new circumstance, challenges to economic growth, competitiveness, the cold war, energy policies and political interests led to grave conflicts in many cases. The war in the Congo, the wars of Biafra, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan and Uganda may be given other labels, deep seated however, on the reasons of energy drive, resources control, exploitation, economic growth aspirations as backgrounds for these conflicts which turmoil aggravate national interests. In most cases, the media was used as a cover for blackmail, sabotage, diversion, outright misinformation and even lies in the service of political, corporate and economic interests.

### **The Club of Rome and the Limits of Growth:**

The outstanding feature of this age is the '*global revolution*', a term first used by the Club of Rome as early as 1972 to describe a phenomenon to which the following facts and aspects are particularly relevant:

- Rapid changes in production methods, technologies, social and political organization, culture, human values and the 'natural environment' have taken place.
- These changes are experienced in different ways by individuals and social groups depending on the level of development of the community in which they live. Frequently, the transformation process affects only some aspects of social systems, especially when it is induced from outside. True, major social upheavals have always been preceded by philosophical-moral ideas, which during the evolution of the industrial societies technical innovations have clearly generated some momentum of their own which the human awareness, our mores and our political and institutional systems have difficulty keeping up with. Empirical evidence can be furnished to show that such a discrepancy becomes especially problematical when technology is transferred, usually only partially to other social systems. This 'simultaneousness of things not genuinely simultaneous' in a world becoming increasingly networked in the technical sense leads to an overall situation that is highly sensitive to irrational actions and could spell the system's total collapse. The very real danger of ecological disaster is a palpable example of this (K. Mannheim).

The present-day critical and ever lamented situations time and again are clearly not the result of economic crises in the traditional sense of the term but a global 'crisis of values' and flaws in the whole social system and

corresponding defects in the control mechanisms. The demand for natural resources which poses a threat to the whole of mankind is chiefly the result of three interdependent processes, viz;

- a horrendous waste of non-renewable resources in the industrialized societies,
- the still largely unbridled population growth, for the most part in the agricultural regions of the Third World, which is exacerbating the already delicate balance between man and resources in those regions, and
- the dramatic, excessive burden on the environment's capacity to absorb pollution which is causing manifest damage to the ecological balance on a global scale.

The problems arise primarily from the fact that traditional value concepts and notions of living standards and consumer behaviour are no longer consistent with the strategies of a 'civilization permeated by science', that technologies, forms of social organization and inter-human relations seem no longer to 'function' in systems. Thus the main objective of a crisis management strategy must be to minimize such 'incompatibilities' by enhancing the awareness of individuals and groups and by correcting deficiencies of system control on an international scale. Such adjustments should, where possible, be consistent with market requirements.

#### **The Present Ecological Crisis has Two Main Sources:**

- One is the still prevalent view that man can exploit nature without restraint and that all things technically feasible should be put into practice. From the scientific, political and socio-ethical point of view these arguments have long been challenged but without this change of attitude having yet had sufficient an impact on economic and social policy.
- The other is the survival of structures and modes of conduct that were considered quite rational in one context but have lost their meaning as a result of endogenous or exogenous changes in other parts of the system. This applies, for instance, to efforts to maximize production at any price, which is understandable in a deficient society. The desire to have large

numbers of children, too, was rational before the revolutionary advances in the field of hygiene and medicine. But if people still cherish that desire when circumstances have changed, continuing population growth represents a direct ecological threat. Adequate control of the system must primarily serve to reduce the contradictions between the rationality of the individual and that of the society as a whole.

It is necessary to draw from our analysis of the problem and our socio-ethical deliberations conclusions for the different levels of responsibility in the community. In doing so the general approach is not characterized by a radical rejection of technology and economic growth as variously called for. Without the many achievements in the field of engineering and without the development of a productive market economy it would not have been possible for many people today to live without fear of the deformities of nature that pose an immediate threat to their existence. Without technological advancement and economic growth, it would not have been possible for humankind to multiply and benefit from their biological life instead of dying prematurely of starvation or diseases which can be combated. The following conclusions favouring the further development of economic and social institutions as well as technology leading to a community life that is more compatible with the environment, are based on these ethical deliberations.

#### **Conflicts Are Pre-Determined:**

It cannot be assumed, however, that agreement on new global institutions and the introduction of necessary structural changes in the industrial and developing countries are possible without conflict. Conflicts over 'short-term' versus 'long-term' economic advantages, conflicts over who bears the cost of basing the economy on ecologically sound principles, are unavoidable. This also applies to conflicts ensuing from the necessary dismantling of the political and economic monopolies of privileged groups in developing countries. What is required are procedures for the rational settlement of conflicts within the framework of the democratic institutions of a country which respects the rule of law.

Ecological problems, too, cannot be mastered with the police-state methods of an 'eco-dictatorship', quite apart from such other considerable ethical misgivings as human rights, because it is essential that the majority of the population voluntarily appreciate the necessity of changing the general conditions and systems of incentives and that they are willing to carry out such changes in their own lives. The social teaching of the Church can help

by, on the one hand, making people aware of the problem and, on the other, urging that conflicts be settled by peaceful means.

### **Consequences on the International Level**

**(a)** In the case of some resources ('goods common to mankind') which might be jeopardized through unrestrained economic activity (extinction of certain animal and plant species, climate stability), international agreements are necessary to impose constraints on their use. Existing agreements must be implemented at a faster rate, verification of their observance approved, and they must be extended to new areas.

**(b)** In the case of resources which up until now have been used without restriction but which in fact are scarce and thus likely to be overexploited (e.g. fish stocks), international agreements (on catch quotas for instance) are needed to limit their exploitation. At the same time monitoring systems will have to be created to thwart attempts by certain countries to circumvent such agreements (whale hunting, ostensibly for research purposes only).

**(c)** Trans-boundary pollutants (for instance, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, CFCs) must be made the subject of global agreements which commit the countries causing the pollution to keep their emissions within prescribed limits.

**(d)** Up to now the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) has contained no reference to 'the environment', which shows how little people were aware of such problems when the agreement was signed in 1947. But since a member of GATT may resort to environment-friendly measures that affect international trade only when the ecological impact is felt in its own country (e.g. a ban on imports of toxic waste), and since choosing trading partners according to their environmental protection standards (for instance, exploitation without reforestation) is inconsistent with GATT, new international rules are needed to tackle these problems. These could include agreements to ensure observance of minimum ecological standards during production. It would then be less attractive to companies in industrial countries merely to switch production abroad on account of the lower environmental protection costs.

Since the aim of 'sustainable development' has been incorporated in the preamble of the treaty establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO) following the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations, the WTO is now called upon to adopt binding directives for 'trade and environment'. It will have to take account of the risk of industrial nations

using such ecological standards as yet another excuse for protectionist measures to the detriment of developing countries. This danger must be counteracted by means of impartial procedures for interpreting the rules.

### **Consequences on Industrial Economies**

Owing to the extent to which natural resources are currently being consumed and the ensuing ecological burden, and also in view of the technological capabilities of the modern industrial countries and the economic options available to them, these countries must be required to adopt production methods that are more in keeping with ecological requirements, and they must lead the way by restructuring their industries along these lines.

**(a)** In this process, it is necessary to eliminate the kind of market activity which places a heavy burden on the environment (for instance, incentives to European or American farmers to produce more irrespective of the scarcity of resources, or the subsidizing of energy production which is conducive to waste). Since there is a demand for environmental preservation measures in industrial countries, there is also some support for the idea of paying farmers to engage in activities which protect the landscape. For some of them this may be compensation for loss of earnings resulting from a reorientation of farm policy, but it will also give them the feeling that they are actually providing services for which there is a demand, which is an important factor for their integration into the community.

**(b)** In many areas external costs have not yet been sufficiently internalized. In the case of air and water pollution as well as waste disposal, attempts must be made to offset the costs in a way which will gradually reduce the degree of pollution and damage.

**(c)** Owing to the expected impact of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on the climate, further increases in this substance in the industrial countries must first be stopped as quickly as possible and then reduced. Technical requirements, certificates allowing CO<sub>2</sub> to be emitted in annually declining quantities, as well as a charge for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (a 'CO<sub>2</sub> tax') would be useful instruments for this purpose.

A CO<sub>2</sub> tax would only have an impact on the environment if fossil fuels were taxed according to the actual CO<sub>2</sub> burden caused and, thus, made considerably more expensive, but without unjustified exemptions (for instance, to save miners' jobs) or additional burdens resulting from the use of

non- CO<sub>2</sub>, sources of energy (wind, water, solar and nuclear energy). In order to avoid distortions in the use of energy steps will have to be taken to ensure that in the case of non-CO<sub>2</sub> sources, too, the external costs are internalized. All the big industrial nations (EU countries, Japan, United States) must be involved in such measures. This is the only way to prevent distortions of competition and keep the global effects actually measurable.

**(d)** In the field of energy, all possibilities of using regenerative sources (i.e. those which do not cause CO<sub>2</sub> pollution) must be resorted to and every feasible economy made. This may require us to accept drastic changes to some of our habits in the long term (i.e. as regards production methods, housing, work, transport). The question of retaining nuclear power or phasing it out must also largely be assessed in terms, not only, of reactor safety and the disposal of nuclear fuel but of the possible consequences of larger CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. One also has to take into account the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and of the waste heat generated through the installation and operation of nuclear power stations.

**(e)** Transport, especially individual transport, is a major environmental problem in the highly industrialized countries. The cost of petrol (measured in working minutes) is today lower than it was prior to the first oil price explosion in 1973. For this but also for other reasons (the growing number of families with second and third cars) the numbers of cars (per thousand inhabitants) and the degree of motorization have increased in recent years. On ecological grounds, this trend cannot be continued. The following steps will have to be taken to restrict it.

Public transport systems are usually too ponderous to be able to operate economically and offer customer-friendly services. They will therefore have to be made more attractive economically. This is essential if they are to become more acceptable ecologically and energy-saving. These improvements cannot be achieved without further deregulation and privatization. Furthermore, various measures (e.g. technical conditions together with a pollution-related car tax, an increase in mineral oil tax, speed limits, and proof that garage space is available) will have to be introduced to make individual transport less attractive. These would be good incentives for resorting faster and to a greater extent to known technologies that are less of a burden on the environment and developing them further.

**(f)** Industrial countries should not pass on their ecological problems to other nations (e.g. by exporting [toxic] waste) who agree to take such products

because of their ignorance of the possible long-term consequences or because of their dire economic circumstances. International agreements such as the *Lomé IV Convention*, under which the EU countries have undertaken not to export toxic waste to ACP countries, should be extended and effectively implemented.

**(g)** To the extent that industrial countries, for instance as a result of positive external effects, profit from tropical rainforests, they are under obligation to pay compensation to developing countries to preserve them. The countries receiving such payments would for their part have to promise to allow controls to be carried out by external agencies. The payments would be made in instalments and adjusted from time to time depending on the extent to which the countries concerned have met their obligations.

**(h)** The industrial nations should assist the developing countries in the following areas of environmental protection, within the framework of economic cooperation:

- Introducing environmentally acceptable technologies, particularly alternative sources of energy that are easy to operate and service (solar energy stations and wind farms, small hydroelectric power stations);
- providing know-how in the establishment of environmental protection agencies, drafting environmental legislation and ensuring its effective implementation; and
- Setting up ecological research establishments to promote, for instance, environmentally acceptable farming methods and forest management.

In these areas, the bilateral would be preferable to the multilateral approach because decentralization is conducive to broader experimentation and, thus, the testing of more options. There could be an exchange of experience at a later date.

Ecologically acceptable economic activity can be expected to develop to the extent that it proves possible to pass on the cost of environmental protection. Thus, for instance, the use of cars for leisure (about 50 % of all car journeys) can become dearer, which suggests that people should use their leisure time differently. By internalizing external costs to a greater extent it is possible to dispense with jobs in branches of the economy that are a particular burden on the environment while allowing new ones to be created in environmentally acceptable areas of production (e.g. the service sector).

But such consideration for the environment presupposes that the necessary adjustments are tolerated. Where the social impact is considerable it will be necessary to provide assistance for such adjustments. It is still necessary for nations to agree to waive some of their national sovereignty within the framework of international agreements. It is the task of the associations, the political parties, and above all the Christian Churches on account of their universal structure stemming from their faith, to promote public awareness of this necessity.

### **Consequences On Developing Countries**

Owing to the systemic links between different problems areas (ecology, poverty, population trends), it is necessary to reform the social institutions in the developing countries to create new ones, and to foster the culture, value-concepts and so on that are a prerequisite for both reform and the proper functioning of new institutions. In this connection, it has to be remembered that there existed in the traditional culture of many peoples both elements of respect for nature and rules for political leaders to apply for the benefit of the community as a whole. It is, therefore, essential to draw on such value-concepts and to use them creatively in establishing the new cultural, political and economic conditions for a global society.

The fundamental problem of many developing societies lies in the fact that their social order is not a system of cooperation for the mutual benefit of all, that is to say, there are no rules, institutions and values that serve the common weal. On the contrary, the uncoordinated pursuit of short-term selfish aims eventually causes damage to the community as a whole. Thus, if only in order to protect their long-term collective interests developing countries ought themselves to be the first to take an interest in safeguarding and preserving their ecological assets, for overexploitation reduces the sustainability of those assets or, in extreme cases, destroys them altogether. Their aim should be, through cooperation with others and the restructuring of their own social institutions, to ensure that uncoordinated individual behaviour on the one hand and short-term selfish interests of minorities on the other do not prejudice their common interests in the long term. The following aspects would seem to have considerable bearing on efforts to cope with the interdependence of the problems of poverty, population and environment.

**(a)** Only if there exists a constitutional state with a democratically elected parliament, an independent judiciary and an administration that is committed to the public good (that is to say one that is not arbitrary but free from

corruption) is it possible to stipulate exact individual and group property rights (e.g. by means of a land survey office, agricultural reforms), to ensure that they are reliably upheld, but also to bind society to effective rules (e.g. laws which provide for reforestation) and the protection of nature parks, etc. For only owners whose property rights are secured in the long term will take care of their natural resources, will preserve them and try to sustain their use. Moreover, the installation of such democratic institutions meets the wishes of large sections of the population in developing countries who, after all, have a feeling for fair administration of justice and government action.

Conditions of democracy benefit the poorest section of the population most of all since they are then no longer exposed to the dictatorial attitudes of officials or those wielding physical, social, political and economic power. Only where the rule of law prevails do poor people have the chance to enjoy the fruits of their labour themselves and are no longer open to the danger of their property being acquired by outsiders.

Democratic conditions are also prerequisites for reducing population growth, however, because in such a society and given monetary stability it is possible to make provision for 'old age' by forming monetary and material assets instead of relying solely on one's descendants. And again, it is only in a democratic society that confidence in collective forms of 'old age' provision, i.e. social security, can develop.

**(b)** But democratic stability is only sustainable if the social system is accepted by the community as a whole. Rights of ownership protected by the rule of law will not be accepted by the majority if the distribution of, say, landed property is extremely unequal, that is, there is a small group of large landowners and a large group of landless people who, apart from having no land, also have no access to other forms of ownership (human capital, means of production, housing etc.). Social acceptance of democratic institutions has to be promoted by government redistribution policies (land reform, education for all, social housing programme, etc.). In the conditions prevalent in many developing countries, capital-formation schemes serve to increase efficiency in broad sections of the community, especially where non-performance-related pensions are absorbed by increased competition, factor quality is improved (education) and factor use increased through larger sections of the population having better access to land (redistribution of land, improved leasing arrangements).

### **Relevant Literature**

- NIGERIA; THE TRAVEST OF OIL AND GAS WEALTH; statement by the Justice Development and Peace Commission of the Catholic Conference of Nigeria; (2006) Gazub, Lagos.
- From Dependency to interdependency; the study of the group of experts "world Economy and social Ethics – African German Symposium in Yaoundé, (1994), Bonn, Germany, Bishops Conference of Germany document.
- Global Finance and Human Development; report by the group of experts on "World Economy and Social Ethics" (2002), Bonn, Germany.
- Pontifical Council for Justice; the Modern Development of Financial Activities in the Light of the Ethical Demands of Christianity (1994), Liberia Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City.



## Chapter Fifteen

### **Towards a Self-Sustaining and Self-Reliant Church: Theological Perspectives from the Social Teaching of the Church and Local Experiences in Development<sup>1</sup>**

#### **I. Gratitude**

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my mathematics teacher, choir master and mentor far back in 1969 and 1970 while I was a fresher and junior seminarian at All Hallows Seminary Onitsha (then on exile at Ukpokwu) the Most Reverend Solomon Amatu, Bishop of Okigwe. I have known the bishop for over 40 years and admire his piety, wisdom and audacity in quiet sincere service and transformation of Church and Society. Father Isidore has told me that the Bishop assented to my nomination as guest speaker and resource person at this auspicious occasion which is a gathering of the Church hierarchy, religious and faithful of the diocese. Besides approving the event, I am told he desired to manage his programme to allow some personal presence, an act that speaks for itself. I pay tribute to all diocesans who are collaborators with the Bishop in the tremendous progress this diocese is making on the path of integral evangelization and the practice of charity since his transfer to serve the people of God in this ecclesiastical circumscription.

I recall the memory of the founding Bishop of this diocese, Most Rev. Anthony Ilonu (*Requiescat in pace*) who after the civil war of Biafra and Nigeria, worked as teacher at the Bigard Memorial Seminary (my parents lived in Uwani Enugu) whilst I was a junior seminarian. I served at his masses for children, celebrated every Sunday at 7am. His last visit to our parish at Sacred Heart Uwani Enugu a few years ago was like home coming. His visit to pass the night with me at my residence in Enugu and our late night discussions centred on his desire to complete a befitting project for his people and lead them to a self-reliant and self-sustaining indigenous African Church.

My gratitude goes to the competent diocesan officials and organizers, especially Father Isidore for taking the lead in inviting my presence and

---

<sup>1</sup> Ike, O.F. paper presented during the gathering of all the Priests and Religious of the Catholic Diocese of Okigwe during the Year of Faith Pope Benedict XVI called.

keeping the pace of the warmth and belief that we had something to share with the brothers and sisters of Okigwe diocese, coming from our own background of Enugu diocese which experiences is worth sharing. A people can by sheer solidarity, determination, will, vision, opportunity and challenge rise above their given situations and take their destiny into their own hands. Enugu diocese has done just that and I am glad to share our local experiences in humble acknowledgment that much is still ahead.

Let me confess that Father Isidore with his persistent daring and constantly keeping in touch with several telephone calls, emails and telematic correspondences, virtually monitoring my movements whether in Nigeria or abroad made me cancel other scheduled engagements to share your warmth and participate at this event. Such daring and persistence by missionaries for their flock, parish, schools, health centres, projects vision and mission for the common good is exemplary and brings desired results in our times and clime. Thank you for the invitation. To my many friends, classmates, colleagues and acquaintances here present, I pay my respects and now invite you all to share with me some thoughts on the topic assigned.

## **2. Okigwe Diocese in Focus**

The focus of this paper, dialogue and sharing is the Catholic Church and people of the territory of Okigwe diocese. Your gift is this land blessed by God with large numbers of priestly and religious vocations who are ready to bring the Good news of salvation to the ends of the earth. Okigwe diocese within Nigeria ranks among the areas with the most dedicated, educated and missionary oriented people. Claim it and enhance it for upon the heels of the bringers of the Good News follow blessings for their people. The Irish and Polish missionary experiences showcase the role of the missionaries in championing the emergence of these nations into the international theatre, with a John F. Kennedy emerging the president of the USA. Missionaries are ambassadors for their people. Added to the gift of these vocations to the religious and priestly life are the many other endowments of human and natural resources of your diocese, some of them still untapped.

Counting on these blessings, one is amazed at the numbers of the human capital, thinkers and scholars who are indigenes to this diocese whether Roman Catholic or not. Professor Adiele Afigbo of the University of Nigeria, now deceased, a renowned humanist and historiography teacher, and such calibre of persons show the gift which is in your territory. The establishment of tertiary institutions, schools and enterprise centres speak volumes of the desire of the people to move from neglect, stunted cultural practices,

religious syncretism, poverty and ignorance into a competitive world class territory with many possibilities and apparent limitations. To achieve greatness however, Unity is essential and this appears in my humble estimation as one of the critical challenges for a Church on Mission in Okigwe diocese to redeem its people.

It seems appropriate to presume that one of the expectations of the audience is to share a reflection on how we can specifically offer a lasting solution to the legitimate quest for self-reliance of the local Church, moving away from the age long dependence on external agencies and institutions to realize the vision and theology of the Second Vatican Council. This theology promoted the role of the particular Church and her competence in human, natural and social resources with the focus on the theology of incarnation and enculturation, summarized in those beautiful words of St John's Gospel: "The Word took flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Our study follows the Synod of the Bishops on Africa at the Plenary Assembly (Africa Synod) in 1994 and the call of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* No 104. The Pope challenges the Church in Africa to articulate her mandate in all dimensions, namely of proclamation, enculturation, dialogue, Justice and Peace, Social communications all of which are possible through a dynamic and sustainable local personnel and to contribute these to the universal Church.

The African Synod locates the issues of self-reliance and sustainability as an agenda of the future of the local people and challenges all who have positions of responsibility to initiate credible methods and models of lifting the African Church and people from a "begging and dependant Church to a self-reliant Church." At a meeting in Kumasi, Ghana of the Bishops of West Africa, concern and focus was given to matters of sustainability and self-reliance, showing that the bishops are resolved to move from a receiving (begging) Church to become a self-sustaining and rather giving Church. Pope Benedict XVI in the Second Synod of the Bishops on Africa in 2009 uses the biblical language "Africa rise up and walk" to show the challenge of the cripple who seemed dependent but indeed had received the gift of healing.

The Apostolic Exhortation "*Africae Munus*" of 2011 is a veritable document which talks of Africa's commitment to Christ from the apostolic times which foundations are its assets in terms of becoming the region of the world Church with future, Hope, family values and as the Pope says – "*the spiritual*

*lung of the world Church*". This is apt because the respiratory organ upon which breathing and thus all life depend upon is the lung.

The role of the Church founded on the incarnate word, who elevated humanity to redemption and salvation and recreated the challenge by the Creator to "*subdue and fill the earth*" (Genesis Chapter 1), is to lead by credible example and show that self-reliance and sustainability is not only possible and desirable, but corresponds to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church (St Augustine; St Thomas Aquinas; St. Peter Abelard; St Anthony of the Desert; St Clement of Alexandria etc). These have adapted the Gospel to their teachings on the endowment of each person with gifts that call for responsibility and judicious use as each shall render accounts of stewardship for the gifts received.

One may thus apply this passage to Africa, the Church, to Nigeria and contextually to Okigwe diocese, our Political Elite, the educational or social and cultural organs and the captains of industry who are our economic drivers to "*rise up and walk*" and not continue to wallow in self-pity, lethargy, apathy, unrealistic bogus claims, dishonesty, adulation and a perpetual dependency syndrome. This in my humble estimation remains part of the challenges facing the Igbo Church, nay in local context, the people of Okigwe diocese. Hope is the gift. Optimism founded on reality, is the foundation for success. Okigwe diocesans are brilliant with realistic ideas, planning and methodological skills which are foundations for the proper participation of all persons as productive ingredients in the attempts towards self-reliance.

The contributions of the Laity in resources management needs to be constantly encouraged and not be neglected. The laity have a wealth of resources, decision making systems and management competency skills that serve the need of the Church and their locality. Their participation is critical and the Laity remains the major untapped resource in our Churches.

### **3. Our Mandate**

Look around you and you shall discover the manifest situation of many people in our land, frustrated, dejected, brutalized, abandoned, disillusioned and rendered poor in every sense of the word. They are hungry, exploited and naked, homeless and many of them die young. Statistics on the African continent state that 40,000 children die daily due to lack of the basic means of livelihood. The contextual statistics would be most challenging, thus the phenomenon of crime, boko haramism, kidnapping and brigandage into negative actions which has become the bane of our society.

Our mandate has its roots in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to “*Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news*” (Matthew 28:19). “*I came that they may have life in abundance*” (John 10:10). “*The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me for the Lord has sent me to bring Good news to the poor*” (Luke 4:18). The Lord Jesus Christ in his life challenged the people of Israel to self-help. A good example is the miracle at the lake of Galilee with the multiplication of loaves. He made the disciples “not to send the people away into the desert in search of food” but to give them food themselves by helping locate a young lad who had five loaves and two fishes. This symbol was enough for the Lord to perform the miracle of the multiplication and feeding of five thousand people, not counting the numbers of women and children.

It is our responsibility as Christian leaders of society to encourage the empowerment of people, which leads them into self-reliance and allows them to shape their destiny. Such strength helps people to understand the underlying causes of poverty and to organize themselves for purposeful activity. Positive empowerment is based on solidarity and mutual respect and strives for an equality of relationship, which it may never fully achieve. This is the real challenge facing the world and the Church, for how can we see people die daily of hunger for food, unemployment, curable diseases, illiteracy and ignorance, ill-health, inadequate housing and horrendous poverty without realizing their God given destinies and talents? The challenge and mandate in the language of Vatican II is to “*see the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel*” (GS 1, 2).

Taking into consideration, the fact that any discussion about self-reliance revolve around the proper use of power which is the ability to achieve purpose and bring about change, we do underscore our utter rejection of a system which creates and encourages poverty in order to practice charity. The New Testament repeatedly attests to the paradoxical inter-relationship of power and powerlessness. “*He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to set the downtrodden free, and to proclaim to all the Lord’s year of favour*” (Luke 4: 18-19).

The long tradition of Catholic Social Teaching has always advocated the empowerment of the poor and marginalized people, a theology completely consistent with the Gospel by empowering the less privileged to become equal and responsible citizens. No genuine authority can be based upon the powerlessness of those who are subject to it. In fact, political and economic situations challenge poor people to effect changes in their own lives by

engaging the oppressive structures and social situations that has kept them dependent. “*God helps those who help themselves*”. What we experience in the Arab world and in other places of tumult and uprising currently is the relocation of power to the people against years of oppression, injustice and tutelage.

There comes a time when people can and must say ‘No’ to subjugation as an attempt to recreate their destinies wasted by an elite that denied them their rights and suppressed it. The exodus phenomenon is the historical presence and action of God alongside the marginalized, a paradigmatic approach which captures the present situation and mood of the Nigerian people. In the words of a Vatican diplomat to the UN: “*If the process of globalization which is taking place in our world is to be truly human, it requires the construction of a truly global community where concern for all especially the weakest is uppermost*”. (Cf. Archbishop Renato Martino, Vatican Diplomat and Nuncio, speech to the UN, 1997).

### **Church and Self-Reliance- Catholic Social Teaching En route**

The universal quest by man created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27) for a better world founded on the biblical injunction to “subdue the earth and fill it” (Gen 1:28) living in full equality, dignity and integrity, prompted this reflection on the linkage of Church and self-reliance. Due to the lack of knowledge by people, including Christians of the profound teachings contained in the Social Teaching of the Church since Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical letter “*Rerum Novarum*” on the conditions of the working classes (and the call for their liberation, just treatment and just wage), the magisterial office of the Church has continued to inundate the world and the faithful with statements, guiding principles and teaching that guarantee a proper understanding of socio-economic and political-cultural realities.

These realities are founded on sound reason, common sense and the injunctions of faith. We as African theologians, Christian faithful and ministers of the Word are also called to reflect on these teachings in the light of our own peculiar faith experiences and circumstances of life with the purpose of drawing from their insights, deepening them in our thoughts and further elaborating upon them with our background and context in view.

This sharing today draws upon some of these age old wisdom and guiding principles, thus their presentation in a brief summary here. Pope John XXIII described the Church as “*Mater et Magistra*” (Mother and Teacher) in his Encyclical letter which bears this title, stating very strongly that this “*Catholic*

*Social Doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life*” (MM 222). He suggests that these principles are of universal application, for they take human nature and the varying conditions in which man’s life is lived into account. The principles also take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society, and are thus acceptable to all (Cf. MM no, 220).

Pope John XXIII therefore recommends that there is urgency for the study of the Social Doctrine of the Church. “Such teaching must be extended by regular, systematic courses in Catholic schools of every kind, especially in seminaries. It is to be inserted in to the religious instruction of parishes and of associations of the lay apostolate. It must be spread by every modern means at our disposal: daily newspapers, periodicals, popular and scientific publications, radio and television” (MM 224). This call, which since then has been interpreted to mean prophetic challenge in view of the events of human history since 50 years of its publication faces us more in the particular churches of Africa and our developing nation.

With the document “*Populorum Progression*,” Pope Paul VI in 1968 gave the world a clear teaching on the link of development and progress, Church and self-reliance, culture and society. In fact, he called development the “new name for peace” and urged that every effort be made to bring humanity to the awareness and authenticity of their true self, identity, skills, ability and resources which in essence is authentic and sustainable development. True development is not infrastructural, it is the building of the human person and his integrity and personality according to the mind of God.

The linkage of Church and self-reliance is a theological concept, expressed since apostolic times and engraved even in the nature of the family and the system of economic enterprise, particularly agricultural production in antiquity before the emergence of industrial capitalism. In the word of Pope John XXIII, “it is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church’s Social Doctrine, the light of which is Truth, Justice its objective and love its driving force” (MM 226).

Grieved at the wanton misery and suffering into which increasing majorities of our people are condemned to live especially their economic dependence, there is need for the leaders of the people to realize that “*failing to plan is planning to fail*”. Therefore, in an effort to free ourselves from the present situation of dependency we acknowledge the need to recognize our potentials and limitations, in order to achieve the desired self-reliance. Over

ambition and undue expectations are part of the problems which make people “build castles in the sky”. Several resources have been wasted in unattainable projects. The Church is called to lead by modest example to sustain this drive and its ministers must commit themselves to carry out this mission in educational campaigns for justice and peace for all our people.

The quest for self-reliance is not an attempt at rebellion, or an exercise in isolation. Self-reliance also implies solidarity. The Church can attain self-reliance in those areas where she can do things for herself, seek reasonable assistance from external bodies on those things she cannot support herself and pursue the wisdom which states that Subsidiarity does not exclude solidarity in the search for the Common Good.

Our belief is based on the fact that we have several values in our religious, theological, cultural and social ambient which teach us the proper use and management of resources. These correspond to the wisdom of our ancestors who became rich by saving and harnessing the little they had. In our context and with the added advantage of knowledge and experiences of what works elsewhere, the management of local resources and the belief in our ability to sustain and survive assumes the dimensions of a Gospel initiative. It is imperative to accept this challenge and serve the people to redirect their values so that we learn to “*cut our coat according to our size and cloth*”.

Given the socio-political conditions in our country today, the Church’s growth and development of the faithful has been adversely affected without much needed resources. The seminaries and religious houses still lack adequate accommodation. Many parishes especially in the rural areas do not have the access and adequate resources required for mission work. Infrastructure much needed for development are lacking as our road networks, housing, energy and power supplies for industrial development is below average and constant outage of electricity a common occurrence.

As a result, we still have to depend upon external assistance on a wide range of areas. We realize that funds emanating from external sources may have some “strings” attached and may not continue for long; in fact, are rather diminishing. Donor agencies have developed a gradual ‘aid fatigue’ and there is a direct call to recipients to be on their own. We urge ourselves and other Non-governmental organizations including our local Church to prepare for this probable development.

As a credible step towards financial self-reliance, we join the recent calls by the local Church and our civil rulers and commit ourselves to encourage income-generating projects to enable people and institutions achieve their own development and overall common good. This can be done through the establishment of Microfinance banks that are properly functioning and are guided by discipline and corporate governance; agricultural projects; skills training and vocational centres for the youth and adult education with literacy programmes for those in need.

Other useful projects are the creation of Small Projects Fund and credit revolving projects for communities and groups such as youth, women and men to promote their efforts on a revolving basis. Such projects build up group solidarity action and workers' rights. From our experience in Enugu, we have observed that the provision of soft loans through our own Umuchinemere Pro-Credit Micro finance bank (UPMFB) supports private initiative, social market and individual or group entrepreneurs and has helped us link and empower over 500,000 people with loanable funds over a volume serviced by an asset base of nearly three billion naira. Umuchinemere bank is one of the largest and leading MFB's in Nigeria.

Here, I shall share with you some of the successful projects going on in the diocese of Enugu as a point of departure of what we all can do in our different localities. Some of these include CST programme; health and educational institutions; the establishment of a diocesan university, the GOU with faculties and the attendant advantages of a university; the VITTC; the Ofu Obi Africa centre, the growing numbers of parishes, pastoral programmes and initiatives towards evangelization; agricultural projects; rural development; education work at all levels; women and men programmes on the competence and levels of the laity; income generating projects; linkage of Church and government; team work of the local personnel through trust and control mechanisms; social housing programmes; further studies and a new sense of mission under new evangelization.

### **Resolutions**

Aware of the enormous responsibilities facing humanity, the African continent, the Nigerian nation and Okigwe diocese at this time, I recommend that we resolve as follows:

1. To face up to the real problems and challenges of the local Church, working in unity, determination and focus and through the Holy Spirit of God to promote more conscientiously the mission of Jesus Christ which is

summed up in the new evangelization understood as: proclamation, dialogue, enculturation, justice and peace and the challenges of the means of social communication ('Ecclesia in Africa').

2. Reaffirm our desire to identify and harness the material, spiritual and human resources of our Local Church for the attainment of a state of sustainable self-reliance.

3. Acknowledge the relevance of trained personnel in our work to sustain the training and empowerment of our personnel and calling for ongoing formation in skills and knowledge within the shores of the locality and abroad.

4. Promote the sustenance of the use and management of funds at our disposal as a vital issue in the attempts to attain self-reliance. It is therefore imperative to hold tenaciously the principle of proper accountability, honesty and transparency in the use of funds.

5. Promote the preferential option for the poor which calls each individual to give a weighted concern to the needs of the poor, in all economic, political and social decisions; because, it is the most impoverished people whose rights and dignity are most often violated. We affirm that we are on the side of the poor.

6. Challenge the rascality by which Local, State, and Federal Government officials have borrowed money to buy supplies, equipment or houses. They borrow money from private markets and international financial institutions. Individual loans are often repaid directly, but if a country borrows money, the citizens are not necessarily notified or informed of the purpose of the loan or its terms and conditions. In fact, instances exist, where such loans have been used to enrich a small group of people and have been transferred to private bank accounts of government officials outside the country. We question the logic and the justice which demands repayment of debt taken thirty years ago, before many African children were born and paid to creditor nations to be enjoyed by their children who were not born when the loans were taken. Huge debt repayments places repayment before life, and a total debt cancellation is a bold gesture of the Millennium Development Goals to usher in demand for ethical considerations that promote and enhances life for all.

7. In line with Catholic Social Teaching, to emphasize our belief in the sacredness of each individual and in the dignity of each person. We consider this position a criterion against which all economic, political and social systems are to be judged and all aspects of the debt situation must be measured. The erosion of common good, caused by the current debt situation demands active solutions from governments, institutions, and the Churches which assure human dignity and protect human rights.

8. To foster education growth at all levels and in all forms and dimensions, especially in the promotion of career and skills programmes, youth and women development and in the promotion of a theology of empowerment, which is truly Catholic and authentically African.

9. To challenge our people to register, vote and be voted for and develop positive interest in politics for the general welfare, whilst supporting lay and active participation in politics. We are aware that only in the restructuring of the social order based on the principles of justice, truth and fairness can there emerge the new society of our dreams. This optimism has its source in the belief that a “*common dream*” is “*the nearest reality*” and affirm with the Bishops of Africa in the Synod our hope and belief in HIM through whom all things are possible (Luke 1:37).

10. To acknowledge the spiritual, social and human dimensions of the Nigerian context in which we act as agents of the Good News. There is a lot of potentiality in human, natural and material resources in our nation and dioceses. Almighty God has blessed us abundantly. The Local Church to a large extent is already self-reliant in manpower and personnel. The Church leadership has vision and there is need for courage. While much has been achieved already with the support of the world Church and people of goodwill, much is yet to be done.

11. The contributions of the laity in resources management should not be neglected. The laity possess a wealth of resources, decision making and management competency skills that should be actively encouraged and supported. The Laity still remain the major untapped resource in our Churches.

12. We believe in the use of effective and realistic ideas, efficient planning and methodology, participation of citizens etc., as productive instruments for achieving self-reliance.

13. To intensify prayer and trust in him who makes all things possible (Luke 1:26) and call on all our people, to work assiduously for the achievement of the goal of a self-reliant Church in our Diocese which is mature enough to help herself do what it can and even assist others. We agree that our success in attaining self-reliance will need discipline, truth, justice, hope, patience, love and perseverance. We therefore call on 'our heavenly Father' in this year of Faith for His abundant blessings.

### **Conclusion**

I have enjoyed my sharing with you all, brothers and sisters. May we now recommend all these deliberations with intensive prayer and trust in him who makes all things possible (Luke 1:26) and call on all our people, to work assiduously for the achievement of the goal of a self-reliant Church in our Diocese which is mature enough to help herself do what it can and even assist others. We agree that our success in attaining self-reliance will need discipline, truth, justice, hope, patience, love and perseverance. We therefore call on 'our heavenly Father' in this year of Faith for His abundant blessings.

## Chapter Sixteen

### The Social Teaching of the Church and the Social Problems of Africa: A Historical Overview <sup>1</sup>

#### I. The Suffering and the Hopes of the African Continent

*At the beginning, the speaker gave an overview of the suffering that afflicts Africa, before turning to the signs of hope on the continent.*

##### I.1 The social context of the African continent

There is an atmosphere of dramatic urgency concerning the continent which presents Africa as a land with a 'wounded face', 'a tragic historical past' and a 'bleak future'. The mass media, whether local or international, generally display no good news from Africa on matters of politics, the economy, culture or social life, except perhaps on items such as sports and music. The general picture worldwide is that of a 'continent of misery', the reality of which is trumpeted by all forms of statistical data whether 'fake or real', exaggerated or correct.

Many Africans have actually started to doubt themselves, their ability and their hope for a better future and society. Some have given up. Some tell their own stories in a pessimistic, horrendous language. The intellectual and the elite, whose responsibility it is to build up their nations, are fleeing abroad, where possible, for any available jobs and, when still at home, are participating in the downgrading, oppression and marginalization of their own peoples whether in military uniform, in civilian political offices or even in the private sector. One would notice a climate of worry in many quarters!

Gradually, the Western controlled mass media have succeeded in virtually writing off Africa as the continent synonymous with ecological disasters, hunger, drought, warring factions, economic depression, unemployment,

---

<sup>1</sup> IKE, O.F.; paper presented at the symposium on "The Social Thought and Action of the Church in English and Portuguese-Speaking Africa" in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1996.

dictatorships, civil wars, primitive cultural practices against men, women and children, the plague of AIDS (which is said to affect one out of every forty Africans - true or false).

Malaria still remains the greatest killer, and infant mortality is high. Comparatively, Africa has the largest number of refugees (in fact, 50 percent of the world population of refugees), not to talk of millions of displaced persons. In over 20 countries of Africa (out of fifty—five) guns were still heard in 1996 and, in many cases, carried by under-aged children, and freely used in the barbaric massacre of hundreds of thousands of people (...).

The facts on ground show that many regions of the continent do not enjoy good governance, and the issues of legitimacy, responsibility, accountability and the distribution of national wealth to reach all on a fair and free level are simply non-existent. Africa's history is beset with betrayals, setbacks and stormy waters, and the land described as the 'cradle of civilisation' and 'the origin of mankind' is treated without respect or dignity in international matters.

Others 'speak for' Africa and 'stand in for' Africa in their own affairs. The background of the slave trade and its attendant colonial and neo—colonial vestiges still overshadow the continent's 'present tense'. The burden of external debt, the arms trade, the violation of human rights and the requirement by Western Governments to link development aid with policies of demographic control: all these are issues which afflict the African nations.

There is value disorientation and large—spread illiteracy leading to mental retardation for some and a spread of injustice for many, whichever way one tries to look at it. Apathy has set in, and social imbalances lead to increasing crime. Urbanisation, rural flight, break-down of law and order, corruption in high and low places, especially an embarrassingly by agents of law enforcement, is not uncommon.

On the other hand, there is the impact of wicked Structural Adjustment Policies which have unleashed more misery and suffering on the people, especially the poor, through imposed foreign economic reform programmes

teleguided by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and such economic wizards as the Clubs of London, Paris, Rome, etc. in the name of the “free market”. Is the human person not more important than the economy? The suffering poor are dying, and a country like Nigeria, which in 1970 had a per capita income of 173 USD, and which rose in 1981 to 1000 USD, declined in 1990 sharply to 230 USD.

In 1994, it was down to mere 100 USD, showing clearly that the standard of living has not only declined but has stagnated, thereby adding to the level of poverty generally.<sup>2</sup> It is in this setting that the question by Africa’s most respected Cardinal Hyacinth Thiandoum of Dakar, at the opening of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, holds:

*In a continent full of bad news. how is the Christian message ‘Good News’ for our people? In the midst of an all—pervading despair, where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings? <sup>3</sup>*

Is this a pessimistic assessment which leaves no other chances open? It is this concrete socio—historical and realistic acceptance of the facts on the ground which led all the participants at the African Synod to agree that:

*One common situation, without any doubt is that Africa is full of problems. In almost all our nations, there is abject poverty, tragic mismanagement of available scarce resources, political instability and social disorientation. The results stare us in the face: misery, wars, despair. In a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected by all. The Church is part of this society in distress.<sup>4</sup>*

---

<sup>2</sup> Nosa Igiebor, *Tell Magazine*, Editorial Report, Lagos, February 20, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Relatio ante disceptationem*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Relatio ante disceptationem*, 4.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II agrees with this evaluation of the social context and reality of people in Africa, for in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, he observes that:

*Africa is a continent where countless human beings - men and women, children and young people — are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalized and abandoned. They are in dire need of Good Samaritans who will come to their aid.*<sup>5</sup>

### **1.2 The signs of hope**

The bishops of Africa described the Synod as a “providential event of grace” for it took place at a time when the continent of Africa was — and still is - at a major critical crossroad in social-political and economic development. We are now meeting within the context of a world in desperate search of a “New World Order”, a World Order that should not only be new, but also more just and human. There is hope, even in the present African situation. The Pope insists that the continent of Africa, in spite of its problems, contains a wealth of hope and a priceless cultural heritage which cannot be overlooked. Africa is basically a very rich continent in both human and natural resources, well endowed by the Creator. It has human qualities which it can offer to the churches and to humanity as a whole.

It is a matter of joy to record the outstanding achievements, by any standards, of the situation of the Catholic Church in Africa:

*In particular, the building up of the Church on the Continent is confirmed by facts such as the noteworthy and rapid increase in the number of ecclesiastical circumscriptions, the growth of a native clergy, of seminarians and candidates for Institutes of Consecrated Life, and the steady increase in the network of catechists, whose contribution to the spread of the Gospel among the African peoples is well known. Finally, of fundamental importance is the high percentage of indigenous bishops who now make up the Hierarchy on the Continent. The Synod Fathers*

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, 41.

*identified many very significant accomplishments of the Church in Africa in the areas of enculturation and ecumenical dialogue. The outstanding and meritorious achievements in the field of education are universally acknowledged. Although Catholics constitute only fourteen per cent of the population of Africa, Catholic health facilities make up seventeen per cent of the health-care institutions of the entire Continent.*<sup>6</sup>

Pope Paul VI had, in 1964, called Africa “a new homeland for Christ”.<sup>7</sup> And Pope John Paul II in his desire to give hope, against every apathy, lethargy, and hopelessness in the light of the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* says:

*It seems that the ‘hour of Africa’ has come, a favourable time which urgently invites Christ’s messengers to launch out into the deep and to cast their nets for the catch (cf. Lk 5:4).*<sup>8</sup>

In the words of Cardinal Thiandoum,

*In these tragic conditions, she [the Church] must carry out her mission to offer our peoples the Good News of Christ’s redemption, and be the sacrament, sign and instrument of God’s Kingdom within our continent. In order to be able to carry out this mission effectively, she must be in constant dialogue and loving solidarity with the society in which she finds herself.*<sup>9</sup>

## **II. Social thought and action**

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, 38.

<sup>7</sup> Homily at the Canonization of Blessed Charles Lwanga, Matthias Mulumba Kalemba and Twenty Companion Martyrs (18 October 1964); cf. also John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Relatio ante disceptationem*. 4.

2.1. Based on the eighth Plenary Assembly of SECAM (Lagos, 1987), which considered with remarkable clarity the question of the Credibility and relevance of the Church's message in Africa, and following the Synod on Africa, the author raises the question: "Church of Africa, what must you now become so that your message may be relevant and credible?"<sup>10</sup>

The answer certainly is to be found in the great wisdom embedded in Catholic Social Teaching (Doctrine), a great source of light and of faith, capable of transforming the evil intentions of man, and of retranslating the 'structural' and 'personal' evil abilities of mankind through the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into an '*adumbratio*' (a foreshadow of the 'already' but 'not yet' understanding of the Kingdom of God).

The Social Teaching of the Church is a heritage which must be known, developed and preserved with fidelity by responding gradually to the new and emerging needs of human co—existence. Africa is in dire need of this Social Teaching.

2.2 *After having indicated the reasons – religious and moral as well as historical – why the Church intervenes in the social field, Obiora Ike gives a historical overview of the Social Teaching of the Church, emphasizing its dynamic character.*

Three Pillars have, over the years, formed the foundation upon which contemporary social teachings are based, namely:

- the teachings of the Fathers in the early Church;
- the teachings of the great medieval scholastics and theologians;
- the teachings of the Popes since the last century, particularly since May 1891 with the epoch-making Encyclical *Reram Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII which marked a spectacular era in the history of the Church's Social Teaching.

It is important, therefore, right at the outset of this reflection, to establish that the social content of the Christian Message has been developed from the very first centuries and that the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church is the fruit of two thousand years of Christian reflection, action. and spirituality in

---

<sup>10</sup> Relatio ante diseepmationem. 34.

the light of the Gospel. The contemporary formulation of this message, which continues to enrich itself from new experiences, cannot be understood if its ancient roots are ignored. One might even add, taking into consideration the rich ideas in the Bible (Old and New Testament), that Social Teaching is as old as mankind itself. Already at Creation, God made man “in His own image and likeness”; thereby founding the dignity of every human person (*Gen 1:26*).

The creation story states that God made Adam a helpmate, Eve (*Gen 2:20—24*): “It is not good that man be alone. I shall make him a helpmate (partner)”. Even when Cain, one of the two sons of Adam, killed his brother Abel, God did not allow that Cain should be killed in revenge. Rather the Bible records: “If anyone kills Cain vengeance shall be taken on him seven—fold” (*Gen 4:15*). Such action portrays the dignity of human life which the Creator ordered should be preserved, not destroyed, even in the face of the deeds of Cain. Already in the Old Testament. Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah not to be destroyed because of their sins (*Gen 18:19*) and on Mount Sinai, God Himself gave Moses the tablets of stone, upon which was written the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) which guaranteed the basic law for the preservation of life, of property, of freedom of speech and movement, of integrity and above all the foundational belief in one supreme God to whom belongs all respect and reverence.

Society, moreover, is not static but dynamic. Various historical, philosophical and theological developments of thought served to clarify to the Church herself the role and thinking of the Church in the evolution of societies. With the development of modern times, each successive Pope has marked his tenure by developing a teaching which coincided with the needs of the people as a Gospel response. John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963) responded with confidence and clarity to the spirit of the times. This trend has continued to date.

That the Church should have a social teaching is nowadays taken for granted. The entire Christian history, in some way, always did have one. In Romans 13:1—7. St. Paul reflected upon the relationship between Christians and the

State. St. Augustine, far back in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, considered the Just War Theory. The ownership of property always held the attention of the early Church Fathers.<sup>11</sup> J. T. Noonan<sup>12</sup> has discussed in detail the medieval school men and their views on the propriety of charging interest on loans.

Further instances abound. In the sixteenth century, Bartolomé de Las Casas and Francisco de Vitoria, both of them Spanish Dominicans, wrote vigorously about the problems of colonisation and the treatment given to indigenous people in territories newly conquered by Spain. The entire Old Testament, the New Testament, the early Church, even up to our day, has always had reason to reflect on social realities in the light of faith. In 1864, Wilhelm Von Ketteler; Bishop of Mainz, Germany, produced a book *The Worker Question and Christianity* and called for a just solution to the problems of society.

All through 2000 years of Christendom, the Church gained experience of society and was constantly developing a social conscience a social teaching and moral criteria. It should have come as no surprise, therefore, when the Catholic Church, in the person of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, began to speak out on social issues. Yet it did. *Rerum Novarum* produced shock waves throughout Europe, and became a landmark in the history of Christian social principles. Not only has it proved to be the first in a long series, many later documents were composed explicitly to commemorate its publication, as some of their titles bear witness. The Catholic Social Teaching constitutes a 'rich heritage' which the Church has progressively drawn from biblical insights, the tradition of the early Fathers, scholastic philosophy, theological reflection, and the contemporary experience of the People of God struggling to live of faith in justice.

2.3. *Throughout this historical evolution, the unity of the doctrine taught by the Church is striking.*

The documents are systematic and contain reference form that only could be specific to the unity and continuity of the tradition known to be Catholic,

---

<sup>11</sup> Charles Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching*, London, Sheed and Ward, New York, Orbis Books, 1983.

<sup>12</sup> *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, Cambridge Mass, 1957.

Universal, Apostolic and Holy. The Popes hardly contradict one another. One truth is extended into other. One would be struck also, going through the various Social Encyclicals, to discover the tone, unity and variety of subject matter discussed as an organic whole. The Fathers of the Church maintain a common anthropological, ethical, theological, and contextual View of the human person

Whether the topic of the Social Question be the family, property economics, politics, culture, ecology, technology, capital, labour, armament, peace, justice, women, international trade, aid, development, the Third World, communism, poverty, war or other global issues, the Popes always had reason to have recourse to earlier documents and to expand upon them. If there are changes in tone, this applies more or less to the distinctive character and personality of the Pope who is writing. Emphasis on a topic depends on the contextual historical reality of the place and time. Generally, however, attempt has been made to look at the Social Question from a global perspective.

*The aim of the teaching of the Church, as the Congregation for Catholic Education rightly reminded us is to promote social progress.*

Today social doctrine is called upon with increasingly greater urgency to make its own specific contribution to evangelization, to dialogue with the world, to the Christian interpretation of reality, and to guidelines for pastoral action in order to enlighten the various initiatives on the temporal plan with sound principles. Indeed, economic, social, political and cultural structures are experiencing profound and rapid transformations which put the very future of human society at stake and thus they need a sure orientation. It is a matter of promoting real social progress which, in order to effectively ensure the common good of all men, requires a just organisation of these structures. If this is not done, there will be a return of great multitudes toward that situation of a 'quasi-servile yoke' which Leo XIII spoke about in *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, Rome 1988, 2.

*What is clearly at stake is the continuity of the social doctrine?*

The term 'continuity' is used to express the relationship between the documents, even if each one responds in a specific way to the problems of its times. In spite of differences in formulation, 'methodological procedure and styles, the documents "do not compromise the substantial identity and unity of the Social Doctrine of the Church".<sup>14</sup>

Due to its character of mediation between the Gospel and concrete social and human realities, the need for a responsive updating to new world situations is accepted.<sup>15</sup> The initial object of this doctrine was the so-called 'Social Question', or the whole series of socio-economic problems which arose in certain areas of the European and American world subsequent to the 'Industrial Revolution'. Today, the 'Social Question' 'is no longer limited to particular geographic areas. It has a world-wide dimension and includes many aspects. In any case, 'Social Question' and 'Social Doctrine' are co-related terms. Thus, its continuity and development from Leo XIII in 1891 to John Paul II in 1996 shows that the Social Doctrine preserves a substantial identity as a doctrinal 'corpus' with great coherency, attentive to evolving situations. It cannot be reduced to a closed system.

As an example, the 'poor' which we refer to frequently are not the 'proletarians' of Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*, nor the unemployed in Pius XI's *Quadragesima Anna*. Today, the poor have emerged as an international, intercultural and inter—religious 'club', found everywhere. They are in those rich Western and American Societies which, until now, were exclusively enjoying the goods of the earth with political freedom, societal liberalism and economic security.

They are also found in unquantifiable numbers in those parts of the Southern globe now labelled as the Third World. In such areas, poverty has become systemic and almost institutionalised. They are also found in the new emerging ex-communist countries where freedom, dignity and humanity were until now 'foreign' concepts.

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 29.

Furthermore, the problems of the 'poor' no longer concern only the unjust differences between classes, but today encompass enormous imbalances between the so-called 'rich and poor nations.'<sup>16</sup>

#### 2.4. *Permanent principles and fundamental values*

These principles have not been formulated by the Church organically in one single document, but are found throughout the entire historical evolution of her social doctrine.

The principles mentioned are not complete, but simply indicative of the important ones, such as the dignity of the human person, human rights, the person—society relationship, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity, human structures and community of persons, the universal purpose of created things.

#### 2.5. *The Church is aware, particularly in this sphere, of her limits: she does not presume to be able to solve all the dramatic Situations of the modern world.*

In fact, the Church proposes no alternative ideology, no social, political or economic system. This is not the level of its action nor of its competence.

On the other hand, the Church can and must, in "the light of the Gospel", provide the principles and necessary guidelines for the correct organization of social life for the dignity of the human person and for the common good.

Its proper role is to interpret the moral value of social activities and to offer social guidelines which are in conformity with the Gospel's view of human dignity.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, a debate took place in some Catholic circles about the Social—Doctrine of the Church, its meaning, its present relevance and even its existence. This 'doctrine', for some critics, represented nothing more than an ideological option in face of more operational ideologies such as socialism and communism. Others viewed the Social Teaching of the Church as a compendium of Papal Encyclicals, whose literal quotation appeared to be of little help for understanding the role of the Church in modern societies.

Pope John Paul II had reason to take these criticisms seriously for he wrote:

---

<sup>16</sup> Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Carrier, Herve, *The Social Doctrine of the Church Revisited, A Guide for Study*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Vatican City. 1990. p. 12.

The Church's social doctrine is not a 'third way' between *liberal capitalism* and *Marxist collectivism*, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather, it constitutes a category of its own. Nor is it an *ideology*, but rather the *accurate formulation* of the results of careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to *interpret* these realities, determining their conformity with or divergent from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to *guide* Christian behaviour. It therefore belongs to the field, not of *ideology*, but of *theology* and particularly of moral theology.<sup>18</sup>

### III. Conclusion: Application to Africa

3.1. Actually, in x-raying a historical overview of the Social Teaching of the Church as we have done, we both directly and indirectly touched on its relevance and applicability to the corresponding social problems of various African countries. A few events on the continent of Africa seem to draw attention to the need for a concerted effort of the relevant church authorities for the gradual development of a continental approach to promote the knowledge, spread and practice of the demands of Catholic Social Teaching.

3.2. Following the 1988 Pan-African Seminar on Justice and Peace organized by SECAM in Rome, Lesotho; the consultation process of SECAM with the various Bishops' Conferences and Regional groups; the meeting of representatives of the French-speaking African Bishops' Conferences in Yaoundé, July 1993; the African Synod of 1994 with the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*; and the current meeting in Harare for representatives of the English and Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa on Social Thought and Social Action. It does seem to me that the time is ripe for the formation of a permanent SECAM continental body to define, promote and initiate activities which relate to the Social Teaching of the Church.

---

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41.

3.3. Secondly, practical encouragement should be given to various individual groups, institutional, local, national and regional initiatives which work for the articulation of these teachings. It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. The several areas of application of these teachings in Africa include: democracy, economy, lay participation in politics, education, agricultural resources, social and development projects, work, industrialization, Church and culture, liberation, refugees, wars, the burden of the international debt which has led to currency devaluation in many countries, to mention but a few.

3.4. It is relevant at this point to indicate some of the difficulties related to the knowledge and spreading of the Social Teaching of the Church in Africa:

3.4.1. One must address the lack of adequate knowledge of these teachings. This problem needs deeper study and evaluation for a proper contextual adaptation of the teachings.

3.4.2. The documents are not available in simplified texts, nor in local languages for the several rural populations in African Societies. In fact, many of the documents are written in professional language and “jargon”, a point which needs some form of consideration. Perhaps local theologians could be challenged to translate the documents into simple language for the lay faithful.

3.4.3. In many African countries like Nigeria, the documents of Catholic Social Teaching are not easily available in bookshops or libraries. Where can you easily obtain an Encyclical?

3.4.4. Knowledge of the contents is not clear to the priests, who could use them in sermons. let alone to the faithful. If the priests do not know or preach on these doctrines, how can the faithful know of these teachings and live them out in daily life? The blind cannot lead the blind.

3.4.5. In the training of future priests, adequate place is not give during formation for a proper knowledge of and education in the Catholic Social Teaching. This matter also needs to be addressed.

3.5. *What must the African Church do?*

3.5.1. *Self-reliance*: African Nations must learn gradually to depend on their own capacities in every field. This corresponds to subsidiarity thinking. No outside assistance can take the place of self-effort. Social and economic action, that is the increase of one's own productive capacities, certainly takes on a particular importance in this sense.

3.5.2. *Education and formation*: Of primary importance, in the responsibility of developing nations, are the tasks of formation an education (both have an economic dimension as well) which are one of the most important requisites for the success of the development of the whole person.

In the words of Pope John Paul II:

*Has the Church in Africa sufficiently formed the lay faithful enabling them to assume competently their civic responsibilities and to consider social—political problems in the light of the Gospel and of faith in God? This is certainly a task belonging to Christians: to bring to bear upon the social fabric an influence aimed at changing not only ways of thinking but also the very structures of society.<sup>19</sup>*

3.5.3. *Witness of action*: On the matter of relevance and credibility, the Holy Father, with reference to the Church's evangelizing mission in the field of justice and peace, says:

Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social doctrine will gain credibility more immediately from witness of action than as a result of its internal logic and consistency.<sup>20</sup>

Christians must be formed to live the social implications of the Gospel in such a way that their witness will become a prophetic challenge to whatever hinders the true good of the men and women of Africa and of every other continent.<sup>21</sup>

3.5.4. *Integral evangelization*: When understood as human promotion, the defence of human rights, the protection of a lifetime guarantees of jobs, etc.:

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, 54.

<sup>20</sup> Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 57; cf. also *Ecclesia in Africa*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, 54.

Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.<sup>22</sup>

3.5.5. Overcoming divisions: The Church is challenged by this specific responsibility to heal divisions of all sorts: ethnic, tribal, religious, etc.

*Tribal oppositions* at times endanger if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the society as a whole. They also create difficulties for the life of the Churches and the acceptance of Pastors from other ethnic groups.<sup>23</sup>

At this stage in Africa, we need more unity, not division.

3.5.6. *Solidarity expected from industrialised nations*: The Church in Africa requests, in the language of the Vatican Council II, that the industrialised nations undertake “spiritual and material adjustments”<sup>24</sup> within their own confines in order to help build a more just and more humane society. We all live in a ‘global village’ and the danger of collective selfishness must be clearly averted.

The present times are no luxury for many African peoples. The Church experiences martyrdom daily. We must make haste: too many people are suffering, and the distance is growing that separates the progress of some and the stagnation, not to say the regression, of others.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, it is our considered View that resignation and hopelessness lead to futility, not to life. The urgent requirement today consists in overcoming resignation and in finding the courage to take the initiative. Catholic Social Teaching is a sure path to this renewal of faith and of life.

---

<sup>22</sup> *Evangelii Nuntium* 18; cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 54.

<sup>23</sup> Pontifical Commission “*Iustitia et Pax*”, *The Church and Racism. Towards a More Fraternal Society*. Vatican City 1988, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*. 86.

<sup>25</sup> Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 29.

