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Evangelisation as Justice and Peace

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Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Ike, Obiora F.
Publisher	Printed and bounded by BEW IT LTD
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Download date	2026-07-15 16:21:27
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166308

Chapter Ten

Evangelisation as Justice and Peace¹

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.”²

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.”³

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

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

² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 41.

³ 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.”⁴

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.”⁵

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

⁴ Paul VI, *Evangeli Nuntiandi*, 31: AAS 68 (1976), 26

⁵ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 42, AAS 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 on 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.