

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
Faculty of Theology

Rev. Fr. Theodore Ikemefuna Iloh

Index Number: 139988

**THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF
THE TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS'
CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA, 1965 – 2017**

**Doctoral Thesis in Systematic Theology written
under the supervision of
Rev. Fr. Dr. Hab. Andrzej Pietrzak SVD, Prof. KUL**

Lublin 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As there cannot be an omelette without egg, so also, the success of a work of this magnitude cannot be realized without the grace of God and the support of many people. My optimum gratitude therefore goes to the Almighty God who has sustained me and done wonderful things in my life. To Him be the glory and honour, forever. I am deeply indebted to my bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Paulinus Ezeokafor, and his auxiliary, Most Rev. Dr. Jonas Benson Okoye, for granting me permission to further my studies. My unalloyed gratitude goes to Dr Godwin Maduka (Lion of Africa) for sponsoring my studies here in Poland. Thank you, my big brother. May God's love continue to remain in your family.

I thank in a special way my supervisor, Rev. Fr. Dr. hab. Andrzej Pietrzak SVD, Prof. KUL. His sincere remarks and suggestions remain unquantifiable for the success of this work. I also express my appreciation to the Dean and all the Professors and workers in the Faculty of Theology, John Paul II Catholic University, Lublin. I thank my brother-priests, Rev. Frs: Pat Okeke, Ken Nwabuike, Cy Duru, Theo Ekwem, Nonso Onyegu, Kingsley Ibe, Afam Ekwem, Kingsley Madu, Uche Okeke, Peter Uzoezie, Charly Ogbunambala, Ken Ekeugo, Ig Okoli, A. B. C. Chiegboka, JB Onyia, Peter Ofoji, Mike Muonwe, Austin Onyebuchi, James Ikeatuegwu, Felix Ibegbunam, Ig. Onwuatiegwu, Casmir Anozie, Andrew Emenike, Benignus Nwankwo, Peter Ibeazor, Steve Akujiobi, Msgr B. C. B. Muojekwu and others. Rev. Msgr. Prof J. B. Akam has been part of whatever success I recorded in life. Thanks for been there for me. Rev. Ekene Nwosu brought the idea of my coming to Poland and fastened the submission of some necessary documents to that effect. I thank him for his love.

Sincere appreciation also goes to some of my friends: Chief and Mrs Patrick Chidolue (Nnabuenyi), Chief Dr and Mrs Greg Omile, Prof. and Mrs Law Chukwu, Prof. and Mrs P. Okafor, Pastor and Mrs Marcellinus Odimgbe, Chief and Lady Alex Okechukwu, Ogbuehi Simon Okpara, Chief and Mrs Paul Muotolu, Senator A. Igbeke (Ubanese), Chief and Mrs Norbert Emejue, Mr Bernard and Virginia Rote, Mr and Mrs Larry Pembleton, Mr and Mrs Mike Herrick, Lady Ruth Cyr, Lady Jeanine Evans, Lady Chinenye Okonkwo, Lady Dr Ify Udegbe, and Lady Jane Onuegbu. I want also to express my gratitude to Late Rev. Fr. Gerry Creedon, Fr Jack O'Hara, Fr Bill, and the entire parishioners of Holy Family Parish, Dale City, Virginia, USA. Thank you, Fr. Mike and the parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish, Manassas, USA. Nigerian Priests here in Poland showed me much love. They include: Frs Tony Umeh, Faustinus Ugwuanyi, Tony Ohaekwusi, Kinsley Ekeocha, Lambert Nwauzor, Mike Konye, Stephen Ugwu, Patrick Obeleagu and all others. May God reward you abundantly and sustain you in your own academic endeavour.

Finally, I am grateful to God for the gift of my father, Late Chief Luke Iloh, and my mother, Ezinne Grace Iloh, for showing me the path to good life. Thank you, Rev. Fr. Julian Iloh, Mr and Mrs Too Iloh, Eze Iloh, Mr and Mrs Peter Iloh, Columbus Iloh, Philip, Stephen, Christy, Lucy and Jacinta, and the entire members of Ilojiukwa family. Thanks so much for your encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	02
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	03
ABBREVIATIONS.....	08
INTRODUCTION.....	11
 CHAPTER ONE: General notion of Mission: etymological, contents, objectives and its contextual evolution in the Nigerian local church	 27
Introduction.....	27
1. Biblical and theological basis of Christ’s mandate (mission)	28
a. Mission in Old Testament.....	28
b. New Testament as the source of the contemporary mission of the Church....	31
c. The Trinitarian Framework in the Church’s mission.....	32
2. Second Vatican Council and Post-conciliar Church: the changing faces of Mission.....	33
a. Synopsis of the mission in pre-conciliar ecclesiology.....	34
b. Conceptual survey of Mission.....	35
c. Mission <i>ad intra</i> and Mission <i>ad extra</i>	38
d. Ecclesiology of <i>Aggiornamento</i>	40
e. Some basic principles of Mission.....	41
i. Mission and the sender: the scriptural import of “sending”.....	41
ii. Mission and the <i>sent: apostolos</i>	43
f. The complex interplay between mission and evangelization.....	44
g. Difinitional Nuances of evangelization.....	46
3. Missionary ecclesiology and objectives.....	48
a. Etymological derivations of the Church in relation to her mission.....	48
b. Relevant images in understanding the church.....	50
c. Proclamation of the word of God to all nation as integral part of mission.....	51
d. The hermeneutics of witnessing as an offshoot of proclamation in the Church’s mission.....	52
e. Recipients of the Gospel message.....	54
f. Human development, peace and social justice: ingridients of mission	55
4. Evolution of Mission: Nigerian experience.....	56

a. Fundamental basic explication.....	57
b. The formation of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.....	58
c. Historical and theological basis for episcopal conferences.....	59
d. Awareness of the Church's missionary responsibility and notion of mission	61
e. Drawing strength from the universality of the Church's missionary activity...	63
f. The mission of the Church as a collective commitment and action.....	64
g. CBCN as the vanguard of <i>missio ad intra</i> and <i>missio ad extra</i>	66
h. CBCN's vision of Mission: The import of the Magisterium appeal letter to Nigerian Bishops.....	67
Summary.....	69

CHAPTER TWO: Mission and evangelization in the local church:

historico-contextual approaches.....	71
Introduction.....	71
1. Socio-cultural, political and religious background.....	72
a. A brief historical touch on Nigeria.....	72
b. Political considerations in Nigerian Development.....	74
c. The Economic Resources considerations.....	77
d. Religious consideration.....	78
e. Cultural and social Elements in the life of the People.....	79
f. Islam in Nigeria: A Brief Historical Review.....	81
g. The fall of Sokoto Caliphate in 1903 as ground for Christian persecution.....	83
h. The advent of Christian missionary activities in Nigeria.....	84
i. Sowing the seed of evangelization: Early missionary encounter with the natives..	84
i. First encounter of the Portuguese with Nigeria.....	86
ii. Second attempt: the era of <i>ius commissionis</i>	90
iii. Freed slaves as catalysts in the missionary work in Nigeria.....	92
iv. Third phase of the birth of the Church: the era of <i>mandatum</i>	93
2. The Gospel's encounter with African Traditional Religion.....	97
a. The idea of religion as <i>Deo-humani</i> encounter.....	97
b. Christianity and African Traditional Religion: the problematics.....	99
c. Some missiological <i>caveats</i> for the missionaries.....	100
d. The initial encounter of the Gospel and the African Traditional Religion.....	102

i. CBCN's interventional approach (between ATR and Christian religion).....	105
ii. Conflicts between the Church and Islamic religion.....	108
3. Mission in the hands of local church authorities.....	109
a. Short historical framework.....	109
b. The indigenous clergy and religious as vanguards of evangelization.....	112
c. The import of vocation in Nigerian missionary experience.....	115
d. Mission on trial.....	118
i. Nigeria-Biafra war, 1967-1970.....	119
ii. Federal Government takeover of mission schools.....	121
iii. Quick response from the Nigerian Bishops.....	121
4. Methods of evangelization used by the European missionaries	123
a. Education as a pivotal method.....	123
b. Integral Human Development.....	126
Summary.....	128
 CHAPTER THREE: The integral missionary approach of the CBCN.....	 129
Introduction.....	129
1. Contextualized missionary ecclesiology.....	130
a. The Nigerian voice.....	130
b. Prophetic role of the Church in the Nigerian context.....	133
c. Education in the evangelizing mission of the Church.....	136
i. Church and educational establishments.....	136
ii. Catholic Education as an imperative in the Church's mission.....	140
d. The New Evangelization in the mission of the Nigerian Church.....	146
i. Contextual consideration.....	146
ii. Reception of the new era of evangelization by CBCN.....	148
2. The Gospel as instrument of justice, peace and progress.....	149
a. The multi-religious nature of Nigerian society and the Church's mission.....	149
b. Promotion of justice and equity in Nigerian society.....	150
c. The Church for the poor.....	153
d. Justice and Peace as integral part of the Church's mission.....	155
e. Promotion of human dignity and protection of human life.....	158
i. The mission of the Church is for human person.....	158
ii. War against abortion: CBCN's stand.....	159

iii. Restoring the Dignity of the Nigerian woman.....	161
3. Ecumenical dimension of mission and interreligious dialogue of the church...	164
a. Ecumenism as a tool in the mission of CBCN.....	165
b. Dialogue and the Church's mission: Nigerian perspective.....	168
c. Mission and inter-religious dialogue.....	169
i. Dialogue with Muslims.....	169
ii. Dialogue with African Traditional Religion and Other Christian religions..	172
4. Theology of Inculturation and Nigerian Church.....	175
a. Theological and contextual basis for Inculturation.....	176
b. Historical perspective.....	179
c. Towards a contextual definition.....	181
d. Incarnational-Inculturation: the imperative in the mission of the Church....	184
e. A Model of Inculturation for the Nigerian Church.....	191
i. First Phase: Reaffirmation of the Indigenous Culture.....	191
ii. Second Phase: Study to discover the Positive Values of the Culture..	192
iii. Third Phase: Study to discover the Culture's Disvalues.....	192
iv. Fourth Phase: Explicit Proclamation of the Gospel Message.....	192
v. Fifth Phase: The Christian Community becomes the evangelizer.....	193
Summary.....	193

CHAPTER FOUR: Agents of evangelization: dynamic structures, progress and challenges for the Church hierarchy in Nigeria.....195

Introduction.....195

1. Administrative structures for the effective evangelization.....	196
a. Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN): A definition.....	196
i. Episcopal Departments and Pastoral affairs.....	197
ii. Pastoral Agents and directorate of social communication	198
b. Episcopal commissions on mission and dialogue.....	199
c. Family as the nucleus of the Church's Mission in Nigeria.....	200
d. National Laity Council of Nigeria.....	205
i. The Magisterium teachings on laity.....	206
ii. The collaborative work of the Laity in the mission of the church.....	207
e. Major Statutory bodies in the Church administration.....	209
i. Catholic Men Organization (CMO).....	210

ii. Catholic Women Organization (CWO).....	211
iii. Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON).....	215
f. Holy Spirit as the principal agent of the Church's mission.....	216
g.. Priests and Religious as agents of evangelization.....	217
h. Catechists as teachers and indispensable agents of evangelization.....	218
i. Catholic Knights as agents of evangelization	224
2. Challenges and obstacles facing missionary endeavour in Nigeria.....	227
a. High level of poverty and illiteracy.....	228
b. Religious syncretism.....	229
c. Influence of Pentecostalism.....	231
d. Ethnicity and religious violence.....	234
e. Inadequacy of formative strategies for the seminarians	236
Summary.....	238
 CONCLUSION	 240
a. Appraisal.....	241
b. Recommendations.....	244
Bibliography.....	250

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
AD	Ad Limina
AFER	African Ecclesiastical Review
AG	Ad Gentes
AM	Africae Munus
AN	Apostolic Nunciature
ARCIC	Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission
ATR	African Traditional Religion
Cann.	Canon Law
CATHAN	Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria
CBCN	Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigerian
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCRN	Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria
CDF	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
CD	Christus Dominus
CEP	Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples
Cf.	Confer
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
CIDJAP	Catholic Institute of Development Justice and Peace
CIWA	Catholic Institute of West Africa
CL	Christifideles Laici
CMO	Christian Men Organisation
CMS	Church Mission Society
COA	Chapel of Adoration
CSN	Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
CT	Catechesi Tradendae
CUNA	Catholic University of Nigeria, Abuja
CWO	Catholic Women Organisation
CYON	Catholic Youth Organisation of Nigeria

DMDN	Department of Mission and Dialogue, Nigeria
DH	Dignitatis Humanae
Ed.	Editor
Eds.	Editors
E.g.	Exempli gratia, for example
EG	Evangelii Gaudium
EIA	Ecclesia in Africa
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
EP	Evangelii Praecones
ES	Ecclesiam suam
FC	Familiaris Consortio
FPCC	Foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture
GME	Gaudet mater ecclesia.
GE	Gravissimum educationis
GS	Gaudium et Spes
HS	Humanae Salutis
ICTV	International Congress on the Theology of Vatican II
IMOP	Institute of Missiology and the Orientation Programme
Is.	Isaiah
JDPC	Justice, Development and Peace Commission
Jn.	Gospel of St. John
KSJI	Knights of St. John International
KSM	Knights of St. Mulumba
LG	Lumen Gentium
Lk.	Gospel of St. Luke
Ltd.	Limited
MD	Mulieris Dignitatem
MI	Maximum illud.
Mk.	Gospel of St. Mark
MM	Mater et Magistra
MPFF	Ministry of the Poor and Faith Formation
Mt.	Gospel of St. Matthew
NA	Nostra aetate
No.	Number

NT	New Testament
OD	Orientalum Dignitatis
OP	Optatem totius
OT	Old Testament
PA	Pastor Aeternus
PDV	Pastores Dabo Vobis
PGP	Praeclara gratulationis Publicae
PMS	Pontifical Mission Society
PP	Princeps Pastorum
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RE	Rerum Ecclesiae
RM	Redemptoris Missio
Rm	Letter to the Romans
RPC	Retreat and Pastoral Centres
SA	Slavorum Apostoli
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium
SECAM	Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
SP	Summi Pontificatus
SYC	Spiritual Year Centres
St.	Saint
Trans.	Translated by
TTC	Teachers Training College
UR	Unitatis redintegratio
US	Ut unum sint
VAT. II	Second Vatican Council
VJTR	Vidajyothi Journal of Theological Studies
Vol.	Volume

Introduction

Background analysis

The historical account of the incarnation of Christ presupposes the birth of Church and her Mission. It is therefore, inconceivable to divorce the Church from her Mission. His birth is intrinsically mission-oriented. The true name of the Church is therefore Mission, and her real vocation is to proclaim Christ who is the embodiment of Mission. This idea is properly fleshed by St. Paul VI when he stated that “there is no true evangelization if the totality of Christ’s incarnation and salvific ministry are not proclaimed.”¹ Pope Francis also reminds the Church that she is not an end unto herself, “but a humble instrument and mediation of God’s Kingdom.”² Therefore, to have seen Christ is to have experienced mission since his life is enshrined in His own mission of doing His Father’s will (Jn. 6:38). In other words, his mission is His Father’s Business (cf. Lk. 2:49). At the same time, the missionary mandate which the Church received from him is to continue the spread of his own mission.

From the beginning of His life, Christ knew the essence of his taking the human flesh. He intended to be all things to all men, to fulfil the mission of mediation between His heavenly Father and the fallen humanity (Isaiah 6:5-10). Thus, in the New Testament, Christ testified and made reference to this act of sending and its missionary purposes. Consequently, he expressed that “the Spirit of the Lord which is upon him, has given him the mission of preaching the good news of God’s salvation and freedom to all mankind, especially the poor and the oppressed.”³ This is the legacy he bequeathed to his apostles. Over the centuries, the Church has continued this mission through the apostolic succession. On this note therefore, Roger Schroeder argues that “the Church does not exist for itself but for the sake of God’s mission.”⁴ The event of the Second Vatican Council remains a landmark event in the life of the Church and her mission in many positive ways. The Council’s “local church” missionary method caught our theological attention. Invariably, with the Council, a strong impetus for a strengthened Episcopal Conferences was reaffirmed. The idea is that the church which directs the faithful to their salvific fulfilment must not overlook their social, political, cultural and religious earthly

¹ St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelization in the Modern World (Dec. 8, 1975), no. 22.

² Pope Francis, *Message for the World Mission Day, 4 June 2017*, no. 7. Libreria Editrice Vaticana. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/missions/documents/papa-francesco_20170604_giornata-missionaria2017.html.

³ Lk. 4:18. Cf. Is. 61:1-3.

⁴ Roger P. Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 29.

realities. The Episcopal Conferences remains a Body of local Bishops who share the same environment with the faithful. They feel the impulse which the faithful feel. Therefore, the success of the Council's new ecclesio-missiological vision depends on how strong and united the members of these Conferences are. Secondly, the Council threw more light on the inclusive ecclesiology of mission. This implies a new understanding of the Church and her mission. The implication is that the mission of the church is not a preserve of the pope, bishops or other members of the clergy, but inclusive of all the baptised faithful. The Church came to existence because of the urgency of the mission which Christ wanted his disciples and invariably all the baptised to continue. Hence, the Council insists that this mission should cut across the entire globe, notwithstanding the historical, cultural or social peculiarities or differences. Of course, this mission is one that requires boldness in the proclamation of the truth. It is a mission to be carried out audaciously, without any tincture of tepidity, in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2). Since the content of the mission is 'Christ crucified' (1 Cor. 1:23), the Church should be ready to be on the side of martyrdom regarding the missionary authenticity.

This was put in a better perspective through the Pentecost event which still remains a catalyst for the universality of the Church as well as her catholicity. This experience formed the foundation for the ecclesiology of mission. Here, the Church, which is still in its embryonic stage of development, received the beaming light of cultural and linguistic intermingling. From all indications and from the above little excurses into the foundation of the Church and her Mission, one is not left in doubt about the importance which Christ places on the missionary mandate. We intend also to give a generous expatiation of this idea in the main work. Thirdly, we also deduce from the new vision of the church by the Council Fathers, that though Christ gave the mission to the church, he did not recommend any specific method of the evangelization. Therefore, the Council supports a variation of her missionary paradigm regarding the realities she finds on the mission territories, with particular emphasis on cultural theology. What therefore forms the crux of our research problem is based on the existential realities in Nigeria as they relate to the missionary efforts of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN). These realities will be synthesized in this work.

On the Pentecost day as we have indicated, Peter used his direct sermon on the mission of Christ, his life, death and resurrection to convince the people why this mission is for the good of humanity. His *kerygma*, spiced with enough convincing theological pedagogy helped to bring a multitude to Christ on the same day. In Thessalonica, Paul used different method of conversion by meeting the people in their different synagogues and sharing the word of God with them. As expected, it was really tough for him to convince many of them (Acts 17:1-4).

Many looked down on him, while many got convinced of his presentation and followed him. Coming to Berea from Thessalonica, he, together with Silas, tried the same method of praying with them in their synagogues. Here, he met a more receptive audience (cf. Acts 17:10-12). As such, conversion was easier. However, coming to Athens, Paul saw a different environment and thus needed a different missiological paradigm and pedagogical approach. He met a more learned group of people (philosophers who were following Epicurean and Stoic principles), but highly schooled in idol worship. He not only resorted to logical argumentation with them in their synagogues, but also carried his preaching to the market places (See, Acts 17:16-21). This is because, Paul felt that basing his proclamation on merely theological concepts would result to nothing. A different approach was inevitable: open market evangelization and open confrontation was needed. It was this approach that eventually resulted in what has remained a famous speech of Paul at the *Areopagus* in Athens, where he used their religious inclinations to convince them of the power in the “Good News” and the victory on the Cross (cf. Acts 17:32). As he noted: “You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious” (Acts 17:22).

As a good missionary, he felt that utter condemnation of their objects of worship could put his life in danger and place the message of Christ on the wrong side, he decided to use practical logic and material things to place their minds on a concrete focus on the theology of Cross and redemptive power of Christ’s resurrection. In Corinth, where he got himself acquainted again with his normal trade of tent-making, he resorted to entering the synagogue and engaging both the Jews and Greeks in discussions (Acts 18:1-5). In all these, one thing is certain: environment determines the method of approach to missionary strategy. Adaptation to different model of evangelization is what has helped the Church to expand rapidly beyond the shores of the Jews and Gentile world, and especially as it was applied in ancient Roman Empire. Therefore, the fundamental question to be posited remains: Did the first evangelizers in Nigeria, and Africa at large actually consider the above missionary or pedagogical strategies used by St. Paul? What should be the best missionary paradigm to be used by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria so that the mission of the church could be positively felt by the people following the mind of the Second Vatican Council Fathers? Nigeria, which is under our consideration has the same story to tell as experienced by St. Paul in different places of his missionary work together with other apostles.

Motivation for the choice of the topic

We note here, that from the content of our topic of research, the connecting concept is “Episcopal Conference.” As such, a broader attention is given to it in this work, especially as it relates to the local church. However, what we intend to give here is its foundational background since it is going to flow with the rest of the work. The mission of the church is fundamentally linked up to the hierarchical structural unity and communion which exists among the Bishops with the Roman Pontiff as the head. At the same time, the success of the missionary mandate, *ipso facto*, rests on this very fact since this Body of Bishops draws its strength from the apostolic tradition. In *Apostolos Suos*, St. John Paul II argues that importance of this episcopal unity in the Church cannot be overemphasized since “the unity of the Episcopacy remains an important constituent element of the unity of the Church.”⁵ Consequently, the Roman Pontiff goes on to emphasize that “in the Episcopal Conference, the Bishops jointly exercise the episcopal ministry for the good of the faithful of the territory of the Conference,”⁶ just as they also promote the unity and good of the universal church. Likewise, in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, the Council Fathers presented the Church as representing and acts as a divinely instituted mediator between Christ as a communion of life and on behalf of the whole of the human race, in her capacity as a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation.⁷ The above presentation goes to define the collegial spirit on which the foundation of the church is laid. This spirit has guided the church for centuries.

With the advent of Second Vatican Council, and considering the growing population of the church, there arose the need for a greater attention to be paid to the grassroot evangelization. This also entails a greater support for the local churches. This also means a boost on the part of the individual local bishop, who, in union with other bishops make up a particular episcopal conference. United with one another in the exchange of ideas arising from particular cultural, religious and socio-political circumstances, a strong foundation is laid for the church and her mission. At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Christ carefully chose his apostles, people endowed with different gifts (Mt. 10:1-4). He also constituted them into “a community, a family, an ecclesial college or permanent assembly.”⁸ By this very fact, Christ made *communio* an essential element of his mission. He also commissioned Peter to be the head of this college

⁵ St. John Paul II, *Apostolos Suos*, On the theological and juridical nature of episcopal Conferences, 1998, no. 8. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/document/apostolos-suos-on-the-theological-and-juridical-nature-of-episcopal-conferences-734>

⁶ *Apostolos Suos*, no. 20.

⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 9.

⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 19. Cf. *Apostolos Suos*, no. 1.

or special assembly, the position which the Pope as the successor and head of the universal church occupies. This collegial structure has continued to be the basis for the unity that exists in the church today. The mandate of spreading the good news to all nation was given through the college of the apostles. In the contemporary ecclesiology, that college of the apostles, under the leadership of the Supreme Pontiff has been further developed into Episcopal Conferences for a more effective evangelization. The Episcopal Conferences, by their very constitution are made up of the college of bishops as successors of the apostles, who, “with the help of their priests and deacons render the community service to the faithful.”⁹ In this community, the threefold mission of the universal church which include pastoral, ecumenical and missionary, is effectively realized.

Moreover, these conferences, according to St. John Paul II, were established, for reasons based on “historical, cultural and sociological reasons, in different countries as a means of responding to different ecclesiastical questions of common interest and finding appropriate solutions to them.”¹⁰ Hence, the Code of Canon Law defines this conference “as a permanent institution, which the church uses through her pastoral functions and programs of apostolate to promote the good she does for humanity, especially as they are fittingly adapted to the circumstances of the time and place.”¹¹ Indeed, in *Apostolos Suos*, His Holiness, John Paul II stated that “the Episcopal Conferences, which he also describes as “constituting a concrete application of the collegial spirit,”¹² “fulfill many tasks for the good of the Church.”¹³ The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria shares in this compliment. However, one of the key points derivable from the above Canonical description, and viewed from the perspective of this work, is its adaptability to particular circumstances in the exercise of her mission of bringing Christ to the faithful. Moreover, the establishment of this ‘permanent institution’ is pastorally oriented aimed at the continuation of the mission of Christ. In reality, the church in Nigeria has, in the last few decades been blessed with an overwhelming flowering of faith. Nevertheless, considering the prevailing unhealthy circumstances in Nigeria, one cannot hold back the question of: what has the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria been able to do for the sustenance of this progressive tempo? In the face of political imbalance and religious crisis that exist in the country, where the Muslim influence is glaringly manifested in all spheres of our collective life, what does the future hold for the mission of the church? How far the Catholic

⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 20.

¹⁰ *Apostolos Suos*, no. 4.

¹¹ *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 447, <http://bibliotecanonica.net/docsaj/btcjajx.pdf>.

¹² *Apostolos Suos*, no. 14.

¹³ *Apostolos Suos*, no. 24.

have Bishops been able to face the problems and how prepared are they for the challenges of the future?

The role assigned to CBCN through the emphasis placed on the collegiality of the episcopal conferences by the Second Vatican Council, challenges the bishops to work together for the good of the church and her mission. The efforts of the CBCN in this direction has been manifested in various ways. This includes, *inter alia*: (1) through their prophetic roles (2) through their emphasis on education as an instrument of evangelization, (3) through their concern for the poor, the down trodden and the reject of the society (4) through the enhancement of the Church's moral principles (5) through health institutions, (6) through the encouragement of vocation to priesthood and religious life, (7) through the establishment of vibrant and supportive laity as encouraged by the conciliar ecclesiology, etc. This dissertation seeks to follow the missionary initiatives of the CBCN through the above enumerated channels. The idea is to know how they have impacted the mission of the church in the Nigerian context. We intend to give proper analysis of the aforementioned areas of their pastoral engagements. This will give us the opportunity of fathoming the missionary weaknesses therein and to proffer solutions indispensable for helping to establish a theologically sound praxis for the mission of the Church in Nigeria and the universal church.

From another perspective, the Second Vatican Council redefined the *modus operandi* of the Church and her mission to concrete and practical meaning of its universality and catholicity. An inclusive Church which regards the cultural foundation human person and the huge sacrifice of the laity for the mission of the church. The Magisterium teaching in this regard "recognizes the bond that exists among nations both in cultural, social, political and economic systems as a people that share in the saving mission of Christ."¹⁴ Indeed, following the expression used by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, (the convener of the Council), "the windows of the Church have been opened to let in fresh air of accommodation, of receptability and of inclusivity." As we already alluded, the flowering of the Catholic faith in Nigeria is a post-synodal occurrence. This can therefore help to explain our choice of bracketing our focus of the dissertation from 1965 to 2017. It can also be called the post-conciliar ecclesiology as it is reflected in the Nigerian missionary environment propelled by the episcopal zeal of the Church's Hierarchy. Also, with the Second Vatican Council, as we already alluded, the focus of the mission of the Church shifted more from *ecclesia universalis* and tilted more to *ecclesia*

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (December 7, 1965), no. 42.

localis (particularis). From this development therefore, the seemingly ecclesiology of rigidity has apparently given a leeway to the theology of reception. Therefore, how and to what extent individual local churches received this opportunity presented by the Second Vatican Council will now depend on the stimulus of the theology of context or praxiological evangelization. It is this idea that has generated our interest to have a comprehensive look at the general mission of the Church under the pilot of CBCN using the missiological lens of the socio-cultural utensils on ground.

Secondly, from its very inception, the Council Fathers stated unequivocally their objective in convoking the Council. This is encapsulated in these words: “it desires to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times.”¹⁵ And towards the end of the Council, they reaffirmed their resolve to open up the horizon of the missionary coverage “after probing more profoundly into the mystery of the Church (*missio ad intra*), and focuses itself to the entire humanity with those realities in the midst of which it lives; his tragedies and his triumphs (*missio ad extra*),”¹⁶ since “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, the poor and the afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”¹⁷ The changes being expressed in the world today calls for a paradigm shift both in the vision of the church and her practical evangelization. Nigeria, which is the focus of our work, being a multicultural, multireligious and pluralistic society does not seem to present an enobling environment for the mission of the Church. The political atmosphere favours the Moslems to the detriment of the Church. The agonies of uncountable families who have lost their loved ones to incessant killings and harassment from the Boko Haram group and militant herdsmen have therefore presented difficult task to the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria.

The questions that present themselves here include: what are the Bishops doing to give hope to those poor faithful? What is the fate of the mission of the Church? What are the stratages which the Church is using to keep alive the missionary mandate? Have the Church really done enough to alleviate the suffering of the vibrant catholic population who are being harassed and killed on daily basis because of their religion? What missionary formular are the Bishops using to bring home the message of the gospel to the grassroot in order to touch the lives of the people in the remotest part of the country? These and other related problems form the bulk of the task facing us in this dissertation. Following our research, we found out that true to her name, CBCN

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963, no. 1.

¹⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 2.

¹⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1.

has really done so many things well regarding the mission of the church. Their efforts have resulted in the publication of many guidelines regarding Priestly Ministry in Nigeria, Ethical standards for clergy and seminarians in Nigeria, Healing ministry in Nigeria, Catholic education in Nigeria, Catholic participation in politics, Collaborative ministry regarding the Clergy and the Laity, Marriage norms, etc. Their Plenary Meetings which are held twice annually, have also produced huge number of Communiqués and resolutions. Yet, a lot still remain. There is visibly no uniformity in the application of their programme or directives regarding some issues in the church. This has therefore resulted in many liturgical aberrations, massive defection of Catholics to Pentecostal churches, some anti-clerical situations, etc. Of course, these are not good for the mission of the Church. These and other related problems will be given critical evaluation in the work. Our effort is therefore, to probe into the workings of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria and see how the opportunities presented by the post-conciliar ecclesiology has been translated into action so as to make the church remain relevant in the contemporary world.

In embarking on this research, we are very much aware of its range of coverage. Therefore, few points need to be clarified here for the smooth research voyage. Nigeria is a heavily populated country with an estimation of one hundred and eighty five million. However, this is not expected to be an issue since that means an appreciable percentage of Catholic faithful which stands at 45.84. Rather, the hard nut to crack in terms of missionary expedition in Nigeria is that the country is a multi-religious, multi-lingua, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic entity. The three major religions in the country are: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. We have also three major languages: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo, while the national language is English. As at last count, Nigeria has also about 355 other ethnic dialects with almost the same number of cultural and social affiliations. These differences are the reasons for a politico-religious heated society as we have it in Nigeria since national issues are often times coloured with ethnic interests and mendaciously marred with nepotism. For a clearer vision and understanding of her intension, the Council went on to elucidate the ideas brought out in the above statements in these strongly-worded statements: "Since the Church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might give it better expression in the varied life of the community of the faithful."¹⁸ This is really a call for ecclesial inroad into the various cultural and social lives of the people. It is a search for

¹⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 58.

better means of the internalization of the gospel message by different groups of people from their own cultural backgrounds. It is an engagement of the Church's pedagogy with the everyday-life of the people.

In his first visit to Nigeria, St. John Paul II, offered words of encouragement to the Nigerian Bishops as they carry out the mission of Christ. "The Church, he emphasised, does not intend to destroy or to abolish what is good and beautiful since she recognizes many cultural values and through the power of the Gospel purifies and takes into Christian worship certain elements of a people's customs."¹⁹ With all these, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, armed with the positive developments from the Second Vatican Council and various teachings of the Magisterium, reasoned that for the mission of the Church to continue to register successes both in Nigeria and in the ecclesial world, it remains an irrefragable fact that grassroots missionary outreach is inevitable. This calls for collective efforts of the clergy and the laity. Again, in this dissertation, we are saddled with the synthesis of how the Nigerian Church Hierarchy has been able to use the above tools presented by the Universal Church to make the teachings of Christ and his mission a more welcomed development in daily lives concretized in the midst of favourable and unfavourable earthly realities. For a better presentation, organisational compass has to be used in this work.

Methodology and Sources

In defining a theological procedural sequence, Benard Lonergan posited that "Method is not a set of rules that must be followed meticulously, but rather a framework for collaborative creativity which outlines the various clusters of operations to be performed by theologians when they go about their various tasks."²⁰ However, we at the same time believe that every meaningful academic and scientific research, not just theological investigations, should follow an organizational pattern. This will help the researcher to untangle some associated ambiguities for a free-flowing arguments. Therefore, this is what we mean by 'methodology.' For clarity, those envisaged "clusters of operations" are articulated and explained here. They will be scrutinized and backed up with relevant literary ideas from other scholars since a logical

¹⁹ St. John Paul II had his first apostolic visit to Nigeria, from 12th to 17th February, 1982. He met with the Nigerian Bishops in the Apostolic Nunciature (then in Lagos), and presented an address to them titled: "*Carry the Gospel to the People*." It was here that he stressed the need for *Inculturation* and *New Evangelization*, as the best strategy and approach for the Church in Nigeria. His opinion is that the Bishops should be able to harness the rich cultural heritage of the different group of people to the advantage of the missionary activities of the Church. Cf. *Papal Message to Nigeria*, Published by the National Committee on Papal Visit on behalf of the National Episcopal Conference of Nigeria, 1982, p.39. (To be cited as: St. John Paul II, Visit to Nigeria, 1982).

²⁰ B. J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd. 1972), p. xi.

methodology provides a solid backbone for a better presentation of a research. This is the idea which Richard Paul and Linda Elder already emphasized when they reasoned that such a critical thinking requires “a more balanced presentation based on clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, logicalness, and significance,”²¹ insisting that, “clarity is a gateway standard.”²² Basically, this navigational line follows the thought pattern of William Badke who argues that this systematic presentation of ideas is part of definite features that make a scientific work “different from an opinion piece or a speech.” It is from this angle that he sees such a research as “a journey that requires the help of others, through the use of already published books, articles, etc. which one gathers during the research process,”²³ recognizing that “others have also dealt with the issue and have put forward points of view and evidence for their own interpretations.”²⁴ In their own view, Booth, Colomb and Williams, all agree that “successful researchers of any degree and of whatever discipline, “are those who are experts in using the research of others.”²⁵ The fundamental point being emphasized here by these scholars is that in the academic world, no one is a lone-ranger. There is always the need for a cross-pollination of ideas and cross-disciplinary borrowing of ideas among researchers and scholars which give their results the required sheen.

Consequently, a dissertation of this nature, with diversified range of coverage does not, in any way pride itself as the sole presentation of the researcher’s ideas, opinion or argument for already preconceived biases. In line with the already established sequence in this introductory part of the work, this researcher follows the directionary elements of “contextualizing background where the envisaged research focus is obtainable, statement of the problem, response to the problem,²⁶ and a presentation of missiological insights for the future. Having said that, and drawing inspiration from the research topic, this dissertation deals with the appreciation of the universal missionary activities as interpreted by the Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, taking cognizance of the prevalent multicultural, multi-ethnic and pluralistic situation in the country. Evidently, there is an increasing percentage of religious apathy, syncretistic behaviours and mass defection of the catholic faithfuls to Pentecostal churches. Therefore, part of the effort is to x-ray the missionary paradigm of the first missionaries to

²¹ Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *Critical Thinking, Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2014), p. 127.

²² Paul and Elder, *Critical Thinking*, p. 129.

²³ William Badke, *Research Strategies, Finding your way through the Information Fog* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, Inc., 4th edition, 2011), p. 247.

²⁴ Badke, *Research Strategies*, p. 247-248.

²⁵ Wayne, C. Booth, Gregory, G. Colomb and Joseph, M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, (Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2008), p. 3.

²⁶ Booth, Colomb and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, p. 233-234.

Nigeria, and see how the Catholic Bishops have been able to grapple with the problems and the way forward for the church and her mission. Hence, it must be stated, *ab initio*, that this work is far from being a comprehensive critique of the Church's mission at the hands of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria considering the socio-cultural and multi-religious nature of Nigeria. It is rather aimed, *inter alia*, at throwing search-light on the missionary activities of the Bishops which give hope for the future of the Church in this part of the world. However, we do not practically rule out the possibility of subtle criticisms regarding their approaches to certain issues on ground. Therefore, proper juxtaposition of their method and the practical situations in the country will be attempted towards the end of this work so as to situate the Church on a more solid footing for the task ahead.

The focus of an academic research such as the one before us is to unearth a problem or problems in a particular discipline which could be "Practical problems or Conceptual problems."²⁷ Booth, Colomb and Williams, describe Practical research problem, as having to deal with "those tangible and unpallatable conditions in the world, which impose intolerable costs both on the society and human beings; while in academic research, the researcher is usually confronted with *Conceptual* problems, because both their conditions and costs are abstract, with obvious negative consequences in the society."²⁸ Our work is an academic one, and *ipso facto*, the consequences of the problem it sets out to address is abstract in so far as its solution cannot be fathomed on the laboratory floor. Hence, the methodological sequence to be followed in this work is from the point of view of historico-theological, missiological, socio-cultural and ecclesiological perspectives. This, we believe is *ad rem* to the topic which has as its key words on the *Church* and her *Mission*. Because of the diverse nature of the targeted area of the work, we intend to use a mixed method of observatory, expository, descriptive and synthesis in our investigation. This falls in line with the recommendations of Ekechi,²⁹ and Uzo,³⁰ in the use of mixed methodology in scientific research. And according to Thadeus Oranusi, who quoted Clark & Creswell, this involves three phases: The qualitative phase, which enables this study to gain new insights about mission and earthly realities, The interpretative phase, which involves the description, interpretation and verification of missionary formular of early missionaries, The evaluative phase, which provides a means through which one can judge the effectiveness of particular strategies and practices and then situate the outcomes with the

²⁷ Booth, Colomb and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, p.54.

²⁸ Booth, Colomb and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, p.55-57.

²⁹ F. Ekechi, "The Consolidation of Colonial Rule, 1885–1914," in, Toyin Falola (ed.), *Colonial Africa, 1885–1939*, vol. 3 of Africa, 27 (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002).

³⁰ L. N. Uzo, *Missionary apostolate of Bishop Shanahan in Igboland of Nigeria* (Rome: 1988).

present missionary efforts of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.³¹ Since the work is theological in nature, with bias in missiology, the primary source becomes the writings from the various Magisterial Documents, Ecclesial Documents (especially the Second Vatican Council), Roman dicasteries, papal apostolic exhortations, episcopal documents and encyclicals, especially those concerning the Church and her mission.

Our dissertation is on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria and their collective effort in keeping the missionary spirit alive in the local church. Therefore, their publications in the form of books, pamphlets, Communiques, Exhortations, Joint Pastoral Letters, and Lentern Pastoral Letters of some individual Nigerian Bishops, are categorized within our primary sources. Also, being a theological work, and as already stated, we do not lay claim to be an arbiter of knowledge on this road. Such great theologians like Karl Rahner, whose ideas have helped to shape the post-conciliar orientations and theological principles of the church will help to shade light on our research path. The view expressed by David Bosch in his concept of paradigm shift is a legitimate tool for the Nigerian Bishops to find a better suitable strategy for evangelization in their local church. Also, Stephen Bevans and Roger Shroeder's concept of "six constants in theology of mission" throws light on "how the church has lived out its identity over the years as a community that continues the mission of Christ and figures out various theological and missiological paradigms for Christianity," challenges the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria to discover better means of doing mission.³²

The post-conciliar ecclesiological understanding espouses the interrelatedness of Christ's incarnation and human culture in relation to mission. Many Nigerian and African theologians and Missiologists, have tried in their various researches and publications to link this to the authenticity of Christ's missionary mandate. Such theologians include: Elochukwu Uzukwu, Hillary Ochulor, Magesa Laurenti, Francis Oborji, Ferdinand Nwaigbo, Oliver Onwubiko, Bolaji Idowu, etc. Their ideas were also used in one way or the other in this thesis. The secondary sources come from other books, pamphlets, articles, journals, magazines, etc., written by other scholars. Library research in the form of archive is always important in this work for historical balance. Internet materials and dictionaries will be helpful in this thesis. Though this work fancies itself on the platform of being a pathfinder on the collective missionary efforts of the Nigerian Bishops, we do not lose sight of the fact that many Nigerian

³¹ Cf. Thaddeus C. Oranusi, *Mission as humanisation in the life and work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan: A theological evaluation of an intercultural encounter in South-East Nigeria*, Thesis (Stellenbosch University, 2018), p. 9. See, Clark, V.L.P. & Creswell, J.W., *The mixed methods reader* (California: Sage, 2008).

³² Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission Today* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2005), p. 35.

theologians have ventured into exploration of some segments of the mission of the church in Nigeria. As such, some have written their thesis with concentration on education, hospital, liturgical reforms, inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and Church-State relation, etc. Consequently, the ideas expressed in those publications will be of great importance to the present researcher. Finally, on account of economy of space in this work, proper references regarding most of the materials, especially those ones from the internet facilities, will be reflected in the bibliography to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Scope and Limitations

In “*Ecclesia in Africa*”, St. John Paul II encouraged African theologians to “look inside yourselves and explore the rich values embedded in your own traditions and culture, you will be able to find Christ who leads you to the truth.”³³ It is also on this ground that he considers ‘inculturation’ as “one of the greatest challenges for the church on the continent on the eve of the Third Millennium.”³⁴ The above clarion call from His Holiness, was one of the motivating factors that pushed us to venture into this research in order to see how our local conference is seeing the mission of the church. Our focus is on the mission of the church understood and interpreted from the perspective of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, from 1965-2017. This focus has also given us a limitation regarding the horizon of our research. However, the limitedness of this work to the local church in Nigeria does not mean that meaningful allusions and examples from other parts of Africa cannot be appreciated. A work of this magnitude cannot be devoid of cross-cultural ideas for a better elucidation. Moreover, the foundation of the work is drawn from the teachings of the Mother Church (*ecclesia universalis*).

Purpose and Significance/Relevance of this Research

Richard Paul and Linda Elder, posited that “something is relevant when it is directly connected with and bears upon the issue at hand.”³⁵ The relevance of this work is premised on the fact that it is pertinent and applicable to a problem we are trying to solve, which ‘has to do with the sustainability of the missionary mandate from the background of Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria.’ The horizon of the Church’s Mission covers a whole lot of areas, which at the same time needs collective efforts of theologians of different orientations to fully bring the concept home to the people it is meant to reach. The emergence of Second Vatican Council

³³ St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 59.

³⁴ *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 59.

³⁵ Paul and Elder, *Critical Thinking, Tools for Taking Charge*, p. 233.

paved way for a greater understanding of the mission of the church as inclusive of the earthly realities of the faithful in their different cultural settings. The impetus drawn from this includes the desire of the church to be more global both in structure and in action. The local church is therefore energized to carry the evangelisation work of Christ using the available materials in their own locality. The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria has been trying to do just that but to the knowledge of few people. Considering the size of the country in terms of population and attendant religio-political turbulence in the country, one would therefore reason that the challenges facing CBCN cannot be an easy one.

The importance of this research therefore lies, *inter alia*, in helping to create enough awareness of the enormous responsibility that is rested on the bishops. To some extent, this is just a little contribution when put into perspective of many other important theological publications following the close of Second Vatican Council in 1965. Nevertheless, it will certainly help in no small measure in letting the greater majority of the faithful be abreast with the activities of this body and the challenges facing them. It will be very useful in the Major Seminaries with their teeming population as it will help the seminarians and formators to know the stand of the CBCN on certain issues of the church and the society. Since the seminaries are the best preparatory ground for the mission and the agents of evangelization, this work will definitely be useful in presenting the channel which the church in Nigeria is following in presenting a better understanding of her mission to the world. Most importantly, this work will help the lay faithful to understand more their responsibilities in the missionary activities of the Church. From the recommendations accruing from the research, the universal church stands to appreciate more the efforts of the bishops in their grass root evangelization. Finally, it is hoped that this work will help the Bishops in reassessing their *modus operandi* in terms of missiological paradigm. It is an effort that will touch the lives of the people by seeing Christ through their cultural realities. John Paul II encouraged the bishops and priests of Nigeria to “devote enough time in understanding the feelings of the people through proper research into the religious and the cultural lives of the people so that ‘inculturation’ of the Christian faith may come about ever more extensively.”³⁶ This research is therefore our own little contribution in answering the above call by His Holiness. It is hoped that the work will help the bishops, priests, seminarians and formators understand why inclusion of such courses like Theology of Inculturation and Practical Theology in the seminary curriculum. This is why enough time will be devoted in this area in the work.

³⁶ St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, On the Christian Family in the Modern World, 1981, no. 10.

Theoretical frame-work

From the point of view of navigational sequence, this research is carried out under a four-chapter format. Each chapter will be preceded by a brief introduction and concluded with a short summary of that particular chapter for a proper assimilation of the issues discussed therein. The work is concluded with a comprehensive appraisal and recommendation. The First Chapter of the work is devoted to the proper explication of key concepts that will run through the entire work. Such concepts include: Mission, Church, Evangelization, etc. The post-conciliar idea of the church and her missional activities in the world will lead us to examine the understanding of the Church and her mission from the point of view of *missio ad intra* and *missio ad extra*. With the advent of Second Vatican Council too, grass root evangelization was also strengthened and which indirectly means a boost to various Episcopal Conferences in the Universal Church. Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria is one of such Conferences and at the same time the fulcrum of our research. Hence, this chapter will also give a detailed information about the internal administrative workings of this body, highlighting its vision of the missionary mandate in the *ecclesia localis*. This chapter will be concluded with an analysis of both biblical and theological basis for the mission of the church. In other words, this first chapter is meant to present to the reader a clear thought pattern regarding the expectations from the entire work.

Since the focus of the research is Nigeria, there is need for us to understand the political, religious and ethnic societal contours in which the Mission of the Church is carried out through the leadership of the Catholic Bishops' Conference. This forms the bulwark of what we are going to see in chapter two. Here too, we shall have a touch on the historical aspect of missional era in the country, missionary method of evangelization, successes and challenges. This will help to give us an overview of how the people welcomed the white men and their 'New Religion' and how it gradually permeated the life of the people who were traditional religionists. Furthermore, there is also need for us to attempt some major conceptual clarifications and definition of some key words for a better appreciation of the work. We shall then examine how far the mission of the church has gone at the hands of the indigenous hierarchy after the era of the pioneer missionaries, highlighting their initial challenges as the outcome of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, from 1967 to 1970.

Chapter three deals with the integral missionary approach which the Catholic Bishops is using to show how they understand and interpret the mission of the church. This will basically show the concrete and various ways where the local church has so far tried to interpret the universal mission of the church in the language and actions most appropriate to the hearers of

the gospel. In the process, we shall establish the fact that integral mission theology which focuses on the human person and his holistic redemption involves his spiritual life with an eye on the eschatological finality without neglecting the earthly realities that pose tremendous challenges to the Universal Church and her mission. Such aspects of the church like ecumenism and interreligious dialogue will also be explicated. It is in this chapter too that we see the consensus of the Bishops regarding what they see as the best missiological paradigm in Nigeria and beyond. Here, we talk of the theology of Inculturation which they try to interpret from the standpoint of Christ's incarnation.

The final chapter will focus on the agents of evangelization and the dynamic administrative structures already put in place by the Bishops for effective appreciation of the Church's mission. Challenges and obstacles facing the Bishops in their missional efforts will be presented and analysed here. This dissertation will be concluded with an appraisal of what we have done, followed by recommendations. Within the body of recommendation, we shall posit what we hope should be a panacea to the prevalent problems vitiating the mission of the church in Nigeria while reaffirming the position of the Bishops that Inculturated gospel message remains the best paradigm for the future of the church in Nigeria and an advantage for the Universal Church. This is the *raison d'être* of the activities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria in their interpretation of the Mission of the Church. We will call it Cultural Missiology.

Chapter One

1. General Notion of Mission: etymological, contents, objectives and its contextual evolution in the Nigerian local church

Introduction

The Church (*ekklesia*), described as a divine pilgrim (LG 7), has a mission, and its targeted destination is eschatological in nature. Also, as a pilgrim, it makes use of undulating terrains of curved and rough roads. And as she embarks on this journey, crossing many seas and breaking more grounds on her missionary efforts, she encounters and tries to situate herself within the confines of different social settings and cultural daints from different geographical areas of human life. And as a Mother and Teacher (*Mater et Magistra*),³⁷ the Church uses different teaching models to direct all living beings towards this eschatological destination. This is her mission; a mission which is divinely instituted with its scriptural foundation in, “going out and preaching the message of salvation and thereby making disciples of all nations, through the water of baptism performed in line with Trinitarian formula.”³⁸ Therefore, one of the outstanding points in this mandate is that mission of the church has no geographical, political, cultural or social limitations. It concerns all human beings who are desirous of salvation. Consequently, “as a universal sacrament of salvation,”³⁹ the Church tries to live up to expectation by bringing the message of the Gospel to all men which is the essence of her catholicity.”⁴⁰ The true name of the Church is therefore Mission, and her real vocation is to proclaim Christ who is the embodiment of Mission. But has she really understood the nature of her mission?

Over many years of her existence, the Church has tried to understand and explain her mission to the world in different ways and in different epochs. However, the advent of Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) reshaped the image of the church and her mission in so many ways. Hence, the ecclesiology of the *post-conciliar* document therefore is hinged on the appreciation of the mission of the Church as centred on the whole man as a unique person. The eschatological mission of the church on earth cannot therefore be treated and understood in

³⁷ Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter, on *Christianity and Social Progress*, May 15, 1961. In it, the Holy Father explains that, the Church as Mother and Teacher of all nations—such is the Catholic Church in the mind of her Founder, Jesus Christ; to hold the world in an embrace of love, that men, in every age, should find in her their own completeness in a higher order of living, and their ultimate salvation. To her was entrusted by her holy Founder the twofold task of giving life to her children and of teaching them and guiding them—both as individuals and as nations—with maternal care.

³⁸ Cf. Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Jn.20:19-21.

³⁹ Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, 1965, no. 1.

⁴⁰ *Ad Gentes*, no. 1.

isolation of man's earthly realities. Consequently, the post-conciliar notion of mission could be viewed through many lenses, but three will be our focus; namely *Missio ad intra*, *mission ad extra*, *mission dei* and *mission ad gentes* as expressed in the magisterium documents concerning mission – *Ad Gentes*, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Evangelium Nuntiandi*. How the Church understands and interprets this mission from Christ forms our starting point in this journey towards understanding of the Church's mission from the standpoint of the Nigerian Catholic Bishops' Conference. Its contents and objectives will also be analysed in this section of the work, starting with the scriptural and theological foundation of mission.

1. Biblico-theological basis of Christ's mandate

Man's salvific history did not start in a vacuum. Its origin is traceable to God himself who offered his only Son as a *sacrificial lamb* as evidenced from the Scriptural exegesis. Ordinarily, it is very easy to limit the historical account of the church's mission to New Testament which is a chronological account of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection. This view will therefore suggest that Christ is the origin of mission. However, since the proper comprehension of New Testament cannot be done in isolation of Old Testament, it is then necessary that we have an overview of the two Testaments so as to fathom clearly the foundation of missionary mandate. The opening sentence of St. John's gospel suggests this. Thus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). Nevertheless, we note that we do not intend to give a holistic exegetical analysis of the concept of mission in this work since our work falls within the confines of missiology.

a. Mission in Old Testament

"The whole earth, from end to end, will remember and come back to Yahweh; all the families of the nations will bow down before him. For Yahweh reigns, the ruler of nations."⁴¹ With the above lines, the Psalmist reminds us that God is the God of all peoples and that Israel's election was not a completely exclusive affair of the Israelites. As we already stated, God's salvific plan which has its culmination in Christ is a programme for all human race. His saving will extends to all peoples. The preminence and supremacy of the Sonship of Christ is made visible from the wordings in the New Testament. As the image and representative of the invisible God, he is the firstborn and represents all creation, irrespective of one's cultural or social affiliations. St. Paul says that "Christ is the image of invisible God, the first-born of all

⁴¹ Ps. 22:27-28.

creation; for in him, all things were created; and through him to reconcile to himself all things”⁴² because “he chose us even before the foundation of the world, to have redemption through his blood in order to be reconciled in him.”⁴³ From the above Pauline words, we deduce that Christ’s coming to the world is in itself a divine mission from His Father which was planned in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. From this point of view, it becomes impossible to talk about the mission of the Church without having a recourse to the Old Testament theology of salvation. Moreover, the Old Testament’s contribution towards a better comprehension of the theology of mission is never on the plain of the ordinary. However, that does not show that the notion of mission as used in contemporary theology is so glaring in the Old Testament as to be devoid of doubt of its authenticity. But considering the nature of Christ’s Nativity, his life, ministry, death and resurrection, we find enormous points of convergence to the Old Testament, especially from his own utterances and scriptural citations.

It is pertinent to assert from the onset that in the Old Testament, the concept of mission is reminisce only in a fragmented form, most importantly through sending of prophets to advise and warn the elected people of God – the Israelites about God’s love for them and the consequences of abusing that love. Secondly, the idea of sending with which we associate mission in the contemporary theology is not after all a novelty in God’s relationship with man. Thirdly, we can also note that the idea of sending did not originate from Christ. Hence, he confirmed this from the first paragraph of the missionary passage found in the synoptic gospel. “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” “The Father is the sender (John 3:17; 5:36; 6:57; Gal. 4:6; 1 John 4:9); the Son is “sent by the Father to testify about the Father and to do his work.”⁴⁴ As such, “the mission of the church flows from the mission of God and the fulfilment of God’s mandate.”⁴⁵ However, the bottom-line is in the very fact that both contextual sending has one objective in view: God’s love, mercy, and salvation as seen from the Old Testament and New Testament theologies share humanity as its targeted audience who should be disposed to receive God’s love and unbounding mercy. Whether the proclamation was made by the prophets of old or by Christ and his disciples in the New Testament, God’s salvific gift is not an exclusive prerogative of any one nation or race. Thus, from the first chapters of the book of Genesis, especially, chapters 4-10, we come to the knowledge of God who reveals himself to

⁴² Col. 1:15-20.

⁴³ Eph. 1:4-10.

⁴⁴ Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra, “The Message of Mission”, *The Bible Speaks Today Series*, (ed.), Derek Tidball (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 84.

⁴⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), p. 67.

humanity as the *Creator* and *sustainer*, (*Chukwu okike, as well as Chukwu ji ihe nile*) of the whole universe. Accordingly, Preez reasons that the issue of creation may never be considered apart from the salvation-theme. Consequently, such passages like Genesis 1-11 “should not be seen as just a presentation account of the creation of man, but rather as a theology of history and a witness to the faithfulness of God towards his creatures.”⁴⁶ It is God, the creator, that is the only true God in heaven and on earth (cf. Deut. 4:39), and he – and not any of his creatures – should be worshipped (cf. Deut. 4:19). In all these, one reasonable assertion and conclusion one can posit is: “God has a mission.” Viewed from another perspective, God’s covenant with Abraham marks a new beginning of God’s plan of salvation. “Abraham was called by God to become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth would be blessed through him, or rather bless themselves through him (cf. Gen. 12: 1-3; 18:18; 26:4; 28:14). This means that God wanted to bless humanity by means of what He was doing to ... [Abraham] and through ... [Abraham] and his descendants (cf. Gal 3: 8-9).”⁴⁷

God’s promise of salvation to Abraham and of course, his descendants, through covenantal relationship mirrors God’s image as the saviour of all creatures and of all nations. Without doubt, this covenant places Israel as a special nation, but that does not translate to exclusivity in terms of salvation. In the eyes of the Lord, the door of salvation is always open to every nation in the frame of inclusivity, though Israel is used as a representation of other nations in the same way that Abraham represents the leader of people of salvation. In this divine plan of salvation for man, Israel is used as an instrument. However, Israel did not always keep to the dictates of the covenant. And since they did not listen to the warnings of the prophets, God’s judgement fell on them at last, and the bitterness of exile overtook them.⁴⁸ However, the good news was that in their groaning in the exilic land, they still turned and fixed their eyes on the mercy of God with all his promises of greater things in future. Among those promises, the most prominent was the messianic age, especially, perhaps one who could avenge for them the ignominy of exilic better-forgotten experiences, (Cf. Ps. 137:1). In tune with our own context, the centrality of messianic concept can be viewed under two aspects – political or worldly eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology which Hanson noted that “emerged after some of some of the Israelites returned from Babylon to Palestine around 538 B. C.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, our concern is not to enter into the exegetical ingredients of the above two concepts. Our interest

⁴⁶ K. Muller, *Mission Theology: An Introduction* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1987), p. 53.

⁴⁷ J. du Preez, “Mission in the Biblical Text,” p. 14; Quoted by Gregory Ikechukwu Olikenyi, *African Hospitality*, p. 62.

⁴⁸ Cf. A. F. Glasser, “The Whole-Bible Basis of Mission,” p. 34.

⁴⁹ B. C. Hanson, *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), p. 335.

more is to establish the foundational importance of Old Testament in trying to understand the notion of mission from the New Testament background.

b. New Testament as the source of the contemporary mission of the Church

Foundational to New Testament mission is that in the event of Jesus Christ and his eschatological fruition, “all flesh shall see the salvation of our God,”⁵⁰ and then, the “glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”⁵¹ We can also say that the central theme in the New Testament theology is Christ’s sacrifice in bringing salvation to all human beings. This is precisely his mission. Therefore, the New Testament can simply be described as the theology of mission. Christ is the gift of love from His Father to humanity. His mission is to share the same gift to the whole world. To have known him is to have known the whole of New Testament. The mission which he bequeathed to his apostles is the same mission he got from his father. He came for a purpose. And from the onset, his mission was clear. Thus St John says, “I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance,”⁵² which also connotes the universality of his missionary intent, because, “my food is to do the will of the one who sent me,”⁵³ and “as the Father has sent me, so I send you.”⁵⁴

Invariably, mission, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament belongs to God. We recall here that the British missiologist, Anthony Gittins, aptly gives the description of mission as “both what God does and who God is.”⁵⁵ In the Old Testament, the content of His mission was delivered to men through the prophets. But in the New Testament, not only that the mission was delivered through His Son, Christ himself became the mission. The Church which came to existence through the mission of Christ is now charged with the duty of proclaiming Him and God’s saving grace to humanity. To be church then, is to be in mission. The missionary authorization which the Church enjoys today comes from the above Christ’s desire to fulfil the mission of his Father. The Church is therefore, in the same manner expected to carry the same mission to the whole universe, the mission of bringing life to people. The act of ‘being sent’ was also more emphatic when he says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching

⁵⁰ Lk. 3:6.

⁵¹ Is. 40:5.

⁵² Jn. 10:10.

⁵³ Jn. 4:34.

⁵⁴ Jn. 20:21.

⁵⁵ Anthony, J. Gittins, “Mission: What’s Got To Do with me?” in, *The Living Light*, 1998, no. 3:6-13. Cf. Roger, P. Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), p. 15.

them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.⁵⁶ Today, fifty four years after the eventful Second Vatican Council, this mission has taken many other positive dimensions, but still the initial fundamentals still remain. The opportunity offered to the episcopal conferences to fashion out the best possible ways of reliving this initial missionary mandate so as to touch the lives of the people in their local churches has been taken up by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. Touching the lives of the people through evangelization entails bringing the message of the gospel to the people in their daily lives, social and cultural earthly realities. This is just what the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has tried to do over the years and are still belted up to do more. Seeing Christ in all the facets of the society is the best way to preach the gospel to the people. They believe very much that our lives as Christians is built around the foundation of witnessing to the mission of Christ.

c. Trinitarian Framework in the Church's mission

One of the major shifts that defined the new understanding of the mission of the Church following the Second Vatican Council remains the notion that the Trinity is the centre and origin of mission. The mission of the church is centred on human person and his salvation and made possible through Christ. This follows from the fact that man's salvific plan and action is a trinitarian action. Hence, the Church and thus all Christians find their origin and end in the Trinity, in the mission of God. In other words, the essence of Church and her mission is to unify all creation in Christ. But without unifying presence of the Holy Spirit, this objective becomes a nullity. The Trinitarian unity is founded on this very reality. What this means is that the message to proclaim the good news to all nation is a triune assignment. Anderson Moyo therefore reasons that "the theology of the triune God of mission is coherent with the Bible that upholds diversity and celebrates multiple human cultures while preserving the non-negotiable Christ-centred gospel."⁵⁷ This very idea expressed here was sumptuously typified with the outpouring of the Spirit on the apostles at the Pentecost event. The gathering of the multitude from different cultural and from far and wide was brought into an entity where everyone understood each other. The church is such an entity where everyone speaks and understands one language of love and caring in Christ made possible through the Trinitarian framework of

⁵⁶ Mtt. 28: 19-20.

⁵⁷ Anderson Moyo, "Missional Strategies from Antioch: Lessons for African Missionaries in Britain," in, *Missio Africanus* Journal of African Missiology, Edited by Harvey C. Kwiyani, volume 1, Issue 2 (January 2016), p. 40–58. Cf. missioafricanus.org/missio-africanus-journal-of-african-missiology/

unity-in-diversity which is the essence of Christ's life, death and resurrection. At the commissioning stage of the apostles (Church) for the mission ahead, Christ advised his apostles not to be in hurry to start off, rather they should for the promptings of the Holy Spirit (The Paraclete, The Advocate), who would "make known to them all that He thought them."⁵⁸ The mission of the church therefore is to make all nations have the sense of Trinitarian life which is only got through "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor. 13: 13), so that "all things will be renewed."⁵⁹ What this entails is that the expectation of humankind is to go back where we started since God is the *Alpha* and *Omega* (*Isi mbido na Isi njedebe*). This is possible through the work of the Holy Spirit, who will direct all men to "Christ when He is lifted up from the earth" (Jn. 12:32). For the African Synod Fathers, "The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization, who filled them with His gifts and guided them on what to do and say, and through him, the hearers of the gospel are brought to conversion, (Acts 10:44). And "Through the same Holy Spirit, the Gospel penetrates to the heart of the world."⁶⁰

From the foregone analysis, one can safely assert that the Church is essentially pneumatological in nature. In other words, from its inception, the presence of the Holy Spirit has never been anonymous. His presence has always been felt from the prophetic annunciation of the birth of Christ, through His Nativity, earthly life, His resurrection and eventual foundation of the Church through His missionary mandate to His disciples. And for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, it would not be out of place to assert that, "the Church as a mystery of communion with its missionary responsibility originates from the life of the Trinity. First, the life of communion between or *within* (*ad intra*) the three Divine Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Jn. 17: 21-23), is the source of the inseparable works of Trinity *without* (*ad extra*) or towards creatures. God, the mystery of communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit has created us in his own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27), and invited us to be in communion with one another and with him, bearing witness to His triune life in the world."⁶¹

⁵⁸ Jn. 14:16; 16:7.

⁵⁹ Rev. 21:5.

⁶⁰ *Synod of Bishops special Assembly for Africa*, no. 75.

⁶¹ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, issued by Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, 2011, Published by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, p. 4.

2. Second Vatican Council and Post-conciliar Church: the changing faces of mission

As we already stated in the introduction of this chapter, with the convocation of the Vatican II Council, we see a paradigm shift regarding the image and understanding of the church and her mission. The post-conciliar ecclesiology is a church which one can easily describe as a church with human face, a church that not only cares for the salvation of human soul but also, a church that is more at home with man's earthly realities, a church that is also interested in the affairs of human beings in their socio-cultural daily lives. A proper understanding of the image of the church from this angle is very much necessary for a better comprehension of the mission of the church in the light of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, 1965-2017. This presupposes an anatomy of the post-conciliar ecclesiology as it pertains the concrete life of the Nigerian faithful.

a. Synopsis of the mission in pre-conciliar ecclesiology

The events of Second Vatican Council really reaffirmed the importance of mission for the global Church. The Council also appreciated the importance of the missionary mandate which Christ has given officially to His disciples and which the Church has accepted as her major reason for existence. However, that does not mean that the Church had never been so interested in *her mission* before Vatican II. As such, it was Pope Benedict XV with his Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* in 1919 who made an important step towards the new concept of mission in the Catholic Church. Also, the *Rerum Ecclesiae* encyclical of Pope Pius XI in 1926 hinged on promoting Catholic missions. In the same vein, Pope Pius XII published two major encyclical letters, *Evangelii Praecones* 1951 and *Fidei Donum* of 1957 with missionary spirit. In *Evangelii Praecones*, he brought to notice some important concrete changes in the Church and envisioned necessary improvements in the Church's mission especially with regard to some prevalent persecution of the Church in many parts of the world.

The encyclical, *Fidei Donum* fully described the present condition of the Catholic mission, pointing at some recorded successes and challenges facing the Church in her mission especially in Africa. Before he muted the idea of Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII published his encyclical letter, *Princeps Pastorum* in 1959. To many theologians, the Holy Father used this encyclical to lay foundation for most of the salient points of discussion at the Second Vatican Council. These include, *ipso facto*, the importance of lay Catholics as representatives of the Church in non-Catholic countries; the importance of fostering native clergy in the Church's mission lands. He also brought a sense of appreciation for the success of Roman Catholic missions in the promotion of faith in many parts of the world which he sees as

the best way to follow the mind of Christ in His missionary mandate. In all, one can chiefly say that the aforementioned developments actually watered the ground for the Second Vatican Council's posture on the ideals and importance of mission. The Council therefore built on that foundation and moved further in presenting the Church more as a global Church. This was glaringly brought to focus in *Ad Gentes*. (Decree on the Missionary Activities of the Church, 1965). To some theologians, with particular reference to missiologists, this “almost-forgotten”⁶² document ushered a more fervent missionary desire in many ecclesio-theological writings. Other important documents include *Evangelium Nuntiandi* of St. Paul VI; *Redemptoris Missio* of Pope John Paul II; and *Evangelium Gaudium* of Pope Francis. However, through many of its documents, the Second Vatican Council opened up new roads in the understanding which we have of mission and evangelization. The result of this is that the Universal Church now breathes an air of globalism. Consequently, this sense of the universality of the Church entails the appreciation of the people's cultural, social and economic situations in different parts of the world, Nigeria inclusive. Thus, the Council gave a welcomed impetus to the established Episcopal Conferences in making use of the available cultural positives in the interpretation of the gospel message of redemption and the Church's mission. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) has variously tried to apply the ideas propounded in the above magisterium documents for a more profitable comprehension of the Church's mission in the local church.

b. Conceptual survey of Mission

At the early stage of the missionary endeavour, especially within the period when the church was on the voyage of expansion, the term mission was often used in the Church's endeavour to proclaim the gospel and the territorial expansion of the Christianity's geographical locations into the non-Christian lands. In other words, we see the mission of the church being understood as the activities of the Church among non-Christian nations. Nwaigbo (a Nigerian theologian) contends that this understanding of mission may also have been greatly influenced by the then, canonical rules that mission was impossible in areas which have had strong instituted ecclesiastical hierarchy. Consequently, “the idea was then held among European countries that the extension outside the boundaries of historical Catholicism was the prerogative and

⁶² “*Ad Gentes*” was promulgated towards the end of the Council which closed in 1965. Therefore, considering the impact it has made in the life of the Church and her mission, many theologians argue that it should have formed part of the early discussions of the Council Fathers. To such people, *Ad Gentes*, in spite of its contribution to the contemporary development of mission was almost treated as a footnote to the rest of the documents.

responsibility of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, which was established in the year 1662, and exclusively for the religious congregations sent by the established Catholic Church to distant far countries. It was observed that the main distinguishing feature of mission consisted in activities without the presence of the said hierarchy: *ubi, sacra hierarchia constituta, adhuc inchoatum aliquid praeseferunt.*⁶³ In their own collective view, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, observed that “what mission is exactly, of course, is notoriously difficult to define.”⁶⁴ They went on to state that perhaps the best way to a definition is to “say mission takes the Church beyond itself into history, into culture, into peoples’ lives, beckoning it constantly to cross frontiers.”⁶⁵

David Bosch’s book, “*Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*,” remains one of the 20th century masterpiece of works in Missiology. In his efforts to give what he called ‘tentative definition of Mission,’ Bosch itemized thirteen basic ideas found in the concept of mission. In line with the Second Vatican Council understanding of mission however, he assertively stressed that “the Christian faith is intrinsically missionary.”⁶⁶ For him, “this dimension of the Christian faith is not an optional extra: Christianity is missionary by its very nature, or it denies its very *raison d’etre*.”⁶⁷ Christian mission, he continues, “gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world, particularly as this was portrayed, first, in the story of the covenant people of Israel and then, supremely, in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁶⁸ Ultimately, Bosch, concluded that “mission remains undefinable; the most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about.”⁶⁹ However, from its etymological derivation, the term *mission* derives from the Latin verb *mittere* which means *send*. It refers to the “act of sending one or more persons to a particular place or environment for a particular purpose, by another person who has the appropriate authority to do so.”⁷⁰ The starting point of the new vision of mission occurred in the Second Vatican Council. Here, the Council Fathers, not really bordered about

⁶³ See, Nwaigbo, *The Church as Communion*, p. 347. Cf. Document of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, *Sapientis Consilio*, in: AAS 1 (1909) 12.

⁶⁴ Stephen B. Bevans & Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context, A Theology of Mission for Today*, (Philippines: Claretian Publications), 2005, p. 8. See also, Frans J. Verstraelen, “Africa in David Bosch’s Missiology: Survey and Appraisal,” in, W. Saayman and K. Krtzinger, eds., *Mission in Bold Humility*, (Maryknoll, N. Y: Orbis Books, 1996), pp. 8, 39.

⁶⁵ Bevans & Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, p. 8.

⁶⁶ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniversary edition (Maryknoll, New York, 2016), p. 9.

⁶⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 9.

⁶⁹ Bosch. *Transforming Mission*, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Hoc Vien Phan-XI-CO, *Introduction to missiology* 2014, p. 5.
<http://docplayer.net/20972592-Introduction-to-missiology.html>

the accurate definition of mission, rather decided to interpret the concept of the missionary mandate from two ways. This is because, they felt there was the need for them to view and treat the mission of the Church both from the inside of her life “(*ad intra*) and its external life (*ad extra*)”⁷¹ which is dotted with earthly realities facing human beings as beings in search of eternal salvation. The Church has no option but to carry out this mission to its final and fruitful conclusion since it is a divine vocation which is based on Christ’s command, “as the Father has sent me, so I send you also” (Jn. 20: 21; 17:18). This *sending* has a mission – “Go out to all the nations and proclaim to them that Good News of the Kingdom (Mk 16: 15; Mt 28: 18-19). The mission is also a *continuum* as long as the world continues to exist and must be carried out in the mind of Christ who is the fountain of love, justice and peace. It is not yet a finished product. Good enough, the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria sees their mission in that part of the world in this light, trying to be all things to all men through the various activities which are geared towards touching the lives of the people especially the poor and the down-trodden and through ecumenical spirit since Nigeria is multi-cultural and religiously pluralistic. In other words, the Gospel message needs to be reinterpreted from the perspective of the Nigerian cultural, political, economic and social life so as to have more rewarding and lasting results on the lives of the people. The gospel must meet the people in their daily lives just as Christ who is the owner of the mission met His apostles in their daily lives as fishermen, tax collectors and traditional shepherds.

We can therefore understand mission as Christ and his gospel being in touch with the people in their daily experiences of life in their different geographical locations and societal status. It is Christ in the midst of the rich, the poor, the sick, the *hoi poloi*, the *anawins* of the society and Christ in the culture of the people, purifying and sanctifying them for the eschatological journey. This idea or understanding of the mission from the above perspective is very much relevant for the church in the modern world because it buttresses the fact of Christ’ incarnation and gives the needed impetus for the incarnational theology which the Nigerian Bishops see as the foundation for the theology of Inculturation. To give a final word in this section of the work, it must be noted from the onset that the divine mandate from Christ is, *ipso facto* a mission. And that the Church has a mission is very evidential from the Scriptures and confirmed by the Church’s teaching magisterium in different documents. Hence, the Church’s mission and permanent priority is, as St. John Paul II argues, “the explicit proclamation of the

⁷¹ Much time will be devoted later in this work to analyse these two concepts (*missio ad intra* and *missio ad extra*) which have really changed and brought much positive ideas for the growth of the pre-conciliar ecclesiology.

good news of God's love to all men and women."⁷² From the aforementioned, we can then assert that since theology is all about God and his omniscience and enduring love, without *Mission*, which deals with the dissemination of God's love to all human race, there is no theology nor church, just as Andrew Walls argues that "theology emerges out of the encounters between gospel and culture in the course of carrying out this mission from God. And any contrary route taken in search of theological search for God invariably leads to the use of images of God that are not true."⁷³ In a word, theology flows from the attempt which the Church makes in interpreting mission received from God to all races. For a better interpretation of this mission as directed by God, the church must understand herself comprehensively. The best form to do this has been offered by the Council Fathers as we shall see below.

c. *Mission ad intra* and *Mission ad extra*

In an attempt to comprehend herself and her mission on earth and beyond, many rays shone on the Church. Those rays which have to do with the Church and her Mission were given proper foundation and interpretation after the Second Vatican Council which came to completion in 1965. Prominent among them is the idea of the Church trying to understand herself properly as well as looking around her environment and touching the realities on ground. This idea has been over the years in the field of mission theology technically described as *missio ad intra* and *mission ad extra*. This in essence calls to mind the need for the Church to look inward and make a valuation of her vocation from Christ and the mission she has been sent to perform in the world. The Second Vatican Council itself has also been variously described by many theologians as the greatest religious event of the 20th century. And the ecumenical tincture of the council was highly evidenced by the unprecedented attendance of 2500 bishops from 116 countries in the world, with reasonable representations from other churches. Precisely, the first announcement for this all-important gathering was made on January 25, 1959.

And for three years, the Council Fathers had a cross-pollination of ideas over sixteen documents that were placed before them. From the onset, Pope John XXIII, who convened the Council expressed his intention for this ecclesiological project, three months after his election as the pope. And according to him, there was urgent need for the church to reassess herself inwardly and outwardly - *ad intra* and *ad extra*. He gave the reasons for convening the Second Vatican Council in a twofold trajectory formation: "a diocesan synod for the city of Rome, and

⁷² St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, 1990, no.44.

⁷³ Cf. Editorial of *Missio Africanus*, Journal of African Missiology (ed.), Harvey C. Kwiyan, vol.1, issue 2, January 2016. missioafricanus.org/.../Missio-Africanus-Journal-Vol-1.-Iss-2.pdf.

a general Council for the universal Church.”⁷⁴ And in his opening speech, the Holy Father emphasised that one of the main reasons for the council, was to find ways and means of expounding theological truths “in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.”⁷⁵ The pastoral character of this council as indicated in the above statement runs through the rest of the discussions of the council. As such, this emphasis farmed the ground for the concept of *aggiornamento* which is now widely used in contemporary theological circle as the Church tries to shift some grounds in her magisterium teachings in other to be at home with the ‘signs of time’. This then is the nexus of *ad intra* and *ad extra* concepts as used by the Council Fathers. Hence, in *ad intra*, the Church grapples with her inner identity and the image she has for herself - what do you think of yourself? *quid dicis de te ipso?* The answer to this question forms the foundation for other related issues and questions which have to do with her relationship to outside world. How does the Church relate with the world outside herself? What are the ingredients of her missionary activities in the world? What is the vocation of the members of this particular church? What is her relationship with people of other faith? How does she see her immediate environment where her missionary effort is highly needed?

Such questions as above and others are taken up by the concept of *ad extra*. Consequently, one does better to speak of mission *ad extra* and mission *ad intra* as referring, not to the geography or the historical circumstance of faith, but to the reality of the Church itself before the world. Cote, in his description opined that “mission *ad intra* would refer to the church’s internal or in-house mission, its own self-evangelization and ministry unto its membership, while mission *ad extra* would refer to its mission outside and beyond its visible boundaries and membership. The former would be mission unto the Church, the latter mission unto the world.”⁷⁶ What we can deduce from this explanatory view of Cote, and which we give our consent is that the church that concentrates on her inner workings and organizational apparatus is not the ecclesiology that can really offer good direction to the people. The church that feels with the people and journeys with the faithful on their earthly life, is the church that is Christocentric. This is the core theological driving force of the Second Vatican Council.

⁷⁴ Alberigo Giuseppe, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), p. 1.

⁷⁵ John XXIII, “Opening Address at the Council” (Oct. 11, 1962), in, *The Documents of Vatican II in a New and Definitive Translation With Commentaries and Notes by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*, ed. Walter M. Abbot (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), p. 715.

⁷⁶ Richard G. Cote, *Re-Visioning Mission: The Catholic Church and Culture in Postmodern America* (New York/New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996), p. 9.

⁵ Brian W. Johnson, <https://brianwjohanson.org/2013/04/12/ad-extra/> ; See also *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, Current version, 2005, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/search?q=ad%20extra,%20ad%20intra>; assessed: 30/04/2018

Based on the above description therefore, one feels that the conciliar ecclesiology is the one in tune with the contemporary social challenges. Hence, in the *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II emphasised that “missionary activity *ad intra* is a credible sign and a stimulus for missionary activity *ad extra*, and vice versa.”⁷⁷ In the latter part of this section of our work, we shall see that the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria also mirrored their own understanding of the mission of the Church from the notion of the Church both internally and externally (*ad intra* and *ad extra*) in a more holistic and concrete form, using the Nigerian environmental realities.

d. Ecclesiology of *Aggiornamento*

The idea of “*aggiornamento*”⁷⁸ was also very much prominent in the discussion of the Council Fathers and very necessary in our present project. Within the period of the council too, the Church, still trying to create and understand herself in line with the realities of the contemporary world, used the concept of *aggiornamento* in many sections of their sittings. The Italian word, *aggiornamento*, “a bringing up to date”, was one of the key words used during the Second Vatican Council both by bishops and the clergy attending the sessions. This intention of the Vatican II Council is very important and most laudable especially with her renewed emphasis on the theology of the local church. With this, different Episcopal Conferences were given a better theological foundation for the theology of Inculturation. This theology is built on the premise of a healthy marriage of the gospel message with the recipients’ cultural and social endowments.

We note also that Paul VI very much welcomed and accepted *in toto* this notion of *aggiornamento* as presented by John XXIII the best strategy to tackle the prevalent challenges of what he calls “signs of the times”⁷⁹ which could also solidify the vitality and robustness of the church. True to his words, John XXIII opened the windows of the Church so that people could see what is inside the church. The Church brought fresh air to the Church outside through the principle of *aggiornamento*. Part of our task in this dissertation exploration is to see how the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have been able to interpret and appropriate the mission of the church situating it with the signs of the time in their own environment for the good of their local church and also the benefit of the universal church. The windows of the universal church opened in a formal way in 1965 have really brought enough air of missionary positives in the local

⁷⁷ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 34.

⁷⁸ “*Aggiornamento*”, “Italian for “updating”; used by Pope John XXIII to describe the church’s need to renew and update itself through the Second Vatican Council.”

http://www.stjoscup.org/newsletter/Vatican_II_Glossary_Answer_1209.pdf [Accessed, 6 April, 2019].

⁷⁹ St. Paul VI, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aggiornamento>

church in Nigeria. Not neglecting the attendant problems and challenges, the socio-political cum religio-cultural pluralism in Nigeria makes it imperative for the proper interpretation and implementation of the mission of the Church.

e. Some basic principles of Mission

From the foregone analysis of the concept of the *ecclesia* and *missio*, we can deduce that whatever the Church sees as her mission on earth today is a continuation of what Christ already started. Secondly, we assert that mission is also what His Father has commanded Him. Christ as the divine *Logos*, is a mission. He is also the content of the mission as well as being the sender of the mission. From another perspective, Christ is the first recipient of the mission and also the sender of the mission. “As the Father has sent me, so do I send you” (Jn. 20:21). In other words, the mission of the church is more of the theological assignment which must be carried out according to the content of the message since He is also the foundation of the Church. Donal Dorr observed that, “the notion of mission is so broad and rich that to understand it we need to approach the subject from a variety of different points of view. We may not presume the permission to change the definition and meaning of mission, but we can reinterpret mission in the light of the needs of our time.”⁸⁰ In an attempt to interpret this concept of mission, we intend to bring out those things that give it a meaning so as to give a better meaning in our own context. Viewed from another direction, the basic principles of mission has to do with the fundamental characteristics of mission. It is meant to answer such questions as what are the key items to be found in the arena of mission. To some scholars, this has to do with the attributes associated with mission. In this part of the work, we intend to examine such concepts as mission and the sender, mission and the sent – the messenger or carrier of the mission, and also we ask the question as to whom is the message sent or who are the recipients of this particular message?

i. Mission and the sender: the scriptural import of “sending”

The missionary mandate of Christ: ‘Go therefore, proclaim the Good News to all creation ... baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... and look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time’ (Mt. 28:19-20) is as fresh today as it was two thousand years ago and will remain as such as long as the church continues to exist. The “great commission” is a *sending* from God with whom Jesus Christ is one (Jn. 10:30). He is the

⁸⁰ Donal Dorr, *Mission in today's World*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 16.

sending God who sends people into the world so that his *mission* will be continued.⁸¹ Hence, we note that the first principle or attribute of mission is the *sending*. It is from this perspective that some see mission as the sending out of the apostles to all the ends of the earth to preach the good news of salvation which has to do with the coming of God's kingdom. This attribute (*sending*) is very well enshrined in the words of Jesus Christ: "...and he said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father *sent* me, so am I *sending* you." After saying this, he breathed on them and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; If you retain anyone's sins, they are retained" (Jn. 20: 21-23).⁸² From here too, we affirm that the sender of the mission is at the same time the owner of the mission – Jesus Christ. He mandated (commanded) his disciples to proclaim (or communicate) the gospel to all human beings. The sending of the disciples does not imply a mission of their own but being involved in *missio Dei* (mission of God). "Mission is primarily an activity of God (Trinitarian God). God who dwells in perfect fellowship inherently as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit acts in sovereign grace towards all human persons."⁸³ The passage from Mt. 28:19-20 (see also, Mk. 16:15-16 and Lk. 24: 46-49) has become known as "The Great Missionary Mandate." However, for some biblical scholars, there might be the need to argue that the missionary character of the Church resides not simply in the historic mandate of the Resurrected Christ but in the very nature of God himself as revealed in the Bible, the Old as well as the New Testament.

Lawrence B. Porter has a haul of examples that go to suggest that the God of the Bible is a "*sending God*." In other words, that the nature of God is more of sending as evidenced in both the Old and New Testament. "Such instances include, in Exodus 3:10 we hear God say to Moses, "I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." In Isaiah 6:8, we hear the prophet remark, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' 'Here I am, I said; Send me.'" In Lk. 1:26, we are told, "The angel Gabriel was sent by God." In Jn. 1:6, "There was a man named John sent by God." In J. 20:21, Jesus tells his disciples, "As the Father has sent, so I send you." Luke 10:1 describes how "the Lord appointed a further seventy-two and sent them in pairs." In John 14:36, Jesus speaks of "The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name."⁸⁴ Porter concludes that "God indeed is a sending God, who is expansive in his very nature. He sends messengers,

⁸¹ Cf. J. R. W. Stott, "The Biblical Basis of Evangelization," in, G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky (eds.), *Mission Trends*, no. 2: *Evangelization* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), p. 6.

⁸² Jn. 20:21-23.

⁸³ Cf. M. Dhavamony, "The Kingdom of God and Religious Pluralism" in *SM*, vol. 46, 1997, p. 234.

⁸⁴ Lawrence B. Porter, *A Guide to the Church: Its Origin and Nature, Its Mission and Ministries* (USA: St Paul's Publications, 2008), p. 196.

prophets, leaders, angels, his Son, their Spirit to his people and finally us into the world. Indeed, the closer the God of the Bible calls someone to himself, the farther he sends that person out. And thus one can reason that the Church, like its Maker, is innately ex-centric, outward bound, searching out, explorative, spreading itself abroad, so as to be as inclusive as possible, in-gathering, collecting and saving everything and everyone.⁸⁵ Put in a simple form, the Church is a *project-in-progress*. As she tries to interpret and understand mission, she invites us to follow in this project with our whole being in our own peculiar nature and culture. The universal church extends such invitation in a special and specific way to the Local Church in Nigeria to make herself available as a proper way for the people to see Christ to her concrete life of witness.

ii. Mission and the *sent: apostolos*

Principally, the apostles (*apostolos*) form the first primary group who were sent to make known the message of Christ to the whole nation. However, with the insight from the Second Vatican Council, we have come to realize that every baptized Christian is also sent on this mission. In a word, it is the Church that is sent. The Church remains the bearer of the message and the custodian of the mission. *Ubi ecclesia, ibi missio*. This mandate is an essential responsibility of the Christian community (the Church) – is most clearly expressed in the following biblical statement: “Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation” (Mk. 16:15; cf. Mt. 28: 16-20; Lk. 24:47).⁸⁶ J. R. W. Stott captures the whole issue in this form: “He sent the prophets to Israel. He sent his Son into the world. He sent out the apostles, and the seventy, and the Church. He also sent the Spirit to the Church and sends him into our hearts today.”⁸⁷ Church as *the one sent* is, therefore, founded in the *missio Dei*.

The Second Vatican Council expresses this point when it declares: “The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary, since according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁸ From the words of St Paul, the great pillar of mission, the Gospel can only be proclaimed to others if messengers are sent (Rom 10:14-17). That is where *Missio* - mission comes from. It is the foundation on which the missionary activities are built. We become sharers in this rare mission only when we are called and commissioned. And in the words of Richard K. Baawobr, “sometimes the word “*appointed*” or “*elected*” is used

⁸⁵ Dhavamony, “The Kingdom of God and Religious Pluralism,” p. 197.

⁸⁶ Gregory, Ikehukwu Olikenyi, *African Hospitality: A Model for the Communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural Context* (Steyler Verlag Nettetal, 2001), p. 16.

⁸⁷ Cf. J. R. W. Stott, “The Biblical Basis of Evangelization” in, G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky (eds.), *Mission Trends*, no. 2: *Evangelization*, p. 6.

⁸⁸ *Ad Gentes*, no. 2.

for “*call*” (cf. Jr 1:5; Mc 3:14). The call constitutes the person, empowering her/him for the mission for which she/he is sent (cf. Ex 3:10; Is 6:8; Mt 28:18-20; Jn 20:21). The call transforms and empowers for the mission.”⁸⁹ Being sent means that we are messengers and that we have a message to share and that we have to accept to be accountable to the one who sent us. We see that with Jesus and his disciples. In other words, mission involves responsibility and urgency in the minds of the ‘*master*’ who owns the message that needs to be communicated to individual or a group of people. Secondly, being sent, connotes the idea of a trusted accountability. What this means is that a lot of expectations go with the notion of being sent. The *sender* (Jesus Christ), has the final say and expects a good quality feedback from the *sent*. In the same way, at the end of our missionary work here on earth, we must be ready to render the account of our own stewardship to the owner of the mission. Our mission has an eschatological conclusion in view.

f. The complex interplay between mission and evangelization

In some places in this work, one may have noticed that to some extent there has been an interchange of usage between mission and evangelization. To many people, it is a simple thing to say that the mission of the Church is evangelization. Here, we have also to note that in the modern usage especially within missiological and theological circles, there is not much difference between mission and evangelization since you cannot creditably talk of one without necessarily implying the other. As such many missiologists prefer to use the words interchangeably. In this work I will also toe the same line of usage since, according to Geffre Claude, “evangelization does not denote simply “the proclamation of the Good News, but [also] embraces all the Church’s missionary tasks which can be included in the service of the Gospel.”⁹⁰ To talk about mission is to talk about evangelization. Hence, the Second Vatican Council defined mission as “evangelization and the planting of the Church among those people and groups where she has not yet taken root.”⁹¹

However, it has to be noted that the discussion on the concept of mission (evangelization) in today’s world has not received an agreed terminology among theologians and especially missiologists. To some people, the term *mission* in its older connotation, refers to the process of implanting the Church in regions where it had not yet previously existed,

⁸⁹ Cf. Richard, K. Baawobr, *Biblical Foundations of Mission and Current Challenges*, March 2013.

⁹⁰ Geffre Claude, “Theological Reflections on a New Age of Mission”, in, *International Review of Mission* 284 (1982), p. 487.

⁹¹ *Ad Gentes*, no. 6.

whereas *evangelization* from all indications has broader appreciation than mission. Both mission, evangelization and proclamation are very much intertwined in practical usage and interpretation. Apparently, Nwaigbo suggested that the term ‘evangelization’ is more “preferably used as the term ‘mission’, from the fact that the territorial connotation of the word *mission* and its historical link with the process of colonization had caused many to retrace their tongues from the word *mission*. As far as the subject matter of both terms (evangelization and mission) are concerned there is no intrinsic difference. Mission is even sometimes called the *opus evangelization*. Nowadays, mission, evangelization and witness are often used by Catholics as synonymous.”⁹² The greatest objective of the Church is to evangelize. At its face-value, evangelization and proclamation of the gospel look very much alike especially when one considers their biblical foundation. However, though coming from the same tree, their fruits are of different sizes and shapes. Evangelization is very much broader both in content and horizon. Its proper understanding and implementation is also more complexed in concrete reality. As already indicated in this part of the work, it is not clear as to the demarcation between evangelization and mission. In some cases, it appears contradictory to use the two, while in many cases, what we notice is mere complementarity.

Hence, for some theologians, mission is the message, while evangelization is the process and methods of disseminating that message with its envisaged results. Evangelization is at the heart of the mission of the Church. The interrelatedness of evangelization and mission is in the region of obvious. The action of one involves the other. We wish therefore to examine the concept of evangelization via the etymological indices of mission. Based on this fact, we can say that evangelization is the Church’s mission. Evangelization gives meaning and relevance to the Church. It is her mission. As water is the greatest stimulant for the survival of fish, so is evangelization to the Church. It is at the centre of her life and joy. Evangelization is the core mission of the church which she received from Christ in these words: Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mk 16:15). Proper interpretation of this Christ’s command gives evangelization its sheen. However, to free ourselves from seemingly contradictory statements and unnecessary ambiguities, it is important that we have a look at the constituents of evangelization especially as coming from the post conciliar magisterium writings. Nevertheless, in the context of our research, we intend to use the two as presenting one idea, but not without further exploration of the concept of evangelization.

⁹² Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective*, p. 348.

g. Definitional nuances of evangelization

The conceptual understanding of evangelization could be better got from the angle of missionary purpose or intent. At this point we have recourse in the explanation offered by the Magisterium, which sees “the purpose of missionary activity is evangelization.”⁹³ Taking note of the constant changing faces of the society, the relevance of the church and her evangelizing mission should be felt more “when this mission is carried out in direct contact with human nature in his daily viccitudes.”⁹⁴ This is what the Council Fathers envisioned when they described “missionary activity as an epiphany, or a manifestation of God’s love.”⁹⁵ On his own part, St. Paul VI observed that the direct definition of evangelization may not be tenable “because of its complexity,”⁹⁶ which St. John Paul II described as a “single, complex reality.”⁹⁷ Granted that the the actual definition of evangelization is shrouded in difficulty, we can still see it as a process whereby the missionary mandate of Christ is actualized in a systematic and strategic ways. In using the words ‘strategic’ and ‘systematic’, we tend to emphasize the fact that evangelization is a divine project carried out by human beings. And as such, should not be done haphazardly so as not to lead people astray.

Secondly, because evangelization is a divine initiative, it remains indubitable that Christ is its main content, while the missionaries are the bearers of the message and at the same time, the evangelized with their cultures are the recipients of this Good News. From the above analysis, we see that the call, mission and evangelization are never independent of Christ. He is the Master who calls and Church as the people of God participates in his mission. What this means is that our daily life is a life of preaching and presenting Christ, the divine *Logos* to the world through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hence, like St. Paul, the Church should always be courageous to say, “I preach the Gospel, and woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.”⁹⁸ The church’s actions start with him and ends with him. He is the *terminus ad quo et terminus ad quem*. In other words, the subject of proclamation is Christ who was crucified, died and is risen. For the aim of evangelization to be achieved, it needs to address the depth and the real core of life of the people within their cultural milieu. As such, one of the essential elements of evangelization is its ability to permeate man’s culture and cultures. This contention is drawn

⁹³ *Ad Gentes*, no. 6.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html

⁹⁴ *Ad Gentes*, no. 8.

⁹⁵ *Ad Gentes*, no. 9.

⁹⁶ St. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Evangelization in the Modern World, 1975, no. 17.

⁹⁷ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 41.

⁹⁸ *1 Cor* 9:16.

from the fact that the Church's presence is not just an idle one. It is the one that touches the life of the people and individual persons in a particular environment and geographical location, leaving her salvific aroma to be felt by those she comes in touch with. Through this type of presence, the Church tries to sing the song of the people, drink their water, of course, just as the people drink the water of baptism and salvation offered by the Church; the Church eats their food just as she offers her own sacramental food to the people; the Church also dresses in the same garbs like the people, dances with them and breathes the same air with them. In fact, the Church now lives with the people in their cultural environment, feels with them and gives them hope in their agonies occasioned by hard earthly realities. Equipped with this type of presence, the recipients of the message of the gospel feels more at home with the Church and ready to accept in totality, the anticipated eschatological promise of joy. This is the angle where inculturation theology remains a better missiological paradigm in the contemporary world of evangelization. This is an ecclesiological imperative of 'being all things to all men.' It is only from this background that one appreciates more the ideas of cultural ecclesiology which we try to propound and which the Catholic Bishops's Conference of Nigeria are expected to develop for a more grounded evangelization.

For the Bishops therefore, evangelization should be viewed from the perspective of a missionary activity which aims at building up the Church as the family of God on earth. It should aim at founding local Churches which would express the profound Christian and African values of communion, fraternity, solidarity and peace. And in our own context, as we shall see as we go on in the navigation of the work, Nigerian Bishops have tried to merge the magisterium teaching on evangelization and the ideas brought forward by the African Bishops as they try to put the Church in a proper sound footing in the Nigerian soil and with the Nigerian people via *Inculturation* as they face an array of earthly realities. And another deduction we make here is that, since the message of the gospel is all about humanity and his earthly realities, Christ is then involved in the cultural givens of humankind. His message can therefore be fully assimilated when it is done within the confines of the culture of a particular group of people. As He is at the centre of the mission of the church, He is also at the centre of human culture. From this perspective, we can deduce that the mission of the church can be described as the encounter between the gospel and the people in their natural socio-cultural environment beauty and their daily living. This mission has also distinctive objectives and desired goals. We shall see them below.

3. Missionary ecclesiology and objectives

The effectiveness of evangelization will depend centrally on the amount of enthusiasm and dedication on the part of the missionary. Hence, as St. John Paul II affirmed that the summit and foundation of the dynamism of evangelization must include the irresistible consciousness of proclaiming Christ and his saving message to all peoples.”⁹⁹ Apart from proclamation, sense of witnessing, coupled with the human feelings for the recipients of the gospel in their daily life challenges define the objective and effectiveness of missionary ecclesiology. The key point here is that the dynamism of the Church’s life and her missionary outlook is made possible through proclamation of the word of God. It forms the nucleus of the ecclesial missionary mandate. What then is this proclamation, one may ask? To fathom the answer to the above question with other constituents of proclamation like witnessing and the human conditions of the recipients of the mission is what is facing us in the line of thought that follows. But this cannot be properly understood without having an indept knowledge of the *Church* that proclaims the mission and her relevant images in the contemporary missiology.

a. Etymological derivations of the Church in relation to her mission

The theological concepts which are and should be prominent in our research are Church (*ekklesia*) and Mission (*missio*) just as they are also reflected on the title of the work. In other words, in assessing a local church (such as in Nigeria) and her mission of evangelization, in relation to the universal church, there is a need to elucidate the operating words: *Church* and *Mission*. It is then, from the onset pertinent to have at least working definitions of these concepts for a more comprehensive and holistic treatment of the topic. We already gave enough time to the concept of mission at the early stage of this chapter. In this part we, shall try and analyse the conceptual understanding of the church that has mission. It will help us visualize what the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria are doing, in concrete meaning with those terms in their local churches both as a college of bishops and as individual pastors in their different dioceses. But it is also necessary to note that the post-conciliar conception of church, which is our main concentration of our thesis, has something or certain things which give its perception of church different colouring especially with regard to its grip on culture. What then is this Church which is the carrier and announcer of mission? A tip of the knowledge of Church will surely situate us in a better position to understand the nature of the message which she carries for the world. But, we do not desire to go into the full analysis of the word, especially from the

⁹⁹ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 44. Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 27.

Scriptural point of view. Nevertheless, from its etymological root, the word *Church* has different meanings from different language translations. In Latin, it is translated as *ecclesia*, while it is *ek-ka-lein* (ἐκκλησία) in Greek language. However, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it generally “means, to “call out of,” a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose.”¹⁰⁰ Also, the Hebrew equivalent of *ekklesia* is *qahal* (קהל). From another, but related point of view, the term is a combination of *ek* – (out) and *-kalein* (to call), and means literally “an assembly that has been called out,”¹⁰¹ especially by a herald. However, it can also be noted that the verb *ek-kalein* does not occur in the New Testament, “but it is found in profane and in some Greek religious circles.”¹⁰² Nevertheless, Nwaigbo gave a suggestion to this non-occurrence of the term in New Testament when he asserted that “presumably, the absence of its verbal form in the New Testament can be explained from the fact that the earlier translators of the New Testament were more occupied with the theological tenet which they were transmitting through this profane term, rather than with elaborating its philological nuances.”¹⁰³ The principal activities that constitute the very life of the Church itself, as explained by Cote include: “proclamation (*kerygma*), catechesis (*didache*), professing the faith (*homologia*), liturgical praise and thanksgiving (*doxologia*), witnessing (*martyria*), fellowship (*koinonia*), service (*diakonia*), and dialogue (*dialogos*).”¹⁰⁴ The above Cote’s insights regarding the components of the Church’s mission is well formulated. However, it may not be entirely acceptable as the final arbiter towards the holistic understanding of the life of the Church. Therefore, we intend to give a deeper theological diagnosis of each of the above components in the course of this work as it affects the evangelization process of the church. Nevertheless, there is still need for us to have a look at the ecclesiastical teachings on the nature of the church itself which is done in a string of images which the magisterium uses to describe the church since the term ‘Church’ is not an easy nut to crack regarding its definitive explication.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 751.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a9p1.htm [Accessed: April 8, 2019].

¹⁰¹ Rausch Thomas, *The Roots of the Catholic Tradition* (New York: 1986), p. 108. Cf. Warnack Viktor, in *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* (ed.) Bauer Johannes, vol. 1, London 1970, p. 101: “*ekklesia* ... derived from verb *ek-kalein* (to call [someone] out of). The word is also used in the New Testament with the secular meaning, which goes back to the period of classical Greek, of ‘popular assembly’ (Acts 19:32; 41ff; ‘a gathering of men’), but in general it has a special religious or theological range of meaning.” Cf. Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 35.

¹⁰² Peter Akpunonu, “The Church and Churches in Acts of the Apostles,” in *Journees Bibliques Africaines*, Kinshasa, 1990, p. 54. Cf. Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 35.

¹⁰³ Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁴ Cote, *Re-Visioning Mission*, p.8.

b. Relevant images in understanding the church

The post-conciliar theology has many images of the church, but few will suffice in our context here. From the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, we draw the first shade of image of the church that is very important in our course here. We are reminded that the Church is in Christ like a “sacrament or as a sign and instrument (‘*signum et instrumentum*’).”¹⁰⁵ We have already alluded to this very fact in this work, that the church is a divine gift from God which is used to actualize God’s reign on earth. The divine character of her function is made visible through different sacraments which it uses to sanctify the people of God and prepare them for the eschatological journey. But her function does not end in the acceptance of the missionary mandate. The church, because it is managed by human beings, acts as a sign-post that shows people the right direction to God. But she cannot perform this function without bringing herself to the people just as Christ himself made himself available to the people by finding them in their real daily lives as fishermen, tax-collectors, craftsmen, local shepherds, etc. This is the angle from where we collectively answer the name, Church. Joseph Ratzinger expressed it in this form: “If previously the Church had been seen above all as structures and organizations, the insight that emerged from the Council was that we ourselves are the Church.”¹⁰⁶

Therefore, when St. Paul expresses the idea of the “churches in Asia and Prisca sending greetings to Corinthians,”¹⁰⁷ he was not referring to the structure, but theologically to the family of the faithful that make up the church. Silvalon also affirms that “Church as sacrament of universal salvation meant that the role of the church was to witness to and serve a broader reality, namely, the Reign of God.”¹⁰⁸ Second Vatican Council vividly presented the church in other beautiful corporate images, like, “the church as a sheepfold; cultivated field; the building of God; Jerusalem which is above and our mother,”¹⁰⁹ etc. The mission of the Church is therefore centred on making known this redemptive gift from Christ to the whole world irrespective of their cultural or even religious leanings especially in a world that is becoming more secularized than before. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria has in effect taken this as a challenge and have continued in various capacities and circumstances to spread this good news of man’s redemption in accordance with the magisterium directives. But the question that still begs for answer is the fulcrum and manner of this divine mission and mandate. At this,

¹⁰⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 1.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Ecumenism and Politics* (London: 1988), p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ 1 Cor. 16:19.

¹⁰⁸ John, C. Silvalon, *God’s Mission and Postmodern Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012), p. 25.

¹⁰⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 6 and 7. Cf. CCC, no. 755 and 74. See also Code of Canon Law, no. 604 which talked about the Church as being the people of God. 755.

many theologians, following from the footsteps of the Fathers of the Church and the teaching authority of the Church have ventured into the arduous task of interpreting the mandate from Christ, that is, the notion of the ecclesial mission.

c. Proclamation of the word of God to all nation as integral part of mission

The notion of '*proclamation*' was given a very detailed assessment of its importance as a starting point of evangelization in *Redemptoris Missio* of St. Paul II. Precisely, the second part of number 44 of this document is of great interest in our course here. In it, the Holy Father re-established the appreciation of mission as a *complex reality* when he said, "In the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role, since it introduces man "into the mystery of the love of God, who invites him to enter into a personal relationship with himself in Christ" and opens the way to conversion. Just as the whole economy of salvation has its center in Christ, so too all missionary activity is directed to the proclamation of his mystery."¹¹⁰ Proclamation of the Gospel opens the door of evangelization, leaves the window of salvation open through concerted efforts for individual conversion and allows the Church to breathe the air of personal relationship with Christ. This initiation through the first preaching or proclamation of the word gives birth to faith. Through this faith, the individual is fully incorporated into the ecclesial community where he is given an opportunity to be immersed in the requisite sacraments of the Church.

Moreover, the same document reminds us that the subject of proclamation is Christ who was crucified, died and risen. Through proclamation, man is called upon to share in the full and authentic liberation from evil, sin and death. What the Church is actually sent to do is to be an *instrument* or *participant* in that mission of God – the communication of his love – for which Jesus Christ came into the world. This, in essence, is the core reason for evangelization. Proper proclamation involves complete commitment to the presentation of Christ to the people. It entails moreso, "following in the footsteps of Christ and in obedience to his command."¹¹¹ The Good News he preached was the presence of this Kingdom in his person and his ministry, touching the human person at every level so that we can become a new creation. In like manner, the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* stated the proclamation of the Gospel as primary duty of priests,¹¹² adducing some reasons: "For through the saving Word the spark of faith is

¹¹⁰ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 44. See also, *Ad Gentes*, no. 13. Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15. *Ad Gentes*, 13-14.

¹¹¹ Alward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 54. Cf. also *Ad Gentes*, no. 10. See, Olikenyi, *African Hospitality*, p. 16.

¹¹² Cf. Edward Schillibeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), p. 261.

struck in the hearts of unbelievers, as the Apostle says: Faith depends on hearing the word of Christ (Rm. 10:17).¹¹³ The priest builds the Church by announcing the Word of God, the basis of *koinonia*, i.e., fellowship with God and with one another. It is the proclamation of the Word which establishes and builds up the unity of God's people which the Eucharist expresses, nourishes and actualizes. What can be deduced from the foregoing is that the starting point of the mission of the church is to invite the entire human race into the love of God through the Sacraments instituted by Christ. Proclamation opens the door to the missionary for a better interaction with the hearers of the Word. It is therefore an important ingredient of evangelization which sets the tone for a more concrete process of conversion which is life of witnessing.

d. The hermeneutics of witnessing as an offshoot of proclamation in the Church's mission

For St. Paul VI, "to evangelize is first of all *to bear witness*, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ, life."¹¹⁴ Proclamation means preaching Christ. This is the starting point of missionary activity. But this has to be followed with practical life of the preacher. This is what witnessing in theological circle is all about. There is therefore an unbroken interrelatedness between evangelization, proclamation and witnessing. With the statement concerning witnessing, a formidable linkage is established between mission, *evangelization*, *proclamation* and *witness*. Witnessing is the concrete life lived by the recipients of the proclaimed word. Therefore, the two concepts intertwine so much that the use of one involves the other especially in missiology.

When one hears the word but without putting it into practice, the word planted in him evaporates. The faith becomes shallow one. Perhaps, this is one of the people facing the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. And as we are going to see towards the end of this dissertation, it has constituted serious problem in the Nigerian church and which has led to high increase in defection from the Catholic Church and religious syncretism. "In the Jewish tradition, just as is the case in the contemporary world, "*Witness*" remains a term used in the legal proceedings to prove the truth. Thus, bearing witness is an act of giving evidence to

¹¹³ Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, On the ministry and life of priests, 1965, no. 4. Cf. Jerome Madueke, *Eucharistic Liturgy as Means of Evangelization*, A Paper Presented at the Liturgical Seminar for Awka Diocesan Presbyterium to mark the Year of Priests, April 26, 2010, at the Pastoral Centre, Awka, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 26.

confirm the events happened and the things said.”¹¹⁵ In *Igboland* (one of the major tribes in Nigeria), the enforcement of justice in their traditional social life involves two or three witnesses before a person is given a public sentence or other punishment. Also, in this culture, each child is expected to carry the image of his or her family where he/she goes. In other words, one expected to bear witness to the moral probity of the family. One’s social life has a lot to say about his family background. As Christians therefore, we carry Christ wherever we go and we expected to be positive witnesses to His life of love and sacrifice. The experience of the apostles in Anthioch (Acts 11:25-27), where they first received the name “Christians aptly describes the credulity of the above statement. It is on record that the people of Anthioch never saw Christ, but they heard about him. Seeing the apostles living life of sharing and communion, the Anthiochians saw this as directly opposite what they were used to. Conclusively, they noted that these people must be followers of ‘that man called Christ which they never saw. The apostles preached Christ through their life and this left enough lasting impression on the recipients of the gospel in Anthioch. Witnessing remains a practical evangelization. And as already noted, it is lived experience of the gospel. What this connotes is that even when going out, our primary task is to be witnesses. Moreover, the church’s missional call, according to the New Testament, is to be witnesses. It follows that we can conveniently assert that *Mission is Witness*. The call to mission is an invitation to witness the life of Christ, his death and resurrection. Thus, according to Shroeder, “witness as mission occurs on different levels. First of all, there are individual Christians; secondly, witness happens on the communal level as a Christian community, a parish, and a diocese lives its life. Third, witness moves beyond the local level of the universal and institutional church. The fourth level is that of common witness to Jesus by Christian churches and denominations.”¹¹⁶

In our own daily living and societal interactions, “*witness*” connotes the physical presence of an individual with requisite attention when certain things happen or when an incidence occurs so as to be able to give evidential testimony in such occasion. Thus, the apostles who were sent out by Jesus to preach the Good news were those who were with him, who witnessed the events – his teachings, miracles and life. The expression, “action speaks louder than words” can profitably be used in this context since ‘*nemo dat quod non habet.*’ What we want to establish here is that the greatest gospel preached by the missionary is the life he lives. It adds authenticity to the proclaimed word. In all these, we can insist that in the

¹¹⁵ Cf. Jey J. Kanagaraj, *Missiological Significance of Bearing Witness in John’s Gospel: Witnesses of Jesus and the Church*. https://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/religious_studies/SNTS/kanagaraj.htm

¹¹⁶ Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, p. 113-114.

contemporary world with ever-growing influence of secularism and new atheistic tendencies, there is need for a more concrete life of witnessing through the life of Christian virtues expected of all followers of Christ. And in Nigeria which is bewildered in particular by religious pluralism, syncretism and Islamic insurgence, the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria and their flocks have much at hand. This is highly necessary since the testimony that Christians make about Christ and the Gospel can lead to the highest sacrifice. St. John Paul II summed the link between proclamation and witness in following form: “Evangelization, a process which begins with proclamation, inaugurates a way of life in which the values of the Gospel are practiced.”¹¹⁷ Finally, it has to be noted that effective evangelization, demands nearness to the people especially the poor and afflicted. It demands a caring touch with the people which must be done in love, patience and courage. Its attitude is not that of condemnation or manipulation but one of tolerance and concern. It requires proper integration on the part of the missionary with the society and culture where he finds himself.

e. Recipients of the Gospel message

The question as to who is or who are the recipients of the gospel message takes us back to the events of the Pentecost. Through the instrumentality of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the whole world becomes the core recipients of the gospel message irrespective of colour, culture, language, geographical location, social status, etc. This idea is encapsulated in his instruction to the apostles who were the foundational recipients of the message: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). Moreover, we also note that the announcement of the advent of the kingdom of God which Christ made at the beginning of His ministry touched all the strata of the society. “He has sent me to preach Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberation to captives and sight to the blind, to give freedom to the oppressed and announce a year of God's favor” (Lk 4:18-19). Here, the purpose of his being sent is revealed. The Good News he preached was the presence of this Kingdom in his person and his ministry, touching the human person at every level so that we can become a new creation. His life also portrayed all inclusive message of hope to all creation. In the same tone, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “Bishops, with priests as co-workers, have as their first task to preach the Gospel of God to *all men*.”¹¹⁸ Christ, who received His own mission from his father wants his own disciples to follow the already-laid part for proper evangelization, making sure

¹¹⁷ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 42.

¹¹⁸ CCC, no. 888; PO, no. 4; Cf. Mk. 16:15.

that the people who should receive the message are not denied. The message of redemption in preparation for the eschatological journey is for all races and it is a continuous mission because of the impossibility of receiving it at the same time, more so, when we realize that the kingdom of God is timeless. However, it must be observed that the poor which forms the bulwark of the envisaged recipients of Christ's message, are not to be understood narrowly of the economically destitute, as some have suggested, rather the term refers more generally to "the dispossessed, the excluded" who were forced to depend upon God. And as we are going to see, the contemporary vision of the magisterium teachings and actions from where the Nigerian episcopate draws their pedagogical strength, have much to do with the poor and the less privileged of the society while not neglecting their cultural and social contexts. After all, what the Church is today is a continuation of what Christ started. The Church is the mission of Christ and her actions are anchored on the principles established by Him. He is at the centre of the Church's missionary activities, energizing her continuously with His abundant and immeasurable graces.

f. Human development, peace and social justice: ingredients of mission

In the post-Vatican or post-Conciliar, mission as what we do to participate in God's mission has moved through a gradual development of understanding that has led to a variety of elements being included as integral dimensions of our mission. "These include: proclamation, witness, inter-religious dialogue, Human development and finally Worship and Praise."¹¹⁹ In one of his key documents on Mission activities of the Church, St. John Paul II asserted that "the witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission" (RM 42), and such witness includes a "*commitment to peace, justice human rights and human promotion.*"¹²⁰ The pursuit of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, is an important track in a book by Roger P. Schroeder. In it, he stressed that the "mission of God calls the church to pursue work for a just and peaceful world and to care for God's gift of creation. This implies establishing goodrelationship with one another and caring for the poor and those in need has always been a part of the church's mission."¹²¹ This call may not be altogether regarded as a new shift in the church's understanding of her mission on earth since Pope Leo XIII already wrote his encyclical *The Condition of Labour (Rerum Novarum)* in 1891.

¹¹⁹ Sivalon, *God's Mission and Postmodern Culture*, p. 80.

¹²⁰ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 42.

¹²¹ Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, p. 117.

It was in it that the Supreme Pontiff laid the foundation for what has grown into an integrated body of Catholic social teaching. The church, he maintained, was called not only to take care of those in need but also to address the unjust social and economic structures and systems that put people in that situation. Moving beyond speaking on behalf of others, the church needs to accompany the poor and victims in finding their own voice and choosing their own action. The Synod of Bishops of 1971 had its theme as “*Justice in the World*”. In it, St. Paul VI made the following clear statement in the exhortation: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”¹²² Jesus announced the advent of the kingdom of God. “He has sent me to preach Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberation to captives and sight to the blind, to give freedom to the oppressed and announce a year of God’s favor.”¹²³ The Good News he preached was the presence of this Kingdom in his person and his ministry, touching the human person at every level so that we can become a new creation. The foregoing discussion has furnished us with the kernel of church’s missionary mandate in practical terms. Moreover, in his *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis “recalls the Church’s primary mission of evangelization and the need for a pastoral and missionary conversion so as to create a healthy missionary activity. By so doing, he reiterates the underlying and important connection between evangelization and human advancement; and more so, the right of the pastors to offer opinions on all that affect peoples’ lives.”¹²⁴ When evaluated from the local church in Nigeria, we should be able to ascertain to what extent the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria has taken up the above challenges posited by different popes in their Apostolic Exhortations with the amount of urgency that they require. A careful look and analysis of their different Communiqués, publications and action-packed programmes of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria will give us a sound footing as to comprehend properly what the mission of the Church is and should be from our traditional context in practical terms.

4. Evolution of Mission: Nigerian experience

The teaching office of the universal church remains the same, and individual ecclesiastical conferences are not expected to offer their pastoral guidelines and teaching contrary to the

¹²² St. Paul VI, Second General Assembly Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, no. 6. <https://www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf>

¹²³ *Lk. 4:18-19.*

¹²⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, On the proclamation of the gospel in today’s world, 2013, no. 182.

ecclesial deposit of faith. The Mission of the Church in the light of the teachings of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria is simply an excursus into the indepth application of the Church's teaching in the local church in Nigeria. Having established some of the teachings and explained some of the guiding concepts in our topic, it is time for us to look what the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria say about the Church.

a. Fundamental basic explication

So far, we have laboured to give a seemingly elaborate diagnosis of the two commanding concepts in our research – *Church and Mission*, with their components. The enough time given to that is purely on purpose on three counts: First, from the nature of the topic, one technically notices that our main purpose is to draw insight from the macrocosm of Church and her Mission, which is universal-driven understanding to the microcosm of digging out how the same concept and the attendant mission is practised in the local church in Nigeria. Secondly, we feel it necessary to follow this line of thought since the Church and her Mission as seen in Nigeria is not necessarily different from the mission of the universal church. It does not also entail formulations of different articles of faith by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. It is rather an attempt to dip into the activities of the Nigerian Church Hierarchy and see how they have been able to imbibe and translate the dictates of Church teachings to positively impact on the lives of the people in their particular cultural environment since the end of Second Vatican Council in 1965. It is still all about "*sentire cum Ecclesia*" (thinking with the Church). The knowledge of the whole can be easier and better appreciated when the root is not left out. It is to some extent, a matter of *per visibulum ad invisibulum* (the philosophical principle of "from the known to the unknown").

The known in this perspective is the Church and her universal mission, to the unknown (only applicable in this context) which is the Church and her mission in *ecclesia localis* in Nigeria. Thirdly, most of the ideas and concepts already analysed in this chapter form the main stream from where the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria draw their insights and theological status in their interpretation and application of the mission of the church in their local context. The touch on some of the Vatican II Council's documents and other post-conciliar apostolic exhortations also gives us a better *theologico-ecclesial* safe-landing. The time is therefore ripped for us to tackle a basic question: How does the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria as an *episcopal body* see the mission of the church? To attempt an answer to the

above question, we intend to give a useful synopsis on the guiding concept in our research, which is *Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN)*.¹²⁵

b. The formation of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria

Evangelization goes beyond facade, the superficial and the conventional to the depth, the very centre and roots of life, to impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man with the gospel. It seeks to convert in an ongoing manner the individual conscience, as well as the collective conscience of a people or society, their mentality, rhythm of life and their environment. Evangelization begins to succeed when it evokes in an individual or a community wholehearted allegiance or that free, vibrant, personal, full and conscious response identified with faith, "marked by entry into the community of the faithful, fidelity and loyalty to the Church and communion with God and neighbour."¹²⁶ The missionary efforts of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria is inspired by this desire to deepen the content of the gospel message in the lives of the people. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) is described as the organ of unity, communion, and solidarity for the millions of Catholics spread across the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. It is the forum wherein the collegiality of the Nigerian catholic bishops, as successors of the Apostles in union with the Pope, is expressed and where the idea of the Church as family is signified. The body was officially incorporated in *March 15, 1958*. CBCN is one of the 36 Episcopal Conferences in Africa which are in direct communion with Rome and the Universal Church.

Out of 113 of such Conferences in the Church, Africa has 36, Asia has 17, Europe 32, Oceania 4, North America 14 and South America has 10. The archbishops and the bishops of the 52 ecclesiastical jurisdictions, as shepherds of souls in their archdioceses and dioceses, are able to pray together, study together, and work together; and with one voice, are able to speak and spearhead the teachings, prophetic and pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The Bishops Conference is headed by an executive body made up of the president, the vice president, the secretary, and assistant secretary. The plenary session of the Conference is held twice a year, for prayers, study and deliberations on important issues concerning the

¹²⁵ *CBCN*: This is the abbreviation for *Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria* which forms the main chunk of our research field. For the greater percentage of this work therefore, and to eliminate as much as possible, unnecessary lengthy repetitions of the phrase, *CBCN* will be used. Their three major collections which are greatly referenced here are: *Church in Nigeria: A Call for Mission* (Published in 2011), *Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, Pastoral Letters and Communiqués – 1960 – 2002*, and *The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on Issues of Faith and Life*, ed. Peter Schineller, A publication of Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, (Nigeria: Daily Graphics Nig., Ltd., 2003).

¹²⁶ Cf. Madueke, *Eucharistic Liturgy as Means of Evangelization*, p. 2.

evangelizing mission of the Church in Nigeria, the pastoral care of the faithful, and the promotion of human dignity, human rights, truth, justice, reconciliation, peace and wholesome development in the wider society. In addition to other executives, they have five Episcopal Chairmen of different departments and 15 Episcopal Chairmen of Committees.

c. Historical and theological basis for episcopal conferences

The existence of an Episcopal Conference, which can also be referred to as Conference of Bishops is not altogether new in the history of the Church, at least in an informal way. It is on record that Swiss Bishops' Conference, which was founded in 1863, and remains the oldest of such conference. More than forty of such conferences existed before the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers, having examined the importance and missional advantages of such conferences, expressed their desire to establish it on a sound footing with requisite legal and theological backings. Hence, it states, that, "like the ancient patriarchal Churches, episcopal conferences are in a position "to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegial spirit."¹²⁷ The status was further defined by St. Paul VI's 1966 *motu proprio, Ecclesia sanctae*.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the operation, authority, and responsibilities of episcopal conferences are currently governed by the 1983 Code of Canon Law (cf., especially canons 447-459), while St John Paul II subsequently clarified it in his 1998 *motu proprio, Apostolos suos*, which stated that the declarations of such conferences "constitute authentic magisterium" when approved unanimously by the conference."¹²⁹

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis expressed his worries and concern that the intent of the Second Vatican Council, "has not been fully realized, and moreso, excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach."¹³⁰ However, the implementation of the missionary mandate of Christ of "going into the whole world and proclaiming the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15), is a continuous theological exercise which is intrinsically the live wire of the Church. It is a calling that has not changed over the years, as Pope Paul VI affirmed in his letter On Evangelization in the Modern World: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the

¹²⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 23. Cf. St Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino*, 9 May 1975, no. 22: AAS 67 (1975), 297. See, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_conference.

¹²⁸ Cf. Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops, Aparecida Document, 29 June, 2007, no. 360.

¹²⁹ St. John Paul II, *Apostolos Suos*; On the theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences, 1998, no. 5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_conference

¹³⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 32. See also, *Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998): AAS 90 (1998), 641-658.

essential mission of the Church.”¹³¹ The Church in her wisdom has been trying over the years to look both inwards and outwards (*ad intra* and *ad extra*) to see how best to give a better appreciable interpretation of the above message of Christ to his disciples. The Church wants this message to meet the people of God in their daily lives so as to transform them. One of the efforts and fruits of the Vatican II is the progressive push which the evangelizing spirit of the church received. Of utmost importance is the theological empowerment of the local bishops and the encouragement to be truly what they are expected to be – true light and salt to the flock of Christ entrusted to them. But the Council Fathers reasoned that “in order that the missionary activity of the bishops may be exercised more effectively for the good of the whole Church, it would be expedient for the episcopal conferences to take charge of those affairs which concern the orderly cooperation of their own region” (AG 38). This document goes further to give guidelines and roadmaps to the bishops for a more coordinated missionary work in their respective nations and provinces. It therefore stipulates that “In their own Conference, the bishops should deliberate about dedicating to the evangelization of the nations some priests from among the diocesan clergy; they should decide what definite offering each diocese should be obliged to set aside annually for the work of the missions, in proportion to its own budget; they should consider how to direct and control the ways and means by which the missions receive direct help; they should deal with assisting and if need be, founding, missionary institutes and seminaries for diocesan mission clergy, and the promoting of closer relations between such institutes and the dioceses.”¹³²

This calls for urgent attention as the *magisterium* reasons that “all over the world indigenous particular Churches ought to grow from seed of the word of God, Churches which would be adequately organized and would possess their own proper strength and maturity. With their own hierarchy and faithful, and sufficiently endowed with means adapted to the full Christian life, they should contribute to the good of the whole Church.”¹³³ He then concludes: “I earnestly ask theologians and professional Christian journalists to intensify the service they render to the Church's mission in order to discover the deep meaning of their work, along the sure path of “thinking with the Church” (*sentire cum Ecclesia*).”¹³⁴ Based on the points enunciated above, the Catholic Bishops in Nigeria decided to form one block as directed by the Mother Church for a more effective missionary work in Nigeria and beyond. ‘Thinking with

¹³¹ *Evangelium Nuntiandi*, no. 14.

¹³² *Ad Gentes*, no. 38.

¹³³ *Ad Gentes*, no. 6.

¹³⁴ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 36.

the Church' entails a huge responsibility on the individual bishops. And considering the size of Nigeria with its religious pluralism and still the encouraging catholic population, the Bishops felt that the local church and *ecclesia universalis* stand to gain more when they speak with one voice on the issues concerning the growth of the church in the country. The basic questions to be answered would then be; how does the Church in Nigeria understand her mission? What are the necessary means of deepening the faith already planted on the Nigerian soil by CBCN?

d. Awareness of the Church's missionary responsibility and notion of mission

For over a century, Nigeria welcomed the missionaries who came to proclaim the Christian message, especially from Europe. There is every sign that their work has been successful with the vibrant Catholic population in Nigeria whose impact can be felt in the socio-cultural reality of the country. The strength of the Catholic Church in Nigeria is demonstrated in the active participation of the laity and the increasing number of priests and religious of Nigerian extractions who are working as missionaries in many countries of Africa and other continents of the world. This emerging reality is a source of joy, because it shows that the Church in Nigeria has assumed its own identity and is capable of giving what she has received.¹³⁵ Continuing, the Bishops appreciate the fact that entrenchment of Christian values in the Nigerian cultural and socio-political setting is not an easy missionary imperative. At the same time, they assert that, in faithfulness to the authentic missionary spirit, the Church in Nigeria will not wait until she is totally self-sufficient and flawless before she plays her role as a missionary Church.

Hence, "The Catholic hierarchy in Nigeria fully understands that Mission is not an option for the Church; Mission is the route to becoming an authentic Body of Christ, if the Church is to be true to herself."¹³⁶ "Mission", according to them, is not for a selected few, it is a mandate given to each of us a baptism and we all have to find ways of fulfilling this injunction of Christ in accordance with our various vocations and states of life."¹³⁷ Therefore, their understanding is that the mission given to the Church by Christ himself is a great responsibility which we cannot respond to haphazardly and without adequate formation and preparation. The missionary commitments of the hierarchy and the people of God in Nigeria are not in doubt. Perhaps of utmost importance regarding their self-understanding of the notion

¹³⁵ Cf. *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. viii.

¹³⁶ Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. viii.

¹³⁷ Matthew Man-oso Ndagoso, in his foreword to "*The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*", 2010, p. v. As the Archbishop of Kaduna, he was then the Chairman, Episcopal Committee on Mission, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN).

of mission, which was publicly pronounced happened in 2002. From the 11th to the 15th of November 2002, the Catholic Church in Nigeria held its first National Pastoral Congress at the Seminary of SS. Peter and Paul, Ibadan, with the theme of the congress as “*The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*.” This theme clearly indicates a self-understanding of the Church in Nigeria as, first the ‘Family of God’, secondly, as a ‘*Church on Mission*’.¹³⁸ This self-understanding was inspired by the teaching of the Magisterium on the nature of the Church as expressed in the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops (African Synod) which took place in Rome in April/May 1994. The Synod Fathers also acknowledged that the image, ‘*Family of God*’ is particularly appropriate for Africa, because it emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust which are enshrined in African cultural life. This call to the African Catholics was further deepened when in 2009, the Catholic Church in the continent was called to be at the ‘*Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*’ at the Second Synod of Bishops on Africa. Considering all of the above, it can be readily understood why the Catholic Church in Nigeria today sees itself as “*The Family of God on Mission*” and why it desires to live with greater commitment the call and responsibility implied in this image.¹³⁹ The Bishops relates this outward thrust and experience in a special way to the Pentecost, when the apostles proclaimed the Good News which was received by men and women from diverse cultures and languages. Thus, mission is experienced as building communion among the human family (Acts 1), and therefore, in the third millennium of its history, the Church is still sent to bring together the scattered children of God into the one Family by its missionary endeavours. Every local Church is commissioned to live out this missionary mandate: ‘Go therefore, make disciples of all nations.’ (cf. Mt. 28:28) The choice of the church as a family of God on mission as prototype of the Trinitarian unity is very much the living principle of the Nigerian families, especially those of *Igbo*¹⁴⁰ extraction.

In this area, life of communalism is enshrined in their daily lives. Man does not live as a man except within the context of community (*umunna ideology*) which has its foundation

¹³⁸ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission* (Abuja: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, CSN, 2004), p. 78. See also, CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 2.

¹³⁹ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ The *Igbos* occupy the eastern part of Nigeria. Ever since the first major seed of faith was sown in this area in 1885, it has remained the hub and melting point of Catholic Church not only in Nigeria, but the whole of Africa. The vocation to priesthood and also female religious life witnessed in this part of Nigeria has never been seen in any part of Christendom. For instance, in Awka Diocese, which is one of the dioceses in this geographical zone of Nigeria, and where this researcher was ordained, the number of diocesan priests is numbering six hundred and eighty. The total junior seminarians in the two minor seminaries owned by the diocese are more than six hundred. Their senior seminarians are found in all the senior seminaries in Nigeria in great numbers. As such, the diocese ordains about fourteen priests on yearly basis. We shall still elaborate on this in the later part of the work.

in families. The “*we spirit*” is a propelling spirit in their daily endeavours with its foundation in extended family system. In summary, their concept of human person is a direct opposite of the Cartesian idea of personhood which is based on the principle of *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). But for Nigerians and as aforementioned, more so the *Igbos*, the principle of life is ‘*we are, therefore I am*’. Based on this, the catholic bishops of Nigeria try to interpret the mission of the church from this angle with the *Triune* theology of *onye aghala nwanne ya; igwe bu ike; umunna bu ike* (united we stand, divided we fall). This theology of life is simply *ad rem* with the proper conceptualization of the ecclesial mission since the mission of the universal church is an inclusive mission which has to do with total availability of the church to the whole creation.

e. Drawing strength from the universality of the Church’s missionary activity

The concepts of *mission ad intra* and *mission ad extra* feature prominently in the CBCN’s understanding of the mission of the Church. They also draw enough inspiration from John Paul II’s missionary experiences and writings. Pope John Paul II stated in his *Redemptoris Missio* the basis for the united missionary activities of the Church in these words: “The Church’s universal mission is born of faith in Jesus, as is stated in our Trinitarian profession of faith. It is only in faith that the Church’s mission can be understood and only in faith that it finds its basis.”¹⁴¹ In the same connection, the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria tried to model their own missionary vision on the same footing with that of the Universal Church. Accordingly, it is expressed that the Church as mystery of communion with its missionary responsibility originates from the life of the Trinity. First, the life of communion between or within (*ad intra*) the three Divine Persons of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Jn. 17: 21-23), is the source of the inseparable works of Trinity *without (ad extra)* or towards creatures.

The Trinitarian theology is itself an attestation of the mysterious nature of God from where our creation mystery emanates. God, the mystery of communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit has created us in his own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27), and invited us to be in communion with one another and with him, bearing witness to His triune life in the world. The Nigerian bishops therefore explain that, Christ’s redemptive work, his mission *ad extra*, transmitted through evangelization, proceeded from the Father’s love and attained completion with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As such, the universal Church’s task of evangelization, which is essentially the indivisible work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, “must

¹⁴¹ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 4.

actively engage all the baptized in the three states of Christian life, namely, the lay, the religious and the clerical.”¹⁴² The Church in Nigeria, certainly inspired by Trinitarian communion and mission, has an important role in evangelizing people within and without of Nigeria, encouraging them to bring their whole life into the Trinitarian communion. “Since the particular church is bound to represent the universal Church as perfectly as possible, let it realize that it has been sent to those also who are living in the same territory with it, and who do not yet believe in Christ” (*Ad Gentes*, 20). In line with the Mother Church, CBCN made it explicitly clear in the Pastoral Exhortation they issued following the 2002 National Pastoral Congress, that they fully understand and recognize their duties and missionary commitment to the *ecclesial universalis* in their evangelization drive within and outside their immediate environment. With a uniformed voice they asserted that “the evangelizing mission of the Church in Nigeria is both *ad intra* and *ad extra*.”¹⁴³ That is to say, on the one hand, that Nigerian Christians are to be missionaries to themselves, *ad intra*. This means our commitment to mission towards the Catholic community in the pastoral care of the faithful, the new evangelization of our brothers and sisters who have lost a sense of the faith, and an active engagement in ecumenical activities so as to make visible and real the unity of all Christians.¹⁴⁴ Nigerian Catholic Bishops very much believe that the work of evangelization should be a collective responsibility of all the baptized which should be done in a spirit of one family of God with eschatological orientation and motivations. Hence, the scope of this missionary activity takes us beyond our geographical, cultural, racial, religious and socio-political boundaries. This mandate is rooted in the Scripture, where Jesus commissioned his apostles to be his witnesses in Jerusalem (where they were), in Samaria (the neighbouring villages and towns), and to the remotest ends of the world (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). It is therefore the candid opinion of CBCN that this universal mandate continues to give missionary imperative to every authentic Christian community to continuously engage in on-going missionary activities, not only within its geographical territory, but also to be concerned about the vast majority of humanity that has not yet heard the Good News of the Kingdom in many parts of the world.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 4.

¹⁴³ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, Abuja: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, CSN, 2004, p. 78; Cf. *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ CBCN, *Family of God on Mission*, p. 80.

¹⁴⁵ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, pp. 5-6.

f. The mission of the Church as a collective commitment and action

From the onset, and as typified in their numerous communiques and joint declarations concerning issues of faith and social life of people, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria see the mission of the church as a shared responsibility among all the baptised Christians. And as they noted: "To deepen our understanding and commitment towards this evangelizing mission in the world, the Catholic Church in Nigeria held its first 'National Mission Congress', in September 2007 at Onitsha. The Congress, with the theme "You Shall be my Witnesses", was convoked to pray, reflect, meditate and reassess the involvement of the Catholic Church in Nigeria in the universal mission as mandated by Christ '*Go make disciples of all nations.*' (Mt. 28: 19-20). It was a sign of the coming of age of the Catholic Church in Nigeria which as part of the body of Christ assumes its missionary responsibility in the universal church.¹⁴⁶ Its success gave fresh impetus to the four Pontifical Mission Societies and prompted the commencement of many missionary initiatives which include the establishment of Institute of Missiology and the Orientation Programme for missionaries leaving the country for the first time. It also helped the Church become very much aware of the need to strengthen the collaboration between the various lay organizations in Nigeria, the CBCN and Institutes/Congregations/Societies of different forms of Consecrated and Apostolic Life.¹⁴⁷ The missionary mandate continues to challenge us to listen to the signs of the times and to respond with missionary zeal.

Consequently, the Bishops are not indifferent to the fraternal call by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council who challenged young Churches to also take up the task of sending out missionaries beyond their frontiers: "In order that this missionary zeal may flourish among those in their own homeland, it is very fitting that the young churches should participate as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church, and send their own missionaries to proclaim the Gospel all over the world, even though they themselves are suffering from a shortage of clergy. For their communion with the universal Church will be somehow brought to perfection when they themselves take an active part in missionary zeal toward other nations."¹⁴⁸ Considering the tone of this appeal and its immediate importance, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria is leaving no stone unturned to give response, neither are they waiting to be self-sufficient before responding to its missionary vocation, because it is fully aware that mission is at the core of its being as Church. Pope John Paul II appreciated the efforts

¹⁴⁶ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁷ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ad Gentes*, no. 20. See, CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 7.

already made by the local church in Nigeria in these words: “The Catholic Church is still relatively young in Nigeria, but she is full of vitality and enthusiasm, and she looks to the future with confidence and optimism. Her mission of loving service to the men and women of this nation, inspired by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will benefit greatly from this new *Apostolic Nunciature*, which is a visible link with the See of St. Peter and a sign of the unity of the Church.”¹⁴⁹ It is expected that this appreciative posture of the Church as expressed above will push the local church in Nigeria to a greater height.

g. CBCN as the vanguard of *missio ad intra* and *missio ad extra*

Nigeria is one of the few African countries that received the message of the gospel about two centuries ago. With the exception of the ancient churches in Egypt and some other outposts along the coast, contemporary Christianity in Africa traces back to the 19th century¹⁵⁰ However, it became a major force to reckon with in the 20th century, when questions of national independences, anthropological and ecclesial identities came into vogue.¹⁵¹ In Nigeria too, for instance, the flowering of the missionary efforts blossomed more in the years following the Second Vatican Council. And this is more the reason for bracketing the missionary dates of our research from 1965 – 2017. Since then, that free spirit of religious outreach, which no one thought existed in the continent, has now been unleashed in the universal Church. “Although the extent of this new energy was not immediately predictable, the increasing number of African missionaries overseas has made the continent indisputably significant in global evangelization.”¹⁵² Indeed, the ‘prophesy’ of Walbert Buhlmann in what he described as a *third church* by which Christianity’s center of gravity makes a historical shift to the southern hemisphere creating an outstanding opportunity for the faith,¹⁵³ is already being fulfilled in Nigeria and perhaps other African countries. Ever since then, a new missiological paradigm has evolved, not only in Nigeria but other African countries. The theological current that arose with this has to do with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria trying to maximise the ‘*opened doors*’ of the Vatican II Council to interpret the notion of mission of the Church in a concrete form in relation to the earthly realities confronting the nation in diversified spheres of life.

¹⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Address to CBCN, on the occasion of his second visit to Nigeria*, 21 March 1998.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Paulines Publication Africa, Nairobi 1994), p. 103.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Francis, Anaeke Oborji, *Trends in African Theology since Vatican II: A Missiological Orientation*, (LEBERIT SRL PRESS, ROMA 2005), p. 52 – 64.

¹⁵² Cf. “SEDOS”, *How Africa is changing the face of Mission*, Vol. 49, number 11/12, February, 2018.

<https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.

¹⁵³ Cf. Walbert Buhlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1978), p. 22.

In doing this, CBCN has seen it as a challenge and a proximate reality to metamorphosize from “welcoming missionaries” to being welcomed as missionaries both *ad intra* and *ad extra* following the example of the universal church. Part of the motivating factor to this move may not be unconnected with the following challenges from the two well-known Pontiffs who devoted much of their time in the affairs of the mission of the church. Firstly, while addressing the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in Kampala, Uganda in 1969, Pope Paul VI made this landmark statement which left lasting impression on the minds of the African Bishops and the entire clergy: “Africans, you are now your own missionaries.”¹⁵⁴ For the CBCN, originally, this was meant as a call for missionary collaboration among the local Churches in Africa. Today, the Church in Nigeria interprets this missionary appeal to the African Churches as a prophetic invitation to participate in the universal mission of the Church. Secondly, on his own part, Pope John Paul II noted emphatically that, “the Church in Africa, having become “a new homeland for Christ”, is now responsible for the evangelization of the continent and the world.”¹⁵⁵

h. CBCN’s vision of Mission: The import of the Magisterium appeal letter to Nigerian Bishops

Axiomatically, Nigeria remains the seat of Catholicism and the hope of the Catholic Church in Africa, just as it is the most populated country in Africa. Presently, the nation is enjoying unprecedented vocation boom in the history of the Church, coupled with vibrant and dedicated laity. This is in spite of the devastating effect of the ‘better-forgotten’ effect of the Nigeria-Biafran civil war and the ‘infamous’ expulsion of the European missionaries from Nigeria in 1970. (We shall see this episode in details in chapter of this work). The Episcopal Conference of Nigeria is truly aware that this is really the work of the Holy Spirit and at the same time a serious call to mission. They are not resting on their oars yet. Consequently, the missionary activities of this Body and her ecclesial spirit of development did not go unnoticed by the Supreme Pontiff and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. As such, the Holy See addressed a specific call to the Church in Nigeria to embark more vigorously on mission than it has done until now especially in the area of *missio ad extra*.

Hence, in a letter dated 22nd April 2010 and directed to the President of the CBCN, the Apostolic Nunciature in Nigeria made a special appeal to the Church in Nigeria in these missionary-motivated words: “With regard to the staffing of new mission territories (*Missiones*

¹⁵⁴ St. Paul VI, *Address to the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, SECAM, Kampala* (31 July 1969), 1: AAS 61 (1969), 575.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 56. See also, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 8.

Sui iuris and *Apostolic Prefectures* and *Vicariates*) the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples wishes to ascertain whether suitable personnel are available. It has therefore asked the Apostolic Nunciature to find out if there are Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, or even dioceses which are in a position to help out in this field, or even accept a *ius Commissionis* and so be responsible for staffing and evangelizing of such a territory I will be grateful if you let me know whether there are any dioceses in Nigeria which in the spirit of *Fidei Donum*, could undertake such an assignment.”¹⁵⁶ This uncommon call raises new challenges for the local Church in Nigeria that is now being specifically invited to become a protagonist in mission *ad gentes* of the universal Church. But this goes beyond a sporadic sending of personnel; it involves a long term missionary commitment of staffing and bearing the financial burden of establishing new mission territories beyond our shores. Moreover, the CBCN acknowledges its on-going participation in mission to send missionaries outside the frontiers of Nigeria, when it declared that: “It is to the credit of the Nigerian Church that many of its sons and daughters are working as missionaries all over Africa, in Europe and the Americas, a development that may be termed ‘reverse evangelization.’”¹⁵⁷ Consequently, the import of the call by the Holy See is for the Church in Nigeria to intensify its missionary effort in Nigeria, as well as “devise a strategy and structure that will enable her to meet her growing responsibility for the evangelization of the continent and the world.”¹⁵⁸ When Pope Paul VI made that encouraging statement of 1969 in Kampala, “you may, and you must, have an African Christianity”, he also called Africa the *New homeland* of Christ. But perhaps, he never envisaged what is happening today in Europe and beyond concerning the crisis of vocation and missionary work. The Pope was calling on Africa to enrich and renew the Christian religion with the wealth of its cultural uniqueness and refreshing humanism.

There are also enough manifestations of practical realities that confirm Africans’ religious inclinations. From all these attributes of the vibrancy of the church in Africa, especially as witnessed in liturgical celebrations, Pope Benedict VI concluded that Africa is now a “spiritual lung for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope.”¹⁵⁹ The very fact that Nigerian priests and religious of different congregations are already on mission

¹⁵⁶ See, Letter No. 91/10 from the *Apostolic Nunciature* in Nigeria to the President of the CBCN, 22/4/2010. Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 9.

¹⁵⁷ See, “Message of the Second African Synod” (Vatican City, 25th October 2009), p. 12. Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ CBCN, *Family of God on Mission*, p. 80. Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On Africa’s Commitment, November 19, 2011, no. 13.

Cf. “SEDOS”, *How Africa is changing the face of Mission*, vol. 49, number 11/12, February, 2018. <https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>

not just in Nigeria alone but also in other parts of the missionary world goes to confirm that Africans, not just Nigeria are living up to the above description by the Holy Father. In this way too, the Nigerian Bishops show that the work of mission is not to remain on paper and impressive theoretical principles but to be put into action. The missionary mandate of Christ in which the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria and her faithful are participants is one that needs to be done in the spirit of filial sacrifice. And true to this principle, Nigerian priests are found everywhere in the globe, in the same way that the European missionaries sacrificed themselves in trying to bring the good news to the entire globe.

It is here that we try to ask the question: to what extent are the bishops taking care of the priests and religious who have been commissioned to evangelize other people outside the shores of Nigeria? Is there any thing they should learn from the modalities which the missionaries that evangelised our nation did outside what is obtainable now in Nigeria? If yes, then what is the way forward? These questions did not just arise from the moon. Something triggered the inquisitiveness of our mind. In our research map, precisely in the section about the methodological aspect of the work, we did stress that experienced realities will have much to contribute in our arguments. This researcher worked as a missionary outside his home diocese for six years. The experience is that, the poor economic situation in Nigeria is a serious factor in negativity regarding what should be the joy derivable in working as a missionary. There is a marked difference between the home support which the early missionaries received while carrying out their missionary engagement and what is obtainable today. The reverse is the case in the contemporary missionary attitude. The experience therefore shows that Nigerian priests who work as missionaries outside their dioceses are expected to support their home dioceses economically. The result is that not many would like to be posted in most of the places that need the light of Christ but with economic disadvantages. The way forward therefore, is that while CBCN is making effort towards positive response to the aforementioned request from the Mother Church, at the same time, proper planning should be put in place so as to give required support to the priests they are sending outside the shores of Nigeria.

Summary

This first chapter of the dissertation which we want to conclude, serves as foundational graphics and navigational compass that points to the best road towards a better understanding of “The mission of the Church in the light of the teachings of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, 1965 – 2017.” In it, we were able to have a definitional touch on such key concepts like Mission, Church, Episcopal Conference, etc., as they are understood and used in the

universal Church. We were also able to establish the fact of the nature of the mission which Christ has called the church to undertake. The scriptural excurses we had, proved that the missionary mandate of Christ to his disciples is a continuation of the divine plan of God the Father as shown in the Old Testament prophecies which was concretely realised in Christ himself through his actions in the New Testament for the salvation of souls.

The convocation of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII brought a deeper understanding of the Church established by Christ through the community of the apostles. This is exemplified through the efforts of the church trying to understand her mission *ad intra* in order to appreciate her missionary output *ad extra*. This ecclesial vision was made possible through the theological concept of *aggiornamento* as collectively put down by the Council Fathers. The three primordial concepts derivable from the theme of our dissertation are: Church, Mission and Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. This first chapter also took care of their conceptual diagnosis. The post-conciliar ecclesiology which forms by implication, our area of concentration, is all about the implementation of the theological cum socio-cultural impulses accruing from this Council by different episcopal conferences. Much time was therefore devoted to a better appreciation of the missionary responsibilities on the part of CBCN. In the chapter that follows, we intend to embark on a historico-missiological, and socio-cultural synopsis of the missionary activities of the Church in Nigeria. A juxtaposition of the Church of the first missionary era and the Church in the hands of the local hierarchy will be made. Here, we intend too, to establish the method of evangelization as fathomed by CBCN.

Chapter Two

II. Mission and evangelization in the local church: historico-contextual approaches

Introduction

Blessed Pope Paul VI clearly outlined the essential ingredients of missionary activities in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. They include: *Kerygma* – this has to do with the initial and proper proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ as the Saviour to those not yet at home with Christianity; *Catechesis* – this relates to the aspect of evangelization that involves deepening of the faith, life of holiness and also conscious commitment to our call as baptised Christians; and finally, *Insertion* of Christian truths or the gospel of Christ and its values into the culture of different host societies (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 22-23). The first two points mentioned above cohere with the theological importance of *sending* as the first step of evangelization and the proclamation of the good news. The message contained therein in that sending is the announcement of Jesus Christ and the reign of God to all His creatures. This idea is vividly portrayed by St Paul who argues that: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved But how can they call on one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And can men preach if they are not sent?” (Rom. 10:13-15). This last aspect of missionary activity as enshrined by Supreme the Pontiff of the Church is all about the contemporary theology of Inculturation which has gone through series of interpretation and applications in different theological circles.

The Post-Conciliar ecclesiology, more than anything else places much emphasis on the interrelatedness of the message of the gospel and human culture, as well as the earthly realities and societal cum environmental givens. Based on this fact, Blessed Paul VI defined evangelization as consisting in bringing the Good news into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: ‘Now I am making the whole of creation new’¹⁶⁰ (Rev. 21:5).” In the present chapter therefore, we intend to situate such understanding of the Church’s mission in the proper perspective of the Nigerian society. In other words, we desire to examine the prevalent situation which the Gospel of Christ and the missionaries encountered at the beginning of their missionary activities in Nigeria; the strategies used to evangelize the people. Obviously, it was never a smooth-selling adventure for them. This will give us a better plumage to appreciate their efforts. Consequently, the last part of this section will answer the question: how far has the local church authorities – CBCN

¹⁶⁰ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 17.

been able to keep the candle of missionary activities? To kick-start this chapter then, it is pertinent that we have a synoptic view of the Nigerian socio-political and religious settings.

1. Socio-cultural, political and religious background

a. A brief historical touch on Nigeria

Four very important social factors in the history and making of Nigeria worth mentioning, namely, traditional, Islamic, colonial and Christian missionary. These have had profound influence on the nature, growth and development of Nigeria as a nation and as well as the Church. The above chronological order spells rightly the four principal actors in Nigeria through whose lenses one can grasp profusely the nature of Nigerian society. These geographical, cultural and religious factors have greatly affected the nature of politics, the State and the Church, and *ipso facto*, missionary activities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. The Federal Republic of Nigeria as we have it today is located on the west coast of Africa of the north of the Gulf of Guinea with its neighbouring countries the Republic of Benin (to the west), Niger and Chad Republics (to the north), and Cameroon (to the south).

Nigeria can be divided into four geographical regions: a dense belt of mangrove forests and swamps which stretch along the coast, often as much as sixty miles wide; the forests of the Eastern and Western parts of the country; and the northern savannah, which lies on the border region of the Sahara, stretches from Sokoto to Lake Chad, and in parts reaches as far as south as Ilorin.¹⁶¹ As a country, Nigeria stands out as the most populous country in Africa with about 182, 244, 357 people. However, there is an appreciable variations among many authors regarding the above number, precisely because of inaccurate population census over the years in Nigeria. It is endowed with vast and abundant natural and human resources. Nigeria is made up of more than 300 ethnic groups with their peculiar cultural orientations and dialects. The most dominant groups or ethnic groups remain Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The three major languages of the country also have their roots in the above ethnic groups. Hence, it can be chiefly remarked that, before their encounter with European explorers and merchants in the 15th century, the people of this sub-Saharan territory were a collection of different tribes, a co-existent number of great kingdoms that had well developed governments of their own. Nigeria is a complex and multi-ethnic nation. The divisive and corroborative images of multi-ethnicity are manifested both in her internal and external structures. As such, what stands as Nigeria today was a conglomeration of distinctive sovereign states which existed as autonomous

¹⁶¹ Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, p. 20.

kingdoms, ethnic nationalities, empires and emirates before the advent of British colonial rule. Some of these states and empires were mono-ethnic in their structures with a particular system of government, and rulers who wielded great power and exercised control over religion, trade, politics, education, law and order. In that setting therefore, we have such great kingdoms as Ijaw, Opobo, Bonny, Urhobo, Calabar, Itsekiri, Bini and Oyo to the South. To the north there were Kanem Borno and Sokoto empires as well as Kano, Katsina and Zaria emirates. There were many ethnic nationalities as the Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Igala, Jukun, Tiv, Nupe and Idoma.

Instigated by political chauvinism and economic domination of human and material resources, the British colonial authority packed all these ethnic groups together under one umbrella, Nigeria, irrespective of natural and geographical boundaries. But the amalgamation refused to take into consideration the heterogeneity of Nigeria.¹⁶² Consequently, often times, Nigeria has been described as “a geographical expression, and that the amalgamation of many diverse nationalities into one geographic zone was a mistake by the British.”¹⁶³ And from the account recorded by Crowther, we also affirm that Nigeria as a name, came into being through the fabrication of the wife of Lord Lugard. Sir Frederick Lugard, the Royal governor of the protectorates, amalgamated the two protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914. “It is also on record that, about sixteen years earlier, Flora Shaw, first suggested in an article for *The Times* that the several British Protectorates on the Niger be known collectively as Nigeria. Basically, the entire Niger-area under British control became Nigeria.”¹⁶⁴ Put in another form, at the initial stage, the socio-political setting of the Nigerian society was broadly divided into: the North and the South. This classification forms the basis for understanding Nigeria’s historical ethno-regional politics, cultural and religious conflict, and socio-political, moral and ethical problems. Within this spectrum therefore, the early work of Christian missions confronted the challenges posed by some very powerful social factors, namely the traditional and Islamic factors, and the Colonial Administration. Thus, it is important that we understand some historical, geographical, political, cultural and religious factors which have contributed in shaping and defining the nature of the Nigerian Church.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ferdinand Nwaigbo, “Ethnicity and New Image of Nigeria, explorations in Creation Theology”, in, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* (ed.) Elochukwu Uzukwu, vol. 17, 2005, p. 70-88.

¹⁶³ Alemika, Etanibi and Festus Okoye, *Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Human Rights Monitor, 2002).

¹⁶⁴ Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁵ Bulus, Y. Galadima and Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity in Nigeria*, Part 1, p. 85-101.
https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/20-1_085.pdf

b. Political considerations in Nigerian Development

From the political point of view, the successful exploration of the Niger River and its surrounding territories in 1830 paved the way for the formal introduction of the political, commercial and religious (missionary) activities of the British in Nigeria. As a political entity, Nigeria is an amalgamation of many unrelated protectorates. The acquisition of Nigeria took place as follows: “Britain acquired Lagos in 1861 and *Yorubaland* in 1893. In 1900, the two protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were formed out of the R.N.C and Niger Coast Protectorate territories. In 1906, the protectorate of Southern Nigeria was integrated with the colony and protectorate of Lagos. In 1914, these were amalgamated with the Northern Nigeria protectorate to form the colonial *Nigeria*”¹⁶⁶, under the leadership of Lord Lugard.

Nigeria attained the status of an independent nation on 1st October, 1960, and was divided into three main administrative regions: the Hausa-Fulani group in the North, the Yoruba in South-western and the Igbo in South-eastern Nigeria. Eventually, it became a republic in 1963. The present population of Nigeria is thus a cross-section of the whole of those three major independent tribes, of which many political analysts call, the ‘*made-in-Britain country*’. It is therefore pertinent to note that based on this unhealthy, incompatible and forceful marriage of the three, otherwise independent regions, the entire country has always been left at the mercy of political instability, unavoidable tensions and chaos which has always resulted in inter-tribal wars. The blows of these tribal conflicts occur in Nigeria with such frequency that the country is sometimes described as a *theatre-of-butchery* and arena of a political drama. In his global description of the Nigerian tribal problems during these centuries, Raphael Nwosu suggested that “it is the moral obligation of the Church to ensure that those who form individual ethnic groups or tribes should enjoy freedom from fear and freedom from want and penury, in addition to all other fundamental rights of man, universally recognized and practised.”¹⁶⁷ The historical experience of Nigeria proves that about thirty-years of military dictatorship in Nigeria has led the country into very deep-rooted tradition in corruption, unfortunate economic problems, inaccessibility of food to the people, scarcity of commodities, lack of good health care system, epileptic power provision, inadequate water supply, massive number of half-educated youths, increase in the number of school drop-outs and mass unemployment of youths, who did themselves in the large cities as hired assassins, gangsters and armed bandits who are prepared

¹⁶⁶ Ikenga, R. A. Ozigbo, *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931. A Study in Colonial Evangelism* (Onitsha Nigeria: Etukokwu Pub. Ltd., 1988), p. 123.

¹⁶⁷ Raphael, Anyamaighiobi Nwosu, *The Church and Inter-tribal Harmony. A Study in the Nigerian Perspective*, (Roma 1986), p. 2. See, Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 23.

to take over conflicts whenever and wherever it broke out. Most of the ambitious politicians and religious fundamentalists count on them.¹⁶⁸ Another point worth emphasising is that at present, Nigeria has a thirty six (36)-state structure and six distinct geo-political zones: three in the North and three in the South. This, according to Emeka Ngwoke, is part of the country's post-independence political evolution; a process driven by many factors but markedly primed by the series of military incursions into Nigerian politics. It is also desirable to know that, at independence in 1960, the country consisted of four Regions: North (14 Provinces), East (12 Provinces), West (7 Provinces), and Mid-West (2 Provinces). With the creation of states in 1967 by the General Yakubu Gowon administration (*via a coup d'état*), an apparent systematic structural imbalance was introduced into the polity. The erstwhile Northern Region evolved into six States with 41 divisions; the East, three States with 37 Divisions; the West two States with 17 Divisions and the Mid-West, one State with 10 Divisions.

The present federal structure came into existence in 1996 under General Sani Abacha. In this instance, the old Northern Region which morphed into three geo-political Zones emerged with the following political structures: North-West: 7 States, with 186 Local Government Councils; North-Central: 6 States, with 121 Local Government Councils; North-East: 6 States, with 112 Local Government Councils. (Total of 19 States and 419 Local Government Councils). What this means is that, by contrast, the other three Regions: East, West and Mid-West (now, fused together as the South) emerged with the following structure: South-East: 5 States, with 95 Local Government Councils; South-West: 6 States, with 137 Local Government Councils; South-South: 6 States, with 123 Local Government Councils. (In total, 18 States and 355 Local Government Councils).¹⁶⁹ So many reasons have been deduced regarding this imbalance and lopsided of political setting. But it is all farce. It is simply the fruit of political manipulation which has also rendered it impossible for Nigeria to have accurate population census. Emeka Ngwoke posited that “the supposed numerical superiority of the North and the Muslims over the South and the Christians of Nigeria is one of the persistent myths of modern Nigeria and a legacy of dubious British colonial policy: the rigging of Nigeria's first national census and elections in favour of the North and the politicization of all subsequent head counts in the country.”¹⁷⁰ In more graphical form, Nwokolo opined that: The current revenue allocation formula and practice, with the states and the local governments as units of allocation is unfair

¹⁶⁸ Ferdinand Nwaigbo, “The Church and Resolution of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria”, in, *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2003, p. 11- 44.

¹⁶⁹ Emeka Ngwoke, *The Gospel and Church in Service of Society* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., Ltd., 2016), p. 9-10.

¹⁷⁰ Ngwoke, *The Gospel and Church in Service of Society*, p. 11.

.... Thus, prior to the application of 13% derivation principle, states in the Northern part of the country, took 52% of the revenue shared among the state of the federation, while the local government councils in the same North got 63.9% of all revenue shared among local government councils in the country. As a matter of fact, while the North West got 21% of all revenue shared among the states, the South-East zone got only 11%. The figure is 32.4% and 8.8% respectively for the revenues distributed among local government councils in the North-West and in the South-West....¹⁷¹ Of course, this type of analysis necessary provokes some salient questions such as: on what criteria were the States and the Local Government Councils created across this country? Why is the revenue allocation formula tied principally to population which has crippled every attempt to conduct credible census in the country?

To say the least, what we have in terms of socio-political structure appears to be a devious imposition by a clique of military officers who seem to have skewed the polity to benefit their kith and kin. Ngwoke observed that this was simply a “*poisoned cup*” (referring to the concept already used by the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka to describe the pitiable political atmosphere in Nigeria) which the soldiers bequeathed to politicians when they were forced to beat a reluctant retreat from politics in 1999 (when democracy came into existence), a hobbling reality even to this very day.¹⁷² In sum, this pluralistic nation, at the moment is experiencing the unstable time set by the thirty-two years of military regime suffocated with corruption, and pauperization of the country through importation of arms. Nwaigbo aptly argues that this plurality would have been a source of pride for the country if a unity in diversity is maintained, but unfortunately, this plurality has failed in uniting the people of Nigeria and in shaping them as a single nation. Now, this plurality is always prone to social problems and conflicts, characterized by frictions and inter-ethnic wars. Ethnicity is sometimes used to incite conflicts and at other times it is deployed as a medium to divide adherents of different religions. Ethnicity is used in Nigeria to sharpen primordial prejudices and divisions. A series of violent clashes since 1966 has been closely related to the problem of ethnicity. This ugly situation has destroyed our socio-political-economic systems, structures and human conscience and dignity.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ J. S. P. Nwokolo, “Convening a National Conference to Fashion a truly Federal Structure in Nigeria: The Rationale and the Issues (Unpublished Public Lecture, 1998), p. 2, as cited by Emeka Ngwoke, “The Role of the Local Church in Nigerian Politics Today” (Lecture at Blessed Iwene Tansi Major Seminary, Onitsha, April 20, 2002), p. 8. Cf., Ngwoke, *The Gospel and Church*, p. 11.

¹⁷² Ngwoke, *The Gospel and Church in Service of Society*, p.12.

¹⁷³ Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 71.

c. The Economic Resources consideration

In an eloquently masterpiece concerning the weapon of leadership, Mokuwugo Okoye, argued that “the type of leadership in any society is the most important element in the matrix of historical causation. It is the leadership which defines the situation and conditions of the people and the nature of their response to them and, ultimately it is this leadership which put its stamp on the future development of the society.”¹⁷⁴ This idea expressed here is very much *ad rem* when considering the economic situation in Nigeria. As a nation, Nigeria is rich in both mineral and natural resources. It is endowed with such mineral/natural resources as petroleum, coal, tin, iron ore, limestone, lead, zinc and natural gas, as well as agricultural products like, groundnut, wool, millet, cocoa, palm oil, and cashew. Other products include: guinea corn, beans, onions, maize, yams, sweet potatoes and cassava. Northern Nigeria is known for cattle-rearing. With the discovery of crude oil in the riverine territories, petroleum has turned out to be Nigeria’s main source of internal and external revenues. It is even suggested that, petrol generates over 90 percent of the country’s foreign exchange and over 50 percent of the Federal government’s revenue.¹⁷⁵

As a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Nigeria has been rated as the fifth largest oil-producing country in the world. Yet, it is not reflected in the lives of the people or infrastructural development. Today, the annual average per capita income is very low. Inflation is growing every year with the dawning of each day. The face of the poor Christ in mendicant African citizens becomes then a challenge to the Church of God in Africa.¹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the sight of huge number of school drop-outs, unemployed graduates, depressed and largely pauperized populace, have therefore given rise to high mortality rate in Nigeria. Moreover, Nigeria’s economy is the second largest in Sub-Saharan Africa, and among the world’s fastest growing sources of high quality crude oil and natural gas. Despite its oil wealth, Nigeria remains highly underdeveloped. Poor governance has greatly limited infrastructural development and the provision of social services, hindering economic development, and leaving more of her citizens mired in poverty.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, it could be said that

¹⁷⁴ Mokuwugo Okoye, “Leadership within the Nation’s Economy,” *African Guardian Newspaper* (October 5, 1992). See, Soronnadi A. Njoku, “Problems and Prospects of the 21st Century Nigerian Society,” in, R.C. Onwuanibe, (ed.), *The Relevance of the Church in the 21st Century Nigerian Society*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁵ Saro-Wiwa K., *A Month and a Day. A Detention Diary* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 162.

¹⁷⁶ Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁷ Lauren Ploch, “Nigeria: Current Issues and U. S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, www.crs.gov. 1. Cited by Francis Ezenezi, *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II’s Theology of the Laity: The Nigerian Church Experience*, A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College and the Theological Department of the Toronto School of Theology, 2015, p. 124.

Nigeria is blessed by God with an overdose of natural resources but corrupt and selfish and untutored politicians have made it a laughing stock in the eyes of the international communities. There is a total neglect of agriculture which has resulted in malnutrition, hunger and untimely death in many parts of the country. A negligible percent of the rural farmers use fertilizers. They have not benefited from any key policy from the government. Only about 25% of the rural areas are linked to major markets. The result is that more than 55% of the agricultural products of the peasant farmers such as maize, tomatoes, mangoes, etc are wasted annually because of lack of storage system and absence of power (electricity). This has therefore resulted in an uncompetitive value chain with any part of the world. Only about 2% of the annual budget of the country is allocated to agriculture. As such, policy environment on the part of the government does not favour economic growth. Overdependence on oil has totally affected the agriculture sector which is supposed to be the economic main stay in the country. Hence, the huge natural resources of the nation is overlooked and wasted. This has tremendously affected other sectors such as education, health, and infrastructural development. From this perspective, the late Nigerian Nobel Prize Winner, Professor Chinua Achebe, summarised the Nigerian economic quagmire in this form: “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.”¹⁷⁸

d. Religious consideration

At least, in principle, freedom of worship is allowed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and various religions exist side by side with each other: Christian religion, Islamic religion, Traditional African religions, and other indigenous independent churches or religions (Pentecostals). Again, using a vague percentage estimation, Nwaigbo states that, in Nigeria, about 15% of the total populations are adherents of Traditional African religions, 35% are believers in Christian religion, 10% are members of other indigenous religions, and the remaining 40% are followers of Prophet Mohammed. But in Nigeria, there is a clear evidence that the government is on the side of Islamic religion and tends always to Islamising the whole country in order to enthrone Islam as the state religion. The followers of this religion threaten too, the country and the national stability with their programme of jihad, and their continuous

¹⁷⁸ Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu-Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Pub., 1985), p. 1.

quest of grappling the seat of power. Such a religious motive is obviously intertwined with politics, which of course, bore some imprints of history.¹⁷⁹ Today, more than ever, the security of the nation is at its lowest ebb because of constant killings by the Boko Haram group, orchestrated by “*herdsmen group*” which is known to be sponsored by highly-placed politicians from the Northern part of Nigeria, and of course, Moslems. Nigeria is indeed experiencing ‘unofficial jihad’. The unfortunate situation in Nigeria is that for the Muslims, there is no demarcation between their religion and politics. Therefore, one who does not profess the same faith with them should not also be part of the political economy in the country. As such, religion is used as a veritable means of justification of all the atrocities being committed against the Christians. This is manifested in national elections, legal systems, employment, enrolment into Federal Universities and Federal parastatals, provision of basic social amenities, securities, etc. As at the present, all the segments of the security agents in Nigeria are headed by Muslims. What this means is that, at any given time, Christians live in fears because of lack of securities. The presence of these religions in Nigeria has given rise to a series of unhealthy relationships and religious intolerance among their members. The short history of the nation as an independent country is dominated by moments of religious disturbances and wars, especially between Moslems and Christians in the Northern part of the country. Based on this, some people very much believe that “Christianity and Islam, two dominant religions in today’s Nigeria, have historically (and perennially) waged destructive ‘*holy war*’, and have continued to polarize millions of human beings. This historic antagonism makes religion such a dangerous flame for Nigerians.”¹⁸⁰ It is therefore, in this regard that one can always ask the question as to how far the contemporary evangelisation mission of the church can go to quench this hurricane wave of religious fundamentalism. How far has the Church in Nigeria under the leadership of their Episcopal Conference been able to show hope to the people of God as to douse the fear which is now a daily bread to many a people of God? In this tensed up atmosphere, can the Church do more than well-researched and carefully worded homilies? Surely, the horizon is very much clear for the Church to move progressively because the foundation is already laid.

e. Cultural and social Elements in the life of the People

Culture, according to Luzbetak, refers to “the sum total of what an individual acquires from his society- those beliefs, customs, artistic norms, food habits, and crafts which came to him not

¹⁷⁹ Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, p. 22.

¹⁸⁰ *The LEADER*, Editorial: “Nigeria and Religion,” no 33, 1991, p. 1, as quoted by Nwaigbo, *Church as Communion*, p. 228.

by his own creative activity but as a legacy from the past, conveyed by formal or informal education.”¹⁸¹ As already stated, Nigeria is a pluralistic and multicultural nation. In most cases the cultures differ from one state to another.¹⁸² This can be seen from the diversity of languages that are spoken in the country and the traditions and ways of approaching religion in the various segments of the country. Hence, one can speak of Hausa culture and mentality, Yoruba culture, Igbo culture, Efik culture and so on. Although these cultures are in some sense different from each other, there exists some basic uniformity in all cultural systems. Hence, among the African [Nigerian] peoples, we find in one form or the other theistic beliefs, manistic cults, witchcraft notions, interdictions and supernatural sanctions, magical practices, etc. but the philosophy of each has its own special character in the way in which, among that people, these ideas are related to one another.”¹⁸³ The sense of sacredness is highly manifested in both the social and cultural life of Nigerians. This is in spite of their religious differences. Nigerian culture is highly shaped by the peoples’ regard for the ‘*unseen*’ who is believed to control the activities of men and their environment where “the created order, visible and invisible, bears the mark of goodness and godliness.”¹⁸⁴ Francis Cardinal Arinze, the emeritus President of the Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions, appreciates this *sense of the sacredness* as an important cultural aspect of African continent, so much so that, in a letter he wrote to the Episcopal Conferences in Africa and Madagascar (March 25, 1988), he suggested the need for the inclusion of the study of African Traditional Religion in the seminary curriculum. By this he meant that, such cultural values like, the “sense of the sacred”, respect for human life, sense of community, respect for family life, spiritual vision and respect for constituted authorities,¹⁸⁵ should not be forgotten. It is a natural heritage that cannot be easily ignored.

Indeed, it is this aspect of Nigerian people, especially those from the eastern part (Igbos), which helped in no small measure towards the proper assimilation of the gospel message. In general, also, Nigeria, has the culture that is traditionally founded on patriarchal structure. It is a culture that is highly dominated by male influence where women are generally relegated to the background in decision-making. In the three major groups of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, for instance, it is assumed that women should be heard only with the permission of the

¹⁸¹ Louis, J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, New York: 1988), p. 134.

¹⁸² Cf. Ozigbo, *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931*, p. 8.

¹⁸³ Ikenga-Metuh E., *Comparative Studies in African Traditional Religions* (Onitsha: IMICO Pub. 1987), p. 21.

¹⁸⁴ Innocent Enweh, “African Christian Spirituality: A Prophetic Spirituality,” in, J. Obi Oguejiofor and Innocent Enweh (eds.), *Ecclesia in Africa: The Nigerian Response* (Nsukka, Nigeria: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1997), p. 122.

¹⁸⁵ Francis Cardinal Arinze, as cited in, A. N. O Ekwunife, “African Traditional Values and Formation in Catholic Seminaries of Nigeria,” *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, 8:2 (1996), p. 59.

men. This is reflected in different families where they are seen to serve their husbands and unreservedly bend to their whims and caprices. Their social status is simply that of second class citizens. And as Rose Uchem puts it, Nigerian culture inherently acknowledge a certain degree of recognition and acceptance under which each gender, male or female, is treated differently in various political, social, economic and religious institutions or settings.¹⁸⁶ However, except in the northern part of Nigeria, some of the ideas expressed above have been reduced drastically, and this is attributed to the influence of Christianity and modernization. The above characteristics also help to define the measure of social interaction that exists among these separate groups of people. In some areas, what is seen as an article of faith in terms of social setting, is abhorred in other places. Even the manner of greetings and respect accorded to elders differ from one place to another. In other words, the word homogeneity cannot be found in Nigerian socio-cultural life as is seen in many of the European and American countries. This situation can be attributed to the lack of common language. The central language used in Nigeria is English which is foreign to the people. Language is the chief initiator of cultural and social life which starts from the moment of birth in a particular family. And where differences in language abound, common opinions and projects are left at the mercy of the majority. Igbos, for instance, are most of the time poetic, rhetoric, and symbolic in expressing serious issues in the society. Their language is always coloured with idiomatic expressions, proverbial and sign-oriented, especially at the gatherings of elders who are seen as the custodians of the cultural heritage and social life of the people. Almost the same thing is applicable to the other groups found in Nigeria. It is from this point of view that it is difficult to reach at a comfortable common ground on the issues of national interest. How this situation is managed and appreciated will certainly give credence to the continued and rewarding existence of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria and the mission of the Church.

¹⁸⁶ Rose, N. Uchem, *Overcoming Women's Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women*, 53-73; Similar voices raised regarding this problem include: Joseph-Therese Agbasiere, *Women in Igbo Life and Thought*-Edited with a Foreword by Shirely Ardner, (London & New York: Routledge, 2000).; Cf. Ifi Amadiume, *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*, (London & New Jersey: Zed Books, 1987). ; Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Women in African: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 45-58; Nwando Achebe, *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria: Ahebi Ugbabe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). See also, Francis Ezenezi, *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II's Theology of the Laity: The Nigerian Church Experience*, The Faculty of Regis College and the Theological Department of the Toronto School of Theology, University of St. Michael's College, 2015, p. 108.

f. Islam in Nigeria: A Brief Historical Review

Islam is believed to have been introduced into Hausaland, around 1350 – 1400, but it was not until the end of the fifteenth century that an Islamic presence was firmly established.¹⁸⁷ It is on record that Islam which entered the northern part of Nigeria was welcomed in Kano which has remained as the first Hausa state to embrace the religion with the arrival of Muslim missionaries from Mali during the reign of Sarki (King) Ali Yagi.¹⁸⁸ Of course, like any other ethnic group in Nigeria, the natives of Kano and other Hausas were adherents of traditional religion. However, they had established a central government and social structure before even the British and Christian missionaries arrived in that area. Islam penetrated Nigeria through the Northern Part of her borders. It came to Northern Nigeria about five or six hundred years before Christianity.¹⁸⁹ The first town of contact was Bornu in the North-eastern Nigeria before it overtook the entire Hausa States between 14th and 15th Centuries.¹⁹⁰ The Muslim missionaries imposed themselves on the Sarki, forcing him to accept Islam and to allow Islamic prayer regulations to be regularly observed in the city as they entered Kano. It was during the reign of Rumfa in the second half of the fifteenth century that Islam found foot in Kano with the visit and settlement of Muslim scholars and merchants. Islam was very slow to take root among the Hausa, for often the rulers and their subjects went back to their old pagan ways. It was only in the 19th century, during the Usman dan Fodio's Jihad, that Islam became deeply rooted in most of Hausaland.¹⁹¹ Through the Jihad, Usman dan Fodio tried to win the natives over from the level of personal beliefs to one of communal law. This was an attempt to shake off the remnants of traditional customs and to create a theocratic empire where Islamic laws and practices would prevail.¹⁹² Initially, Islam was propagated only among City dwellers and was chiefly patronized by the upper class for economic, social and political reasons. It was not until the time of Uthman

¹⁸⁷ B. O. Okike, *The Practice of Sharia in Nigeria: a Democratic Secular State* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd. 2000), p. 48.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. K. B. C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa*, (Book One A.D.1000-1800) (Onitsha: African Educational Pub., 1967), p. 41.

¹⁸⁹ Ikenga Metuh E., "Muslim Resistance to Christian Missionary Penetration of Northern Nigeria 1857-1960: A Missiological Interpretation", in, Metuh, I. E. (ed.), *The Gods in Retreat: Continuity and Change in African Religions*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimensions Publishers, 1985), p. 85-106. I. M. Enwerem, *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria* (Ibadan: IFRA, 1995).

¹⁹⁰ J. S. Trimingham, *A History of Islam in West Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹⁹¹ Cf. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa*, p. 41. See, Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause and Hilary Achunike, "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013," in, *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 18, 2013.

¹⁹² Cf. J. F. A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Elite* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd. 1965), p. 1.

Dan Fodio's Jihad that Islam spread to every nook and cranny of Northern Nigeria and was forced upon the people.¹⁹³

g. The fall of Sokoto Caliphate in 1903 as a ground for Christian persecution

The famous Sokoto Caliphate was founded in 1804 by Uthman dan Fodio, a Fullani, who used the Jihad as a means to gain power and territory starting from the Northern part of Nigeria. The Caliphate covered parts of Cameroon, Niger, and Mali. Sokoto in Nigeria was used as its capital. After the collapse of the Caliphate because of the British influence, Sir Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, the then British High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria delivered his famous speech on March 21st 1903, to the remnants of the caliphate in the following words: "All things which I have said the Fulani by conquest took the right to do, now pass to the British. Every Sultan and Emir and the principal officers of the state will be appointed by the High Commissioner throughout all the country.... The government will, in turn, hold the rights in land which the Fulani took by conquest from the people. The government holds the right of taxation and will tell the Emirs and Chiefs what taxes that they may levythe government will have the right to all minerals. All men are pleased to worship God as they please. Mosques and places of worship will be treated with respect by us."¹⁹⁴ It then meant that the Sultan himself and all the Emirs he appointed were to swear an oath of allegiance in the name of Allah and the prophet, but to the colonial state through the British High Commissioner. Lugard thus confirmed his position as the new authority over the Sultan, his emirs and the entire population that made up the former Caliphate. By this, Lord Lugard replaced the Sultan. That the territory was now to be ruled by the British, and not by the Sultan and his Emirs, and ruled under British laws, not under Islamic law or the Sharia.

The official educational system was no more the traditional Quranic schools but the Western system of education. English now became the official language and not Hausa or Arabic. The century-old Caliphate with all its power and glory had come to a sad end and so was the identity and pride of the northern Hausa-Fulani Muslim. The consequence of these decisions is what we are witnessing today as religious unrest and a sore Christian – Muslim relationship. Kukah described the situation thus: "There are those who ... believed that they would fight to the end and never surrender to the new conquerors. They believed that the

¹⁹³ C. A. Ekeopara, *The Development of Islam after the Death of Mohammed*. An Unpublished Handout, University of Calabar, 1996. See, Kitause and Achunike, *Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013*, vol. 3, no. 18.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Matthew Kukah, *After the Insurgency: Some Thoughts on National Cohesion*, being a lecture delivered at the 43rd Convocation at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, on March 27th, 2014.

caliphate could still be reclaimed and this is largely the lost glory that is being contested. Secondly, there were those who believed that some kind of cohabitation might be diplomatically worked out so that the religion could survive. Thirdly, there were those who believed that the new order should be supported and ways be explored to ensure a better future.”¹⁹⁵ That Nigeria is used as the theatre of mass burial today is a bad foundation laid many years ago. Today, the Christians in the Northern part of the country can never sleep with their two eyes closed. So many efforts made in the past has not yielded any desired result. The Catholic Bishops Conference, in many ways have tried to live with this situation while using the spirit of ecumenism to strengthen the religious unity.

h. The advent of Christian missionary activities in Nigeria

Having made some working clarifications regarding different religions in Nigeria, it is of utmost important that we have a more in-depth exploration into the advent of Christianity (Catholic Church) in Nigeria since that is the backbone of our work. As already stated, Christianity is one of the famous established religions in Nigeria. And historical literatures concerning the entrance of Christianity in Nigeria is not in short supply. Our concern here is not so much to sound repetitive, but it is still of utmost necessity for us to have an over view of when and where we started as a Church and where we are today. But what is common among the authors is that the journey was never a smooth-sailing adventure, thus, leaving behind many recorded casualties. Many of them even died before getting to their proposed missionary land, while some died within few weeks of their arrival on the West African coast. However, some of them who survived the initial unfriendly environment continued to preach Christ with unflagging faith, and apostolic determination. The result of their sacrifices is the abundant harvest of a vigorous Church which we see today in Nigeria and Africa in general. Indeed, they went sowing in tears, and they come back in joy carrying their sheaves, (Ps. 125:5).¹⁹⁶

i. Sowing the seed of evangelization: Early missionary encounter with the natives

One of the high points of the Second Vatican Council is the fact that it brought out in clearer terms, the universality of the missionary mandate of Christ and the need for the Church to strive at touching the ends of the earth. In other words, “All peoples comprise as single community and have a single origin, since God made the whole race of men dwell over the entire face of

¹⁹⁵ Kukah, *After the Insurgency*, 2014.

¹⁹⁶ Francis Cardinal Arinze, “*Looking for light Series*”, *Book IV*, edited by Lambert Ejiofor (Nigeria: Optimal Computer Solutions Ltd., 1990), p.104.

the earth” (Acts 17:26). One also is their final goal: God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, and His saving designs extend to all men.”¹⁹⁷ St John Paul II also stated that “there is only one divine plan for every human being who comes into this world, one single origin and goal...The differences are a less important element, when confronted with the unity which is radical, fundamental and decisive.”¹⁹⁸ For the Church, says Blessed Paul VI, “evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”¹⁹⁹ How then was this missionary evangelization carried out in Nigeria? To answer this question, we need to note that the evangelization that took place both in Africa as a continent and Nigeria as a country was not a straight forward event. It happened in stages or phases. In *Ecclesia in Africa*, we are reminded of how the missionary journey began with the first phase, the first centuries of Christianity which saw the evangelization of Egypt and North Africa. Then came the second phase, the 15th and 16th centuries when sub-Saharan Africa was evangelized. And the third phase, which began in the 19th century, “marked by an extraordinary missionary effort”²⁰⁰ (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 30). And in his first visit to Nigeria in 1982, St John Paul II, while expressing his delight for the work of the missionaries and the ongoing evangelization, and referring to the heroic efforts of the first missionaries, described the stages of evangelization in Nigeria thus: “And so, in the course of time and according to the deep mystery of God’s plan, the Good News of salvation eventually reached Nigeria, coming first to the Kingdom of Benin almost five hundred years ago. This first attempt at evangelization eventually died out. The lasting work of spreading the faith had to wait until 1863, when missionaries of the Society for African Missions reached Lagos. Then, in 1885, the Holy Ghost Fathers reached Onitsha, and, a little later, the Society for African Missions arrived in Lokoja and Shendam ... It is because of their dedicated efforts, together with the openness and generous response of your fore-fathers, that we are assembled here today at the altar of the Lord professing our one faith in God and giving glory to his holy name... The Church in your land is now largely directed by Nigerian bishops and priests, although you continue to give a wholehearted welcome to the important contribution of the missionaries.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, no. 1.

¹⁹⁸ St. John Paul II, “Address to Roman Curia” on 22 Dec, 1986, no. 3, in, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X, 2, 1986, p. 2021.

¹⁹⁹ *3Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.18.

²⁰⁰ Anthony, A. Akinwale, *How have we received Ecclesia in Africa?*

<http://dominicaninstitute.academia.edu/AnthonyAkinwale>

²⁰¹ St. John Paul II, “Address to the Nigerian Bishops,” Visit to Nigeria, Compilation of Speeches, 1982, p. 6.

i. First encounter of the Portuguese with Nigeria

The Portuguese were the first group of Europeans that set their feet on the Nigerian soil. And with their vintage position as discoverers and explorers, they started the expedition between the year 1415 – 1850.²⁰² In the first half of the 15th century, the Portuguese traders with their explorers landed at the bay of Benin under the leadership of Joao d'Aveiro; and with this event, African continent entered into another phase of history.²⁰³ Benin, one of the great empires that existed in Africa, was privileged to be the first city that welcomed '*the white man*' in Nigeria. The white men were given resounding red carpet of hospitality and acceptance, of course, being the trademark of African people, especially Nigerians. Following the warm reception accorded to them by the Oba of Benin (Chief) and his subjects, a growing interest for trade and thought of mission was aroused, and which blossomed into international trade partnership and opened a direct road for the gospel. Collaborating the three eras which St. John Paul II identified as stages of missionary evangelization in Nigeria, Oborji noted that the first era was the fifteenth century Portuguese (European) expansion along the Atlantic coast of Africa. The Portuguese missionaries who came through their sailors and explorers under the missionary juridical system of *Padroado*,²⁰⁴ were the first to preach the Gospel in a Nigerian soil, the ancient Bini (Benin) Kingdom. This took place, around 1486 AD. They came first to the riverine areas of Warri and by 1516 AD, the missionaries had penetrated into the ancient Benin City through Ughoton in the outskirt of Benin. They remained in Benin City until 1688 AD. These missionaries were given letter of accreditation to the Oba (traditional king and ruler) of Benin whose fame had spread even to Europe during this age of exploration. However, the strategic aim of the missionaries was to convert the powerful Oba of Benin who would decree the Catholic faith the religion of his large and powerful kingdom.²⁰⁵

Of course, that was a reasonable plan of action since the king was regarded then as the god. His decision in serious matters was seen as final. And at the initial stage, the idea worked, giving credence to the ecclesial dictum, that *ubi rex ibi ecclesia* (*where the king is, the church is*). It was reasoned that once the king of a particular community is converted, it became easier to convert the rest of the people since the king was regarded as the mouthpiece of his people.

²⁰² Kenny Joseph, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa* (Ibadan-Nigeria, 1982), p. 1.

²⁰³ Nwaigbo, *The Church as Communion*, p. 221.

²⁰⁴ "*Padroado*" - This concept connotes *Papal patronage* of privileges which was granted to the Portuguese sovereigns by the popes over their territories in Africa), patronage over the Church in all the lands that they would discover. This meant that the Portuguese government had privileges such as nominating the bishops who were to be appointed by Rome, but in effect the Portuguese kings became the head of the Church in all these lands. But unfortunately, the Portuguese used this privilege against the Church.

²⁰⁵ Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya: The New Era and New Evangelization*, p. 1-19. See also, P. E. Ekpu, *History of the Church of Benin City* (Benin, Nigeria: Floreat Systems Ltd., 1984), p. 1.

With the envisaged advantage in this relationship and the *Padroado* juridical system in place, Pope Eugene IV in 1442 placed all the new territories under the care of the Order of Christ, and later in 1444, was placed under the bishop of Cetua, who was given the title '*Primate of Africa*'. With this, the king of Portugal was given an unwritten authorization by the Church "to conquer the unbelievers, to subdue them, to put them into yoke and carry them into slavery,"²⁰⁶ a decision which later became the *Achilles's heel* of the Church regarding her relationship with the natives and with negative effects on the integrity of the Church. This idea will be further expounded more in the work. Schineller Peter recorded a more detailed content of the agreement in this form: "In the name of our apostolic authority, we grant to you the full and entire faculty of invading, conquering, expelling and reigning over all the kingdoms, ... of the Saracens, of pagans, and of infidels, wherever they may be found; of reducing their inhabitants to perpetual slavery; of appropriating to yourself those kingdoms and all their possessions for your own use and that of your successors."²⁰⁷ This particular decision of the Church obviously put a serious question mark on the intension of the Church and her 'noble' course of carrying the mission of Christ to the ends of the earth. Moreover, this portends a negative missiological paradigm on the part of the Church that was expected to act with the mind of Christ, the sole owner and sender of the mission. As expected, it was a welcome development to them, and a thing of joy at seeing "many black slaves converted to faith – their souls being won for Christ. Slavery was thus justified because only through it could large numbers be brought to Christ. It was not only that the greed of the colonisers and slaves dealers was ignored, but this was given theological support: because of their paganism, the heathen had no spiritual and civil rights."²⁰⁸

One may tend to ask some questions, whether the Church was then in support of man's inhumanity to man? Or, had the Church any hidden agenda different from the salvation of souls? Could it be described as coercive evangelization of missionary submission? But whatever answer that may be deciphered, the principle defiled the Christocentric missionary model of mutual persuasion. As such, Nwaigbo sees this as the greatest mistake in the Church history, because in 1455, the Portuguese kings capitalized on the loopholes and claimed the "right of *padroado*, that is, patronage over the Church in all the lands that they would discover. This meant that the Portuguese government had privileges such as nominating the bishops who were

²⁰⁶ Theophilus Okere, *Die schwarze Kirche in Afrika und die weisse Tradition aus Rom*, Quoted by Nwaigbo, *The Church as Communion*, p. 222.

²⁰⁷ Pope Nicholas V and Dum Diversas, 1452. Quoted in Schineller Peter, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (New York: 1990), p. 34. See also, Nwaigbo, *The Church as Communion*, p. 222.

²⁰⁸ Eugene Uzukwu, "Missiology Today: The African Situation", in, *Religion and African Culture*, Band 1. Inculturation – A Nigerian Perspective (Enugu-Nigeria: 1988), p. 151. Cf. Nwaigbo, *The Church as Communion*, 222.

to be appointed by Rome, but in effect the Portuguese kings became the head of the Church in all these lands, ... and only missionaries approved by the kings from among Portugal's population of one million people would be welcomed to this vast new world."²⁰⁹ But as events unfolded, it became undoubtedly clear that the Portuguese kings had the double interest of championing the process of Christianity as well as controlling commercial affairs in the territories in which they found themselves. These interests were stimulated by this special privilege of "*Patronage*" or "*Padroado*" granted to Portugal and Spain by the Holy See to explore the regions of Africa, Asia and Brazil and to convert the natives to Christianity. The Pope divided the lands that had been discovered, and those that would be discovered in the future, between these two countries. Portugal assumed responsibility for Africa, Asia, and Brazil; Spain, for Central and South America and the Philippine Islands."²¹⁰ Falk interpreted this privilege as a reward for their loyalty to the Holy See and summarised the arrangement in this form: "The Portuguese and Spanish missions were organised within a structure termed the *padroado*, created in a series of papal bulls and briefs between 1452 and 1514 and dividing the new world between Portugal and Spain, as a reward for their loyalty to the Holy See. Through these bulls, Portugal and Spain acquired extra-ordinary authority and influence over the countries they were to evangelise."²¹¹ With this unalloyed support from the Church, "the kings of Portugal, namely Alphonso, John II, Manuel and John III, launched their pioneering missionary and commercial enterprise in the kingdoms of Benin and Warri in Nigeria."²¹² Nevertheless, the arrival of the Portuguese merchants and the first set of priests gave a face-lift to the kingdom of Benin so much so that, from the commercial point of view, much trade activity developed to the benefit of the countries. For their part, the missionaries did not do much to evangelise the people. The King allowed them access to the palace, to baptise one of his sons and erect a church in his court. He had a monopoly of all trade with the Portuguese and no one could transact any business with them without his permission."²¹³

²⁰⁹ Kenny, *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*, p. 2. See, Nwaigbo, *Church as Communion*, p. 222.

²¹⁰ Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, p. 92. Hillary Ochulor contended that Portugal and Spain enjoyed this special favour from Rome because of their Catholicity during this period and their ability to resist the infiltration of the Reformation during this period. Hence, granting the right of patronage to be in charge of all missionary and economic activities in these countries was a kind of recognition and reward for their loyalty to the Holy See. Cf., Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*, pp. 35 – 45.

²¹¹ P. Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Michigan: Zondarvan Pub. House 1979), p. 75. Cf. Ochulor, p. 56.

²¹² G. M. Okafor, *Development of Christianity and Islam in Modern Nigeria* (Altenberg: 1992), p.71. See also Imokhai C. A., "The Evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria", in, Makozi A. O., et al., (ed.) *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria* (Nigeria: Macmillan Publishing Co.,1982), p. 1.

²¹³ Onwubiko, *History of West Africa Book One A. D. 1000 -1800*, p. 96.

Consequently, the missionary activities of the priests were highly pigeon-holed by the Oba. They became so engrossed in the profitable commercial activities that little thought was given as to how to expand the horizon of their missionary geography. Moreover, an unhealthy situation arose where there was a disagreement between the king and his cabinet concerning the presence of the priests. In effect, the missionaries could not go beyond the palace in their religious activities because of the conflict in the palace between the king and his cabinet and the *Uwangué*, who were opposed to the priests and to their religion.”²¹⁴ Secondly, the booming commercial activities in Benin and other cities around, coupled with the increasing interest in slave trade by the European and North American countries created enough room for distraction for the missionaries that people could not genuinely differentiate between slave trading and normal commercial enterprise. And according to Isichei, the greatest weakness of the Christian enterprise in Benin and environs at that period was its close association with the slave trade. There was a basic contradiction between converting the people and purchasing them as slaves,²¹⁵ and unfortunately, this situation was made worst by the very fact that Rome was in full support as a result of patronage (*padroada*) agreement which meant full authorization and recognition of their commercial exploits.²¹⁶ This presented enormous difficulties in later centuries when the Portuguese doggedly resisted the attempts of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, founded in 1622, to send missionaries to these territories. The endless quarrels between Rome and Portugal led to the division of mission lands into two categories: the *padroada* and the Propaganda Fide.²¹⁷

Hence, *Propaganda Fide*²¹⁸ got involved in the missionary and evangelical activities in Africa. Nevertheless, this chaotic situation later turned out to be good news not only for Africa but also for the mission and the future of the Church. In order to nip in the bud a future occurrence of this ‘missionary mistake’, the Church, through Propaganda Fide promulgated its missionary guidelines known as *ad dexteris*²¹⁹ on 10th November, 1659, to the missionaries

²¹⁴ Cf. L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst & Company 1983), p. 47.

²¹⁵ Elizabeth Isichei E., *A History of Christianity in Africa. From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Africa World Press Inc., 1995), p. 71.

²¹⁶ Cf. Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, (New York: Paulist Press 1990), p. 34.

²¹⁷ Cf. I. N. Omenka, *The School in the Service of Evangelization; The Catholic Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria 1886-1950*. Cf., Hillary Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue*, pp. 35 – 45.

²¹⁸ The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (now Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) is one of the departments of the Pope’s administrative Secretariat called *curia Romana*. Founded in 1622, the Congregation is about the largest and one of the most powerful Departments of the Curia. It was charged with the responsibility of reuniting separated Christians and to co-ordinate and direct works of evangelisation in the newly found world.

²¹⁹ *Ad dexteris* was a call for another missionary attitude to mission which is different from that of the first missionaries whose attempts to establish the Christian faith did not succeed. It urges them to draw closer to the natives, appreciate them and to identify with them and their culture and way of life.

in Africa and Indochina. Recognising people's culture and way of life as important factors in missionary activities, a section of the document puts it categorically that missionaries should "put no obstacle in their way, unless these are obviously opposed to religion and good morals. For what is more absurd than to bring France or Spain or Italy or any part of Europe into China? It is not these that you should bring but the faith which does not spurn or reject any people's rite and customs, unless they are depraved, but on the contrary try to keep them. Admire and praise what deserves to be respected."²²⁰ Apart from the wilful neglect of the values inherent in people's culture, one of the other stumbling blocks on the road to progressive evangelization during this period was the evils of inhuman trading which pushed hundreds of Black People into perpetual servitude in the hands of their fellow human beings. According to Baur, an official of the *Propaganda Fide* complained bitterly about this ugly situation in 1833 in these words: "The greatest hindrance of the missions is the slave-trade, operated by the [Portuguese] Christians of Angola. It renders our religion odious to the Africans who keep in mind their chains instead of seeing the freedom brought to them by Jesus Christ."²²¹ This is understandable since it was the same people that brought Bible to the natives that also initiated slave trading. In many quarters today, the dictum is: 'the whitemen came with two gifts: in one hand was the Bible meant for salvation, and in the other hand was the weapon of destruction in the form of slave trade which resulted in the erosion of best brains in Africa.' This stigma is still very much with the Blacks today.

ii. Second attempt: the era of *ius commissionis*

The inability of the first missionary efforts to reach other places outside Benin did not dampen the missionary spirit. As such, the intervention of Propaganda Fide regarding the separation of territorial power between the Holy See and Portugal brought strengthened faith and hope for another missionary epoch in Nigeria in the 19th century, a century described by Ochulor as missionary explosion in Nigeria in the sense that the period brought about the blossoming of the missionary interests of various missionary churches"²²² In perspective to this work, we assume this second phase to end in 1965. The third phase then would cover the period from 1965 to the present day. Nonetheless, one of the remarkable things that helped to fasten the

²²⁰ Collections of Documents of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith. Vol. I, No. 135, p. 45. As quoted by F. Arinze, *Church in Dialogue: Walking with the Other Believers* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 54. See also, Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue*, pp. 35 – 45.

²²¹ John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62 – 1992* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994), p. 95. Quoted by Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation; transforming the Church in Africa*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 264.

²²² Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*, 2002, pp. 35 – 45.

spread of the gospel in Nigeria and indeed, African missions, within this second phase is a change in the missionary juridical system from *padroado* to *ius commissionis*. The Congregation de Propaganda Fide issued the *ius commissionis*, by which mission territories were allocated to particular missionary institutes (Religious Congregations or Orders) to evangelize and administer.²²³ During this period, many religious institutes were founded in France specifically for the evangelization of Africans. Among these are the Society for African Missions, the Holy Ghost Congregation, the Missionaries of Africa (commonly known as White Fathers), the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, and so on. By this time, Portugal was virtually replaced by France in the missions in Africa. In principal, the Pope himself, represented by the Propaganda Fide, had the primary responsibility for evangelization rather than the monarch, as was the practice in the *padroado* system. The missionary institutes were therefore responsible to the pope and not to their national sovereigns in matters concerning the mission territories.²²⁴ But unfortunately, the first request made to the Jesuits and Dominicans to send missionaries to the Nigerian missions was turned down, most probably, because of the general impression that West Africa was then known as the white man's grave, "... where many go in but very few come out"²²⁵ But when approached by the Vatican, "the Society for the African Missions and the Holy Ghost Fathers voluntarily accepted the challenge and thus became the really founders of the Catholic Christianity in Nigeria."²²⁶ On arrival, these two Congregations shared the responsibilities of covering different parts of Nigeria. Consequently, the Western region and Lagos protectorates came to be assigned to the members of the Society for African Missions; the Eastern region went to the Holy Ghost missionaries; and the Northern region was later to be assigned also, to the Society for African Missions. Other missionary institutes and congregations were to come later.²²⁷

In 1863, missionaries of the Society for African Missions reached Lagos in the West of this vast country. Arinze summarized this period but with more concentration on the eventual penetration of the Catholic Church in Igboland, in the following way: "The second half of the 19th century started seeing the presence of Catholic missionary activities, precisely, from 1885 when they reached Onitsha and the surrounding hinterland. Then followed the areas east of the River Niger and south of the River Benue, which were evangelised from Onitsha as from 1885.

²²³ Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya: The New Era and New Evangelization*, p. 18-19.

²²⁴ Cf. Oborji, *Trends in African Theology*, p. 53. See, Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, pp. 1-19.

²²⁵ R. Oliver and A. Atmore, *Africa since 1800*, (London: SCM, 1978), p. 38.

²²⁶ Cf. C.A. Obi (ed.), *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 – 1985* (Onitsha: Africana-Fep Publishers, 1985), p. 5.

²²⁷ Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, pp. 1-19. See also, Francis Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, ed. Lambert Ejiofor (Nigeria: Optimal Computer Solutions Ltd., 1990), p.103-104.

In the South the missionaries found that the various peoples had a firm belief in God, in spirits, good and bad, and in ancestors, and that their worship revolved especially around the worship of the ancestors and the spirits, although God was often invoked at prayer and names were given in His honour to children.”²²⁸ The quick adaptation of the native people in this area to the new religion is therefore very much possible because of their already existing sense of theism. However, the story of missionary activities in the eastern part of Nigeria is not quite different from the experience already expressed in some parts of the country since Church Missionary Society (C.M.S. – known today as *Anglican Communion*) arrived in this area much earlier than the Catholic Church. But the difference lies more in the mode and progress of the evangelizing activities recorded. They arrived in the area known as Onitsha in July, 1857. With the aid of some local chiefs, they were able to establish mission stations around the riverine areas covering the southern part of River Niger called Ossomala in 1873; across the River Niger around Asaba in 1875, and Obosi in 1882. But as Achunike also noted, the advancement of the C.M.S at this time was very slow,²²⁹ perhaps this may not be unconnected with their missionary formula which some historians observed as being anti-culture. On the other hand, Catholic missions in Eastern Nigeria began on December 5, 1885, with a handful of priests, brothers and artisans led by Fr. Lutz of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. They became the first Catholic missionary team to settle in Igboland on the eastern side of the Niger,²³⁰ and they obtained a piece of land on which the present Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, Onitsha was built. Almost at the same time, the Society for African Missions also established the Church around Lokoja and Shendam areas, followed by St Patrick’s Congregation from Ireland followed much later, with concentration in Asaba before moving further to the hinterland. Today, this area has become the hub of Catholic Church with numerous dedicated clergy and enthusiastic lay faithful.

iii. Freed slaves as catalysts in the missionary work in Nigeria

With the end of the slave trade, the slaves were settled in Sierra Leone. It was from this place that some of them came to Lagos. They recognised the port as the place where they had been

²²⁸ Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, p. 50.

²²⁹ See, Hilary Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response to Christianity in North-western Igboland 1970-1990*, p. 43.

²³⁰ See, Celestine A. Obi, “Background to the Planting of Catholic Christianity in Lower Niger,” in, Celestine A. Obi, et al. (eds.), *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria*, p. 10-12. See also, Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven*, p. 44-45. Cf., Innocent O. Dim, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese*, p. 39-45. Cf. Ezenezi, *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II’s Theology of the Laity*, 2015.

shipped away by the slave dealers. They disembarked and went inland to Abeokuta, their home town. Soon afterwards other liberated Yoruba in Sierra Leone migrated home. Within three years it was estimated that more than five hundred liberated slaves had returned home to Abeokuta. These slaves, as we have noted above, were instrumental to the re-introduction of Christianity in that century after the failure of the first attempts by Portuguese priests. These slaves, who had become Christians in their various countries of servitude, came back to Nigeria and requested the Christian missionaries in Sierra Leone to send them missionaries to attend to their spiritual needs.²³¹ The immigrants had become converted to Christianity in Sierra Leone, and on their return to Abeokuta they missed very much the spiritual care they had enjoyed in their former abode. The missionary bodies in Sierra Leone also became concerned about the spiritual welfare of their members who had migrated to Nigeria. Consequently, Henry Townsend, a Church Missionary Society missionary in Sierra Leone, “was appointed to survey the situation in Yorubaland.”²³² These freed slaves later played a significant role in the missionary activities of the C.M.S. in Nigeria in general and in Igboland.²³³ Bulus, also affirmed the above story. According to him, the story of modern missions in Nigeria began with the freed slaves in the Americas and Great Britain. They became the pioneers and the instruments of spreading and building Christian missions on the West Coast of Africa, especially in Yourubaland, the Niger, and Cross River. One of such freed slaves was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Christian missions in Southern Nigeria began in 1842 with both the Scottish Presbyterian in Cross River and the Wesleyan Methodist in Abeokuta and Badagry.²³⁴

The ethnic backgrounds of these Sierra Leonean returnees became the primary factor behind the historical variation in missionary activity between Southern ethnic groups. The demand for schooling, and missionaries, was high among various Southern groups. Some groups were motivated by the protection missionary presence afforded them in times of war (especially in Yorubaland in the Southwest), and others in the Southeast were primarily motivated by the need to have their communities participate in the growing trade in legitimate

²³¹ Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*: pp. 22-35.

²³² J. K. Agbeti, *West African Church History*, p. 34. See, K. B. C. Onwubiko, *History of West Africa*, Bk., 2, p. 204. See also, Hillary Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue*, pp. 22-35.

²³³ Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber 1962), p. 129.

²³⁴ Galadima and Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity in Nigeria, Part 1*, pp. 85-101. See also, Dominic Ignatius Ekanem, David Windibiziri and Abiodun Babatunde Lawrence, *Nigerian Christian Leaders Journal of African Christian Biography*, Volume 1, Number 3-4, August – September, 2016. [https://dacb.org/resources/journal/1-3\(4\)/1--3-4-Aug-Sept2016JACB-booklet-NOcover.pdf](https://dacb.org/resources/journal/1-3(4)/1--3-4-Aug-Sept2016JACB-booklet-NOcover.pdf). Original Biographies from the Dictionary of African Christian Biography by Olusegun Obasanjo with commentary by Michael Ogunewu, DACB Liaison Coordinator and Deji Ayegboyin, DACB Advisor and JACB Contributing Editor.

commodities.²³⁵ As such, former slaves from Brazil, Sierra Leone and other colonies, who by 1860 had already formed a Catholic community in Lagos under a layperson, a pious catechist called “Padre Antonio,” championed Catholicism in South-Western Nigeria. In 1862, a priest of the Society of African Missions (SMA), Fr. Francisco Borghero, arrived in Lagos from Sao Tome. The pioneering work of Fr. Borghero was fruitful. With the assistance of the community, he secured lands and embarked on school and farm projects.²³⁶

iv. Third phase of the birth of the Church: the era of *mandatum*

To many ecclesial historians, especially those of Nigerian origin, the third phase of the advent of the Church in Nigeria starts with the beginning of 19th century. But I should think that this phase starts with the historic event of the Second Vatican Council which ended in 1965. My choice of this periodical phase also gives credence to our topic of this work. It was done on purpose. In writing the historical landmarks in the Nigerian missionary activities, many scholars try to get satisfied in the above three stages as we have seen. However, in the perspective of the present work, there is need for us to extend it for a better elucidation. Our reason is that, the actual flowering of Christianity in Nigeria is a postconciliar occurrence. This is precisely while we decided to limit our effort within the period after the eventful Council. The intention is to figure out how the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have been able to manage the missionary mandate in their local church following the “opened windows” of the universal church, since according to O’Collins, “understanding, interpreting, and implementing Vatican II still remain a task far from completed.”²³⁷

Secondly, it was the council that in trying to officially *open the windows of the Church*, gave enough feathers to the Church as a universal/global Church with enough tinctures of diverse cultural differentiations. Thirdly, it was this particular council which in practical terms espoused and solidified the theology of the local church, and which invariably strengthened various Episcopal Conferences of the universal Church. And of course, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria which is under review in this work is one of them. The appreciation, reception and interpretation of the content of this council document as it patterns the local Church in Nigeria could better be put in the perspective of the pastoral care of CBCN. As we

²³⁵ J. F. A. Ajayi, “Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite,” in, *Ibadan History series* (Longmans, 1965), p. 134. See also, Dozie Okoye, *Historical Missionary Activity, Schooling, and the Reversal of Fortunes: Evidence from Nigeria*, Dalhousie University Roland Pongou Department of Economics, University of Ottawa, August 18, 2014.

²³⁶ Francis C. Ezenezi, *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II’s Theology of the Laity*, 2015. See also, CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, p. 22.

²³⁷ Gerald O’Collins, Liturgical Press, 2014, Cf. <http://litpress.org/Products/8311/the-second-vaticancouncil.aspx>.

are going to see in subsequent chapters, the flowering and growth of the church in Nigeria moved with astronomical pattern in the years following the Second Vatican Council. Based on the above facts, Francis Oborji recalled the eventful first Pastoral visit of St John Paul II to Nigeria in 1982 and concluded that the third phase of missionary work in Nigeria practically started with that visit of His Holiness. Thus, the new era of evangelization which John Paul II has called our attention to, is the third phase of the evangelization of Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular, which began with the Vatican II.²³⁸ Still, talking about the actual periodization of missionary activities in Nigeria, Nwedo²³⁹ contended that it should be viewed under five phases.²⁴⁰ The last phase (1965 – 1985), according to him, is a period that gave us much to be proud of and very much to lament at. It was the period that saw the dynamic growth of the Nigerian Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers; it witnessed the rise of indigenous clergy, religious and formidable lay faithful; and therefore, the birth of the local Church in the region. But, on the other hand, it has been a period of social turmoil and political instability, a period which experienced an upsurge of our national economy into a very hopeful boom and then, a downward plunge into near helpless doom.

The period, also, witnessed multiplicity of Universities and Institutes of higher learning, of exaggerated notion of the excellence of academic degrees and a wild pursuit of these degrees, a period of unprecedented unemployment with resultant over-crowding of urban areas and its concomitant moral evils, manifesting itself ironically in the proliferation of sects and much room churches. This, too, is the period that witnessed the tremendous growth in number of the children of the Catholic Church in the territory, the period that has given us hundreds of native priests, given to Bishop Shanahan's former Prefecture 16 Dioceses, 13 indigenous Bishops, two Archbishops, and two Cardinals. It is the period which for the Catholic Church ends gloriously today with our Centenary celebrations. "Tomorrow we shall begin a new Era. How is this New Era going to end?"²⁴¹

²³⁸ Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, pp. 1-19.

²³⁹ Anthony Nwedo, C.S.Sp. (ordained for Holy Ghost Congregation), was one of the few Nigerian bishops that directly inherited the missionary mantle from the European missionaries. He was the first bishop of Umuahia diocese in the southern part of Nigeria. On December 7, 1985, he delivered a touchy homily during the centenary celebration of the coming of the Catholic Church in the eastern part of Nigeria, 1885-1985.

²⁴⁰ Anthony Nwedo speaks of a hundred years of five phases in the evangelization of Eastern Nigeria. These are: First Phase 1885-1905 (the Early arrival of the missionaries); Second Phase 1905-1925 (The Gospel seed germinates and puts on leaves of books); Third Phase Period of intensive apostolic work and remarkable growth; Fourth phase 1945-1965 (The hey-day of missionary activity and emergent nationalism); Last Phase 1965-1985 (the period that gave us much to be proud of and very much to lament at). Cf. A.G. Nwedo, *Centenary Celebration in Eastern Nigeria 1885 – 1985* (Aba, Nigeria: Uncle Felix Press, 1985). Cf. Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, pp. 1-19.

²⁴¹ A.G. Nwedo, *Centenary Celebration in Eastern Nigeria 1885 – 1985*, p. 7. Quoted by Oborji, in, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, p. 16.

But, Oborji insists that in Nigeria, the decisive moment and the local Church's consciousness of this era came with the visit of St John Paul II in February 1982. According to him, the Holy Father used the opportunity of the visit to officially hand over the work of evangelization to the Nigerian Christians through their hierarchy (CBCN).²⁴² As such, the "new era of evangelization" is an era that calls for initiatives on the part of the Nigerian hierarchy for the promotion of works of evangelization in order to grant a certain amount of autonomy to the local Church in the work of evangelization within the universal church-family."²⁴³ Again, John Paul II call for a new era of evangelization in Nigeria has its inspiration from the Vatican II mission theology. Vatican II developed a missionary theology of local Churches as agents of mission in their respective territories, however, in communion with the sister churches of the universal Church-Family and under the Petrine ministry of the See of St. Peter in Rome. The Council also developed a theology of reciprocity within the universal church-family.²⁴⁴ The Church in Nigeria for instance, having been planted through the word of God proclaimed by the pioneer missionaries and early native converts, should be now allowed to grow, making use of the nutrients from the Nigerian soil in which it has been planted. The nutrients are the Nigerian Christians themselves, their culture and traditions. It was on the basis of this principle that Pope Paul VI, in 1969 advised the missionary institutes and orders in Africa, who were still operating under the old juridical system of *ius commissionis*, to hand over the structures (which included church buildings, schools, hospitals, social centers, and so on) in their former mission territories to the diocesan bishops.²⁴⁵

As could be read from almost all the speeches he delivered during the visit, the Pope expressed his trust and confidence on the Nigerian hierarchy and the faithful in the way they are carrying out the work of evangelization and Church implantation in the country. The Pope praised the past missionary efforts. He challenged the Nigerian hierarchy and Christians in general to gain inspiration, wisdom, and strength from the heroic works of the pioneer missionaries and early Christian converts (including catechists, Catholic teachers, indigenous clergy and religious) through whose labour the Christian faith has been truly planted in the soil of the country. This teaching of John Paul II which he gave at the Mass he celebrated in Lagos

²⁴² Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, p. 1-19.

²⁴³ Oborji, *Archbishop Ezeanya, The New Era and New Evangelization*.

²⁴⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 13; *Ad gentes*, no. 22.

²⁴⁵ Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, pp. 1-19. See also, Francis Oborji, *The Mission ad gentes of the African Churches* https://sedosmission.org/old/eng/oborji_2.htm

on the first day of his arrival in the country in February 1982, is the point of departure for our understanding of the expression, “new era of evangelization” in the Nigerian context.²⁴⁶

2. The Gospel’s encounter with African Traditional Religion

a. The idea of religion as *Deo-humani* encounter

Religion is one of those words which have defied a collective approval regarding a definitive definition, both from socio-anthropological point of view and philo-theological perspective. But what is not lacking in most of the theological, as well as socio-cultural disciplines is descriptive analysis of religion in different fields. This is why some scholars would want to see the concept of religion either subjectively or objectively. Whatever may be the case, our concern here is not to go into comprehensive synopsis of religion. Rather, what we intend to establish here is that the concept of religion is not peculiar to any particular culture or group of people. We want to show the fact that the idea of religion portends the knowledge of the divine, the unseen and untouchable being, which man believes that exists but very much ignorant about his mode of existence. The intension too, is to show that the advent of Christianity in Africa or Nigeria does not necessarily mean the invension of God. It does not mean that the newly evangelized never had any idea of God before the coming of the missionaries. On the contrary, we feel that it is pertinent to establish the fact that there was already an existing relationship between God and Nigerians, nay, Africans. This relationship is put into practical terms through their traditional worship of that Unseen Being, which is known in *Igbo*land as *Chukwu*, (the Big God, which goes to say that they recognize other smaller gods, just as the Greeks and Romans) or *Chineke* (God that creates); in Yoruba as *Oluwa* and in Hausa as *Alah*.

The idea of *Deo-humani* encounter portrays the relationship between God and the created humans. This relationship is what we can call liturgy. Religion is therefore an effort which man makes through liturgical celebrations or theological thinking to understand and appreciate the immensity of God’s love and protection on the created beings. St. Anslem calls it *fides querens intellectum*. This already established foundation of searching for better illumination about God and the knowledge that this corporal world is not an end, but a preparation for the eschatological end, laid solid foundation for the acceptance of the new religion in different cultural societies in Nigeria. It is therefore a well-known fact that everything about an African man revolves around his religious life so much so that one can hardly differentiate between his social life and his religious life. In other words, K. Gyekye,

²⁴⁶ Oborji, *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya*, pp. 1-19.

& K. Wiredu, affirm that “the indigenous environment into which Christianity and Islam penetrated was (and still is), intensely religious and there was that strong awareness of and belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, conceived as the creator and sustainer of the universe and with whom humans tried to establish constant ties.”²⁴⁷

Put in another form, religious bias of man is shaped by his cultural and societal attributes. Because of its linkage to culture, it becomes difficult, if not impossible to pin down one definition of religion since culture itself does not enjoy a collective definition among theologians, anthropologists, philosophers and social scientists. At most, one settles for descriptive analysis of their attributes. From this understanding, one can chiefly decipher the idea that though man is the originator of religion, its end or the *terminus ad quem* is realisable only in God since God is the objective target of religious worship. Religion is the closest avenue of the journey to the Divine. Through it, God communicates His omniscience and obtrusiveness to man in his cultural and social settings. Hence, in the formulation of religious creeds or doctrinal and religious principles, some key words are required and reflected. These can include, but not limited to them: God as the Supreme Being, gods/deities, spirit, divinities, ancestors, (as mainly observed in the case of African Traditional Religion); man who performs the action, altars, sacrifice, religious/ethical norms as guiding principles for the divine worship, etc. It is worthy to emphasize here that the above attributes of religion are not seen as a monopoly of any one religion or society. It is also conspicuously found in the traditional African religion just as any other world religion. However, the major difference is that it is extremely difficult to have a clear-cut demarcation between an African man’s religious life from his cultural or social life. In other words, his life is his religion since his view of religion and the Divine is holistic and all-encompassing.

This idea is well graphed by Mbiti when he asserted that within traditional life in African communities, “human being lives in a religious universe...names of people have religious meanings in them; rocks and boulders are not just empty objects; the sound of drum speaks a religious language; the eclipse of the sun or the moon is not simply a silent phenomenon or nature, but one which speaks to the community that observes it, often warning of an impending catastrophe.”²⁴⁸ On his own part, Uka sees Religion as “a reality in human experience which pervades through life. It describes the way man relates with the Supernatural world or the Divine Being. This relationship finds expression in beliefs, worships, creeds and

²⁴⁷ K. Gyekye, & K. Wiredu, K. (eds.), “Person and Community”, in, *Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, 1, Washington, D. C: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 15.

symbols.”²⁴⁹ In a more particularised culture, like in *Igboland*,²⁵⁰ we have to emphasize that every thing about man, from birth to death is ritualistically done in the form of traditional and religious initiations. The nature of this traditional religion, as expressed in many areas in Africa, is very ‘communal and utilitarian or pragmatic’ according to Laurenti Megasa. That is, “people born into that traditional community were, also, born into the religion, in which they, naturally, participated as they grew up through the traditional socialization processes. The universe was perceived as a wider community, consisting of a composite of divine spirit, human, animate and inanimate elements in a hierarchical order, but directly related, and always interacting with each other.”²⁵¹ Finally, it has to be expressed here that African Traditional Religion is value-oriented. And such values include, *inter alia*, “social solidarity, harmony, cooperation, sharing, love, generosity, hospitality, respect and the value for life as well as obedience to and respect for elders. The indigenous religio-cultural background that has been outlined above offers a snapshot into the traditional environment where Christianity and Islam entered. This is to enable us to know what was in place before and to assess some of the changes that have possibly occurred after the encounter of the two immigrant religions – Christianity and Islam – with the indigenous religious and cultural universe.”²⁵² However, it must be emphasized from beginning that the encounter was not a smooth sailing one *ab initio*.

b. Christianity and African Traditional Religion: the problematics

We have taken time to examine the notion of religion and within that ambience, we gave particular attention to the nature of African Traditional Religion. It was purely deserving since it was the religion on ground when the missionaries came. Secondly, we needed to show beyond the ordinary, that Christianity did not really meet the Nigerians, and indeed, Africans as Godless and faithless group of people. It was the host religion which welcomed the new religions (Christianity and Islam) with open hands and unalloyed sense of hospitality. But whether this

²⁴⁹ E. M. Uka, “Is Religious Education Necessary in Contemporary Schools?”, in, Nwachuku, D.N. (ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Education and Development* (Enugu: Sam & Star Group Company, 1990), p.149-159.

²⁵⁰ “The *Igbo*” being referred here, and where this present researcher comes from, is one of the biggest ethnic groups in Nigeria, highly revered by their traditional religious inclination. Incidentally, this is the area where Christian missionaries of different denominations recorded an overwhelming successes. Today, this area is the greatest stronghold of the Catholic Church throughout Africa and beyond. We shall still get back to this point in the course of this work in a more elaborate way.

²⁵¹ Laurenti Megasa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant life* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997), p. 44.

²⁵² Cf. Francis Acquah, *The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present: A Case Study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area of the Central Region*, December 2011, pp.174-176.

new religion as guest properly reciprocated is to be fathomed in this part of the work. Nevertheless, in the process, we noted some of those things that have given it the impetus to be regarded as a religion in the mode of other religions in the world. From the description of the concept of religion, and the fundamentals in African Traditional Religion, we can conclude that the religion which both Islam and Christianity met in Nigeria and the rest of the African countries has all the indices and attributes to be regarded as pure religion. As such, our intake is that religion is not a concept that is exclusively reserved for any one culture. It is rather, a means of spiritual and eschatological-oriented journey and experience, or system of ideas, teachings, rites and traditions whose core foundation is faith in a supernatural, and a transcendental Being. Therefore, that Africans are “incurably religious”²⁵³ could be seen as the best foundation which they (Nigerians) used to accept Christianity. The traditional principles of moral life and social interaction was an added advantage to the first-time hearers of the good news. The much related identities of the moral principles imbedded in the African traditional life style and deep-rooted religious cleavages have are guided by the *dos* and *donts* paved way for a safe-landing of the first missionaries in Africa. We need to appreciate the already existing spirit in them before we can concretely and theologically be balanced to interpret their missionary spirit and then deepen the faith more. The success of the Church in the Old Roman empire and other parts of Europe was made possible because the evangelizers built on the ever present spirit of God found in them and their cultural and social life, not through utter condemnation and relegation of their natural theological belief in the unknown God to the level of paganism or *ignoramus* regarding the knowledge of the ubiquitous God. In other words, religion is viewed as being in the nature of man since man’s earthly life is primarily God-focused and God-oriented. It is not therefore surprising that the early missionaries were warned and given some guidelines as to handle the people they were to meet on their missionary journey.

c. Some missiological *caveats* for the missionaries

The mandate of going to the whole world to preach the good news entails embarking on a journey of uncertainties. It is in most places, a journey of martyrdom since most of the time, the missionary is met with unfriendly weather that may end in death, just as it happened to many of them that came to Africa, especially in Nigeria, where their journey was seen as ‘a journey-of-no-return’. The result was the labelling of Africa as a continent of death. However, the most aspect of the uncertainty lies with the people the missionary meets on the journey. The

²⁵³ John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (London: Heineman, 1969), p.1

degree of positive receptivity of the natives goes a long way to assessing the progress or the effect of the evangelization. The Church is very much aware of this arduous nature of her mission from inception. Consequently, the missionaries were always sent with clear directives on how to handle the situations that may confront them. However, conscious caution and diplomatic spirit of love should always be the foundation of any positive missionary evangelization. Hence, in 1659, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith advised the intending missionaries thus: “Do not regard it as your task and do not bring any pressure to bear on the people to change their manners, customs and uses unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals. What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them but only the Faith, which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wish to see them preserved unharmed There is no stronger cause for alienation and hate than an attack on the local customs especially when they go back to a venerable antiquity.... Do your utmost to adapt yourselves to them.”²⁵⁴ The Second Vatican Council recovered this positive attitude toward culture. In encountering other peoples, the Church “must implant itself ... in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances” (AG 10).²⁵⁵ The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council went further to state that the local churches are to “borrow from the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator.”²⁵⁶

These wise words were not completely forgotten in the following centuries; they were, for example, repeated with regard to the work of evangelization in Congo, where the same Congregation held that the “Catholic Church is neither Belgian, nor French, nor English, nor Italian or American; it is Catholic. This is why it is Belgian in Belgium, French in France, English in England, etc. In Congo, it must be Congolese.”²⁵⁷ The above visionary instructions is precipitated on the very premise that Christian faith is not belief independent of reasons. It is

²⁵⁴ Stephen Neil, *History of Christian Missions* (Penguin Publications, 1964), p. 179. See also, Stephen, B. Bevans, and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 192; Roger P. Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 122; *Collectaneae Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide* (Rome, 1907), 1, no. 135, as quoted by Oliver Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1992), p. 13.

²⁵⁵ Schroeder, *What is the Mission of the Church?* 122.

²⁵⁶ *Ad Gentes*, no. 22.

²⁵⁷ Oliver Onwubiko, *Theory and Practice of Inculturation* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1992), p. 13. See also *Sylloge praecipuorum documentorum Summorum Pontificum et Sacrae Congregationis Romanorum ad usum Missionariorum*, Rome, 1939, no. 206.

a belief that seeks to understand. If the church has to teach all nations, it has to re-examine its methods in order to formulate a more appropriate and efficacious means of handing on the message of salvation.²⁵⁸ From another perspective, it shows ample appreciation by the Church that it is not ignorant of the fact that man is generally religious by nature and this is better expressed in a peculiar social and cultural environment.

d. The initial encounter of the Gospel and the African Traditional Religion

To some African theologians, one of the greatest problems that the missionaries in Africa had with the religion was their inability to be patient enough in some areas to study the religion in order to sift the good elements imbedded in it. As such, they saw it as a problem to be solved rather than an avenue to be explored for a more effective evangelization. Few instances will suffice here. It was generally believed that the first missionary outreach in Africa was conceived as a venture to rescue souls from the “devilish continent” for God. Here, such great Nigerian theologians like E. Ilogu, L. Mbefo, A. Ekwunife, O. Onwubiko, give us a better compass. They are all of the opinion that the initial mistrust and neglect of the people’s culture painted negative picture of the missionary approach. The bid to snatch souls from the devil could be read against a generalizing remark credited to Levi-Bruhl as to how an untutored African can claim to know God. Bruhl’s level is that of impossibility of the knowledge of God or Absolute, or the Supreme Being by Africans. In which case, the discussion about African theism does not arise. As such, the report of Sir Samuel Baker to the Ethnological Society of London read: “Without any exception they are without a belief in a Supreme Being, neither have they any form of worship or idolatry, nor is the darkness of their minds enlightened by even a ray of superstition. Their mind is stagnant as the morass which forms its funny world.”²⁵⁹ Edmund Ilogu also recorded in his book that: “the conference held at Onitsha from May 12 – 14 and June 3rd and 4th in 1914, between the missionaries and the native Christian leaders on how to Christianize some Ibo (Igbo) ‘native customs’, as well as to decide which ones should be so Christianized, failed to achieve any tangible result. Almost all the various examples of ‘native customs’ that came before the conference were regarded as ‘heathen practices’ about which a Christian man should not concern himself.”²⁶⁰ The tendency to stigmatize and thus condemn traditional mores, customs; the use of such characterizations as the ‘natives’, ‘barbarians’,

²⁵⁸ Luke, Nnamdi Mbefo, *Towards a mature African Christianity* (Nigeria: Spiritan Publications, 1989), p. 36.

²⁵⁹ Baker Samuel, “The Races of the Nile Basin”, in, *Transactions of Ethnological Society of London*, 1867, no. 5.

²⁶⁰ Edmund Ilogu, *Christianity and Ibo Culture* (New York: NOK Publishers Ltd., 1974), p. 217.

‘savages’ and ‘bushman, invariably was indicative of their approach from the ‘arrogance’ of a superior culture. And according to Mbefo, the consequence is that a large number of the missionaries never really settled down to know and understand the people among whom they lived. They taught the faith through a catechism that told the natives nothing about their world of experience, learnt by rote but irrelevant to life.”²⁶¹

Appreciation of environment and cultural givens of a particular area where one finds himself surely helps in the integration process which of course is an added advantage for the visitor. Where this is not possible, it becomes a herculean task for the visitor to understand the people. Of course, the effect is that many Africans who could have been of great help to the missionaries could not do otherwise because they were not seen as real human beings. This is of particular reference to Nigeria, especially among the Igbos of eastern Nigeria. Robertson Smith puts it succinctly when he wrote, “No positive religion that has moved man has been able to start with a *tabula rasa* and express itself as if religion were beginning for the first time; in form if not in substance the new system must be in contact all along the line with the older ideas and practices which it finds in possession.”²⁶² He went further to expatiate the idea that “a new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to religious instincts and susceptibilities that already exist in its audience and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which all religious feelings are embodied and without speaking a language which men, are accustomed to all these old forms, can understand.” Unfortunately, this particular attitude was far from being used by the early missionaries on Nigerian soil and indeed, Africa as a continent. In effect, traditional Africans were, and are still in many quarters, rated terribly low, such that they are not supposed to be capable of having an authentic concept of God. Many of their actions were highly supportive of Emil Ludwig’s sarcastic questions of: “How can the untutored Africans conceive God? How can this be? Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing.”²⁶³ Bolaji Idowu did enough work in trying to negate the above stance of Ludwig and his colleagues from the background of Yoruba²⁶⁴ religious beliefs.

²⁶¹ Luke, N. Mbefo, *Towards a Mature African Christianity*, p. 37.

²⁶² William Robertson Smith, “Lectures on the Religion of the Semites Second and Third Series, edited with an Introduction and Appendix by John Day, in, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 183, *The Religion of the Semites*, originally published in 1889 (2nd edition, 1894; 3rd edition, 1927, *Lectures On The Religion Of The Semites The Fundamental Institutions* (The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 2. See, U. E. Umoren, “Symbols and their Meaning in West Africa”, in, *Evangelizing Mission of the Church in West Africa*, ed. Rev. Sr. Ugochukwu Agbakwuru (Nigeria: AWACC Publication, 1993), p. 82-100.

²⁶³ Bolaji, E. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman Group Ltd., 1977), p. 88.

²⁶⁴ “Yoruba” as a word stands for one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Predominantly found in the Western part of the country. The word also goes for the formal language of that group. The first official contact of the

According to him, “the Yoruba have no word for angels of God, the divinities are His angels. No wonder they say *angeli*, as Christians, and *malaeka* as Muslims. In sum, God is neither *deus incertus* nor *deus remains*, as describing God in African perspective. The Yoruba, in the final analysis, are fond of saying: “*I’agbara Olorun*” (by God’s grace): *E je k’a fi gbogbo nnkan le Olorun lowo* (Let us leave everything in God’s hands, i.e. God will take care, and ensure things work out as one wants.) Such Yoruba expressions correspond with St. Paul’s teaching that God has revealed Himself and His will to all human beings, ever since the creation of the world (Rm 1:19). Thus, each people will worship God according to their own understanding and peculiarities.”²⁶⁵ The Igbos of eastern part of Nigeria, regarded highly for their religious inclinations, place more emphasis in the worship of God (*Chineke/Chukwu*) and His overflowing love and power over the created universe, so much so that greater percentage of the names given to their children reflect their unwavering belief and trust in God. Such names like: *Chukwudi* (God exists), *Chukwuebuka* (God is great), *Chukwuma* (God knows everything), *Chinenye* (God gives), *Chinwendu* (human life belongs to God); *Chinaza* (God answers), etc., are household names in their culture. When confronted with difficulties and uncertainties in life, their expressions and interpretations of such situations reflect their knowledge of God as omnipotent and omniscience. *Alagbarachioso*²⁶⁶ is a name which my father inherited from his grandfather who lived and died about ten years before the advent of Christianity in Owerre-Ezukala, Nigeria. At the same time, *Ahuruchianya*, is my mother’s name which was given to her by her parents who never saw the white missionaries and their religion. These two names serve as worthy examples of Nigerian, nay, African theistic view of the universe which also permeates their entire social and religious life. The inability to confront and preach the gospel to the people from this religious background created a lot of tension between Christianity and traditional religions in Nigeria. At most, one can safely say that the meeting of the two religions, based on

“white man” with Nigeria (Christian missionaries inclusive) took place in this zone. With the existence of the biggest sea port in Africa, this zone also boasts of the biggest market.

²⁶⁵ Bolaji, E. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London, Longman Group Ltd., 1977), p. 140. Cf., U. E. Umoren, “Symbols and their Meaning in West Africa”, p. 82-100.

²⁶⁶ “*Alagbarachioso*” as a name in *Igboland*, is highly theological and philosophical name given to a male child in a family. It can also be used as a consolatory expression to a person or family when hit by death or unsurmountable difficulties in life. However, whether used as a name of a person, or otherwise, the meaning, which is interpreted in an interrogative form, means, “can you run away from your God?” Placed in a hermeneutical perspective, it coheirs the ubiquitous nature and omnipresence of God in human affairs, so much so that as human beings created by Him, no one can run away from Him. *Ahuruchianya* is also an affirmative form of expression to interpret the obtrusiveness of God. Though, He cannot be seen by humans, His presence is unavoidably felt in human affairs. The Psalmist puts it clearly when he tells us that “God stays in heaven and oversees what is happening on earth” (Ps. 33: 13). The name has also a theological tincture iced by Christ. Thus, “no one has seen God, except the Son....” (Jn. 1: 18, 6: 46; Ex. 33: 20; 1 Jn. 4:12).

misinterpretations on the part of the missionaries, and fear of the unknown, on the part of the native people, was an unhealthy marriage which produced half-baked Christians.

The effect is still in our midst today where religious syncretism is on the high level in the contemporary Nigerian society. The gravitation of the Nigerian natives to the new religion was not an easy one since the missionaries could not understand the language of the traditional religion of the people in the form of their symbolic, mythical and cultural representations. This resulted in so much resistance in many parts of the country that truly affected both the missionaries and their missionary efforts. Today, the CBCN has no option than to find reasonable ways of handling the situation since this has given credence to the contemporary syncretic posture being experienced today in the church in Nigeria. It is a missiological problem which faces CBCN. In Igboland, the youths are the most vulnerable who tend to go back to the traditional religion. However, the required ‘voice’ and contribution of the Catholic bishops was heard at the right time. But we have to note that at the latter years of the Church, different papal encyclicals show that there is an appreciable understanding of that the Church can always produce better fruits in the evangelization process when different cultures of the world are accorded required importance. The stance of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria in this regard is seen below.

i. CBCN’s interventional approach (between ATR and Christian religion)

Like Christ, “Christianity has come not to destroy but to fulfil”,²⁶⁷ and the Church on her own part exists in this world to give glory to God through Jesus Christ, and her actions and mission take their meaning from this end. She is a spiritual society – and yet she is not merely spiritual because her members have bodies as well as souls, she feels for them and with them. Consequently, CBCN acknowledges the fact that as the Church pursues her spiritual purposes she is aware that other bodies exist side by side with her who also pursue spiritual purposes. Pope Pius XII already stated that “the herald of the Gospel and messenger of Christ is an apostle. His office does not demand that he transplant European civilization and culture, and no other, to foreign soil, there to take root and propagate itself. His task in dealing with these peoples, who sometimes boast of a very old and highly developed culture of their own, is to teach and form them so that they are ready to accept willingly and in a practical manner the principles of

²⁶⁷ Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *Pastoral Letters and Communiqués – 1960 – 2002. Specifically, “The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria, Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy. October 1st 1960,” in, The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on Issues of Faith and Life, ed. Peter Schineller, A publication of Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Nigeria: Daily Graphics Nig., Ltd., 2003.*

Christian life and morality; principles, I might add, that fit into any culture, provided it be good and sound, and which give that culture greater force in safeguarding human dignity and in gaining human happiness. Catholic inhabitants of missionary countries, although they are first of all citizens of the Kingdom of God and members of His great family, (*Eph. 2:19*) do not for all that cease to be citizens of their earthly fatherland.”²⁶⁸ The Catholic Church also appreciates the fact that Nigeria is a multi-religious society, and as such, has always recognised the good will and sincerity of other religious communities who seek to worship God in the way that seems best to them.²⁶⁹

Moreover, the Church, which is the Body of Christ, has continued the mission of Jesus in this world from one generation to the next by being in turn inserted in the human condition, and seeking to transform it from within. CBCN therefore concluded that in line with this mission of the Universal Church, the Church in Nigeria has, over the years, undertaken to articulate the concerns, the legitimate aspirations and just expectations of Nigerians.²⁷⁰ Based on this, CBCN asserts that pagan religion is human religion which also shares in human achievement and in human weakness. In line with the thoughts of Pope Pius XII, they affirm that ‘even though since the fall of Adam, human nature is tainted with a hereditary fault, it remains for all that naturally Christian. Enlightened by divine truth and strengthened by grace it can be lifted up to true virtue and the supernatural life.’²⁷¹ They conclude that though traditional religion must give way to religion revealed by God through His prophets and His Son, it can be baptized like the human nature from which it springs with all that is good in it. In the spirit of elucidation, the bishops posited that African pagan religion may be summed up as characterized by three fundamental sets of beliefs: (1) Acknowledgement of a high god. (2) Belief in lesser gods and spirits. (3) Veneration of ancestors. Two sets of practices expressed these beliefs: (1) Sacrifices. (2) Contact with the spiritual world through material symbols. Basically Christianity can accept such beliefs and practices. It must though at the same time reject aspects of them, purify some of them, and elevate all,²⁷² since “the Catholic Church does not despise nor reject pagan teachings but she rather completes and perfects them with Christian

²⁶⁸ Pope Pius XII, On promotion of Catholic Missions, *Evangelii Praecones*, Libreria Vaticana, June 2nd, 1951, no. 60. Cf. *Discourse to the Directors of the Pontifical Missionary Society*, 1944; A.A.S., 1944, p. 210.

²⁶⁹ CBCN, *The Church Teaches*, p. 155. CBCN’s first official joint document was issued on the 1st of October, *Independence Day Celebration*, with the caption, *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria*, Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy. October 1st 1960, p. 155.

²⁷⁰ CBCN, *The Church Teaches*, p. 161.

²⁷¹ Pope Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones* (Libreria Vaticana, 2nd June, 1957), no. 57. Cf. Tertull., *Apologet.*, cap. XVII; ML, I, 337A.

²⁷² CBCN, *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria*, 1960.

wisdom once they have been freed of error or defect.”²⁷³ Going further, they enunciated the possible methods through which the Christian religion can integrate African beliefs through: (1) the doctrine of the infinite and triune Creator, (2) Belief in the greater and canonized saints and in the pure spirits whom we call angels. (3) The fellowship or communion of the saints. African religious practices are perfected in: (1) Christian sacrifice: Cross and Eucharist. (2) Christian use of symbols: sacraments and sacramentals.²⁷⁴

In this detailed analysis of the positives of the African Traditional Religion, the Bishops tried as much as possible to disabuse the minds of many regarding the “futility” of the religion which Christianity met on the ground. Indirectly they tried to redirect the minds of the people and by so doing, re-established the teachings of the Universal Church regarding other religions. In a more specific tone, the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, insisted that the Church has never fostered an attitude of contempt or outright rejection of pagan teachings²⁷⁵, rather, the Church has been on the vanguard of preserving artistic and philosophical values which are capable of enriching the culture of the human race.²⁷⁶ Fundamentally, therefore, the Church, does not identify itself with any one culture, not even with European and Western civilization, although the history of the Church is closely intertwined with it; for the mission entrusted to the Church pertains chiefly to other matters, that is, to matters which are concerned with religion and the eternal salvation of men.²⁷⁷ Pope John XXIII, following the footsteps of his predecessor, Pope Pius XII reminded the intending missionaries about the necessity of “constantly keeping before their mind’s eyes their ultimate goal, which is to establish the Church firmly in other countries, and subsequently to entrust it to a local hierarchy, chosen from their own people.”²⁷⁸ In all, CBCN still understands that this aspect of the mission of the Church is an on-going project which remains problematic to them. The mission given to them by the universal church is to use the available social, religious, and cultural resources to make the gospel of Christ penetrate the lives of the people.

²⁷³ *Evangelii Praecones*, no. 58.

²⁷⁴ CBCN, *The Church Teaches*, 1960.

²⁷⁵ *Evangelii Praecones*, no. 43; AAS 43 (1951) 522). Cf. St John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, On the Missions, Native Clergy and Lay Participation (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, November 28, 1959), no. 19.

²⁷⁶ *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 19.

²⁷⁷ *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 19. Cf. “Address to Participants in Second World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists,” AAS 51 (1959) 260. Brief summary in TPS (Summer 1959) v. 5, no. 3, 290-1.

²⁷⁸ *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 8. Cf. *Evangelii praecones*, AAS 43 (1951) 507.

ii. Conflicts between the Church and Islamic religion

“Nowhere else in Nigeria is Western education so unpopular as is in the North. And in no other part of the country are Christians so hated, persecuted, discriminated against and oppressed as in the North.”²⁷⁹ The above statement by Adamu truly sets the tone and puts in concrete perspective the nature of Christian-Muslim relationship in Nigeria. Sadly enough, the sour relationship is not a child of contemporary history. However, in recent years, the number of deadly conflicts which have sent uncountable number of people (Christians) to unprepared graves and left thousands homeless have become so frequent for comfort. These conflicts or insurgences have assumed different names such as *Maitatsine* and *Boko Haram*. Of recent, another dangerous group under the name militant herdsmen has continued to cause untold hardships to the people, especially christian-dominated areas. From the available information, this group is being sponsored by highly-placed Muslims. The only reason one can give for all these is that Muslims see every other person as an infidel. In their own religion, to kill an infidel is a heroic project and worthy of ample rewards. The pertinent question to be asked and answered in order to get to the root should be, what is the cause of this unhealthy relationship since both Christianity and Islam were not originally found in Nigeria?

The first Christian Missionaries to ever set foot in the far North of the country (the headquarters of the Caliphate) were the members of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). They arrived in 1893 in order to sow the seed of the Gospel. But they were denied the necessary permission to do so. However, that permission would be given in the late 1930s, after the British must have taken control of the territory. But the first Catholic Missionaries, the SMAs were luckier. Not only because they arrived in 1907 after the fall of the Caliphate, but also because they first settled not in the far North, like the SIMs but in Shendam, Plateau State, which was outside the former territory of the Caliphate. It is therefore clear here that the arrival of Christianity in the North took place almost at the same time with the conquest of the Caliphate by the British. It is not difficult to see why the British colonialists and the Christian missionaries came to be seen as one and the same thing; having the same goal, namely to eliminate Islam and evangelize the Muslims. The group called *Maitatsine* started in the late 1970s and the early 1980s to fight this. Its leader was Mohammed Marwa who directed his criticisms and attacks, first of all, at the prominent Islamic clerics and Sheikhs who were highly regarded and well respected. He claimed that such respect and veneration was not only Western, but anti-Islam

²⁷⁹ Thomas Adamu, *Boko Haram and its havoc on Nigeria*, (Being a paper presented at the meeting of Nigerian Priests and Religious in Austria (NIPRA), in Lasse – Austria, on 29th March, 2016).

and unorthodox and therefore should be discontinued. He held and preached that anybody who believed in and followed the Western way of life was a *kafir* – Arabic word for an unbeliever or pagan. Such things like riding bicycles and motor bikes, driving cars, using torchlights, wearing spectacles and wrist watches, etc. were Western and therefore inconsistent with Islamic beliefs and principles. This scenario will help us to appreciate the antagonism of the typical northern Hausa-Fulani Muslim towards any form of Western value and what is perceived to have any connection to it. Here, their radar is constantly flashing on the Christians.

3. Mission in the hands of local church authorities

a. Short historical framework

In 1959, when St John XXIII wrote his encyclical on “Missions, Native Clergy and Lay Participation”, (*Princeps Pastorum*), the entire Africa had only 25 bishops. And by 1957, Africa had only 1811 priests. Yet, in a joyful mood for the increase in vocation, the Holy Father called on the entire Family of God “to join in rendering thanks to God for the fact that *a numerous* and elect legion of bishops and priests has arisen in the Mission territories.”²⁸⁰ Indeed, the Church’s ultimate goal of establishing the Church firmly in other countries, and subsequently to entrust it to a local hierarchy, chosen from their own people,²⁸¹ and which has always been the principal and constant goal of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith,²⁸² was on the desired road of fulfilment. Earlier before then, Pope Benedict XV, in his Apostolic Letter *Maximum illud*, argued that “a native priest, having a place of birth, character, mentality, and emotional make-up in common with his countrymen, is in a privileged position for sowing the seeds of the Faith in their hearts: indeed, he knows much better than a stranger the ways of persuasion with them.”²⁸³ In these words, the Holy Father gives a supportive stance for indigenous vocation since priests from particular cultural background would be able to interpret the gospel better to the people using their cultural settings, idioms and better symbolic signs and mythology. As already noted earlier in the work, the event of Second Vatican Council did much to strengthen this belief and vision of the Church in a more concrete form by strengthening the Episcopal Conferences of Bishops in different regions of the missionary

²⁸⁰ *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 9.

²⁸¹ *Evangelii Praecones*, AAS 43 (1951) 507). Cf. *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 8.

²⁸² *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 8.

²⁸³ Pope Benedict XV, Apostolic Letter, On the Propagation of the Faith throughout the World *Maximum illud*, November 30, 1919. AAS 11 (1919) 445. See also, St John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, no. 13.

world. Today, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, with their thousands of priests,²⁸⁴ stand as the Christ's answered prayer of asking "the Lord of the Harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest" (Lk 10: 2), especially at the present time, when "the harvest indeed is great," (Lk. 10: 2). Hence, on their own part, CBCN, while expressing gratitude to God for the bountiful harvest in Nigeria especially with the vibrant and dedicated lay faithful have continued to carry on the mission of Christ in conformity with the Universal Church's vision with its Nigerian cultural colouring amidst some observable challenges. The positive effects of these efforts are being manifested such that in 2013, Nigeria, which had fifty-two Catholic dioceses and nine ecclesiastical provinces, today boasts of fifty six dioceses, fifteen Archbishops, fifty nine bishops, seventeen Major Seminaries and thirteen catholic universities. Indeed, the Nigerian Church, under the leadership of CBCN has become truly a local church, whose track of achievement has been attributed to the heroism and dedication of the missionaries who announced this faith to Nigerians.²⁸⁵ The good news too, is that almost all the dioceses have their own separate Minor seminaries with hundreds of admissions every year. The same also goes for Spiritual Centres where qualified candidates are prepared before starting their philosophical training.

The emergence of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria as an organ of unity of the local churches makes concrete the remarkable cooperation that existed between the Bishops of Nigeria before 1950 when a local hierarchy was established. Other aspects of the Nigerian Church which depict its growth and maturity are, among other things, the fact that the late Dominic Cardinal Ekandem was ordained as the first Bishop in Anglophone West Africa in 1954 and made Cardinal in 1976. In 1985, Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, became the second Nigerian Cardinal. Also in 2003, the retired Archbishop of Lagos, Anthony Cardinal Okogie became the third Nigerian Cardinal.²⁸⁶ Nigeria, as a nation gained her political independence from Britain officially on the 1st of October 1960. It was a joyful day for the nation marked with pumps and pageantry. The Catholic Church in Nigeria, under their *Episcopate* (CBCN), was not left out. The Bishops, while rejoicing with the nation did not lose sight of the enormous responsibilities facing her and the nation. As such, in an official pastoral statement, they

²⁸⁴ As at the time of this research, Awka Diocese (the researcher's diocese), which is one of the Dioceses in Nigeria, has six hundred and eight priests working in Nigeria and in different parts of the world. This number does not include those who were ordained in different Religious Congregations.

²⁸⁵ See, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God*, no. 37.

²⁸⁶ See, "Pope Benedict XVI's Address to New Cardinals," <http://www.zenit.org/en/article/pope-benedictxvi-address-to-new-cardinals-and-their-families>. Cf. Francis Ezenezi, *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II's Theology of the Laity*, p. 107.

reminded themselves that, “Each age and country is meant to re-live and make its own the faith that Christ gave to the apostles and first Christians.”²⁸⁷ With this in mind, they got themselves focused on the realities on ground concerning the proper identification of the Church with the faithful and the entire citizenry regarding shortage of vocation to cater for the envisaged increase in the Lord’s bounteous harvest in the country. In other words, the euphoria of independence celebration did not blur their vision for the mission of the church. This is a rediscovery of the local churches as the primary agents of mission. On the part of the Nigerian episcopate, one would then ask a pertinent question as to how has the Catholic Bishops Conference been able to handle the responsibilities of continued missionary evangelization?

From the onset, CBCN, while appreciating the missionary efforts of the Europeans, noted with confidence and trust in God that, great progress has indeed been made and the Church has taken root. Thus, in their first meeting and communique issued on the 1st October, 1960, where they outlined their new vision for the Church in Nigeria, they first recalled the consoling words of the prophet Isaiah. ‘And the Lord God will make good His promise for all the world to see; a springtime of deliverance and renown’ (Isaiah 61: 11). Trusting in God and the ever-presence of the Holy Spirit in the church, the bishops believed that in spite of attendant difficulties in the country, within a foreseeable future, “the great aim of missionary work will have been realised in Nigeria: a Church, ruled and guided by a Nigerian hierarchy and clergy, and strong in spiritual life of its members. And this Church will contribute to the life of the Catholic Church in other parts of Africa and of the world.”²⁸⁸

Their first step was the fundamental understanding of the Church as divine institution and her mission on earth, which is oriented towards eschatological completion is operated on two different but coordinated segments: *ecclesia universalis* and *ecclesia localis* (*ecclesia particularis*). In either of the two segments, man stands out as the central figure in her missionary ecclesiology in terms of receptivity. In other words, the mission of the church is basically situated around the effort of the Church in placing man on the right path towards salvation and fruitful eschatological journey. Man is both the evangelizer, as well as the evangelized. Human beings are both universal and local in his daily activities, spiritually and socially. The Pope as the successor of Peter, “mediates between the divine universal church and the local church.”²⁸⁹ The Church exists in the here and now, yet has a goal “beyond history”

²⁸⁷ CBCN, *Pastoral Letters and Communiques – 1960 – 2002*.

²⁸⁸ CBCN, *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria*, October 1st 1960.

²⁸⁹ Robert Kress, *Theology of the local Church*.

<https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/.../2770/2405>, 2012.

when God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness (LG, 39, SC 5). Hence the *perichoresis* of the local and universal Church evokes as its proper life-style “collegiality.”²⁹⁰ This collegiality remains one of the impulses of the Second Vatican Council. In other words, the theology of the local church was given much boost after the Council, with particular credit to Blessed Pope Paul II who was able to interpret the Council’s “opening of the widows to receive fresh air” from the proper establishment of the episcopal conferences for a better missionary activities of the church in different cultural settings. Starting from the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, a great positive change occurred in different parts of the world with regard to the mission of the church. In Africa, Blessed Pope Paul VI challenged the church to look inwards in their culture to make the gospel of Christ home to the people. Indeed, CBCN got the message from the Holy Father, St John Paul II in his two different visits to the country, 1982 and 1998, and swung to more action in terms of practical evangelization of the people. And the constitution of the Church, *Gaudium et Spes*, reiterated the need for a linkage between the gospel and the life situations of the people thus: “There are many ties between the message of salvation and the human nature. For God, in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch. Likewise, the church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures to explain the message of Christ to all nations.”²⁹¹

b. The indigenous clergy and religious as vanguards of evangelization

In *Redemptoris Missio*, St John Paul II succinctly noted that “Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is *given to others!*”²⁹² Giving it to others entails the core attribute of mission. And surely, the church in Nigeria has, over the years strived to give the good news to people in many different ways. They see this mission as a gift as well as a responsibility handed over to them by the European missionaries who sacrificed so much for the Church to survive. They also try to understand the missionary evangelization as a challenge both from Christ and the universal church as evidenced from the pastoral constitution. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council challenged young Churches to also take up the task of sending out missionaries beyond their frontiers: “In order that this missionary zeal may flourish among

²⁹⁰ Robert Kress, *Theology of the local Church*.

²⁹¹ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 58.

²⁹² *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 2.

those in their own homeland, it is very fitting that the young churches should participate as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church, and send their own missionaries to proclaim the Gospel all over the world, even though they themselves are suffering from a shortage of clergy. For their communion with the universal Church will be somehow brought to perfection when they themselves take an active part in missionary zeal toward other nations” (AG 20).

In his all-important address in the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) in Kampala, Uganda in 1969, Pope Paul VI also challenged the church in Africa in the following statement: “Africans, you are now your own missionaries”,²⁹³ originally meant as a call for missionary collaboration among the local Churches in Africa. Today, the Church in Nigeria interprets this missionary appeal to the African Churches as a prophetic invitation to participate in the universal mission of the Church.²⁹⁴ Detecting the missionary potential of Africa, St. Paul VI prayed for the grace of “fertilizing the good seed and stirring up the human and Christian energies” inherent in the genius of African vocations for both spiritual and temporal fulfilment. He went further to remark that Africa would soon be capable of bringing to the universal Church “the precious and original contribution of negritude” which the Church of Christ urgently needs at this particular moment in history.²⁹⁵ He encouraged African churches to enter the hermeneutic of history, remembering those who came from outside to evangelize them. Such a history he believed confers on the local Church the mark of its authenticity and nobility, its mark as apostolic.²⁹⁶ An actualization of what the Holy Father described as “*an impulse from the heart of Africa*” is the establishment of the Missionary Society of St Paul, Nigeria.²⁹⁷ Writing in a similar vein, St. John Paul II remarked that “the Church in Africa, having become “a new homeland for Christ”, is now responsible for the evangelization of the continent and the world.”²⁹⁸ A more important challenge to the Church

²⁹³ St. Paul VI, *Address to the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, SECAM*, Kampala (31 July 1969), 1: AAS 61 (1969), 575.

²⁹⁴ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 10.

²⁹⁵ St. Paul VI, “Homily” The Eucharistic Celebration at the conclusion of the Symposium organized by the Bishops of Africa, Kampala, Uganda 31 July 1969.

<https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.

²⁹⁶ SEDOS, *How Africa is changing the face of Mission*. <https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.

²⁹⁷ See, SEDOS, <https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.

The idea of *Missionary Society of St. Paul* which was established in sept 1976 by CBCN, under Cardinal Ekanem, will be properly given attention in the perspective of CBCN’s missionary effort in managing her vocation boom for the advantage of the universal Church. However, it is worthwhile to note here the fundament of that Missionary Society which is encapsulated in its constitution: “To be a Christian is to be missionary, and a Church that is not missionary, is not the Church of Christ.” See, *Constitutions and Directives of the Missionary Society of St Paul of Nigeria*, p. viii.

²⁹⁸ *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 56.

in Nigeria came from the Holy See who addressed a specific call to the Church in Nigeria to embark more vigorously on mission that it has done until now. In a letter dated 22nd April 2010 and directed to the President of the CBCN, the Apostolic Nunciature in Nigeria made a special appeal to the Church in Nigeria: “With regard to the staffing of new mission territories (*Missiones Sui iuris* and Apostolic Prefectures and Vicariates) the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples wishes to ascertain whether suitable personnel are available. It has therefore asked the Apostolic Nunciature to find out if there are Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, or even dioceses which are in a position to help out in this field, or even accept a ‘*Ius Commissionis*’ and so be responsible for staffing and evangelization of such a territory.... I will be grateful if you let me know whether there are any dioceses in Nigeria which in the spirit of *Fidei Donum*, could undertake such an assignment.”²⁹⁹ This recent call raises new challenges for the local Church in Nigeria that is now being specifically invited to become a protagonist in mission *ad gentes* of the universal Church. It goes beyond a sporadic sending of personnel; it involves a -long term missionary commitment of staffing and bearing the financial burden of establishing new mission territories beyond our shores.

Moreover, the CBCN acknowledges its on-going participation in mission to send missionaries outside the frontiers of Nigeria, when it declared that: “It is to the credit of the Nigerian Church that many of its sons and daughters are working as missionaries all over Africa, in Europe and the Americas, a development that may be termed ‘reverse evangelization.’³⁰⁰ Collectively, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria recognises the import of the call by the Holy See as a challenge for the Church in Nigeria to intensify its missionary effort in Nigeria, as well as “devise a strategy and structure that will enable her to meet her growing responsibility for the evangelization of the continent and the world.”³⁰¹ Furthermore, they believe that the above request has to be followed with the required urgency. According to them, “missionary mandate continues to challenge us to listen to the signs of the times and to respond with missionary zeal.” Moreover, “as a young dynamic Church, we can recall the sacrifices of the missionaries who brought the faith to our land, and we rejoice in the fruitfulness of their labour which has given birth to this vibrant Church. However, our Church truly grows and matures if it assumes the responsibility of sharing the faith received. Thus, the

²⁹⁹ Letter No. 91/10 from the Apostolic Nunciature in Nigeria to the President of the CBCN, 22/4/2010. See, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, Published by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, 2011, p. 8.

³⁰⁰ Cf. “Message of the Second African Synod”, Vatican City, 25th October 2009, p.12. See also, CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria, Call to Mission*, p. 9.

³⁰¹ CBCN, *Church in Nigeria: Family of God*, Published by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, p. 80. Quoted in *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 9.

Catholic Church in Nigeria is not waiting to be self-sufficient before responding to its missionary vocation, because it is fully aware that mission is at the core of its being as Church.”³⁰² In trying to respond to this missionary call, CBCN never lost their commitment to the spirit of collegiality that exists between the universal church and local church. Hence, the Church in Nigeria, certainly inspired by Trinitarian communion and mission, has an important role in evangelizing people within and without of Nigeria, “encouraging them to bring their whole life into the Trinitarian communion.”³⁰³

c. The import of vocation in Nigerian missionary experience

As I already indicated earlier in this section of the work, the CBCN, especially from the Nigerian independence had a clear vision of their mission of evangelization, concluding that “*the Spiritual complement of national independence is a Nigerian Clergy*,”³⁰⁴ since the aim of missionary work is to establish a self-supporting Church that is guided by its own bishops and priests. With this stance, the bishops, while emphasizing the need for local clergy in a local church, re-echoed the ideas of Pope Pius XII which he expressed in *Evangelii Praecones*, that ‘The ultimate goal of missionary endeavour,’ ‘which should never be lost sight of, is to establish the Church on sound foundations among non-Christian peoples and to place it under its own indigenous hierarchy.’ CBCN then expanded the idea for a better comprehension and practical importance in admitting that “the central task in the pursuit of this aim is the training of young men and women as priests and religious.” They also reasoned that “if the Church is to keep up the immense progress that has been made in Nigeria, we must have before too long many generous vocations.” The reasons for this are explicated by CBCN in the following points *inter alia*:

- i. Foreign missionaries fulfill an essential function in bringing the faith initially and in enabling the Church to begin. Love of Christ brings them to a people among whom they were not born. They grow to love this people dearly; they learn over the years customs and traditions until they become part of their people. However, Priests who are sons of the soil make immediate and easy contact with their people. They

³⁰² CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 10.

³⁰³ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*.

³⁰⁴ As Nigeria celebrated her independence on the 1st of October 1960, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, identified concretely with the nation. By so doing, they issued a very relevant Communiqué to all Christians as well as the leaders of the country, with the caption, *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria, Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy*. In one of the subheadings they categorically stated that “*the Spiritual complement of national independence is a Nigerian Clergy*.” In it, they articulated properly their vision concerning the mission of the Church in an independent Nigeria, streamlining some of the pastoral needs of the Church and the challenges facing the hierarchy in a nation of religious pluralism.

have lived in the same compounds, played the same childhood games and grown up within the framework of the laws and customs of their fellow countrymen. Nigerian priests will best teach the eternal truths in the languages and with the imaginative genius of their people, they will know best how to give expression to the spirit of worship of their people within the structure of the Christian liturgy; they will furnish living proof that the Church is in no way alien but belongs to Nigeria as much as to China, the United States, Italy or Ireland.

- ii. Unless many young Nigerians enter God's service, we shall never have enough priests and sisters to do all the religious work that there is to be done in this country. At the moment, the increase in the number of faithful is taking place at a proportionately greater pace than the increase in the number of our vocations. More important again, no supply of priests is as sure as a supply that springs from the inner health of the Church in a country. Indeed our ambition must be to have so many priests and sisters of our own that we shall be able to spare some of them for the spread of the gospel in other lands, especially other lands of Africa.
- iii. We insist that the faith is solidly grounded in a country only when Christian families are willing to give their children to God in the priesthood and religious life. Unless we have many families of this kind who make possible a strong local clergy, the faith will remain exotic and fragile. Families would do well to keep in mind the saying of Christ that Paul quotes: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20: 35). The depth of the faith of our communities is measured by the spiritual life of Christian families.³⁰⁵

Energized by the above ecclesial challenges, CBCN, has left no stone unturned in trying to form credible and zealous priests who have kept the church in Nigeria and beyond aglow with their missionary touches in different spheres of life and many countries. Recognizing the fact that the Catholic Church in Nigeria has enormous wealth of human resources at its disposal. Hence, since the end of Second Vatican Council in 1965, there has been a steady flowering of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. As such, thousands of priests have been ordained for dioceses across the country. The major seminaries have a healthy intake of students every year. Some, in fact, are filled to overflowing. The same can be said about the houses of religious formation, both male and female.³⁰⁶ Perhaps, the reason for this is not far-fetched. Individual

³⁰⁵ CBCN, *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria*, p. 220.

³⁰⁶ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 10.

families in Nigeria now see this as a way of expressing their deep rooted faith by sacrificing children for the service of God. Parents are now more willing today than in days gone by to let their children answer the call to priestly or religious life. Many actively support and encourage their children while they are in the seminary or house of religious formation. As a result, we are witnessing a steady rise in the number of families with multiple vocations.³⁰⁷ Consequently, The Pastoral Exhortation issued by the CBCN following the 2002 National Pastoral Congress made the point that “the evangelizing mission of the Church in Nigeria is both *ad intra* and *ad extra*.”³⁰⁸ That is to say, on the one hand, that Nigerian Christians are to be missionaries to themselves, *ad intra*. This means our commitment to mission towards the Catholic community in the pastoral care of the faithful, the new evangelization of our brothers and sisters who have lost a sense of the faith, and an active engagement in ecumenical activities so as to make visible and real the unity of all Christians.³⁰⁹ Vatican II went beyond the sending out of missionaries to stressing that every Christian by virtue of his or her baptism is a missionary.³¹⁰ The present Pontiff, Pope Francis in several ways expressed the need for all-inclusive missionary engagement of all the baptised and as such, has made the “missionary option” the priority of his pontificate, urging every believer to step out and witness to Christ.³¹¹

Nigeria is therefore privileged to have enough of these missionaries especially on the side of the Presbyterian and dedicated faithful who have been able to carry the light of the gospel from their own cultural and socio-political backgrounds. This is indeed, a practical and fruitful interpretation of the mind of the Vatican II Council Fathers, who wished that “when the local church is rooted in the socio-cultural life of its peoples and is equipped with its own supply of indigenous vocations and ecclesial structures, it gains some stability and firmness in the faith.”³¹² Based on the above facts, and under current missiological developments, one can indeed, echo the thoughts of Bosch, when he remarked: “Christian mission more than ever before is in the firing line today.”³¹³ Indeed, the bishops of Nigeria in collaboration with their dedicated priests have continued to keep the light of missionary evangelization aglow. The good news is that it was not long before a true appreciation of their efforts was sounded by the

³⁰⁷ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 10.

³⁰⁸ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, 2004, p. 78. See also, CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 5.

³⁰⁹ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, p. 80.

³¹⁰ See, *SEDOS*

³¹¹ Cf. Vatican II, *Ad Gentes Divinitus* Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. ” December 7, 1965. no. 2. See, *SEDOS*, <https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.

³¹² *Ad Gentes*, no. 19.

³¹³ David, J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books), 1991, p. 1-11. See, *SEDOS*, “How Africa is changing the face of Mission.”

Supreme Pontiff, St John Paul II in the following lines: “I thank all of you, beloved Brothers, for your dedication as pastors to the flock that has been entrusted to your care. I recall at this time the *heroic sacrifices of many devoted missionaries* who over the past century have preached the Gospel in Nigeria and sustained the faithful in giving an ever more authentic witness to the teaching of Christ and his Church. Their exemplary lives have inspired many Nigerian young people to offer themselves to Christ in the priesthood and in the religious life.”³¹⁴

d. Mission on trial

Officially, Nigeria, got her independent in 1960 from Britain. However, since that day, the country has never got so many things right. The political terrain of the country has been tumultuous, changing hand from one military group to another until recently when she eventually had her democracy back. The pluralistic nature of the political and religious setting in the country has never yielded positively for the people. Of course, this type of situation can never be the ideal ground for a fertilized evangelization. Consequently, the evangelization programme by the CBCN which was already on the progress lane suffered serious setback when in 1966, a civil war broke out between Nigerian and the Igbos of eastern Nigeria who declared the Republic of Biafra under the command of late Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. This unfortunate scenario lasted from 1966 to 1970. The war broke out when the mostly Christian tribes of the East and Southeast wanted a new state of Biafra citing marginalization by the ruling North. Millions of the “Biafrans” died during this war, especially children of starvation. The post-war period was however, suffused with fears of genocide against the “Biafrans” that even Pope Paul VI was prompted to caution the Nigerian government against any forms of reprisals.³¹⁵ Worthy of note is the one voice with which CBCN condemned *in toto*, that pogrom meted out to the Biafrans. Their feelings and empathy was put into practical use when, through their efforts, such charitable organizations like Caritas International contributed immeasurable food items, drugs, clothing and other useful items to the suffering masses, mostly children who suffered malnutrition through the dreaded disease of what was known as “*kwashioka*.” Touched by that despicable situation, the Bishops appealed to the whole nation and especially the warring factions for the need to love one another, which was the essence of Christ’s coming. Hence, “mindful of the fact that we are all children of the same God no matter from what part

³¹⁴ St. John Paul II, *Address of the Holy Father to the Bishops of Nigeria on occasion of their “Ad Limina” visit*, Thursday 3 September, 1987 (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana).

³¹⁵ Cf. C. K. O. Nwosu, *Cardinal Dominic Ekandem and the Growth of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p. 197. See, SEDOS, *How Africa is Changing the face of Mission*, <https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>

of the country, we, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, re-state God's fundamental commandment of fraternal love: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." The Bishops remind all Nigerians of this fundamental commandment and call on all men of good will to join in restoring this nation to peace and stability through the practice of the law of God.³¹⁶ Unfortunately, the goodwill of CBCN, driven by love and concern for the people as worthy shepherds, was misjudged by the Nigerian government who wrongfully accused the bishops of sponsoring Biafrans. Touched by this infamous position of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Bishops issued the following statements: "Patriotic Nigerian Catholics have been greatly distressed and acutely embarrassed by the recent attitude of Press, Radio and Television towards the Church. Allegations, without sufficient evidence, of political and military involvement in the civil war have been made against the Church. We protest and emphatically deny these charges. Such charges may have arisen from a serious misunderstanding of the Church's mission.

The Church's mission is to lead all men to God. The Church does not and cannot cherish one section more dearly than another, but offers to mankind whatever help it can give in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to their destiny. We reject the suggestion that Pope Paul is involved in this war, directly or indirectly, in any capacity except that of bringing peace and reconciliation. Equally well known is the Holy Father's concern for the poor and suffering. Wherever they may be, he sends help to them through '*Caritas Internationalis*' because this is an organisation dedicated exclusively to bringing aid to victims of war, famine and disaster.³¹⁷ The war, through the mercy of God, came to an end in 1970. But its effect really shook the foundation of the young Church.

i. Nigeria-Biafra war, 1967-1970

Christ was emphatic about what could befall the apostles while making efforts to fulfil their missionary obligations. Hence, He warned them to be ready for all eventualities but with the assurance of his presence with them till the end of time (*Mtt. 28:20*). While sending them out, He reminded them that they are going to work '*among wolves*' (*Mtt. 10:16; Lk. 10:3*). This mission entails persecutions, tribulations, afflictions, sufferings, untold hardships, etc. They should be prepared since it goes with anxious moments, perplexing thoughts and distress. His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, was very much aware of this difficult and slippery missionary terrain

³¹⁶ CBCN, *Breakdown of law – violence*, A Communique issued on November 1966. Cf. *The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on Issues of Faith and Life*, ed. Peter Schineller, A publication of Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (Nigeria: Daily Graphics Nig., Ltd., 2003), p. 217.

³¹⁷ CBCN, *Statement on the Nigerian crisis*, December 1968.

and therefore spent much time in forming missionaries who could be humble enough to train the local clergy. The Supreme Pontiff, was one of the Popes that had unquantifiable interest in the local church, ipso facto, local hierarchy and clergy, believing that it was highly auspicious for any envisaged missionary success. He always supported his ideas with the sound argument in this form: “Suppose owing to war or political upheavals there is a change of government in some missionary territory, and the request is made or a law is passed that the foreign missionaries of a certain country must leave: What then, We ask, would be the disaster that would threaten the Church throughout all that territory, unless full provision has been made for the needs of the Christian populace by a network of native priests throughout the whole country?.”³¹⁸ This was, to say the least, highly prophetic. Not long when the fruits of the labours of the missionaries were about to be harvested in Nigeria, the country became engulfed in civil war which left devastating effects on the missionary field of Nigeria.

One of the consequences of this war was that the Church, which already had teaming population in the eastern part of Nigeria suffered untold setbacks since the area was turned to a theatre of war for almost three years, with the loss of human beings and infrastructures, including churches. The few Major Seminaries in existence were used as military camps, while many of the seminarians who were forced to join the military never came back alive. However, while the Church then, comprising mainly the foreign missionaries were still trying to establish a better understanding with their home countries on how to help rebuild the church in Nigeria, the worst happened. The Federal Government of Nigeria, now under the military regime and headed by General Gowon ordered an immediate repatriation of all the foreign missionaries working in Nigeria on the false accusation of their positive assistance to the Igbos.

As much as it was embarrassing the hierarchy of the Church, it also placed much challenge to them. This resulted in acute shortage of priestly personnel to take care of the increasing number of the faithful. However, this did not deter the Church from forging ahead especially in championing the peace process for the entire nation. Consequently, CBCN had their first sitting after the war in February and March, 1970. In that meeting, the way of peace and reconciliation became the centre-point, because according to them, the Christian law is the law of love and the practice of this law has its first fruit, peace. They went further to emphasize and reiterate that, “our desire and that of our Catholic People to cooperate fully with the Federal and State Governments, other Churches, and recognised voluntary organisations in the great

³¹⁸ Pope Pius XI, Encyclical On the Missions of the Church *Rerum Ecclesiae*, February 28, 1926, no. 22; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1926, 75. Cf. *Evangelii Praecones*, no. 26.

and urgent tasks that face the nation. This long term form of reconstruction is the truest guarantee and the most solid foundation of peace.”³¹⁹ Indeed, this attitudinal response of the Church during this trying period of the nation goes a long way to expressing the Church’s understanding of her mission following the mind of Christ.

ii. Federal Government takeover of mission schools.

From the inception of their missionary work in Nigeria, the missionaries prioritized education for a more effective evangelization which had already started yielding much fruit both in the areas of conversion and vocation founded on sound moral teachings. But unfortunately, shortly after the repatriation process, the Federal Government also took over all the schools established by the missionaries. What this meant was that the church had no freedom again to teach and educate the children from the point of view of Catholic moral and religious principles. With this development, many of the children lost bearing regarding Catholic teachings. The takeover of schools was done under the pretext of rebuilding new nation and reduction tribalistic tendencies. But the fact remains, as already indicated, that it was done as a penalty on the missionaries who were suspected by the Government of helping and sustaining Biafra during the civil war. However, in a bid to show how real they were, a proposal to build what is known as unity schools in all the geopolitical zones of the federation was incubated. Though it was eventually realized, but the result remained a far cry from what the missionaries envisaged for the young church in Nigeria.

iii. Quick response from the Nigerian Bishops.

The missionary mandate of Christ to preach the gospel and make disciples in the world. Inversely, the ultimate goal is to bring the supernatural light of faith to all peoples, and to promote the interests of civilization and culture, and fraternal concord among nations.”³²⁰ The Church has no other reason for existence than, by developing the Kingdom of Christ on earth, to make mankind participate in the effects of His saving Redemption.³²¹ Consequently, Pope Pius XII emphasised that the best way to put into concrete reality the mandate from Christ is to endeavour and establish the Church on sound foundations among non-Christian peoples, and place it under its own native Hierarchy.³²² Today, this idea of the Church has been materialized

³¹⁹ CBCN, *Statement, Decisions and Recommendations*, February and March, 1970.

³²⁰ *Evangelii Praecones*, no. 22. See, *Epist. perlibenti equidem*; A.A.S., 1950, p. 727.

³²¹ *Rerum Ecclesiae*, no. 1. See, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1926.

³²² *Evangelii Praecones*, no. 22.

with the solid establishment of CBCN. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has no doubt that there is a lot to be done to entrench Christian values in the Nigerian cultural and socio-political setting since she understands that Mission is not an option for the Church; but the route to becoming an authentic Body of Christ, if the Church is to be true to herself.³²³ This missionary spirit of commitment of the hierarchy and the people of God in Nigeria was put to test with the ugly development of expulsion of the white missionaries and the takeover of mission schools. At this point, with the latest harsh development, the bishops had no option than to look for better and more rewarding ways of grappling with the problems. According to Oborji, while the mission of the Church has as its basis on evangelization, it should go beyond ordinary preaching of the Word of God; "it includes the transformation of human society through the message and living witness of the church and her members."³²⁴

In this type of situation, one can always fall back to such paternal advice such as the one given by St John Paul II in his *Slavorum Apostoli* and in *Ut unum sint*. For the Holy Father, the doctrine needs to be presented in a way that makes it understandable to those for whom God himself intends it.³²⁵ What this entails is that the bishops should urgently look for ways of encouraging indigenous vocations and teachers who would be able to use their cultural knowledge to continue the work of evangelization from where the missionaries left it. He went further to remark that, in the same spirit, he did not hesitate to say to the Aboriginal Peoples of Australia: "You do not have to be divided into two parts ... Jesus calls you to accept his words and his values into your own culture."³²⁶ Armed with this spirit, the Catholic Bishops started the voyage of fundamental reconciliation and peaceful reconstruction of the nation and national integration in order to bring hope back to the people. And for Aigbadumah, this effort saw the emergence of indigenous theologians in the universities, seminaries, and colleges of theologies across the nation, all making their contributions to the post-independence discourse on what the future of Christianity would be.³²⁷ The church's response during critical moments shows how well she understands her mission in context. In various ways, the bishops expressed their readiness and willingness as a body and as individual bishops in their various dioceses to cooperate fully with the government and other non-governmental agencies; "to pool all our

³²³ Matthew Man-oso Ndagoso, in his *foreward* to "The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission" by CBCN, 2010, p. viii. During this time, as the Archbishop of Kaduna, he was then the Chairman, Episcopal Committee on Mission, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.

³²⁴ Francis Oborji, *The Mission ad gentes of the African Church*.

³²⁵ St. John Paul II, *Ut Unum sint*, Apostolic Exhortation, On commitment to Ecumenism, no. 19.

³²⁶ *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 19. See also, Address to the Aboriginal Peoples (29 November 1986), 12: AAS 79 (1987), 977.

³²⁷ C. A. Aigbadumah, 2011 <https://research.vu.nl/files/42205207/chapter%20Three.pdf>

available resources, spiritual, moral, physical and financial for the relief of suffering and the building of a better nation”.³²⁸ In an effort to take care of the pastoral and religious needs of the people, the bishops restructured the existing pastoral and catechetical structures left by the missionaries. This led to the establishment of *Pastoral* and *Parish Councils*³²⁹ to function as advisory boards to the bishops and priests in the various dioceses and parishes respectively. These councils were also charged with the responsibility of promoting the Apostolate of the Laity in accordance with the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay people of the Second Vatican Council; to assist the hierarchy of Nigeria with advice, suggestions and practical help etc.³³⁰

Many other lay organizations and apostolates followed this new pastoral structures. Today, they remain the fulcrum of catholic buoyancy in Nigeria, especially in the eastern part of Nigeria. And as Ochulor posited, this new vision of the bishops opened the road for the formation of many Religious Orders, such as the congregation of the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy (SMMM) in 1972, founded in Umuahia diocese, by Bishop Anthony G. Nwedo C.S.Sp. (He already founded the congregation of Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy in 1962). And at Onitsha, Archbishop Francis Arinze founded the Congregation of the Brothers of St. Stephen (BSS) in 1975. In Enugu diocese, Bishop Godfrey Okoye founded the congregation of Daughters of Divine Love (DDL), in 1969. Today, the number of such congregations and religious orders in Nigeria remain a thing of pride for the local church and the universal church. And to cap it all, in 1977, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, under the ingenious reasoning of Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, founded the Missionary Society of St. Paul (MSP) as a missionary Major Seminary in Gwagwalada, Abuja, which Baur described as “a particular success story of the Nigerian Church in history.”³³¹ It is also a credit to the CBCN for retaining the missionary spirit of the foreign missionaries. Hence, almost all the parishes in Nigeria today have schools, starting from kindergarten to secondary schools.

³²⁸ Cf. SEDOS, *How Africa is changing the face of Mission*. See also, Peter SCHINELLER, (ed.), *The Voice of the Voiceless: Pastoral Letters and Communiques of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria 1960- 2002*, (Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited, Ibadan 2002), p. 56.

³²⁹ These two organs are the most powerful groups which play unquantifiable roles in the Catholic Church. The *Pastoral Council* is the highest decision-making body in the diocese, where the bishop is the chairman, with representatives from various parishes that make up the diocese. Precisely, the different chairmen and secretaries of the parishes within the diocesan jurisdiction form the Pastoral Council. Parish Council on the other hand, is the highest decision-making body in a parish. The parish priest is the chairman, while selected representatives from all the statutory body of the Church in that parish make up the members.

³³⁰ G. A. Ojo, “Emergence of Laity Organization of Nigeria”, in, O. A. Makozi/G. J. Afolabi Ojo (eds.) *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p.71-86, 77. See, Ochulor, p. 103.

³³¹ Cf. John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publication Africa, 1994), p. 272.

4. Methods of evangelization used by the European missionaries

Before we finally examine the integral missionary approaches by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, which is in the chapter, there is need for us to have a look at what helped the first missionaries to succeed in Nigeria. As expected, the missionaries of different congregations that worked in Nigeria employed different methods in their missionary endeavours. But apart from some subtle differences in their approaches to the problems on ground, their methods were basically the same as we shall see here. Therefore, we shall group them into two major parts: (1) education and (2) integral human development which will include such areas as care for the poor and also the health related issues which they met on ground.

a. Education as a pivotal method

With the establishment of the first mission house, the missionaries were faced with how to go about their activities in the new territory. It was extremely difficult for them to make a start, since they could speak neither English –which was and remains the official language in Nigeria – nor the native language Yoruba. This language handicap forced them to design a missionary programme that was based on the building of schools and the training of young boys and girls, first of all in a common basis (French) of communication (English) and in various trades and crafts.³³² To assist the fathers in their school and medical apostolate, a group of nuns of the Franciscan Sisters of the Propagation of Faith in Lyons were invited to the missions. The presence of the sisters and their activities gave a firm foundation to Roman Catholic education work in Lagos. They built schools and domestic centres for the training of the natives. The establishment of the Saints Peter and Paul Seminary in 1905 boosted their urge not only to promote the course of the Gospel in Lagos and its environs but also to train of indigenous clergy who would continue the work of Evangelisation in these areas later.³³³

In introducing Christianity, the pioneer missionaries to Igboland adopted certain strategies and techniques in the varying circumstances in which they found themselves. Such methods of evangelization included: open-air preaching, regular pastoral visitations to homes and villages, intense catechetical instruction within the “Christian village” setting, establishment of schools and medical assistance. They also undertook other humanitarian services such as the liberation and rehabilitation of slaves, assistance to social outcasts and

³³² G. M. Okafor, *Development of Christianity and Islam in Modern Nigeria*, 75.

³³³ Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*, 2002, pp. 35 – 45.

helpless, and education in literary and vocational training.³³⁴ When the missionaries arrived in Nigeria in the 19th century, catechesis was their first approach in evangelization.³³⁵ In this method, the use of interpreters and locally trained catechists was of utmost importance. This approach meant that the missionaries needed to educate the native people, not just to listen to stories about the life and missionary exploits of Christ, but also how to read and write. This meant that opening of Catholic schools was of paramount importance and must be pursued with the require urgency. They opened Church-schools inclusive of primary, secondary, and teacher training colleges throughout the western, eastern, and southern regions of Nigeria. These Church-schools served not only to educate the students in western ideas, but also, served as a major means for the missionaries to evangelize and to catechize them.³³⁶

In addition, Onwubiko³³⁷ pointed out that the missionaries established Catholic teachers training colleges to train and to form Catholic school teachers in the Catholic tradition so that they would staff the created primary and secondary Catholic schools. He highlighted that the products of these training colleges were “teacher catechists,” who worked cooperatively with the missionaries in the work of education and faith formation of school children. Furthermore, Onwubiko observed that these Teachers Training Colleges (TTC – very famous at that time) “contributed in no small measure in ensuring that Catholic elite are not wanting in politics, business, the professions, academics and other important walks of life in Nigeria”³³⁸ Furthermore, he maintained that it was largely through the cooperation of the natives that the missionary efforts were successful. He reported that the collaboration between the Church and the native communities unfolded in three stages. Firstly, it began with the positive response and appreciation of the Chiefs of the communities, who invited the missionaries to build Catholic churches and schools in their towns and villages. Secondly, it continued with the natives, who willingly provided the labour for the construction of the Church and school buildings. Thirdly, the Church-Community collaboration was furthered as the Church and communities worked

³³⁴ See, Innocent O. Dim, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church*, p. 46-64. See also, Ikenga, R. Ozigbo, *Roman Catholicism in South-Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931*, p. 58. Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, no. 26. Shanahan, as he was quoted by the Nigerian Catholic Bishops, said: “If we go from town to town talking about God we know from experience that much of our efforts bring no result. But no one is opposed to schools.” See also, Mary-Noelle Ethel Ezech, I.H.M. *Archbishop Charles Heerey and the History of the Church in Nigeria*, (India: Paulist Publication, 2005), p. 35-39. Quoted by Francis C. Ezenezi, *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II's Theology of the Laity*, 2015.

³³⁵ Francis Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, p. 113.

³³⁶ R. A. Njoku, *The advent of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Its growth in Owerri Diocese* (Owerri, Nigeria: Assumpta Press, 1980); K. B. C. Onwubiko, *The Catholic Church and the development of education in eastern Nigeria, 1885-1994*, 1985.

³³⁷ Onwubiko, *The Catholic Church and the development of education in eastern Nigeria*. Obi (ed.), *A hundred years of the Catholic Church in the eastern Nigeria*, (pp. 224- 276).

³³⁸ Onwubiko, *The Catholic Church and the development*, p. 241.

together to expand their school efforts and to raise money for such expansions.³³⁹ Their educational programmes were such as: Literacy Programmes; Classes for Religious Instruction; Sunday-School and Catechism Programmes; Elementary and Primary Education; Teacher Training and Secondary Education Programmes; and Theological Education and Training Programmes. The bulk of educated civil servants and professionals had their humble beginnings from mission education programmes and institutions. Christian missions pioneered education where the Colonial Government and Native Authorities could not provide such for their subjects. The major contributions of Christian missions in the area of education has been literacy, social, moral, and spiritual up-bringing and general development of the peoples and societies. Education was the most potent tool for the transformation of African societies and also the most effective tool of evangelism.³⁴⁰ With the help of the catechists and mission teachers whom they recruited and through school teachers after they established schools, they admitted catechumens, taught them catechism and they baptized them; and thus, the people became Christians. The laity was an indisputable entity in their missionary work. In the area of education also, the missionaries did not just concentrate on the academic aspect, but delved into Christian moral formation. The establishment of Convents in different stations helped to form young newly married girls and intending ones to learn the basics of Christian living. They were also taught the basics in tailoring skills, handcrafts, cooking and general moral principles of married life.

b. Integral Human Development

In the evangelization of Nigeria, the Church has been aware that “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social.”³⁴¹ Consequently, the missionaries made big efforts for the development of the whole person and of every person through schools, medical care, social work and inspirational teachings.³⁴² In order to reach the desired groups, both adults and children, they organised them into small groups that latter became faith or Catholic communities. In this case, the work of catechists which they trained was highly indispensable. In line with this principle, the seed of the Catholic faith was sown in Awka Diocese through the efforts of Fr. Albert Bubendorf, who joined Fr. Lutz’s missionary team in January of 1890. He

³³⁹ Onwubiko, *The Catholic Church and the development*, p. 251.

³⁴⁰ Bulus Y. Galadima and Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity in Nigeria, Historical and Social*.

³⁴¹ *S Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 29.

³⁴² Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, p. 113. See, St. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 14.

opened small Catholic communities, called stations, in the Awka Diocese at Nimo in 1911 and Adazi in 1912. Later, in 1925, Adazi became a parish. In 1950, the Archdiocese of Onitsha was created and in 1977, and Awka Diocese (in 1978) was carved out of the Onitsha Archdiocese.³⁴³ These small communities also became the co-ordinating centres for the distribution of relief materials. Since the missionaries believed in the evangelization of human person, they also saw the need in following the missiological paradigm of Christ, by feeding the people (*Mk. 6:37; Matt. 14:16; Lk. 9:13*); and clothed them (*Matt. 5:36-46*). A very high number of primary and secondary schools in Nigeria have been spearheaded by the Catholic Church. Kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, vocational training centres, adult education centres and teachers' colleges have been given priority by the Catholic missionaries. It was only later that government interest developed up to the extent of government seizure of many of these institutions. The school is to be rated among the primary agents of progress in Nigeria. It helped to usher in all-round development: religious, educational, cultural, social, political and economic.³⁴⁴ Christian missions pioneered Christian literature ministry and translation in Nigeria. They reduced African languages into writing and grammar, printed, sold and distributed Christian and general literature through their translation work and bookshops. They also pioneered Christian journalism and developed social critics and greatly influenced nationalist's movements. Christian missions have done more in bringing about social, religious and human development and change than any other human agent. Missionary activities in general were indeed powerful tools for religious and social change, human development and social formations and transformations. Social and human services to the missionaries were first and foremost auxiliary to the Gospel of Christ. They were a means to the gospel. They were not ends in themselves.³⁴⁵

The arrival of the missionaries on Nigerian soil brought much relief to the people who were dying in great numbers because of unidentifiable sickness. Some of them could not be treated with the traditional medicine that was in vogue. Many of the missionaries were trained health workers and doctors who dedicated themselves treating people freely and provided necessary protein supplements to the children who were highly malnourished. According to Arinze, "the Church has paid great attention to the health of the people. Dispensaries and maternity and child care clinics are to be found in out-of-the-way villages. So also are hospitals of varying degrees of sophistication. They took care of the sick, especially sick children, and

³⁴³ Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, p.113.

³⁴⁴ Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, p. 113.

³⁴⁵ Galadima and Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity in Nigeria, Part I*, pp. 85-101.

the needy. This won them the admiration and respect of the Igbo people.”³⁴⁶ Christian missions pioneered medical ministry where both the Colonial Government and Native Authorities had no adequate medical services and institutions for their subjects, especially in the remote rural areas. They built health clinics, dispensaries, maternity homes and hospitals. They also pioneered Leprosy ministry and services and as well as built eye clinics and hospitals. Just as in the field of education, the Colonial Government -and Native Authorities needed the help of Christian missions in this area. Christian missions contributed immensely to the state of health. Both medical and education activities were conceived by Christian missions as auxiliary or the hand-maid of the Gospel of Christ.³⁴⁷

Summary

In this chapter, the terrain in which the mission of the church *was* and also *is* practiced was amply and broadly examined. While doing so, a brief history of Nigeria and the advent of foreign missionaries came to our consciousness and which was handled on the platform of current *ecclesio-missiological* paradigm, and in relation to the socio-cultural cum religio-political context in the Nigerian Church. We also explored in various ways, models and strategies through which the first missionaries in Nigeria carried out their missionary assignment. The missionary transition from the foreign evangelizers to the local hierarchy was not as smooth as expected; a situation which placed the Nigerian hierarchy in a precarious situation, a situation created by the outbreak of civil war. In this chapter, therefore, we devoted much time analysing the efforts of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria in filling the gap left by the sudden expatriation of the foreign missionaries. By so doing, we were able to establish the fact of stability which the CBCN, in collaboration with the local clergy and the theming catholic faithful have been achieved. In the chapter that follows, we shall discuss in a more elaborate perspective, the concrete ways in by which the mission of the church is conceptualized and interpreted by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria.

³⁴⁶ Arinze, *Africans and Christianity*, p. 113.

³⁴⁷ Bulus, Y. Galadima and Yusufu Turaki, *Christianity in Nigeria*, pp. 85-101.

Chapter Three

III. The integral missionary approach of the CBCN

Introduction

As already analysed in this work, Pope John XXIII built his idea of the Second Vatican Council which came to conclusion in 1965 on three foundational theological concepts: (1) *aggiornamento* (an updating of its pastoral attitudes and approaches; (2) spiritual renewal of the Church; (3) the promotion of unity among Christians.³⁴⁸ For Kroeger, “*Aggiornamento* envisions a profound inner transformation (not only external changes). This endeavour demands a second principle: *ressourcement* which expresses a return to the sources of faith (e.g. Scripture, Tradition, Church Fathers) and integrating them into contemporary ecclesiology.”³⁴⁹ In contemporary missionary ecclesiology, this entails a challenge to different *Episcopal Conferences* to look inwards and situate their missionary efforts in the experiential social and cultural lives of the people of God. Consequent upon this, *Integral missionary approach* as is used in this work, derives its foundation on the practical and life-touching ways in which the Mission of the Church is carried in reference to the set-out objectives of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria in their local church.

This Body has a well-defined administrative setup which includes different committees, through which they carry out their missionary works. They include, *inter alia*: Pastoral Affairs Department, Department of Pastoral Agents, Department of Church and Society, Department of Mission and Dialogue, Directorate of Communication, etc. These departments have also different units and subcommittees. However, an in-depth examination will be given to them at the later part of this work, precisely in chapter four. Nevertheless, in this chapter, we are basically saddled with the specific areas where the voices of the CBCN are laudably heard in the mould of St. John Baptist, Jeremiah, Hosea, Ezekiel, and the missionary exploits of the New Testament prophets. Although, in one of his addresses, Pope Pius XII stated that “the Church has no proper political, economic or social mandate. The goal which Christ assigned to it is strictly religious.”³⁵⁰ This idea was precisely the principle that guided the pre-conciliar ecclesiology. But conciliar and post-conciliar church is the one that sees beyond the spiritual welfare of the people. It is the church which also takes into account the living condition of the people, in their social, cultural and political affairs as human beings.

³⁴⁸ See, James, H. Kroeger, *A Vatican II Journey: Fifty Milestones* (Philippines: St Pauls, 2012), p. 1.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Kroeger, *A Vatican II Journey*, p. 5.

³⁵⁰ Pope Pius XII, *Address to the International Union of Institutes of Archaeology, History and History of Art*, March 1956.

Thus, in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Fathers of Vatican II Council opined that “out of this religious mission itself, there is still need to draw light from the human community that obeys the divine law.”³⁵¹ The Igbo Catechism sums it as: *onyinye nke amamife bu nke na-eme anyi ka anyi mara ihe nke uwaa, were choba ihe nke eligwe*. This summarizes ‘wisdom’ as the gift of the Holy Spirit that enables human beings to be abreast with the workings of their immediately environment so as to be able to understand the spiritual things. Invariably, what this connotes is that the role of the Church, especially in the contemporary world with its economic cum socio-political challenges, is not limited to the moral dimension of man. The dignity of this human person as a composite being and his environment cannot be taken for granted in the face of the terrestrial realities. This chapter therefore seeks to examine in practical terms, the efforts of the hierarchy of the Church in Nigeria in trying to continue the mission of the Church, both from the point of view of *ad intra* and *ad extra*. This is what integral theology sets out to do.

1. Contextualized missionary ecclesiology

a. The Nigerian voice

From all intents and purposes, the Second Vatican Council’s objective is not far removed from the earlier councils’ motives. As such, it had as its core mission, *the proclamation of the Christian faith* to the world that has, in various ways changed over the years. A world that has continued to question the authenticity and necessity of the Church’s mission. The attack on the Church and her teachings was constantly receiving increased momentum. Hence, the idea of ‘*opening the windows in order to let in fresh air*’ of theological balance and earthly realities became a matter of urgency and laudable twist. In his opening speech therefore, Pope John XXIII explained that “the greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this, that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively defended and presented.”³⁵² The church, he maintained, “must also look at the present times which have introduced new conditions and new forms of life, and have opened new avenues for the Catholic apostolate.”³⁵³ However, the exact nature of this relationship between context and proclamation of faith, between changing historical situations and unchanging faith, is still the subject of a theological debate. As such, some notions are put forward like “*aggiornamento*, development,

³⁵¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 42.

³⁵² John XXIII, *Gaudet mater ecclesia*. Opening Speech to the Council, no. 11. *Acta apostolicae sedis* 54 [1962] 785-96. Translated from the original Italian version by J. A. Komonchak, <http://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>.

³⁵³ *Gaudet mater ecclesia*, no.12.

ressourcement, or reform in order to capture what is at stake.”³⁵⁴ In other words, from all available records, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council never lost sight of the socio-political situation in the contemporary world. Consequently, some of the major themes in their debate reflected the prevalent issues of primary concern in the society,³⁵⁵ since the church is becoming conscious of being “*world-church*.”³⁵⁶ Kroeger, maintained that “ignorance of Vatican II is ignorance of the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church today.”³⁵⁷ Pope John XXIII, who convoked the council, eloquently expressed optimistically that the Council would bring great joy to Mother Church. Therefore, he earnestly encouraged an in-depth and attentive reading of the “*signs of the times*,” so that the Church would be more attuned to the needs of the contemporary world.”³⁵⁸ He was more emphatic when he noted that “this is the door of penetration towards that so-called, external, but all apostolic activity of the Church, from which the words of the *docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis* take vigour and irradiation.” He concluded by saying: “In fact, the world needs Christ: and it is the Church that must bring Christ to the world. The world has its problems, of which it sometimes seeks a solution with anguish.”³⁵⁹

Indeed, the Church has the difficult task of challenging the unjust social structures. She has to face constantly the danger of secularism and the degradation of moral values that it is bringing. The Church needs the strength of the Spirit to proclaim the gospel of Christ and bear witness to Him. Nevertheless, the Church has never doubted the enormous nature of the mandate she received from Christ, with the attendant responsibilities and challenges which the mandate connotes. The Lord gave his Church the same mission that the Father had entrusted to him (cf. Jn. 20:21). And from the Church’s beginning, this mission was accomplished by all Christians (cf. Acts 8:4; 11, 19), even with the sacrifice of their lives in many cases. “The Lord’s missionary mandate has its source in the eternal love of God, who sent his Son and his Spirit

³⁵⁴ John O’Malley, “‘The Hermeneutic of Reform’: A Historical Analysis,” *Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2012): 517-546. Grégoire Catta, *‘God for Us’ in the Challenge of Integral Human Development: Theology in Post-Vatican II Catholic Social Teaching*, A Dissertation, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, May 2015, p. 27-29.

³⁵⁵ Many of those ideas are expressed by some of these theologians: David Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et spes*,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching. Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 267-271; John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008); Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

³⁵⁶ Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in, *TI*, vol. 20 (New York: Crossroad Publications, 1981), p. 77-89.

³⁵⁷ Kroeger, *A Vatican II Journey*, p. 1.

³⁵⁸ Kroeger, *A Vatican II Journey*, p. 3.

³⁵⁹ Cf. Pope John XXIII, Radio Message of His Holiness to the Faithful of the world, a month from The Second Vatican Council (Rome: Vatican Publishing Library *Tuesday, 11 September 1962*).

because *he wanted all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim 2:4).³⁶⁰ The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, as a body, understands their mission as being aligned to that of the universal church. However, the application and interpretation of those many theological impulses that accrued from the Council still remains, to some extent, the administrative and pastoral responsibilities of bishops in their individual parochial jurisdiction. This is where impute of the professional theologians are highly desired since the theologian primarily endeavours "to discover how the Christian community might translate its faith into practice." This he does by desiring "to grasp the truths, opinions, questions and trends which the Holy Spirit stirs up in the People of God."³⁶¹ Peter Okafor argues that these discoveries will be highly helpful to the bishop for the purpose of a re-appreciation of the existing interpretation of the faith and the living tradition of the Church.³⁶² The need for this renewed interpretation of the faith and tradition of the Church was highlighted by Pope John XXIII at the opening of the first session of the Second Vatican Council in these words: "The deposit of faith is one thing, the way that it is presented is another; for the truth preserved in our sacred doctrine can retain the same substance and meaning under different forms of expression (...)."³⁶³

In effect, the Pope admitted that the Church's dogmatic expressions were culturally conditioned, and he implicitly invited re-examination and reformulation of that heritage in accord with a diversity of cultural perspectives.³⁶⁴ The relationship between the deposit of faith and its changing modes of expression, according to Okafor, "is rooted in the relationship between revelation and the historicity of humans since our access to the absolute is always from the finite and historically determined point of view."³⁶⁵ In one of his addresses to the Pontifical Council for Culture, St. John Paul II tasks them to find ways of making the message of the Church accessible and understandable to the contemporary frames of mind and sensibility. Without the concreteness and the particularity of people's situations being seriously addressed this way, the process of evangelization runs the risk of losing, as Paul VI puts it, "much of its

³⁶⁰ Cf. *Summaries of Catholic Teaching: Topic 12, I believe in the Holy Spirit, Believe in the Holy Catholic Church*, January 28, 2014. <http://opusdei.org/en-us/section/summaries-of-catholic-teaching/>.

³⁶¹ C. E. Curran and R. E. Hunt, *Dissent in and for the Church, Theologians and Humanae Vitae* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 107; Cf. St Pope Paul II, Address to the International Congress on the Theology of Vatican II, in *The Pope Speaks*, 11 (1966), p. 351-352.

³⁶² Peter Okafor, "Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church, Challenge of the twofold Apostolic Heritage," in, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 17, (2005), p. 103-127.

³⁶³ Cf. C. E. Curran and R. E. Hunt, *Dissent in and for the Church*, p. 99; See, AAS 54, (1962), p. 792. Cf. Aylward Shorter, *Towards a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books), 1988, p. 188. See also, Michael Connors, *Inculturated Pastoral Planning: The U.S. Hispanic Experience* (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001), p. 8. *Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology*, vol. 10, No. 2, Article 7. (2002). <http://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt/vol10/iss2/7>.

³⁶⁴ Michael Connors, *Inculturated Pastoral Planning*, p. 8.

³⁶⁵ Okafor, *Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church*, p. 125.

force and effectiveness.”³⁶⁶ This is the ecclesio-theological background from where the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria draws real impetus in their attempts to make the mission of the church become a life-giving evangelization. Understanding their mission as a prophetic one draws them more to other aspects of their missionary challenges.

b. Prophetic role of the Church in the Nigerian context

Munus propheticum (to proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ), as already stated, forms one of the functions of the mission of the Church. The historico-theological nature of the Church, and *ipso facto*, the history of her mission is painted with series of friendly and as well as unwelcomed interpretations and contextual connotations. Moreover, the perennial perplexity in her holistic comprehension of the goal of her mission and evangelization makes it more arduous to situate the Church in a pluralistic and ethnic-conscious-driven society as Nigeria. However, this ugly environment has not deterred the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria from using their office in the right direction in their desire for proper evangelization in Nigeria. Among the central points which directs the interpretation of the ecclesial mission by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria is their acknowledgement of their prophetic roles as shepherds who share in Christ’s evangelical work.

Taking clue from both Old Testament and New Testament prophetic roles, the Bishops in various areas have never ceased to warn, advice, condemn and chastise the erring people of God especially those in authority. Isaiah out rightly condemned such attitudes in these words: “The Lord enters into judgement with the elders and princes of his people; it is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?” Says the Lord God of hosts (Is. 3:14-15). In the same line of prophetic words, Amos warned: Thus says the Lord,... Because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes – they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and turn aside the way of the afflicted (Amos 2:6-7). The Church by its mission and role has a prophetic responsibility in every society. The prophets in the Old Testament spoke in the name of God and denounced people’s actions when they go contrary to the will of God; this is evident in their activities: Nathan reprimanded King David for his murderous action against Uriah (II Sam 12:13), Elijah confronted King Ahab and his wife

³⁶⁶ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,” AAS 68 (1976), no. 63. Cf. Michael Muonwe, *Dialectics of Faith-Culture Integration* (Bloomington, USA: Xlibris LLC. 2014), p. 94.

Jezebel over Naboth's vineyard (I Kgs 21:20-24).³⁶⁷ Prophetic mission involves direct confrontation with the causes of social and political oppression, aiming at a historical change of the situation. This would involve the denunciation of real persons, social, economic and political institutions in so far as any of them violates justice. It involves the pursuit of justice for the poor and the oppressed. The basis for this focus is that injustice constitutes a serious violation of the express will of God. To achieve this, Christians are to participate in political action.³⁶⁸ The prophet Isaiah utters woe to those who increase their holding on land (Is. 5:8) and those who deny the poor justice (Is. 10:1-4). The prophets denounced all forms of social injustice for its sinfulness and dishonour to God. They preached social reform, citing specific abuses and appealed to Israelite conscience and law. The prophets never waned in recalling to Israel's errant conscience the social legislation of the Pentateuch. It was against the immoral cupidity of this upper class that the prophets protested forcefully and eloquently.³⁶⁹ From her independence, the Nigerian society has never ceased to witness such leaders who use their positions to manipulate the people of God.

Hence, the Bishops, like the prophets of old and as observed by the Swiss protestant exegete Andre Neher, prophets made national catastrophe the basic point of departure and orientation of their prophecy.³⁷⁰ The Bishops have also tried to preach like St Paul in season and out season against the evils of the society. St Paul says: "Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel." Woe to the Church, woe to us, if we are not missionaries. And he adds: "All that I do, I do it because of the Gospel, so that I may have a share in it," showing us plainly by this that, if we want to have a share in the Gospel, we must share it with others.³⁷¹ The Nigerian Bishops through their writings and pastoral work in the different dioceses of Nigeria and even beyond as already noted above have a very prophetic understanding of their role in mission. Like the Old Testament prophets, they call the people to renewal and to holiness (Ezek. 36:16), they denounce bad government and warn the people against impending danger (Jer. 4:19-20), like the prophet Isaiah, they give the poor and the lowly hope – "The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail" (Is. 58:11). They

³⁶⁷ Jude Uwalaka, "The Church as Conscience of a Nation", in, I. Onyeocha (ed.), *The Church as agent of progress and Development*, CIP Jubilee Essays (Owerri: Imo State University press, 2008), pp. 84-119.

³⁶⁸ Augustine Nebuchukwu, "The prophetic mission of the Church in the context of social and political oppression in Africa", in, Justin Ukpong (ed.), *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millenium: Challenges and Prospects* (Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1992).

³⁶⁹ See, Toni Mario Ozele, "Catholic Social Thought: Contemporary Challenges for African Church", in, *NACATHS Journal of African Theology*, no. 2, March, 1992, p. 45-52.

³⁷⁰ See, Ozele, "Catholic Social Thought", p. 45-52.

³⁷¹ Louis Evelyn, *The Word of God*, trans. Mary Agnes (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 282.

are conscious of this prophetic role and used every opportunity to address the various issues in the political and religious life of the flock placed under their care. In one their plenary meetings they declared: “As Christian leaders, we are, however, apostles and ministers of hope. We urge the people of Nigeria, especially the youth, the poor and the lowly who have had to bear the greater burden of the protracted political crisis not to despair”³⁷² They admonished all to a sustained prayer and intercession to God as the last and final hope. In their 1995 Communique, they stressed that the ‘prophetic denunciations’ of some of the anomalies of the day and said: “We can save ourselves but we can do so only if and when we denounce and rid ourselves of evil practices. We therefore cannot but condemn the imprisonment of so many people on political grounds, especially where they are kept in prisons with deplorable conditions and without being charged or tried for years.”³⁷³ In the exercise of its prophetic role in the society the *Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria* issued the following documents: *Increase in crime Wave*, September 1998, *The Menace of Cult in our Institutions*, September 1997, *Government Exists for the People*, October 1960, *Effects of Greed*, February 1983, *Lavish Lifestyle of Officials*, March 1990, *Greed- The Root Cause of our Problems*, March 1995, *The Root Cause of our Wounds*, February 2002 etc.³⁷⁴

And in 1996, with the theme “The prophetic and intercessory role of the Church”, they opined: “The Catholic Church pursues its prophetic role with undivided attention. Like the sentry in the prophecy of Ezekiel whom God commanded to speak to the nation (Ex. 33:1 - 9), we continue to denounce individual and social injustice in our society. This should not be construed as antagonism. We continue to encourage Nigerians to recognise their rights and to resolutely pursue and defend them with all legitimate means at their disposal. The Catholic Church in Nigeria is satisfied that through the voice of her bishops, she has kept faithful to her prophetic role. We have not failed to “proclaim moral principles even in respect of the social order.” Events might have made ours seem like a voice crying in the wilderness. The prophets of old were often ignored. They did not for that matter sheath their tongue. Neither did we, nor ever will.”³⁷⁵ The prophetic role demands sometimes speaking against the prevailing current of thought and behaviour. We did that when the army took over power in the wake of the

³⁷² Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa, ‘The message of Hope, no.1. Cf. Eze Ikechukwu, *Being a Christian in Igbo Land: Facts, Fictions and Challenges* (Germany: Logos Verlag Berlin GmbH, 2013), p. 148.

³⁷³ Eze Ikechukwu, P., *Being a Christian in Igbo land: Facts, Fictions and Challenges*. Logos Verlag Berlin: GmbH, 2013. p. 148.

³⁷⁴ Elizabeth, Onyii Ezenweke, and Anthony, Ikechukwu Kanu, “The Church and National Development: towards a Philosophy of Collaboration”, in, *African Research Review*, vol. 6 (2), Serial No. 25, April, 2012, pp. 103-112, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrr.v6i2.9>, IAARR 2012: www.afrrvjo.net, Indexed African Journals Online: www.ajol.info.

³⁷⁵ CBCN, 1985, *Joint Pastoral Letter of Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, Lagos 1st October, 1985*.

thoroughly botched elections of 1983. It was in a well-publicized memorandum presented by a high-powered delegation of our bishops' conference to the then head of state, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari in March, 1984, three months after his taking office.³⁷⁶ This means that the Church “has the *right* always and everywhere to proclaim moral principles even in respect of the social order, and to make judgments about any human matter in so far as this is required by fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls” (*Canon 747, par.2*). In practice, the Church has striven to be faithful to this mandate of her founder at all times and in all places. She has always read the signs of the times, interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. “In language intelligible to every generation, she strives to answer the ever recurring questions people ask about the meaning of this present life and the life to come....” Hence our rather prophetic warning about social justice: “The problem of justice in Nigeria may well become one of the gravest and most urgent problems of our immediate future... There is spreading a cancer of injustice suffered by the ‘little ones’ of the land, from the hands of some public officials interested too frequently in their personal promotion rather than in their community service.”³⁷⁷ From the beginning, we never minced words on this matter of social justice.

c. Education in the evangelizing mission of the Church

i. Church and educational establishments

The Second Vatican Council document asserts that “The Church, which has been sent by Christ to reveal and communicate the love of God to all men and to all peoples, is aware that for her a tremendous missionary work still remains to be done.”³⁷⁸ This stand of the Council Fathers invariably elicits a renewed consciousness of the importance and responsibility contained in the Christ’s missionary mandate to his apostles. Mission entails teaching, and teaching involves

³⁷⁶ CBCN, *Communique*, 1985.

³⁷⁷ CBCN: *Joint Pastoral Letter of Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, Lagos 1st October, 1985*. It is very pertinent to note here that this Joint Pastoral Letter remains the longest of its kind written by CBCN, followed by the one they wrote in 1960, which was their first pastoral letter as a body. It was written precisely on the 1st of October, the very day that Nigeria got her independence. In it, the Bishops expressed joy and joined the rest of Nigerian community in thanking God for the answered prayer regarding a long-sort-independence. They used that opportunity to itemise the expectations of the people on the part of the government and concluded with a firm promise of total support to the government in finding ways to move the country forward. Prophetically, they spoke of dangers in the government neglect of certain areas of human development. But unfortunately, like the prophets of old, the government never paid heed to the warnings. It was not all together surprising when the country got immersed in bloody civil war, just six years after the joy of independence. By the time the war ended in January of 1970, the government confiscated all the privately owned schools and repatriated all the foreign missionaries. Since then, things have really fallen apart in the Nigerian nation. Therefore, on the 1st of October, 1985, during the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Nigerian Independence, the Bishops tried to bring their thoughts of twenty five years together, and again, reminded the nation on the need to put many things on the right perspective for the future generation.

³⁷⁸ *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 10.

proper education. Hence, the eunuch's response to Philip, "How can I, unless someone teaches me (Acts 8:31). It involves guidance, proper direction and mentoring. Consequently, this can properly explain the degree of importance which the first missionaries to Nigeria attached to education. This idea was collaborated by R. Njoku and many other authors who wrote extensively on the History of Catholic Church in Nigeria (or Igboland). For such authors, one approach that the missionaries used in the evangelization and catechesis of the Igbo Land was the opening of Catholic schools. They opened Church-schools inclusive of primary, secondary, and teacher training colleges throughout the western, eastern, and southern regions of Nigeria. These Church-schools served not only to educate the students in western ideas, but also, served as a major means for the missionaries to evangelize and to catechize them.³⁷⁹ (*This idea was also well expounded in the previous chapter of this work*) And according to K. B. C. Onwubiko, the missionaries established Catholic teachers training colleges to train and to form Catholic school teachers in the Catholic tradition so that they would staff the created primary and secondary Catholic schools. These '*teachers training colleges*' "contributed in no small measure in ensuring that Catholic elite are not wanting in politics, business, the professions, academics and other important walks of life in Nigeria."³⁸⁰

The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have also followed the footprints of this inheritance in placing premium importance on education. Today, the Nigerian Episcopal Conference has taken over the Missionary work in their country and has extended their activity beyond the political boundaries of Nigeria. On this note, John Onayikan,³⁸¹ affirms that "the work and achievements of the foreign missionaries were acknowledged in deservedly flowing terms and their continued role stressed."³⁸² This has been amply complimented by Kenneth Dike when he expressed the idea that "the history of my own education is very much the history of the education of most Nigerians of my generation; today the great majority of our leaders in public life, in politics, in education and the Church, in commerce and industry, owe their education in

³⁷⁹ R. A. Njoku, *The advent of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Its growth in Owerri diocese* (Owerri, Nigeria: Assumpta Press, 1980); K. B. C. Onwubiko, 1985, "The Catholic Church and the development of education in eastern Nigeria (1885-1994).", in, C. A. Obi (ed.), *A hundred years of the Catholic Church in the eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, (Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana- FEP.), p. 224-276.

³⁸⁰ Onwubiko, "The Catholic Church and the development of education in eastern Nigeria (1885-1994).", cited by James Okafor, *The Theological Literacy, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Practices of Lay Catholic Administrators of the Catholic Secondary Schools in the Awka Diocese of Nigeria*, Doctoral Dissertations, 2013, p. 81.

³⁸¹ John Cardinal Onayikan, *the fourth Nigerian Cardinal, was once the President of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria*.

³⁸² John Onayikan, 'What we saw and heard at the African Synod', *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 6/2, pp. 8-9.

whole or in part to missionary enterprise.”³⁸³ This could not have been possible without much interest in education. Hence, the availability of many mission schools, nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions that produce quality graduates to serve the nation remains a concrete testament of the importance of education in the ecclesial life. A detailed exposition of the place of education in the missionary endeavour of Catholic Bishops of Nigeria is therefore necessary. This follows from the general impetus that gave credence to the above project which is not unconnected with the importance which the Magisterium places on education. Under the teaching formation of the Church, *De Ecclesiae munere docendi*, the Code of Canon Law of 1983 aptly states that, “the duty and right of educating belongs to the Church, which strives in assisting persons so that they will be able to reach the fullness of the Christian life,”³⁸⁴ in such a way that “children and youth are to be nurtured in a special way so that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously.”³⁸⁵ The emphasis here is on the need for the Church, in her missionary efforts, always to think about the totality of the human person who lives in a particular society, and who desires to enjoy the life-of-hereafter. The social and cultural aspects of his development cannot be separated from his moral development. Thus, what we therefore see or should see in Catholic schools, according to Omolade, “is a symbiotic relationship between culture and faith, and faith and life.”³⁸⁶

Also, in *Gravissimum educationis*, of 1965, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stated *inter alia*, that “the Catholic school, while pursuing cultural goals and the natural development of youth like other schools, attempts to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love in an effort to relate all human culture to the good news of salvation.”³⁸⁷ With this new dimension, the post-conciliar ecclesiology truly defines a credible novelty in the understanding of her mission. Among the outcomes derivable from this is the reaffirmation of the mother Church which not only takes care of the spiritual welfare of the individual in the society, but takes care of the totality of the human person. This is her specific calling, nay, her vocation and indeed, her mission. Consequently, the Congregation for Catholic Education (of Seminaries and Educational Institutions) states that “the Catholic school, as an educating community, is a school for the

³⁸³ Kenneth, O. Dike, *Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891*, A paper read at the Centenary of the Mission at Christ Church, Onitsha, on November 13, 1957. Published for the C.M.S. Niger Mission by the Ibadan University Press, 1962.

http://anglicanhistory.org/africa/ng/dike_origins1957.html.

³⁸⁴ *Code of Canon Law* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), 794, par. 1.

³⁸⁵ *Can. 795*, par. 1.

³⁸⁶ Richard Omolade, “Challenges for Catholic Schools in Nigeria”, in, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, vol. 1, Issue 1, 2009.

³⁸⁷ Vatican II Council, *Gravissimum educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education,” (October 28, 1965), no. 1.

person and of persons, primarily with the aims at forming the person in the integral unity of his being, using the tools of teaching and learning where “criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life are formed. Above all, they are involved in the dynamics of interpersonal relations that form and vivify the school community.”³⁸⁸ As already stated, the mission of the church is all about teaching, correcting and directing human person to Christ’s life of love in anticipation of the joyful eschatology. From this point of view, the Church becomes truly a pointer, the light and sacrament of salvation. In his many encyclicals, the idea of holistic personality in need of redemption was very prominent in the thoughts of St John Paul II. This idea was again brought to view in his idea of catholic education. Therefore, he opined that the Catholic school “sets out to be a school for the human person and of human persons since the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.”³⁸⁹ From this perspective, the Catholic school becomes a ‘worthy stakeholder’ in the realization of Christ’s mandate, and she truly “participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church.”³⁹⁰ The Church, by her calling is an institution of education, a proper instrument of teaching, and she is expected to do this “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Catholic schools are also, according to St. John Paul II, “places of evangelization, of inculturation, and of dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds.”³⁹¹ We have thus taken much time to touch some important areas where ‘the Church’ emphasizes the need for proper educational involvement in her mission. It is precisely for proper appreciation of the efforts of the CBCN in her educational missionary efforts that we followed that rout. The missionary effort in education, especially from the evangelization that took place in Nigerian is highly complimented by Kenneth Dike when he observed: “.... I have no doubt that the history of my own education is very much the history of the education of most Nigerians of my generation; today the great majority of our leaders in public life, in politics, in education and the Church, in commerce and industry, owe their education in whole or in part

³⁸⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education (of Seminaries and Educational Institutions), *Educating together in Catholic Schools a shared mission between consecrated persons and the lay faithful*, 8 September, 2007. See *Evangelii nuntiandi*, (8th December 1975), no. 19: AAS 68 (1976), 18. <http://www.lasalle.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Congregation-for-Catholic-Education.pdf>.

³⁸⁹ St. John Paul II, “Address to the International Meeting of the Catholic Schools in Italy”, in, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 24 November 1991, p. 4.

³⁹⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education (for Seminaries and Educational Institutions): *The Catholic School on the threshold of the third Millennium*) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_schol2000_en.html.

³⁹¹ St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On the Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000 (Yaounde, Cameroon, 14 September, 1995), no. 102.

to missionary enterprise.”³⁹² How then has CBCN understood and interpreted her mission from the point of view of Catholic education?

ii. Catholic Education as an imperative in the Church’s mission

From the above discourse, we can unarguably deduce the fact that the collegial unity which exist between the *Magisterium* and the educational missionary efforts of the local hierarchy is an age-long necessary inheritance for a proper interpretation and actualization of the Gospel message of “*euntes docete omnes gentes*” (Mt 28: 19-20). Bishops, in their different episcopal conferences and individual dioceses are to look at their environment and deduce the most practicable means of this means of evangelization for the good of the universal church. The first missionaries to Nigeria, as we already examined, placed much importance in education as a proper means of evangelization and were able to touch the lives of many people which translated to overwhelming success in the conversion mission. It is noteworthy to assert from the onset, that in the recent past, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria has through many positive strategies moved education to the next level as an imperative in the mission of the church. Having said that, we then assert that the teachings and interpretation of the idea of catholic education regarding the mission of the Church in Nigeria is not different from the Mother Church, the *ecclesia universalis*.

However, since the contents of faith are known not by merely detached observation but by indwelling or participation, somewhat as we know our own body with its powers and weaknesses,³⁹³ the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria try to expound in concrete terms the importance of catholic education in human person. And for them moral and religious education are specifically directed towards this aim. A nation which neglects this aspect of its education programme spoils its youth, undermines its future and is calling for disaster.³⁹⁴ This is precisely the idea which Schreck expresses when he remarked that ‘education helps in an immeasurable way in developing a person’s physical, moral and intellectual endowments.’ In a similar way, Christian education among other things, introduces a person into a knowledge of the mystery of salvation, based on the gift of faith; (2) teaches a person to adore God in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23), especially through liturgical worship; (3) trains the person to conduct his

³⁹² Kenneth, O. Dike, *Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891*, A paper read at the Centenary of the Mission at Christ Church, Onitsha, on November 13, 1957. Published for the C.M.S. Niger Mission by the Ibadan University Press, 1962.

http://anglicanhistory.org/africa/ng/dike_origins1957.html.

³⁹³ Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co.), 1992, p. 8.

³⁹⁴ CBCN, “Education for All” (February 25, 1983), in, *The Church Teaches*.

or her personal life in righteousness and truth, modelled after Christ himself . . . , (4) helps the person grow accustomed to giving witness to the faith and hope that is in him or her and to promoting the witness to the faith and hope that is in him or her and to promoting the Christian transformation of the world.”³⁹⁵ On their own part, CBCN asserts that the Catholic school enables young people, while developing their own personality to grow at the same time in the new life, which has been given to them in baptism. In nurturing the intellectual faculties of children which is its special mission, the Catholic school develops in them a capacity for sound judgement and introduces the pupils to the cultural heritage bequeathed to them by former generations. It fosters a sense of values and prepares them for professional life. This it does by providing a conducive atmosphere for friendly contacts between pupils of different characters and backgrounds, which encourages mutual understanding.³⁹⁶ In the same tone, The Code of Canon Law states that: “The Church has in a special way the duty and the right of educating, for it has a divine mission of helping all to arrive at the fullness of Christian life.”³⁹⁷

This goal cannot be achieved without the establishment of schools by the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is also particular about how education is packaged. The Church believes very strongly that learners especially those in kindergarten and primary school pupils must be taught from the very beginning to know the distinction between virtues and vices, right and wrong, good and evil, selflessness (altruism) and selfishness, truth and falsehood, forgiveness and vengeance, love (charity) and hate, knowledge and ignorance.³⁹⁸ As already indicated, the importance which the church places on education as a tool for evangelization dates back to the cradle of missionary work in Nigeria around 15th century, before Nigerian independence of 1960. It is worthy of note that The Catholic Church founded the first Missionary School in Badagry, Lagos in 1842. In fact, it is on record that towards the end of 1920, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (then completely European missionaries), made several attempts towards the establishment of Catholic university. When the Federal government opened the Yaba College of Technology in 1934, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria began plans to establish a Catholic university which would be affiliated to it. The Bishops hoped that on the one hand, the spiritual needs of Catholic students would be adequately cared for, while on the other hand, the students would acquire the latest scientific

³⁹⁵ A. Schreck, *Vatican II: The crisis and the promise* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books. 2005), p. 265.

³⁹⁶ CBCN, *The Church Teaches: Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on Issues of Faith and Life*, p. 187.

³⁹⁷ The Code of Canon Law, no. 794 (1).

³⁹⁸ Joseph Sunday Aliyu, “A Review of the Catholic Nursery and Primary Schools,” in, *Catholic Education in Nigeria, Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education in Nigeria*, edited by Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, for CBCN, 2014, p. 20.

knowledge.³⁹⁹ But unfortunately, this idea never got materialised. Again, CBCN renewed their interest in the Catholic University, when the Federal government of Nigeria opened the University College, Ibadan in 1948. It was also disappointing that there was no serious push for its success. And according to Jordan, the Catholic University project was again abandoned by the Conference of Bishops for two major reasons. First, the Catholic Church at that time could not undertake such a gigantic project due to inadequate funds and personnel. The second reason was more specific to the eastern region. Since the regional government was at that time embarking on the establishment of its own university (University of Nigeria, Nsukka), the Catholic Bishops of the east decided to cooperate in this project rather than commence an independent effort of funding its own university. In the 1970s when the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria raised enough funds and personnel to establish its own independent university, the military government of Nigeria enacted a law, which prohibited private establishment of universities.⁴⁰⁰

Although this state of affairs hindered the efforts of the Catholic Church to provide college education, it did not deter the Church from providing elementary and secondary school levels of education. Onwubiko, noted that although the dream of a Catholic university was not immediately realized, Catholic Bishops of Nigeria sought to develop other levels of education (primary, secondary, and teacher training colleges) and to use these levels of education to promote faith and intellectual formation of its young people and adults.⁴⁰¹ The bishops have never lost sight of this fact. Therefore, in their first Pastoral letter and *Communique* they referenced this effort in these words: “It does not seem out of place to say that the Church is proud that her contribution to education and her work of drawing together into one social body people from all parts of the country have been no small factors in the achievement of independence.”⁴⁰² This shows that the Church started very early to invest heavily and fruitfully in quality education in what is now known as Nigeria. The reality of this is so glaring that “in some Nigerian towns and villages, the only places of learning are schools established the

³⁹⁹ K. B. C Onwubiko, “The Catholic Church and the development of education in Eastern Nigeria, p. 241. Cf. Edward Inyanwachi, *A content analysis of church documents relative to the role of Catholic schools and universities in Nigeria in the process of inculturation*. A Dissertation Presented to The University of San Francisco, May 2007, p. 20.

⁴⁰⁰ J. P. Jordan, Interview with Father Vincent Nwosu, January 9, 1982,” in, Celestine Obi (ed.), *A Hundred years of the Catholic Church in eastern Nigeria, 1885-1985*, p. 21.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Edward Inyanwachi, *A content analysis of church documents*, p. 21.

⁴⁰² CBCN, Pastoral Letters and Communiques – 1960 – 2002. *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria*, Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy, October 1st 1960.

Catholic Church.”⁴⁰³ These achievements have been possible because of their belief and conviction that, the good health of a nation is largely dependent on the quality of education of her citizens. With integral education, the human person is formed to be loving and caring, able to actualize his or her potentials, and contribute to the attainment of the common good and fulfil his or her aspiration. Quality education in this respect has a religious and moral content. Education, in the final analysis, is a means of cooperating with God to overcome evil and bring out the best in the human person.⁴⁰⁴ As the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria aptly said, “quality education produces citizens who will work for the establishment and maintenance of socio-economic and political order. It is the antidote for the recurring and related problems of poverty, corruption, insecurity and incompetence in our land. Indeed, the task of building a better Nigerian begins with the provision of quality education.” Since in the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “real education is not possible without the light of the truth – the truth about good and evil,”⁴⁰⁵ the bishops sounded a note or warning to the government authorities that Nigerians must avoid a reductionist conception of education. Consequently, the Bishops aptly contended that “quality education involves the formation of the whole person, that is, the human person in his or her spiritual, intellectual, moral and technical dimensions. It is rooted in and animated by spiritual values. Above all, the goal of real education is to teach us to love: to love God above all things, and to love our neighbours because, despite their different religious, ethnic or cultural affiliations, God loves them. It is by pursuing this objective that education fosters a just socio-economic and political order.”⁴⁰⁶

The Bishops see catholic education as a prolegomena to the continuation of Christ’s missionary mandate. Hence, the body has always advocated that different dioceses, parishes, generous individuals, should always help sponsor indigent children in their educational quest. Hence, with one voice, they have always affirmed that with proper catholic education, holistic human development is achieved for a better evangelization.⁴⁰⁷ Based on these facts, CBCN has continued to encourage the establishment of nursery, primary and secondary schools in different dioceses. Nevertheless, until recently, when private universities were licensed to operate in Nigeria, there were no Catholic universities in the country. But major seminaries, which were affiliated to universities for the award of degrees in Philosophy and Theology existed. In May

⁴⁰³ CBCN: Communique, on Education and Nation Building (March, 2012), in, *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, p. 307.

⁴⁰⁴ CBCN, “Education and Nation Building”, in, *Our Concern for Nigeria*, p. 327.

⁴⁰⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, Message on the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2012, no. 2. See, CBCN: *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, p. 306.

⁴⁰⁶ CBCN, *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, p. 327.

⁴⁰⁷ CBCN, Communique, March, 2005.

1999, the first set of private universities licenses to operate in Nigeria included a Catholic University, Madonna University, Okija. Since then, other Catholic universities that have emerge are: Caritas University, Enugu, Renaissance University, Enugu, Veritas University, Abuja, Tansian University, Umuaya.⁴⁰⁸ There are also some notable Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Colleges of Science and Technology, Vocational Institutes, etc. built by the Catholic Church. Presently, many individual dioceses have started building universities. The idea is to have a continuation of the training given to the children from their nursery schools, through primary and secondary schools with basic catholic principles. Based on this fact too, CBCN, through the Department of Education in their Secretariat has continued to encourage and co-ordinate these schools. Dioceses are also advised to encourage their clergy to embark on further studies, especially in circular courses. However, despite the appreciable results recorded in the education sector, one must agree that it has never been too rosy for the CBCN in their missionary efforts. As such, the Church in Nigeria is aware of the challenges facing Catholic schools, and the first ever national Summit was therefore held in 2006 to address some of them. The result is the replication of the Summit on the diocesan level, so that problems facing particular dioceses could be given special consideration. The importance of this type of gathering is that it involves all stakeholders, thereby showing the collaborative nature of education.”⁴⁰⁹

Therefore, in their plenary meeting of 2014, they happily announced the Second national Catholic Education Summit scheduled for 28th to 31st of October, 2014, at Abuja, while once again reiterating their willingness to continue to partner with the Government at all levels in the provision of quality education for our children.⁴¹⁰ Considering the huge successes recorded in the previous summits, a third National Catholic Education Summit was organized in October, 2018. Since the end of this Summit, they have continued to organise education seminars, workshops and encouraged publication of educational works especially on the part of the clergy. Nevertheless, the bishops have continued to insist that the evils of confiscation of private schools in 1970 still live with us and has consistently hampered the progress of religious formation in schools.

⁴⁰⁸ U. M. O. Iwobi, Corporate Challenge to Nurturing and sustaining Catholic Tertiary Education, in, Catholic Education in Nigeria, Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education in Nigeria, edited by Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, for CBCN, 2014, p. 41

⁴⁰⁹ Richard Omolade, “Challenges for Catholic Schools in Nigeria”, vol. 1, Issue 1, 2009.

⁴¹⁰ CBCN, Communique at the end of the Second Plenary Meeting, at Warri, 11th to 19th September, 2014, in, *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, p. 334.

According to CBCN, the need to give the young a sound moral and religious upbringing brings to the fore the indispensable role of the Church in education, a role which has been compromised by the government take-over of schools in many states of the Federation. Most Nigerians are aware of the disastrous effects of this take-over on the educational system and the society in general. We believe that there should be genuine collaboration between the Church and State in education. We still ask the government to return those schools taken over from the Church and other agencies and to involve the Church in the running of other educational institutions. We reiterate that we are prepared to enter into dialogue with the government and other interested parties to work out the terms of such collaboration.⁴¹¹ Rose Amadi corroborated the above ugly situation expressed by the bishops. As she put it, “the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war, confounded by the Government’s forceful takeover of the missionary and private schools, ushered in an unprecedented fall in standards. The Catholic Church nonetheless, faced up to the challenge of ensuring good education for her children in a truly Christian way. However, the Catholic Church in Nigeria, could not adequately provide the needed infrastructure in her own schools. There was also the non-attractiveness of teaching in most secondary schools. Since the government does not give grants or subsidies to the Church for her educational endeavours, Catholic schools have no pension schemes and retirement benefits for their teachers. As a result of this, young graduates prefer teaching in public schools to teaching in Catholic schools.”⁴¹²

Therefore, Cardinal Onayikan posited that the takeover of missionary schools by state governments was wrong in the first place as it did not help the sector, given the steady decline of standards and morality. That is why it has become imperative for state governments to return the missionary schools to their rightful owners without further delay.⁴¹³ Similar call for the government to return the schools taken over by the 1970 Public Education Edict to their rightful owners has also been made by the National Council on Education (NCE), during its annual general meeting in 2003.⁴¹⁴ Happily, some state governments, have given listening ears to the above clamour by returning the schools to their owners. Such states include: Anambra, Abia, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Lagos and Rivers, etc. In some areas where the

⁴¹¹ CBCN, *Communiqué*, Uyo: 9th to 12th September, 1997.

⁴¹² Rose N. Amadi, “The Nature of the secondary school and vocational curriculum,” in, *Catholic Education in Nigeria, Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education in Nigeria*, edited by Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, for CBCN, 2014, p. 34.

⁴¹³ John Onaiyekan, “Return of Missionary Schools”, 2013. www.vanguardngr.com/2013/02/return-missionary-schools-to-original-owners-cardinal-onaiyekan-tells-govts/.

⁴¹⁴ F. Ozor, “Return mission schools to owners, NCE urges state governments,” in, *Daily Independent*. Retrieved November 6, 2003. <http://www.odili.net/news/sources/2003/nov.6/303.html>.

handover has been completed, an understanding of joint-sponsorship of the schools has been put in place. Some dioceses such as the ones in Anambra State are already reaping the fruits of this bi-lateral relationship with the government. Surely more benefits are derivable for the return of schools as Osuji remarked: “there would be a significant change to our school setting, if the institutions were handed over to the missionaries and religious and moral instructions are made mandatory in primary and secondary schools.”⁴¹⁵ It is on purpose that we have much time in this area of our research. As we are going to find later, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria is of the opinion that education is a *sine-qua-non* in the mission of the church in Nigeria, both for the present and the future.

d. The New Evangelization in the mission of the Nigerian Church

When St John Paul II muted the idea that mission is a complex concept that does not enjoy global acceptance, perhaps he was implying the vicissitudes of different environments where evangelization is carried. The influence of societal changes and the unpalatable earthly realities of different dimensions and magnitudes which confront the recipients of the Good news of Christ entails a re-evaluation of the missiological paradigm. Education formed the concrete foundation where missionary activities were laid with numerous monumental positive results as we saw above. Morality and ethical issues were never divorced from educational cum missionary principles which gave the society numerous balanced personalities. However, in view of the degree of lukewarm attitudes and high rate of disinterestedness to the proper mission of the Church, coupled with increasing rate of religious syncretism, St John Paul II came up with the idea of re-evangelization known as new evangelization. The major task here is for us to evaluate how the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have understood and applied this concept in improving their missionary task in the Nigerian context.

i. Contextual consideration

Considering the vibrancy and increasing population of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, one can only conclude that the Catholic Church has really come to stay. It has taken root. Their traditional religion prior to the advent of Christianity was part of their daily life which is totally based on the moral principles that give foundation to human relationship. In the same way, one

⁴¹⁵ Osuji F., “Education minister campaigns for return of mission schools,” in, *Vanguard*, October 23, 2003, p. 2. <http://www.odili.net/news/source/2003/oct/23/64.html>. See also, Edward Inyanwachi, *A content analysis of church documents relative to the role of Catholic schools and universities in Nigeria in the process of inculturation*, p. 20.

can say that Christianity has become part of the daily life of many Nigerians especially in the eastern part of Nigeria which is the hub of Christianity in Africa. Therefore, “one is not a Christian on Sundays only, or in the seclusion of one’s private life. The separation of one’s private life, or of one’s religious life from secular life, is foreign to the Christian religion.”⁴¹⁶ Following from the above picture, we see a confirmation of an encouraging assertion of Pope Benedict XVI when he noted that Africa is now a “*spiritual lung for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope.*”⁴¹⁷ With this statement, the Holy Father throws a challenge to Africa, and indeed, to Nigeria which has the highest number of missionary personnel (*Bishops, Priests, Religious workers, Seminarians, lay faithful*) in Africa. However, the aforementioned evangelization positives do not in any way negate the fact of negativism and syncretism on the part of the Catholics. This is the situation that calls for the necessity of new evangelization. The appreciation of the Good news and high percentage recorded in the missionary work of the church is always attributable to the invigorated spirit of the Second Vatican Council and energized by the understanding of the Magisterium.

Remarkably, the first apostolic visit of his St. John Paul II (February 12-15, 1982), changed the face of Catholicism in Nigeria. Not only that it strengthened the faith of the faithful, it also helped to solidify the bond of relationship between the church and other religions, while encouraging a greater understanding among the episcopate in Nigeria. Part of his primary motive for that visit was clearly encapsulated in his words, while addressing the Catholic Bishops in Lagos. By reminding the bishops about the importance of unified missionary objective which is centred in Christ, he at the same time implied that no one takes up the work of evangelization except he who is sent, just as we have been sent by Christ and to communicate Him to the world, in a special way through *a new era of evangelization.*”⁴¹⁸ The above good intention of his Holiness was repeated while addressing the Nigerian bishops during their *Ad Limina* visit of 1987. While recalling the vivid memories of his apostolic visit to Nigeria, His Holiness thanked them for “the vitality and enthusiasm of the faith found in Nigeria and the need for *a new era of evangelization* which he sees as his main purpose for the visit.”⁴¹⁹ With

⁴¹⁶ Raphael, C. Anasiudu, “The Christian in Public Life”, in, *Religion in a Secular State: Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Christian Association of Nigeria*, 15 – 17 November, 1988, (ed.), A. O. Makozi and G. I. Afolabi Ojo, p. 36.

⁴¹⁷ *Africae Munus*, no. 13.

⁴¹⁸ St. John Paul II, *Address to the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria*, in, Papal Message to Nigeria, (Lagos, Nigeria: National Committee on Papal Visit on behalf of the National Episcopal Conference of Nigeria, 1982), p. 38.

⁴¹⁹ St. John Paul II, Address of the Holy Father St John Paul II, to the Bishops of Nigeria on the occasion of their “*ad limina*” visit, Rome, Thursday 3 September 1987.

the above encouraging words from the Holy Father, CBCN has been energized to face the challenges of the contemporary missionary activities.

ii. Reception of the new era of evangelization by CBCN

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, in their missionary activities do not lose sight of the fact that '*ecclesia*' as *a divina institutio* through the work of the Holy Spirit (Act 20:28). The bishops continue to draw inspiration from the *Magisterium*. 'New evangelization' as envisioned by St John Paul II serves as a new direction in the church's evangelizing efforts aimed at addressing the emerging situations in the field of evangelization, directed to those "groups of the baptized who have lost a living sense of the faith ... and live a life far removed from Christ and the Gospel. The situation that calls for a new evangelization is particularly found in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger churches as well" (*RM*, no. 33).⁴²⁰ Linked to the above understanding of the concept is what he describes as *cultural sectors*, the modern equivalent of the Areopagus. This includes the "world of communications, commitment to peace, advancement of women, children and of culture, challenges they offer to mission."⁴²¹ The task of new evangelization is to decipher the best missionary strategies to counter the above societal problems. In Nigeria, for instance, the greatest 'Areopagus', is the incessant harassment of the Christians by *Boko Haram*, *Herdsmen Militancy* and Islamization of Nigeria as an agenda by the Moslems. To speak of a new evangelization is to reassess situation on ground and see how the missionary method being used by the church can be reshaped. Shedding light on those new problems is what the CBCN has tried doing as they are daily confronted with prevalent problems of Nigerian society, midwifed by series of Islamic insurgence like *Boko haram*, *herdsmen militancy invasions* of villages, corruption, injustice, poverty, dangerous ethnic cleavages and some moral issues like abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, human trafficking, neo-paganism, religious syncretism, etc. We have been preoccupied in this chapter of our work in x-raying the efforts of the bishops in this regard. Consequently, the bishops accepted the concept of new evangelization as "a major initiative to inspire this nation in the struggle against indiscipline and materialism; to supply spiritual methods of reforming the individual, family and society; of restoring true cultural and patriotic values; of everywhere renewing Christian belief and practice and of reconciling

⁴²⁰ Cf. Oborji, *Concepts of Mission*, p. 10; See also, Francis Anaekwe Oborji, *New Evangelization in the context of the Church in Igboland: Prospects and Challenges*; A paper delivered at the meeting of the Association of Igbo Priests, Religious and Seminarians in Rome (Pontificio Istituto di "Sacra Musica", Rome), 19 March 2006, pp. 1-14.

⁴²¹ See, Oborji, *New Evangelization in the context of the Church in Igboland*, 2006.

families, communities and ethnic groups to live in peace and harmony.”⁴²² According to the bishops, “only Christians evangelized by themselves, Christians who are sermons by their own lives can bring conversion and renewal in others. The Church pledges to redouble its efforts in producing such citizens.”⁴²³

2. The Gospel as instrument of justice, peace and progress

The history of the Church, and *ipso facto*, the history of her mission is painted with series of friendly and as well as unwelcomed interpretations and contextual connotations. Moreover, the perennial perplexity in her holistic comprehension of the goal of her mission and evangelization makes it more arduous to situate the Church in a pluralistic and ethnic conscious society as Nigeria. However, this ugly environment has not deterred the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria from using their office in the right direction in their desire for proper evangelization in Nigeria. The task facing us here is to decipher to what extent that CBCN has been able to impact their missionary activities that reflect the Gospel of Christ and his mission in the improvement of justice, peace, and positive attitudes towards fairness and equity in the society where they operate.

a. The multi-religious nature of Nigerian society and the Church’s mission

In *Lumen Gentium*, the Council states: “It is the duty of all Bishops to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith and the discipline common to the whole Church..., and, to foster every activity which is common to the whole Church, especially efforts to spread the faith and make the light of the full truth dawn on all people”⁴²⁴ The Church exists in this world to give glory to God through Jesus Christ. All that she does takes its meaning from this end. She is a spiritual society and yet she is not merely spiritual because her members have bodies as well as souls. But as the Church pursues her spiritual purposes she is aware that other bodies exist side by side with her who also pursue spiritual purposes. Hence, the Catholic Church acknowledges the reality that Nigeria is a multi-religious society. As such, while she claims that Christ did not leave men in doubt about the truth of his message and established a Church with authority from Himself, the Church nevertheless has always recognised the good will and sincerity of other religious communities who seek to worship God in the way that seems best to them.

⁴²² CBCN, *Communique*, 1984.

⁴²³ CBCN, *Communique*, 1st Oct. 1985.

⁴²⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 23.

Consequently, we welcome the religious freedom that is written into the Constitution.⁴²⁵ However, one needs not pretend that proper missionary activities in this type of pluralistic and highly ethnic-oriented environment will be smooth-sailing for the chief shepherds. In this circumstance, therefore, the idea of unity is visited, especially as it concerns the CBCN and for them to be united as a body to face the challenges emanating from other religious groups. Thus, in the words of St John Paul II, “the College of Bishops serves the unity of the Church in a special way and the unity that should exist between them, priests, Religious and laity.”⁴²⁶ The Holy Father, also encouraged them “to face the work of evangelization with strong zeal since “God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power” (2 Tim 1:7).”⁴²⁷ Hence, in a multi-religious society like ours, the Bishops feel acutely conscious of the tragedy of Christian disunity. That disunity goes clearly contrary to Christ’s intentions for His followers. It also confuses the minds of many people and makes them despair of ever getting to know what Christian truth is in its fullness and perfection. These continuing doctrinal disagreements are unfortunate. But at least we must live together in charity. Love is meant to be a mark of those who follow Christ. Indeed, “the Catholic Church wants to carry on her spiritual mission of giving glory to God. She wants to find herself at peace with all men of good will as she carries out her mission. The Church prolongs the work of Christ.”⁴²⁸

b. Promotion of justice and equity in Nigerian society

The Second General Assembly of Catholic Bishops took place in 1971. One of the most pertinent points raised and discussed in that forum was the issue of justice and human rights as it affects the entire world. In one of the sections, it was vividly stated that fundamentally, the Church is a religious and hierarchical community. Nevertheless, she has a role to play in the orderly human activities especially in the areas concerning human relationship, national relationships and international engagements. Succinctly put, “of itself, it does not belong to the Church, insofar as she is a religious and hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic and political spheres for justice in the world. Her mission involves

⁴²⁵ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, 1st October, 1960.

⁴²⁶ St. John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of Nigeria on the occasion of their “*ad limina*” visit, Thursday 3 September 1987. Referring to this visit in February of 1982 and the joy that accompanied it, he said: “As you will remember, it was with the hope that my coming would initiate a new era of evangelization in Nigeria that I undertook the pastoral visit.”

⁴²⁷ St. John Paul II, *Homily at Mass for the beatification of Father Cyprian Iwene Tansi*, 22nd March, 1998.

<http://www.totus2us.com/universal/nigeria/jpii-pilgrim-visit-1998/#c5108>

⁴²⁸ CBCN, *Communique, Christian Unity and Religious Understanding*, 1985.

defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.”⁴²⁹ Christ’s mission on earth centred on the total condemnation of man’s inhumanity to man and exploitation of the less privileged. This was the same mission he transferred to the Church. As such, the above document summarised the fundamental principles embedded in the corpus of the missionary mandate. Stressing the points, the bishops noted that the Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to people to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal kinship 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 people and their very salvation demand it. The Church, indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.”⁴³⁰

In the same footing, during the silver jubilee celebrating of Nigeria’s independence, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria articulated some of the laudable efforts they have collectively made towards a better society. Speaking on the Social Concerns and injustice, they noted: “We the bishops have spoken not only through the pastoral letters. We have spoken also through the communiques that come out of the meetings we hold twice in the year. We have addressed ourselves on many occasions to the needs of the family, “the base of the nation;” to responsibilities owed to the masses, the silent majority, to serve whom is the test of good leadership; to the aspirations and problems of youth, the hope of tomorrow; to their need in particular for proper and sufficient education. To achieve this kind of education, we have insisted that the Church be allowed to participate. With one voice, the bishops lamented the rate with which acts of injustice are perpetrated with impunity in Nigeria, and labelled it as a ‘*cancer*’ both in the entire society and in their missionary endeavour. “Hence our rather prophetic warning about social justice: “The problem of justice in Nigeria may well become one of the gravest and most urgent problems of our immediate future... There is spreading a cancer of injustice suffered by the ‘little ones’ of the land, from the hands of some public officials interested too frequently in their personal promotion rather than in their community

⁴²⁹ Second General Assembly Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, no. 37.

<https://www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf>

⁴³⁰ *Second General Assembly Synod of Catholic Bishops*, no. 36.

service.”⁴³¹ Continuing, they opined that the Church “has the *right* always and everywhere to proclaim moral principles even in respect of the social order, and to make judgments about any human matter in so far as this is required by fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls.”⁴³² Social justice and human equality are necessary ingredients for any meaningful development. The Church as an agent of progress has issued so many documents to guide world leaders towards the promotion of social justice. As an expert in humanity, the Church offers by her social doctrine, a set of principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and directives for action. Consequently, in all Catholic dioceses in Nigeria, there is the *Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)*, tasked with the responsibility of promoting justice and peace.

In a more practical terms, during the 2007 national elections, the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) printed and circulated banners and stickers encouraging Nigerians to vote and shun violence and all nefarious activities that jeopardize peace. In places ravaged by war, hunger, disease and famine, the Church is seen giving a helping hand to victims. There are millions of Church-owned and orphanages, rehabilitation homes, youth centres and old people’s homes.”⁴³³ Because of the place of importance which the bishops have for the issue of justice, social welfare and human dignity, a good number of documents have been issued by them. These include, *inter alia*, “The Church and Human Rights, February 1972, Dignity of the Human Person, February 1972, Violation of Human Rights and Dignity, September 1984, Government Must Respect the Rule of Law, September 1994, Inalienable Rights- Food, Health, Education, ETC, September 1985, Church’s Stance in Defence of Life, November 1995, Make Public the Oputa Panel Report, March 2001.”⁴³⁴ Through these documents, they have been able to practicalize the ideas projected by the Second Vatican Council. The Council teaches that the Church “serves the world by healing and proclaiming human dignity, and by promoting family unity, through injection of faith with Christian practical life of charity.”⁴³⁵

Through the Encyclicals and addresses of the Popes, it is implied that the Church must carry on the light against the sins of society, she must address itself to the benefits which the poor have been deprived through injustice and unequal distribution. In more apt words, the Nigerian Church must “regard it as her basic mission to preach the principles of social justice.

⁴³¹ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, Lagos, 1st October, 1985.

⁴³² CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, Lagos, 1st October, 1985.

⁴³³ C. E. C. Onwuliri, “The Church as an agent of progress and development”, in, I. Onyeocha (ed.), p. 70-83.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Elizabeth, Onyii Ezenweke, and Anthony, Ikechukwu Kanu, “The Church and National Development: towards a Philosophy of Collaboration”, in, *African Research Review*, vol. 6, 2012.

⁴³⁵ A. Flannery, (ed.), *Gaudium et Spes: Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1965), p.903-1001.

The ultimate concern of the church is the salvation of all men.”⁴³⁶ Ozele contended that, the crux of the missionary mandate as encapsulated in “going out to make disciples of all nation (Mt. 28:19), is situated properly in the perspective of the baneful situation of clinical cleansing of the politico-moral evils that have engulfed Nigeria as a nation. This is the rough and undulating terrain that the Church must trek for her to remain truly “salt of the earth” (Mt. 5: 13) and “light of the world” (Mt. 5:14).”⁴³⁷ Continuing, he suggested that the CBCN as the mouth-piece of the Church in Nigeria has never been wanting in this regard in her efforts of being “all things to all men” (1Cor. 9:19-23). This, they have always done from the perspective of their prophetic roles. The pervasion of justice, negation of human rights and degradation of moral norms in the society are all indices of a society that requires not only spiritual cleansing, but the proper hierarchical condemnation.”⁴³⁸

c. The Church for the poor

In his announcement of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pope John XXIII said that “Our sole concern is the *“bonum animarum”*. This slight change of emphasis from *salus animarum* to *bonum animarum*, in the mission of the church, implied a change of approach. But with the concept of *bonum animarum*, the integral and pastoral mission of the church for the good of body and soul of the whole human person began. The Catholic Bishop’s Conference of Nigeria held their first plenary meeting of the year at the Eucharistic Heart Centre, Ikeja, Lagos, 14th to 18th February, 1989. At the end of that meeting, they unanimously asserted that “As religious leaders, we take the social and temporal order seriously as part and parcel of our prophetic presence.”⁴³⁹ This idea is completely in tandem with one of the theological impulses that came with Second Vatican Council. It emphasises that as the Church moves from a-closed-Church-mentality (*missio ad intra*) to a-Church-in the world vision (*missio ad extra*), corporal aspects of human person should be of utmost importance. And in the social order, one of the challenges of the Church in Nigeria, and indeed, most of the countries in the world, which deals with human corporality is poverty.

CBCN, in so many ways have therefore voiced their dissatisfaction on the degree of poverty ravaging the country. In line with this, one may, in good conscience therefore question the fecundity of the “*Good News*” in the ears and mind of an empty stomach. As such, when

⁴³⁶ See, Ozele, “Catholic Social Thought: Contemporary Challenges for African Church,” 1992, p. 45-52.

⁴³⁷ Ozele, “Catholic Social Thought,” p. 45-52.

⁴³⁸ Ozele, “Catholic Social Thought,” p. 45-52.

⁴³⁹ CBCN, *Peace through Justice and Love*, Communique, Ikeja, Lagos, 1989. p. 70.

Christ detailed his disciples to “*give them something to eat*” (Mk. 6:37; Mt. 14:13-21; Lk. 9), he was only asserting the need for *bonum animarum*. Hence, just as they affirmed in 1985, in Lagos⁴⁴⁰, the bishops insisted that, “inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the guidance of the befriending Spirit of Love. The Church of Christ has *particular concern for the poor and suffering*. It is the duty of the Church to serve the suffering everywhere.”⁴⁴¹ Indeed, the strength of the Church lies, not in any technical, economic or political power, but rather in the light she draws from the Gospel, a light which illuminates life, brightening the consciences of men, and transforming their personal and communal relations and activities. She is not afraid of raising her voice and *committing herself to the poor* whenever she sees the powerful, and the power-conscious, privileged pressure groups browbeating the weak. Following Christ’s example, *she is always on the side of the poor*. Her mission, like His, is to serve them and to liberate them. Her Christ-like charity is the soul which vivifies her pronouncements on human justice. Simply put, *the Church is the church of the poor* and it is to the needy that we dedicate our services and our lives.⁴⁴² Again, “our hearts are given to the poor and we accept that we must be grateful to ensure that the poor see this and accept it as true”⁴⁴³ since, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, theirs is the Kingdom of God*” (Mt. 5:3). Consequently, “as Church of God in our distressed nation, we are challenged by the harsh realities within which we have to witness to the love of God. The entire Church in our land, in all its components of clergy, religious and laity must avoid all extravagance and lavishness, even in sacred and noble projects, if the poor are to find any meaning in our message of consolation and hope. “You are the light of the world, your light must shine in the sight of men” (Mt. 5:14-16).⁴⁴⁴

In practical terms, the church uses, both *JDPC* (Justice Development and Peace Commission) and *Caritas* as her organs to touch the lives of the poor. These organs are also established in individual dioceses and parishes. A clearer picture of their functions will be seen later in this work. St. John Paul II describes Africa as “a Continent where countless human

⁴⁴⁰ CBCN, In their plenary meeting, they noted that: “*In practice, the Church has striven to be faithful to this mandate of her founder at all times and in all places. She has always read the signs of the times, interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. “In language intelligible to every generation, she strives to answer the ever recurring questions people ask about the meaning of this present life and the life to come....” 1985.*

⁴⁴¹ CBCN, *Communique*, December, 1968.

⁴⁴² CBCN, *The Church and the Poor*, 1972. See also, CBCN, 1996, where they stated that “The Catholic Church in Nigeria continues to identify herself with the joys and sorrows of every Nigerian, especially the poor. To bring the good news to the poor; To proclaim liberty to captives; And to the blind new sight; To set the downtrodden free; to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour” (Luke 4:18 - 19).

⁴⁴³ CBCN, *Communique*, *The Church and the Poor*, 1972.

⁴⁴⁴ CBCN, *Communique*, *True Solidarity with the Poor*, 1989.

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.”⁴⁴⁵ And in the latest report by the National Bureau of Statistics, we are told that the population of Nigerians living below poverty level is about 112 million people, (this translates to 67.1 percent of Nigeria’s population of about 167 million).⁴⁴⁶ The Catholic Bishop of Awka describes this scenario as incredible, mindboggling, and completely unacceptable in a country rich in human and natural resources.⁴⁴⁷ In this type of pitiable situation, the mission of Christ will be shallow and of lesser import if the poor in the society are neglected. The Bishops therefore, have decided to model their own mission with that of Christ who devoted His time for the poor and downtrodden. Many other individual bishops, have, also in their Lenten pastorals tried to sensitize the public about the need to carry the mission of Christ to the poor, by translating the *Good Samaritan* philosophy to their own daily lives. Put vividly, CBCN very much believes that in carrying out the mission entrusted to them, they are not inspired by any earthly ambition. The Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the guidance of the befriending Spirit of Love. As such, the Church of Christ has particular concern for the poor and suffering, irrespective of his/her religious, ethical or cultural background. When brother fights brother inflicting dreadful suffering, the Church cannot disown them but must suffer inconsolably until they are reconciled. To bring help to one’s neighbour in need is a holy command of all religions.⁴⁴⁸

d. Justice and Peace as integral part of the Church’s mission

It is the opinion of Oborji that, the question of *justice* and *peace* in the world today is beginning to influence the writings of contemporary missiologists who reflect on the challenges of reconciliation and violence in our increasingly pluralistic society. This is the background under which most missiologists and theologians today offer their reflections on the emergent emphasis on reconciliation in the social context.⁴⁴⁹ In fact, the key to resolving economic, political, cultural and ideological conflicts is justice; and justice is not complete without love

⁴⁴⁵ *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 41.

⁴⁴⁶ See Vanguard Newspaper, 12 January 2018; <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/10/poverty-112m-nigerians-live-poverty-line/>; Cited by Paulinus Ezeokafor, *Bearing One Another’s Burdens (Gal 6:2): Towards a Befitting Living – Care for the Poor, Sick, and the Aged*, Lenten Pastoral Letter (Awka, Nigeria: Fides Publication, 2018), p. 6.

⁴⁴⁷ Ezeokafor, *Bearing One Another’s Burdens (Gal 6:2)*, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. CBCN, December, 1968 (at the middle of the Nigeria – Biafra war, 1967 -1970).

⁴⁴⁹ Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Mission and Reconciliation Theology and Pastoral Challenges of Social Violence*, MMXV Aracne editrice int.leS.r.l., 2015, p. 19.

of neighbour, without an attitude of humble, generous service.⁴⁵⁰ The Church in Nigeria has never shied away from her mission of preaching peace and justice since that forms the fulcrum of Christ's message. In other words, it is the mission of the Church to bring the Gospel message to bear, not only on individuals but also on the social, political, and economic structures of nations, with the aim of promoting greater justice, integrity, love, and peace among peoples. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria wishes to restate the constant teaching of the Catholic Church, that *justice* is the only way to true and lasting peace. To the people of Nigeria, we are messengers of peace, and we recognise in the words of Pope John Paul II that those who wish to have peace must work for justice. In pursuance of this mission, we have issued several statements since the onset of the current political crisis, declaring our stand on the side of justice and the rule of law. These statements seem to have fallen on deaf ears, but not without the dire consequences on the nation and its people which we had foreseen.⁴⁵¹

The concept of *Peace* has never been seen as a novelty in the Church's missionary life. Christ's own mission was anchored on that so much so that the event of his resurrection, the first words he gave to his disciples was, "Peace be with you" (Jn. 20:19-23; Lk. 24:33-47). The mission which He wanted them to embark in these words, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (Jn. 20: 22), is invariably the mission of peace. The Church therefore has no option than to be a Church of Peace, and her message to the world must be founded on the ingredients of peace. According to Ezenweke, the Church must start this mission of peace "from the family which is the basis of national and world peace, in the community, in the country and the world." Hence, in her involvement in the search for peace for the nation, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria issued the following documents, inter alia, Breakdown of Law-Violence, November 1996, Violence Begets Violence, November 1995, Violence in the Name of Religion, February 2000, Dialogue Rather than Violence, September 2001 etc.⁴⁵²

In the search for peace and justice, the Nigerian socio-political reality sets the agenda of mission for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. From this angle, the church's mission becomes the presence of God in the world, a prerequisite of which is discerning the signs of the time, such as the socio-political realities. Secondly, mission becomes as well the transformation of society and human condition.⁴⁵³ Consequently, at a time when Nigerian

⁴⁵⁰ St. John Paul II, *Homily at Mass for the beatification of Father Cyprian Iwene Tansi*, 1998. <http://www.totus2us.com/universal/nigeria/jpii-pilgrim-visit-1998/#c5108>.

⁴⁵¹ CBCN, *The Mission of the Church in the Society*, A Communique (Enugu, September, 1994).

⁴⁵² Elizabeth, Onyii Ezenweke, and Anthony, Ikechukwu Kanu, "The Church and National Development: towards a Philosophy of Collaboration", 2012, pp. 103-112.

⁴⁵³ John S. Pobee, "I am first an African and Second a Christian?" in, *Indian Theological Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, July 1988, p. 268 – 277.

society was painted with images of injustice, impunity, violence and disorder, the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo sent a passionate message to CBCN for solution in these words: “The nation is knocking at the door of the Church for peace and harmony at this midnight hour. Rise up and meet our need.”⁴⁵⁴ Thus, in their First Plenary Meeting of 2001, the Bishops assured the President of their resoluteness to continue to play an increasing active and important role as a positive element within the Nigerian society. In pursuance of this objective, they directed all the parishes to begin a programme of basic education in the civic rights and responsibilities of its members in collaboration with the Justice, Development and Peace Committees, while promising to initiate a nation-wide programme on education on the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church.⁴⁵⁵ And in their Second Plenary Meeting, the Bishops continued to condemn the use of violence in all its forms by adherents of every religious or ethnic group, insisting that “no destruction of human life can be justified in the name of religion. On the alternative, we continue to propose dialogue, forgiveness, and reconciliation, since it is quite clear that if we want lasting peace, we must work for justice.”⁴⁵⁶

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria is very much aware that the world to which the church has been sent is depraved, sick and divided. And this weighs heavily on consciences in modern times. Hence, they are of the opinion that the Church should urge co-operation with and support of the government social, educational, medical, religious development work in the true Vatican ecumenical spirit. Since Religion is a unifying force and not a divisive one, the Church must co-operate to work for unity and peace and do nothing to be identified with tensions and divisions. In union with other churches we take up specially the defence of the poor subjected peoples in our continent as we assert the requirements of justice with respect to nations: Our Christian social message for these people is stated clearly in the principal social documents; “*Mater et Magistra*”, “*Pacem in Terris*”, “*Gaudium et Spes*”, and “*Populorum Progressio*”. They spell out for us a message of courageous return to the heart of the Gospel; a message of hope, renewal and liberation from all forms of social enslavement.⁴⁵⁷ Indeed, Christ came free people from such social entanglement and slavery. His vocal voice was heard beyond the frontiers of his immediate environment. He touched their lives with the message of peace and justice. CBCN also tries to align their own mission with that of Christ in announcing the message of truth to the people.

⁴⁵⁴ CBCN, *Building God’s Kingdom of Justice and Peace*, A Communique (Abuja, March, 2001).

⁴⁵⁵ CBCN, *Building God’s Kingdom of Justice and Peace*, 2001.

⁴⁵⁶ CBCN, *Towards a Just and Peaceful Society*, A Communique (Lagos, September, 2001).

⁴⁵⁷ CBCN, *The Church and the Nigerian Social Problems*, A joint Pastoral Letter, 1972.

e. Promotion of human dignity and protection of human life

One of the consistent issues that featured in many of the apostolic visits of St John Paul II in many countries, has to do with practical mission. This means a result-oriented theology of mission, a theology of *life-witnessing*. The mission that touches the lives of the people is simply the church that Christ envisioned. As such, in his first visit to Nigeria, he reminded the priests of the unbreakable link between the mission of the church and the daily lives of the people. Thus, any definition of the mission of the church that is devoid of human earthly realities, the pains and sorrows of life, may not be given a positive acceptance since the central mission of the church is to be found among the people of God in their daily lives. Hence, the church-in-mission cannot possibly close its eyes to these realities. The Supreme Pontiff admonished them thus: “Since ‘evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and men’s concrete life’ (EN, 29), the priest will be deeply concerned with bringing the light of the Gospel and the power of God’s word to touch the many different issues of family life, fundamental human rights and duties, justice and peace, development and liberation, culture and learning.”⁴⁵⁸ In this regard, CBCN has been appreciably vocal in the condemnation of such issues that borders on the dignity of human life and morality. The Church being the voice of the voiceless is also inclusive of unborn babies and other related issues of human life.

i. The mission of the Church is for human person

In their efforts to discover the deep meaning of the Church’s mission as it relates to the earthly realities in the Nigerian context, CBCN has always relied heavily on the Church’s Magisterium. Their understanding of *missio ad intra* and *missio ad extra* has always been geared towards being on the sure path of “*sentire cum Ecclesia*” (*thinking with the Church*) (Cf., *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 36). In other words, their integral understanding of the mission of the church, must first of all be felt on their defence of the human person as a composite being as explained by the Magisterium. From this perspective, CBCN completely dedicated their First Plenary meeting of 1986 to the issue of artificial population control with the caption, “Bishops say no to artificial population control.” While encouraging responsible parenthood and natural methods of birth control, the Bishops warn against limitation of family by artificial means such as contraception and clinical abortion. They view with serious concern the exploitation of the

⁴⁵⁸ CBCN, *Address of St John Paul II, to Priests and Seminarians*, during his Apostolic Visit to Nigeria, February, 1982, Published by the National Committee on Papal Visit on behalf of the National Episcopal Conference of Nigeria, p. 20.

ignorance of many of our people by drug campaigns peddling freely in our nation, contraceptive pills already withdrawn from overseas as being dangerous to health. They also condemn the conscious attempt to underrate the effectiveness of natural family planning methods, which are clearly cheap and without medical side effects.⁴⁵⁹ Of course, Nigeria being a country with still high degree of illiteracy, the Bishops know quite well that this war against artificial birth control can never be won with a cup of coffee. It needs consistency and proper enlightenment programmes. As such, they reaffirmed their stand in their 1987 Plenary Meeting.

In that meeting, they noted that, “to make population control dependent on the crumbs from the rich man’s table is un-Christian, unbecoming and debasing for the human family. Birth control by artificial means, contraceptives and/or abortion, reflect shamefully on man’s noble and resourceful labour to provide a plentiful harvest and a bountiful table to feed the whole human race.”⁴⁶⁰ The Bishops also insisted that “responsible parenthood, moral discipline, fear of God and natural methods of birth control produce better and more honourable results than man-made devices and artificial methods that offend God and man. To make it compulsory for nurses and midwives to promote artificial birth control is a grave violation of freedom of conscience.”⁴⁶¹ CBCN, is of the opinion that artificial contraception and sterilization are inhuman and morally disordered measures which pander to human weakness and create greater problems. Here, too, there is an underlying moral problem of sexual irresponsibility that we must have the courage to address ourselves.⁴⁶² On the issue of human trafficking, the Bishops extolled the efforts of the Nigerian Conference of Women Religious (NCWR) in spearheading the campaign against human trafficking. They continue to maintain the stand of the Church’s teaching that “human life originates from God, is sacred and as such must be loved, respected and protected from conception to natural death.”⁴⁶³

ii. War against abortion: CBCN’s stand

In his Encyclical Letter Peace on Earth, Pope Saint John XXIII emphasized that, “Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle: that every human being is a person; his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. By virtue of this, he has rights and duties of his own, flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature, which are therefore universal, inviolable, and inalienable. If we look upon the

⁴⁵⁹ CBCN, Communique, February, 1986.

⁴⁶⁰ CBCN, Communique, 1987.

⁴⁶¹ CBCN, Communique, 1987.

⁴⁶² CBCN, Communique, March, 1992.

⁴⁶³ CBCN, Communique, Abuja, 2001.

dignity of the human person in the light of divinely revealed truth, we cannot help but esteem it far more highly...”⁴⁶⁴ Protection and promotion of the human person and his dignity has always remained important part of the Church’s mission, in the same wave-length with pursuit of justice and peace. In other words, the social teaching of the Church reflect in its entirety the idea of auto transcendence of human person who is created in the image and likeness of God. As such, the Church, in trying to fulfil her mission, takes care of the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the individuals. This explains the reason behind the efforts which CBCN is making in the mission of “*sentire cum Ecclesia*”. In various ways, the bishops, both as a body and in their individual dioceses, continue to sensitize the nation on the need for protection of life at any stage.

According to them, “God alone gives life and God alone can take it. Abortion is against the law of God. *Thus we say “No” and will continue to say “No” to abortion.* We will do so with our voices, our votes, and our feet. We endorse the actions so far taken by the Catholic Women Organisation of Nigeria,⁴⁶⁵ and other organisations in this regard.”⁴⁶⁶ The Bishops defined abortion as killing of innocent human life. The unborn baby, they insisted is human and innocent. Abortion is an abomination not only in the Christian faith but in Islam and our Traditional Religions. It is contrary to all that is best in our culture which respects the eminent sacredness of human life. And since abortion is murder, no government or any human authority can declare it lawful. What is morally wrong is always wrong: to legalize abortion is to attempt to legalize sin and murder.⁴⁶⁷ In another form CBCN labelled abortion as a culture of death and assaults on human life, and it remains a heinous crime of murder. On this note, the Bishops, in their prophetic role, warned against the idea of flirtation of Nigerian government with the idea of legalizing abortion, and therefore maintained that it would be retrogressive and contrary to the culture of life which is also rooted in the African tradition.⁴⁶⁸ Generally speaking, the theologians of human promotion take as their point of departure the local situation, especially the socio-political and economic reality of the people. Human promotion also studies issues of justice, peace, and solidarity.⁴⁶⁹ Without doubt, there is a link between evangelization and human promotion. Oborji therefore argues that, the theological foundation

⁴⁶⁴ St. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter, *Peace on Earth*, 1963, 9-10.

⁴⁶⁵ Catholic Women Organization (CWO), is a very strong instrument of evangelization which the Church in Nigeria has been using in reaching the rural women. Proper analysis of this organization will be given later in this work under *Agents of evangelization*.

⁴⁶⁶ CBCN, Communiqué, First Plenary Meeting (Abuja, 5th to 10th March) 2001.

⁴⁶⁷ CBCN, Communiqué, September, 1991; CBCN, 1997; CBCN, 1960 – 2002. *The Catholic Church in an independent Nigeria*, October 1st 1960, *The Church Teaches*, 2003.

⁴⁶⁸ CBCN, Communiqué, 1996.

⁴⁶⁹ Oborji, *Mission and Reconciliation Theology and Pastoral Challenges*, 2015, p. 22.

of human promotion is the *incarnation*. Through the redemptive incarnation of Christ, God himself enters, in a very radical way, into a new solidarity with humanity in history, liberates men and women from sin, and re-establishes them as sons and daughters. Both in his teaching and in his actions Jesus witnessed to this radically new and liberative solidarity of God with humanity (Lk. 4:16-22; see Is. 61:1-2; Mk. 1:15; Rev. 21:1-4).⁴⁷⁰ The social and spiritual message of the Church can be made credible only by the witness of action, only by a sincere and generous reaching out to those in special need, to the poor and marginalized members of society in various personal, communal, and institutional ways. To this end, some Bishops have struggled to the point of giving their lives. Every Bishop, like the Apostles, must be an image of Christ emptying himself for the suffering, offering his life for the Kingdom of God (Jn. 10:11). This is the crowning act of episcopacy, bringing to life once again the hope-filled and triumphant Church of the martyrs.⁴⁷¹

iii. Restoring the Dignity of the Nigerian woman

The universal Church, through the Magisterium has issued many documents dealing with the social issues of the day, such as peace, justice, development, fundamental human rights and the rights of peoples and nations. Those documents received universal acclaim among peoples of diverse culture and religious affiliations, many of whom committed themselves to ensuring the realization of the principles enunciated in them. On their own part, CBCN has, for many years issued such documents in support of the Church in fighting evil in the society. They have been always very vocal in the condemnation of social evils, especially moral issues. In the communiqué that they issued at the end of their First Plenary Meeting for the year 2001, March 5th-10th, the bishops promised to produce a joint Pastoral Letter, concerning the obnoxious trafficking in Nigerian women and girls for the purpose of prostitution especially in Western Europe. In that same communiqué they called on the government, law enforcement agencies, parents and victims themselves to deal decisively to put an end to that ugly situation.⁴⁷² That promise was fulfilled in February, 2002 when they issued the Pastoral Letter for the faithful.

In the Pastoral Letter, the bishops observed that the most disturbing of all is the high incidence of flagrant departure from age-old norms of morality. Patterns of behaviour that were once universally deemed to be morally unacceptable are today being vigorously promoted as

⁴⁷⁰ Oborji, *Mission and Reconciliation Theology and Pastoral Challenges*, p. 23.

⁴⁷¹ Robert James Carlson, *The Duties of the Bishop, Catholic United for the Faith*, March 1999, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=89>.

⁴⁷² CBCN, See, *Communique*, March, 2001; Cf. CBCN, February, 2002.

viable alternatives, particularly in the communications media. This is most evident in the area of sexual behaviour of men and women. There seems to be a growing perversion of the true meaning and purpose of human sexuality in favour of unfettered hedonism. Continuing, they noted that, as Nigerian Bishops, we are concerned that a disturbing proportion of the victims of this ignoble enterprise are Nigerian women and girls.⁴⁷³ In a little statistic presented, the bishops noted that it is regrettable that at the last count, some 15,000 Nigerian women and girls were engaged in prostitution in Italy alone. Many more ply their trade in several other countries of Western Europe. Their activities have done untold damage to the victims themselves and to the already battered image of our country in the eyes of the international community. We would be failing in our responsibility as Pastors if we do not raise our voice against this modern monster of immorality.⁴⁷⁴ The Pastoral Letter which CBCN issued in 2002 was titled “*Restoring the Dignity of the Nigerian woman.*” The caption already suggests that the image and the dignity of womanhood has been battered. Something urgent needs to be done in order to restore it to its former beauty and glory. From this point of view therefore, the ideas expressed in the Letter were overwhelmingly accepted by the Nigerian *Presbyterium* and the lay faithful. In praise of the dignity of womanhood, the Bishops navigated through the Scriptures to the Magisterium of the Church and garnered enough foundational points of departure.

Referencing their ideas from the Scripture, the Bishops observed that from its very beginning, the Church has upheld the dignity of women and womanhood. Her position has been anchored, quite naturally, on the teaching of Scripture and Sacred Tradition. In the New Testament, several women were numbered among the disciples of Jesus. Among them were the sisters, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joset, and Salome (Mark 15:40). It is significant that those same women *were the first to see Jesus after his resurrection*. And it was to them that the Saviour entrusted the task of brining the Good News of his resurrection to the Apostles (Mt. 28:9-10).⁴⁷⁵ Of special mention is the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Saviour himself whose virtues were extolled by the Christian Tradition through her fulfillment of the prophetic images contained in the Old Testament. She is the woman whose offspring would bruise the head of the Serpent (Gen. 3:15), the young woman who would conceive and bear a son to be named Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), the woman in travail who would bring forth a child (Micah 5:3). She is the same woman who gave

⁴⁷³ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, February, 2002.

⁴⁷⁴ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, February, 2002.

⁴⁷⁵ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, February, 2002.

birth to the Son of God “when the time had fully come” (Gal. 4:4).⁴⁷⁶ Most significantly, Mary is the Mother of the Incarnate Word of God, the Saviour, and Jesus Christ. No greater honour has ever been conferred on any human being, nor will any be conferred until the end of time. No wonder the angel said she enjoyed God’s favour (Lk. 1:28), Elizabeth proclaimed her the most blessed of all women (Lk. 1:42), and Mary herself prophesied that “all generations will call me blessed,” (Lk. 1:48). Mary is also the Mother of the Church. Jesus her Son gave her to the Church to be her Mother when he said, while hanging on the cross, “Woman, this is your son,” and “This is your mother” (Jn. 19: 26-27). On that occasion, the disciple whom Jesus loved stood in for the entire Church.⁴⁷⁷ With all these accolades from the Scripture, there remains no doubt that *She is the image of true womanhood*. Put in the perspective of the status of women in the global affairs, The Second Vatican Council regretted the fact that women’s fundamental personal rights are not being universally respected.

The Holy Father, St John Paul II, made highly commendable efforts towards the restoration of the image of women. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity of Women,) which he dedicated to the dignity of women and womanhood, the Pope said, *inter alia*, that the Church ...desires to give thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for the “*mystery of women*” and for every woman – for all that constitutes the eternal measure of her feminine dignity, for the “great works of God,” which throughout human history have been accomplished in and through her⁴⁷⁸ In 1995, the same Supreme Pontiff addressed a *Letter to Women* in which he regretted that, “Women’s dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity.”⁴⁷⁹ The Pope went on to “condemn the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encouraged the systematic exploitation of sexuality and corrupts even very young girls into letting their bodies be used for profit.”⁴⁸⁰ On a similar note, the Holy Father devoted a paragraph to the *Dignity of the African Woman* in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*. There he acknowledged that “One of the characteristic signs of our times is the growing awareness of women’s dignity and of their specific role in the Church

⁴⁷⁶ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, February, 2002.

⁴⁷⁷ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, February, 2002.

⁴⁷⁸ St. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, On Dignity and Vocation of Women. August 15, 1988, no. 31. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris_dignitatem.html

⁴⁷⁹ St. John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, June, 1995, no. 3; cited by CBCN, *Pastoral Letter*, 2002.

⁴⁸⁰ *Letter to Women*, June, 1995; no. 5; cited by CBCN, *Pastoral Letter*, 2002.

and in society at large.”⁴⁸¹ The bishops also made important reference to the traditional African culture, especially in Nigeria, which condemns prostitution in its entirety. In many traditional African societies prostitution was looked upon as a monumental disgrace for the person engaging in it and her family. In some cases it was even an abomination. The person engaging in it was ostracized, and was required to perform certain religious rites before she could be readmitted into the society. In their document therefore, the bishop spoke with voice in total condemnation of prostitution, human trafficking and other related abuses to women. As a practical contribution, CBCN, through their Pastoral Letter pledged to join government and other agencies in providing medical, psychological and spiritual rehabilitation for the victims when they return to Nigeria. To that end, they promised to endeavour to provide vocational training for them to enable them to secure gainful employment. At the same time, we call on other women groups within the Church, notably the *Catholic Women’s Organisation* and the *Confraternity of Christian Mothers*, to become actively involved in the crusade to end the obnoxious trade.⁴⁸² However, great the efforts they are making, and not matter the degree of their missionary outreach, it remains a fact that the mission of the Church cannot be fully realized by the Church alone. In a pluralistic and multi-ethnic cum religious belief divergences such as Nigerian environment, the Catholic Bishops do not presume to achieve missionary positives in isolation with other religious groups. In what follows, we see how far the bishops have gone in the application of the principles of ecumenical ecclesiology.

3. Ecumenical dimension of mission and interreligious dialogue of the church

To achieve the desired missionary goal of bringing peace to the world and in particular, to Nigerian society, certain things must be looked into: (i) the ecumenical nature of the Church, (ii) the relationship of the Church with Islamic religion, (iii) the place of the Traditional Religion in the Church’s mission. These ideas must be taken into consideration if the CBCN’s missionary efforts in Nigeria can expect to yield good fruit. This is also very tangent considering, as we have severally noted, the pluralistic and ethnic-orientation of the Nigerian society.

⁴⁸¹ *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 121.

⁴⁸² CBCN, *Pastoral Letter*, 2002.

a. Ecumenism as a tool in the mission of CBCN

To talk about integral evangelization is to have a re-visit to the content of the missionary mandate of Christ which is *euntes ergo docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis*, (Mt. 28:19-20). The ‘*omnes*’ (*all*) as contained in the mandate that voids any track of exclusivism. The command is a *bond* with humanity. Therefore, the Church in Nigeria, in the spirit of Catholicism and Universality of the *ecclesia* should have a long reach to everybody in her pluralistic environment. In this missionary journey, therefore, a proper understanding and application of ecumenical spirit is very necessary for a more fruitful mission in Nigeria. However, we do not lose sight of the attendant bottle-necks and challenges involved. In the same thought-wave-length with Bosch who opines that “for missiologists, ecumenical dialogue has been identified as one of the emergent dimensions of mission,”⁴⁸³ Oborji reasons that “this new perspective in mission studies goes with its own problems and challenges.”⁴⁸⁴ Because of the inherent difficulties contained therein, and yet, considering the importance of unity of Christians in the Church’s mission, the Second Vatican Council suggests that, “if they cannot yet fully bear witness to one faith, they should at least be imbued with mutual respect and love.”⁴⁸⁵ The Vatican II decree on ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* also speaks in favour of improved relations and mutual acceptance.

In general, Vatican II considers ecumenism as one of its principal concerns since, “division among Christians not only contradicts the will of Christ, it scandalizes the world, and weakens the spirit of preaching the gospel to every creature.”⁴⁸⁶ In the Nigerian Church, the need for a better relationship between the Christians, Muslims and other religious groups, is still far from reality and this poses a serious problem to the hierarchy. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which was formed in 1980 has remained one of the avenues which serve as uniting ground for all the Christian Churches in order to have one voice. While expressing delight in the ongoing efforts towards a more congenial relationship on the international level, St. John Paul II, also wished that such efforts should be doubled in the case of Nigeria. As he highlighted the already existing organs of such ecumenical push, “he wished that more inroads

⁴⁸³ David, J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 457.

⁴⁸⁴ Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology*, p. 15.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ad Gentes*, no. 3.

⁴⁸⁶ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 1.

should be pursued since such is highly desired for a unified pluralistic nation like Nigeria.”⁴⁸⁷ Following from the above admonitions of the Holy Father, Bishop Kaigama, (former President of CBCN), emphasised that Catholics are known for remaining united under the apostolic and pastoral leadership of the Holy Father the Pope. Our strength, he said, “lies in our diversity, and we try not to fall into the temptation of parochialism, ethnocentrism or exclusion. It is in our DNA as Catholics to show fraternal communion of faith in one Lord, one faith one Father and Lord of all (Eph. 4:4-6), because, the waters of baptism should be thicker than the blood of tribe or cultural affiliation.”⁴⁸⁸ Again, on the occasion of second Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission meeting, St John Paul II recounted that the Commission was the outcome of his meeting with Archbishop Runcie in 1982, insisting that the Holy Spirit has called us to the *ecumenical task*.⁴⁸⁹ For him, dialogue is the key to any meaningful ecumenical movement even though it is hedged with difficult problems. In other words, “the path of dialogue may be long, but we must not lose heart.”⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, the two post-synodal documents – *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus* – of St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, respectively point vividly to the contemporary world that God’s desire to bring humanity into a peaceful and harmonious family is a project in the history of salvation. This plan of God was made manifest, *ab initio*, in the call of the Patriarchs especially Abraham (cf. Gen 12:1ff) whose patrimony is shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims, and whose optimal manifestation came to fulfillment in the coming of Jesus, the Incarnate Word.⁴⁹¹ On their own part, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference referred to the famous *Assisi Meeting* of different religions with St John Paul II, which included religious leaders of the world - Christians of other denominations, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., and advocated that the principles outlined in that meeting should continue to guide the ongoing discussions on ecumenical movement.

According to them, “In Assisi, religion was seen to bring out what was best in man and to promote unity and peace for all mankind. The great lesson was that man could and should worship God in sincerity and truth. So should it be in our country. In the spirit of Assisi, we

⁴⁸⁷ St. John Paul II, *Address to representatives of various Christian denominations present in Nigeria*, during his Apostolic Visit to Nigeria (Published by the National Committee on Papal Visit on behalf of the National Episcopal Conference of Nigeria, February, 1982), p. 50.

⁴⁸⁸ Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, *Evangelization and Pastoral Progress*, Homily, on the Canonical erection of the Catholic Diocese of Bomadi and the Installation of Most Rev. Hyacinth Oroko Egbebo, 15th December, 2017.

⁴⁸⁹ St. John Paul II, Address on the occasion of plenary session of the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2 September, 1987, <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987.index.html#speeches>.

⁴⁹⁰ St. John Paul II, Address on the occasion of plenary session of the second Anglican - Roman Catholic International Commission, 1987.

⁴⁹¹ Isidore, U. Nwanaju, *The Contributions of Ecclesia in Africa and Africae Munus to Dialogue with Muslims in Nigeria*. www.iiste.org, Historical Research Letter, ISSN 2224-3178 Vol.34, 2016, p. 1.

call on all religious leaders, of whatever persuasion, to join hands in the name of God our common father, to rid our nation of fanatics and misguided elements who are giving religion a bad name. To give religion a bad a name is to give truth a bad name. At the root of our present conflicts are lies and not truth. With falsification of truth, crimes are committed in the name of truth.”⁴⁹² Because of the amount of efforts already made by the Catholic Church towards a rewarding ecumenism, Bevans remarks that Catholic mission is distinguished by its *ecumenical* nature, basing his argument on the all-inclusive extensive bibliography recorded by many theological scholars. This shows that Catholic scholars depend greatly on the wealth of scholarship of many other Christians. The deducible positive implication of this scenario is what I can call “intellectual ecumenism” which has to do with crosspollination of ideas or minds in search of truth. In which case, when a Catholic theologian is writing, though with his own catholic background and upbringing, he uses the ideas of other theologians from other religious denominations to buttress his points.

In other words, among the intellectuals of different religious lineage, we find ample support and interdependence on the ideas of others. Bevans therefore makes reference that such great Protestant writers like David Bosch, Mercy Odoyoye, Andrew Walls, etc., are often quoted. He therefore concluded that Catholic missiology is unabashedly Catholic, not only in the sense that it finds expression within the parameters of Catholic doctrine, but in the wider sense as well of drawing on any truth that can help deepen an understanding of the *entire* church’s great commission to proclaim and witness to Jesus Christ to all creation. We have and continue to learn from our Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical and Orthodox brothers and sisters in Mission.⁴⁹³ Nigerian bishops, over the years have been on the vanguard of translating this idea of intellectual ecumenism to other spheres in matters of deeper human relationships among different religious groups in Nigeria. Today, the existence of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the monumental edifice at the heart of the nation’s capital known as *Ecumenical Centre* is a testament to this fact. Speaking on behalf of the CBCN, Archbishop Kaigama recounted that, “In a multi-religious society like ours, we are acutely conscious of the tragedy of Christian disunity. That disunity goes clearly contrary to Christ’s intentions for His followers. It also confuses the minds of many people and makes them despair of ever getting to know what Christian truth is in its fullness and perfection. These continuing doctrinal disagreements are unfortunate. But at least we must live together in charity. Love is meant to

⁴⁹² CBCN, Communique, *The Spirit of Assisi*, 1987.

⁴⁹³ Cf. Stephen Bevans, “Roman Catholic Perspectives on Mission”, *The Ecumenical Review* vol. 66, no. 1, March 2014. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/erev.12082>.

be a mark of those who follow Christ.”⁴⁹⁴ However, the key to further success remains a deep-rooted dialogue.

b. Dialogue and the Church’s mission: the Nigerian perspective

In their highly articulated philosophy of life, the Igbos of eastern Nigeria have over the years developed a principle that guides them in their interpersonal relationships, especially when it concerns settlement of conflicts in an amicable way. Accordingly, they say that “*ire oma ka ejule ji-aga n’ogwu*. In its literary meaning, it means that one can always scale through difficult hurdles with well-calculated reasoning, with patience and appealing voice and humane approach. Contextually, it could mean that with dialogue and appeal to good conscience, one achieves a lot of good. The concept of dialogue is as old as human life. Dialogue makes good family. It is the link that sustains marriage. Dialogue is an indispensable principle in human relationships. Dialogue gives harmony and vitality to society. The “*divine nature*” of *dialogue* was echoed by CBCN when they noted: “And for us Christians, Jesus the Son of God established the eternal dialogue between God and man and united himself in some sense with every human being. He thus, provides the basis for us Christians to dialogue with others.”⁴⁹⁵ In other words, in a highly pluralistic, ethnic, religious and multicultural nation like Nigeria, it is expected that unhealthy rivalries can occur from time to time. However, when such rivalries develop without caution, it degenerates to impunity and war, most of the time bloody. On this note, CBCN, while asserting that most of the problems causing conflicts in the nation can be prevented, if there is a commitment to dialogue, agreed also that authentic democracy entails a culture of dialogue. The importance of dialogue in the Church’s missionary activity was also given a boast by the Second Vatican Council. As Nwanaju stated, “the call to dialogue in the Church has received a new spirit and impulse after the Second Vatican Council which is in itself an Ecumenical Council that sought for dialogue. In that Council, the Church stated with new vigour and enthusiasm the need for dialogue with other Christian sects, Jews, Muslims, and unbelievers.

Various documents of the Council promoted and encouraged dialogues at various levels of relationships: *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions), *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), *Dignitatis Humanae* (Religious Liberty), etc. The Council

⁴⁹⁴ Ignatius, Ayau Kaigama, *Evangelization and Pastoral Progress*, Homily, 15th December, 2017.

⁴⁹⁵ CBCN, Communique, *Dialogue provides the way*, Lagos, 13th March to 18th, 2000.

Fathers enumerated the aims and nature of dialogue, basis of dialogue, conditions for dialogue, method of dialogue, subjects for dialogue and forms of dialogue, which will foster a fruitful dialogue in the world today. For instance, it was stated that “the Church... urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity in discussion and collaboration with members of other religions” (*Nostra Aetate*, no. 2).⁴⁹⁶ On their own part, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, in of their communiques resolved to make every effort to promote such dialogue and collaboration, in the spirit of truth and mutual respect, freedom, and according to the wise directives, rich traditions and fruitful traditions of our Church in this matter. Dialogue is a basic term required in the mission of the church since it gives the carrier of the message and the hearer of the word to come closer to each other. Within this forum, the possibility of conviction and conversion is established. And when crisis comes up, Christ advises that an atmosphere of dialogue should be established. Hence, “if your brother sins against you, go and tell him” (Mt. 18: 15; Lk. 17: 3-4). Before all else, dialogue is a manner of acting, an attitude; a spirit which guides one’s conduct. It implies concern, respect, and hospitality toward the other. It is the mission of the Church to bring the Gospel message to bear, not only on individuals but also on the social, political, and economic structures of nations, with the aim of promoting greater justice, integrity, love, and peace among peoples. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria wishes to restate the constant teaching of the Catholic Church, that justice is the only way to true and lasting peace. To the people of Nigeria, “we are messengers of peace, and we recognise in the words of Pope John Paul II that those who wish to have peace must work for justice. However, the ethnic colouring of religion which breeds intolerance and violence is a reality in Nigeria as much as in many African nations. The Church’s principles and teachings on inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism are yet to be internalized and fully applied. These divisions, either among Christians or among the various ethnic groups that make up our nation, give counter-witness to the Christian values of love and unity.”⁴⁹⁷

c. Mission and inter-religious dialogue

i. Dialogue with Muslims

The challenge here for the Nigerian church is great, given the kind of tense relationship that exists between the Christians and Muslims in a country where even a dialogue of life is now becoming more difficult and almost impossible. Unarguably, the relationship between the

⁴⁹⁶ Nwanaju, *The Contributions of Ecclesia in Africa and Africae Munus* p. 3.

⁴⁹⁷ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, Abuja, 2011, p. 15.

Christians and Muslims in Nigeria has never been a cordial one. It can best be described as that of strange-bed-fellows. In the theological or matrimonial ascent, it has remained on the region of incompatibility. As we already emphasised earlier in this work, the British amalgamation of three independent regional entities in 1914, into one umbrella known as Nigeria was calamitous and destined to collapse. It was, and will remain a deceitful marriage coated with selfish political engineering. And the manifestation of this started rearing its ugly head shortly after the official political independence in 1960. The cracks on the walls became so obvious that each of the former regions started pursuing their own independent identity; a situation that resulted in the civil war. Sequel to this is the fundamental ideological differences between Christian principles and Islamic orientations which make it impossible to demarcate their religious and political boundaries. On account of this therefore, it remains a herculean task to establish a common ground for proper ecumenical relationship. On the part of the church, it still remains a task for her to enter into dialogue with the Muslims in the pursuit of her evangelizing mission.

In his opinion, Kukah, affirmed that the story of the relations between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria has been a very painful one. The difficulties, according to him, have their origins in our colonial history and the fickleness of a political elite unable to come to terms with the urgency of national development and cohesion based on liberal Democracy and Constitutionalism.⁴⁹⁸ He also linked up the problem to ethnicity, which is also one of the teething problems facing the nation. In his words, “Nigeria’s experience as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, with almost equal percentages of Christians and Muslims has been marked and characterized by sad stories of endless conflicts and tensions. But beyond the radar of this orgy of violence, are deep human stories of gallantry, tolerance, accommodation and peaceful co-existence which mark daily life.”⁴⁹⁹ Yakubu gave the picture a proper description when he asserted that, the challenge here for the Nigerian church is great, given the kind of tense relationship that exists between the Christians and Muslims in a country where even *a dialogue of life* is now becoming more difficult and almost impossible. In the light of frictions in the relationship between Christians and Muslims, there is therefore, a great demand of some urgent pastoral attention from the church, the government, and God’s divine intervention.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Sharia Law in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*, (Draft Paper presented at a Conference on Islam & Mission in Africa organised by the *Fondazione Ambrosiana Paulo VI*, in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Milan, September 2-5th, 2015). <http://catholicdiocese-sokoto.org/article/sharia-law-africa-nigerian-experience>.

⁴⁹⁹ Kukah, *Sharia Law in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Ibrahim Bawa Yakubu, “Evangelization 2000: Tasks and Challenges for the Nigerian Church”, in, *NACATHS*, Journal of African Theology, vol. 2, 1992, p. 77-85.

However, in the face of the above problems, the universal church through the Council Fathers advocated for greater efforts on the part of the Christians, and in the context here, CBCN. In the light of this, the Second Vatican Council stated that “although in the cause of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred synod urges all to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common course of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.”⁵⁰¹ In line with the above ideas expressed by the Supreme Pontiff, CBCN, in her doctrinal, moral and pedagogy-related issues of ecclesial theology, has variously pushed for a more cordial interreligious atmosphere.

Again, on behalf of the Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Kaigama pointed out articulated these ideas: “We express sentiments of fraternal love toward our Muslim fellow-citizens. We share with them a sense of reverence for the One God. It is a comforting sign of hope for Nigeria that the vast majority of people in our country are convinced that man’s first duty is to God and that life has no meaning without religion. In short, the Catholic Church wants to carry on her spiritual mission of giving glory to God. She wants to find herself at peace with all men of good will as she carries out her mission. The Church prolongs the work of Christ.”⁵⁰² Indeed, her mission in prolonging this work of Christ summarizes the bulwark of CBCN understanding of the mandate given to the apostles, of course, from the perspective of Nigerian environment. To encourage the bishops in this missionary drive, it is desirable that such course as ‘dialogue with the muslims’ be included in the seminary curriculum. On the following day of his visit after meeting with the Muslims, the Holy Father gave the CBCN, the following words of admonition: “the call for peace, understanding and mutual cooperation between Christians and Muslims is the desire of the Creator of the one great human family to which we all belong desires that we bear witness to the divine image in every human being by respecting each person with his or her values and religious traditions, and by working together for human progress and development at all levels, through continued pursuit of a sincere quest for mutual understanding.”⁵⁰³

Part of the efforts and programmes set on ground by CBCN towards the realization of the above wishes of the Council Fathers led to some common condemnation of some government policies regarding human rights, respect for human life, etc. As Nwanaju noted:

⁵⁰¹ Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, no. 3.

⁵⁰² Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, *For Evangelization and Pastoral Progress*, Homily, 15th December, 2017.

⁵⁰³ St. John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops*, 1998, <http://www.totus2us.com/universal/nigeria/jpii-pilgrim-visit-1998/#c5108>

“The recent unanimous attack by Christians and Muslims against legalization of gay marriage in the Nigerian Parliament is a commendable development among Christians and Muslims in raising their voices against unfair and unjust policies and practices, which some global powers supports, and which the document advocates as a common point of evangelizing mission from both religious bodies as true children of Abraham (cf. EA n.66).”⁵⁰⁴ Again, in their efforts, CBCN firmly expressed sentiments of fraternal love toward Muslim fellow-citizens, more so, because we share with them a sense of reverence for the One God. Christians and Muslims can work together for the good of the country. “It is a comforting sign of hope for Nigeria that the vast majority of people in our country are convinced that man’s first duty is to God and that life has no meaning without religion.”⁵⁰⁵ Moreover, in the light of frictions in the relationship between Christians and Muslims, there is therefore, a great demand of some urgent pastoral attention from the church, the government, and God’s divine intervention.”⁵⁰⁶

ii. Dialogue with Traditional African Religion and Other Christian religions

From the events of contemporary Catholicism, and judging from ecclesial history, it remains axiomatic that the post-conciliar ecclesiology has really breathed the *air of change* brought by the Second Vatican Council. As already explained in many sections of this work, the event of this council still remains the greatest event in the history of the church. According to Rahner, the Council’s achievement consists in looking beyond the question of salvation of individual non-Christians to a positive relationship of the Church to the religions as such.⁵⁰⁷ One of the glaring twist following the council has been the appreciation of the interrelatedness of faith and culture, Gospel and culture, evangelization and culture. To many theologians, pre-Vatican II Church was a Church that paid little attention to cultural backgrounds of different peoples in their evangelization mission. This attitude resulted, in many cases in utter condemnation of the traditional belief of many people. Africa suffered much from this.

Today, many countries in Africa are still nursing the wounds of neglect shown by the church their culture. In the context of our study, this remains the root of prevalent syncretism in the Nigerian Church today. However, things have changed and many theologians are clamouring for a new paradigm in the church’s missionary evangelization. The Church in Africa, especially in Nigeria is not in shortage of theological literatures or theologians who have

⁵⁰⁴ Nwanaju, *The Contributions of Ecclesia in Africa and Africae Munus*, p. 4.

⁵⁰⁵ CBCN, Communique, *Christian Unity and Religious Understanding*, 1985.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Ibrahim Bawa Yakubu, “Evangelization2000,” p. 77-85.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Karl Rahner, “On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation”, in: *TI*, 18 (1981), 228-295.

done reasonable research in this regard. What is certain and what has been confirmed by many of those scholars is the deep-rooted sense of divine and religious attachment by the Africans. In other words, the indigenous environment into which Christianity and Islam penetrated was (and still is), intensely religious; there was that strong awareness of and belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, conceived as the creator and sustainer of the universe and with whom humans tried to establish constant ties.”⁵⁰⁸ Hence, it is no longer new to hear “that an African is deeply religious and tenaciously cultural.”⁵⁰⁹ The Church needs to harness this religious inclination in her missionary approach through dialogue. Constructive dialogue, and indeed in greater refined form, remains an imperative, in order to deal with intruding forces such as Christian fundamentalism and Nigerian cultural revivalism.⁵¹⁰

This call for proper dialogue was one of the main features of the Post-Synodal document of St John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*. With regard to African Traditional Religion, the Pope explained that prudent and careful dialogue should be used in order to incorporate the important values that accrue from it into the evangelization process. According to him, “a serene and prudent dialogue will be able to foster the assimilation of positive values such as belief in a Supreme Being who is Eternal, Creator, Provident and Just Judge, values which are readily harmonized with the content of the faith.... They can even be seen as a preparation for the Gospel, because they contain precious *semina Verbi*” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 67). In this way, he ‘appreciated the African soul which searches for God through traditional religion, which was the religion of the majority of Africans before the arrival of Christianity and even Islam in Africa’.⁵¹¹ In the area of African traditional sense of *eschatology*,⁵¹² the Supreme Pontiff

⁵⁰⁸ K. Gyekye, & K. Wiredu (eds.), *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, 1, Washington, D. C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁹ See John, S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 2. Adrian Hastings. *African Catholicism: Essay in Discovery* (London: S C M Press), p. 24. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: Scan Press, 1973), p. 13.

⁵¹⁰ Jude, C. Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian indigenous Culture”, in, *Religion, History and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in honour of Ogbu U. Kanu*, (ed.), Chima, J. Korie, G. Ugo Nwokeji, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2005), p. 26.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Jean-Baptiste Sourou, *Ecclesia in Africa à la lumière de l’Esprit d’Assise: Essai de lecture du premier Synode pour l’Afrique en marche vers le second* (2008), no. 11; See also, Jean-Baptiste Sourou, “African traditional religion and the Catholic Church in light of the Synods for Africa: 1994 and 2009”, *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 2014, 14, p. 142-149.

⁵¹² One of the main tenets of African Traditional Religion is the belief in the continuity of life. For the *Igbos* of eastern Nigeria, their strong belief is that man does not die completely. Rather, what happens at death is only a change of state. Both good and bad men experience this change. The difference is the state of the change as it affects the particular individual. Those who lived virtuous life are changed to *good spirit (ezigbo mmuo)* who try to keep link with the family members who are still alive. It is from this point of view that the idea of *theology of ancestor* finds root. Only those *male* children from a particular family who lived good life qualify to belong to the group of *ancestors*. On the contrary, those who lived life of wickedness eventually belong to *evil spirit (ajo mmuo, amuosu)* world who go about inflicting injuries to the living. Nota bene: This little explanation serves as a prolegomena to future theological research. It remains one of the contemporary theological currents which needs

remarked that the belief and veneration which Africans accord their ancestors can be properly harnessed and theologically explored. Hence, since “they believe intuitively that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them, is this not in some way a *preparation for belief in the Communion of the Saints?*” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 43). The Vatican II missionary Decree *Ad Gentes*, stated that, “all over the world indigenous particular Churches ought to grow from seed of the word of God, Churches which would be adequately organized and would possess their own proper strength and maturity. With their own hierarchy and faithful, and sufficiently endowed with means adapted to the full Christian life, they should contribute to the good of the whole Church” (AG 6). With this attention drawn by the universal church, CBCN has taken it upon them to dip into the contents of Nigerian cultural values. Their conclusion is that a proper dialogue in order to situate *Inculturation* firmly as a true missiological paradigm which will be appealing to the Catholics more than what we have today. This idea will be treated in a more comprehensive way latter in this chapter. However, CBCN has continued to lament that the ethnic colouring of religion which breeds intolerance and violence is a reality in Nigeria as much as in many African nations. The Church’s principles and teachings on inter-religious dialogue and ecumenism are yet to be internalized and fully applied.

These divisions, either among Christians or among the various ethnic groups that make up our nation, give counter-witness to the Christian values of love and unity. On the other hand, we have failed to imbibe the positive cultural and religious values of the African Traditional Religion. It is often the case that when they are faced with crisis situations, many Catholics will not hesitate to secretly seek out the traditional medicine man or witch doctor to find a solution or protection against their real or imagined enemies.⁵¹³ Arinze also expressed this idea when he muted that while in many of its elements the traditional religion did prepare Nigerians to embrace Christianity, it is also a fact that many Christians are tempted to have recourse to practices of the traditional religion at such moments of crisis as marriage, birth of a child, sickness, and funeral. The answer lies in a deeper grounding in the faith and in more meaningful Inculturation.⁵¹⁴ Giving his last word to Nigerians at the airport before departure after his second visit, March 21–23, 1998, His Holiness offered a special word of appreciation to the followers of African Traditional Religion, and I assure them that the Catholic Church, by her efforts aimed at inculturating the Gospel, seeks to highlight and build on the positive

to be explored for proper integration of the message of the gospel to the cultural underpins of the people. This idea was also raised by St. John Paul II, in his *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 43.

⁵¹³ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 15.

⁵¹⁴ Arinze, *Looking for light series*, p. 118.

elements of Africa's religious and cultural heritage." Before we get to that new missiological paradigm, there is the necessity for us to have shot at the events that strengthened its juicy evangelization promises.

4. Theology of Inculturation and Nigerian Church

As we have noted in some of the sections in this work, the hierarchy of the Church in Nigeria knows too well the enormous challenges facing them in their efforts in carrying out the mission of Christ. Among others, religious syncretism, neo-paganism, religious apathy and Islamic and Pentecostalism form the bulwark of the challenges. Faced with these problems, they needed to fashion out the best missionary paradigm that would be in tone with the prevalent earthly realities facing the hearers of the word. As it is today, in their episcopal collegiality, they have come to the conclusion that mission as *Inculturation* remains the key to a better interpretation of the mission of the church in Nigeria. This idea is very much reflected in one of their major communiques just as it is expressed here. The underlying historical imperative for this option is that "The Church learned in its history to express the Christian message in the concept and language of different peoples and tried to clarify it in the light of the wisdom of their philosophers (*Gaudium et Spes*, 44. See also 58).

This situation called for another method of propagating the gospel message referred to as inculturated evangelization. It is a new way bound to accept other concepts and practices for the church in areas such as the spiritual, the pastoral, the liturgical and the church's very understanding of its faith: *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith in search of understanding). Response to this new method has varied from continent to continent, country to country and from one cultural milieu to another. The century old Nigerian Church is finding her footing in the new order. Evidence exists of her effort to educate herself. Here and there, she has made some attempts at the process. Her principal motivation is the realization that unculturated evangelisation has left her with wounds.⁵¹⁵ With these ideas expressed here, CBCN, accented to their unwavering support for the theology of inculturation as the foundation for proper interpretation of the mission of the church in their own *ecclesia localis*. Because of the importance they placed on it, we shall try in this section to give some elaborate analysis of this pattern of evangelisation, but we do not intend an exhaustive treatment of the concept since it is not directly reflected on our topic of research.

⁵¹⁵ CBCN, "Evangelization through Inculturation: a New Method of Evangelization," 1991.

a. Theological and contextual basis for Inculturation

The establishment of the Sacred Congregation's department, *De Propaganda Fidei*, in 1622 marked an important step in Catholic missionary activity based on its approach to "respect for the people's way of life and culture."⁵¹⁶ In 1659, following an attempt to appreciate the importance of culture in peoples' worldview and daily lives, the above sacred *Congregation for the Propagation of Faith* issued the following instructions to the missionaries who were being prepared for foreign mission: "Do not regard it as your task and do not bring any pressure to bear on the people to change their manners, customs and uses unless they are evidently contrary to religion and sound morals. What could be more absurd than to transport France, Spain, Italy or some other European country to China? Do not introduce all that to them but only the Faith, which does not despise or destroy the manners and customs of any people, always supposing that they are not evil, but rather wish to see them preserved unharmed There is no stronger cause for alienation and hate than an attack on the local customs especially when they go back to a venerable antiquity.... Do your utmost to *adapt* yourselves to them."⁵¹⁷

In the same line of thought, Pope Leo XIII, through the publication of his two important apostolic exhortations, *Praeclara gratulationis Publicae*, (On the reunion of Christendom) in June 20, 1894 and *Orientalum Dignitatis* (On the Churches of the East), 30 November, 1894, fostered inter-cultural diversity. These encyclicals basically praised and appreciated the cultural and liturgical diversity of expressions of faith within the Church. They also repeated the need to preserve and cultivate diversity and declared different cultures to be a treasure.⁵¹⁸ On his own part, Pope Pius XII,⁵¹⁹ who is regarded as one the first popes to use the word '*inculturation*', explained that "The introduction of the Gospel means *inculturation* and not the destruction of local cultures." In his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus* (On the Unity of Human Society, 20, October, 1939), he succinctly stated that a deeper appreciation of various

⁵¹⁶ Ayward Shorter, *Toward a theology of inculturation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 155.

⁵¹⁷ S. Neil, *History of Christian Missions* (Penguin Publications, 1964), p. 179. See also, Oliver Onwubiko, *The Church in Mission in the Light of Ecclesia in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications, 2001), p. 103.

⁵¹⁸ Pope Leo XIII, Apostolic Exhortations, *Praeclara gratulationis Publicae* (On the reunion of Christendom, June 20, 1894) and *Orientalum Dignitatis* (On the Churches of the East, 30 November, 1894).

⁵¹⁹ Pope Pius XII, *was the Pope, from 1939 to 1958, 19 years. Promulgated 41 Papal Encyclicals during his reign as a Pope; a number that exceeds the 32 written by all his successors.* And in his 1944 speech to the directors of the *Pontifical Missionary Society*, he said: "The herald of the Gospel and messenger of Christ is an apostle. His office does not demand that he transplant European civilization and culture, and no other, to foreign soil, there to take root and propagate itself. His task in dealing with these peoples, who sometimes boast of a very old and highly developed culture of their own, is to teach and form them so that they are ready to accept willingly and in a practical manner the principles of Christian life and morality; principles, I might add, that fit into any culture, provided it be good and sound, and which give that culture greater force in safeguarding human dignity and in gaining human happiness." See, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inculturation#cite_note-17

civilizations and their good qualities is necessary to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.⁵²⁰ Specifically too, he devoted much time in his latter encyclicals, *Evangelii praecones* (June 2, 1951) and *Fidei donum* (April 21, 1957), in concretizing the theology of inculturation and positive impacts of culture on evangelization work. These ideas already expressed by different Pontiffs laid foundation for the positive arguments regarding the importance of *inculturation* during the Second Ecumenical Council where St Paul VI played pivotal role. With the promulgation of *Ad gentes*, His Holiness, Paul VI supported the idea of inculturation and insisted that *inculturation imitates the “economy of Incarnation.”*⁵²¹ In like manner, St John Paul II’s Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, gave a reasonable attention to the theology of Inculturation, especially from the perspective of the African church and evangelization. The language used for some of the ‘subtitles’ bear eloquence to this fact. They include: “*Positive Values of African Culture*” in which the Pope firmly expressed the idea that “Africa is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the Churches and to humanity as a whole.

The Synod Fathers highlighted some of these cultural values which are truly a providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel (*Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 42 and 43). Here, the Pope, among other cultural values, specified that Africans have deep and profound *sense of religious belief*; much reverence for the ‘*sacred*’ which includes ‘*spiritual*’ world, and of utmost interest, ‘the importance of spiritual purification and expiation. The Holy Father also talked about “*Urgent need for Inculturation*” and “*Areas of Inculturation*” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 59; no. 62), in which he challenged the Church Hierarchy in Africa to take serious steps towards a better and more rewarding implementation of Theology of Inculturation in the evangelizing mission of the church. And in his words: “look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, look to the faith. Here, you will find genuine freedom – here you will find Christ who leads you to the truth”. It is also on this ground that he considers ‘inculturation’ as “*one of the greatest challenges for the church on the continent on the eve of the Third Millenium.*”⁵²² Pope Benedict XVI has also encouraging positive points for the theology of inculturation as a rewarding missiological paradigm. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “*Africae Munus*,” of November 19, 2011, His Holiness asserted that “Through profound catechesis and inculturation, the church in Africa needs to help people to discover the

⁵²⁰ Pope Pius XII, Apostolic Exhortation, *Summi Pontificatus*, On the Unity of Human Society, 20, October, 1939.

⁵²¹ Cf. C. Walter, *Missionary Pope: The Catholic Church and the positive elements of other religions in the Magisterium of Paul VI* (New York: IVE Press, 2009).

⁵²² St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 59.

fullness of Gospel values.”⁵²³ What this entails is that appreciation of gospels message should be grounded and solidified when it is interpreted from African background using African images, idioms, proverbs and other cultural African endowments. Moreover, the Second Vatican Council placed much premium on cultural importance of different peoples of the world which is encapsulated in the lengthy nature of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*. The content of this document goes a long way to prove that the interconnectedness between nature and culture is on the horizon of the obvious. The veracity of this idea is also so plausible that one cannot attempt a separation between the two. Human person being a product of nature owes its maturity and fulfilment to culture. Therefore, with the above facts and light which we have examined, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria got a safe-landing ground for their support in Inculturation theology as a suitable evangelization paradigm for Nigerian society. St John Paul II also strengthened their belief when he affirmed that “Holding fast to the two principle of the compatibility with the Gospel of the various cultures to be taken up, and of communion with the universal church, there must be further study, particularly by the *Episcopal Conferences* and the appropriate departments of the Roman Curia, and greater pastoral diligence so that this ‘*inculturation*’ of the Christian faith may come about ever more extensively.”⁵²⁴

In his first visit to Nigeria, 12th to 17th of February 1982, the Holy Father expressed the hope that the visit would initiate “*a new evangelization*”, on the premise of his conviction “*that the zeal for evangelization will envelop the church here in Nigeria*. He then, reminded the Bishops “that the catholic people, under their pastoral leadership, have the opportunity, the privilege and the duty to give a corporate witness to the Gospel of Jesus in the culture in which they live. They have the power to bring the Gospel into the very heart of their culture, into the fabric of their everyday lives.”⁵²⁵ The Holy Father therefore emphatically opined: “An important aspect of our own evangelizing role is the whole dimension of the inculturation of the Gospel into the lives of your people. Here, you and your priest co-workers offer to your people a perennial message of Divine Revelation – the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8), but at the same time, on the basis of this ‘eternal Gospel’ (Rev 14:6), you help them ‘to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.’⁵²⁶ This is necessary since, “The church truly respects the culture of each people. In

⁵²³ Pope Benedict XVI, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus*, 19 November, 2011, no. 93.

⁵²⁴ *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 10.

⁵²⁵ St. John Paul II, *Papal Message to Nigeria: A Collection of Speeches*. Published by the National Committee on Papal Visit (Nigeria: His first Apostolic visit to Nigeria, 12th to 17th February, 1982), pp. 39-40.

⁵²⁶ St. John Paul II, *Papal Message to Nigeria*, p.39. See also *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 53.

offering the Gospel message, the church does not intend to destroy or to abolish what is good and beautiful. In fact, she recognizes many cultural values and through the power of the Gospel purifies and takes into Christian worship certain elements of a people's customs. The church, he insisted, comes to bring Christ; she does not come to bring the culture of another race, because, the "path of culture is the path of man and it is on this path that man encounters the One who embodies the values of all cultures and fully reveals the man of each culture to himself."⁵²⁷ The ideas expressed above cohere with the encouragement which the Episcopal Conferences of Africa received from St. Paul VI when he visited Kampala Uganda. In his address to the African Bishops, in July 1969, the Supreme Pontiff said: "You may and must have an African Christianity."

To have *African Christianity* reasonably entails acceptance of the message of the gospel within the context of African culture, and in relation to their own worldviews. It is a call for deep-rooted search for Christ's image in the environment where the mission of the church takes place. It is a call for the theology of Inculturation. It is from this understanding that in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II defined Inculturation as "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through the integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures." "The bride of Christ", he continues, "becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is when the young churches contribute their genius. Inculturation is not the sole domain of a few experts, but belongs to the entire people of God" (RM, no. 52; EA, no. 59; Propositio, no. 28).

b. Historical perspective

From its historical background, *Inculturation* as a pastoral and a missiological terminology is generally regarded as being relatively new and a concept still on the progressive road towards theological acceptance in the circle of many theologians. The fact that we want to emphasize is that there are still divergent opinions regarding its historical birth in the community of theological disciplines. For some scholars, Inculturation gained popularity and became a household name among African theologians after the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council of 1965. Nwagbala also opines that the task of Inculturation is not something new in the history of the Church. Saint Paul in his missionary context makes a distinction between faith and culture, between expression of the faith in the gods, and elements in the culture, which serve other social or cultural purposes. (Cf. 1 Cor. 8:4; Acts 17:23-25; 17:28-29; Gal. 4:8-10). Some

⁵²⁷ St. John Paul II, *Papal Message to Nigeria*, 1982, p. 39.

pagan temples and shrines became Christian churches and shrines. Generally, the Church Fathers recognise some incipient revelations in non-Christian religions and cultures. An outstanding feature of the theology of Inculturation is that it takes culture very seriously.⁵²⁸ The process of inculturation started with the incarnation of Christ in the Jewish culture. The Christians in Nigeria must seriously apply the teaching of the church in Vatican II that “the younger churches are to borrow from custom, tradition, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people, everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of the Christian life” (AG, no. 22).⁵²⁹ Accordingly, the process of Inculturation surely corresponds to the proper theological understanding of the nature of Christian experience of salvation, which as David Tracy has argued, is always contextual.⁵³⁰ Indeed, the historical account of the growth of the Church, dating back to the apostolic age to the heroic stabilization in Roman society, shows a positive intermingling and assimilation of various cultures even in architectural designs. Cross-cultural activities of the church over the years cannot easily be ignored.

Therefore, one can conveniently come to the conclusion that inculturation activities and processes have been part of the church’s growth and progress. What is rather new may be the contemporary organizational activities among theologians who are trying to theologially organise and situate it within the confines of practical theology and as an important component which should be placed and studied on the same pedestal with such theological courses like Patristics, Church History, etc. In other words, our contention is that ecclesiology as a branch of theology without inculturation is not complete because incarnational theology may not be properly understood without inculturation theology. What we are stressing is that, the content of inculturation is not new. What may be new is the *modus operandi* as it concerns theological courses and its interpretation among some episcopal conferences. As such, many theologians like S. Neil, are also of the opinion that, the history of Inculturation goes back to the first pages of the Acts of the Apostles; from the moment the Greek members of the Christian community claimed that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food, (Acts 6:1) via the hilarious event when our first Pope was told to eat what he considered to be ritually unclean,

⁵²⁸ Cf. M. Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity* (Rome, 1982), p. 54. R. Crollius, *The Meaning of Culture in Theological Anthropology*, 1986. See, Edmund Nwagbala, “Christian forgiveness (Mt. 6:12) and Igbo Traditional Concept of Sin and Forgiveness”, in, *Bigard Theological Studies*, January – June, 2003, vol. 23, no. 1, p. 78-97.

⁵²⁹ Yakubu, “Evangelization 2000: Tasks and Challenges, 1992, p. 77- 85.

⁵³⁰ Cf. David Tracy, “World Church or World Catechism: The Problem of Eurocentricism,” *Concillium* 204, no. 4, 1989, p. 31-32; See also, David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad/Herder and Herder; London: SCM Press, 1981). Cf. Michael Muonwe, *Dialectics of Faith-Culture Integration*, p. 94.

(Acts 10:15) till the Council of Jerusalem when the missionaries Paul and Barnabas confronted the more conservatively inclined Peter and James. Together, they came to the beautiful consensus not to lay a load on the heads of new believers which neither their ancestors nor they themselves had been able to carry (Acts 15:10).⁵³¹ From another perspectives, the Popes have continued to encourage the new Christian peoples to introduce their genius and culture into the *Mystical Body of Christ*: Vatican II Council had also already stated that “There are many links between the message of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing himself to his people to the extent of full manifestation of himself in his Incarnate Son, has spoken to the culture proper to different ages.”⁵³²

Following from this, and especially the encouraging insights drawn from the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference feels delighted at the number of the publications concerning the theology of Culture and Inculturation from her members. A literature review shows increasing number of available local indigenous publications. These include, F. Arinze (Retired Nigerian Cardinal), “*The Church and Nigerian Culture*” Lenten Pastoral (1973), B. Gbuji “*Pastoral on Title Taking*,” Pastoral Letter (1984), S. Ezeanya, “*Lord Increase our Faith*” Lenten Pastoral (1973) are good examples. Several published doctoral theses by Nigerian priests have tackled the problem one way or the other. Increasing interest in anthropological studies has resulted in the publications of analytic works on Nigerian Culture. Unpublished independent studies also abound. The Bishops’ Conference, the Bishops in their various dioceses, priests in their various communities, are all primal pastoral agents of inculturation.⁵³³ At this point, few definitional attempts will help to appreciate the concept more in our own context.

c. Towards a contextual definition

The importance of culture in human development even in the spiritual field has made Luzbetak to emphatically assert that “The Gospel must be preached to human beings as human beings.”⁵³⁴ Here, ‘human beings as human beings’ entails taking into consideration his cultural environment. It means the assimilation of the gospel message as Nigerians, not as European. And as already remarked, our aim in this section is not to give a detailed indices of inculturation

⁵³¹ S. Neil, *History of Christian Mission* (Penguin, 1994), p. 179.

⁵³² Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 58; See also Oliver Alozie Onwubiko, *The Church in Mission in the light of Ecclesia in Africa*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001), p. 386. Cf. Michael Muonwe, *Dialectics of Faith-Culture Integration* (Bloomington, USA: Xlibris LLC, 2014), p. 94.

⁵³³ CBCN, *Evangelization through Inculturation: a new method of evangelization*, 1991.

⁵³⁴ Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 44.

since it is a vast track in emerging theology in Christian life. However, for clarity of purpose, and because of the importance which CBCN attaches to it, few definitions or explanations will surely suffice. Hence, from the onset, we posit that Inculturation is the process that leads to proper comprehension and appreciation of the gospel message and the content of missionary mandate from one's cultural and social background and coloured with his/her own worldview. This elicits deep sense of acceptance of the gospel message of salvation which must take place; not in isolation of one's cultural environment, but in the balanced state of inclusivity of one's traditional state and the expected new state of Christian baptismal renewal. However, because of the intricacies of this process, the concept has not yet enjoyed a global acceptance regarding its definition.

This is why St John Paul II says that "The process of the Church's insertion into peoples' cultures is a lengthy one. It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for inculturation "means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures."⁵³⁵ He went further to explain that "inculturation is the *incarnation* of the Gospel in native cultures and also the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church."⁵³⁶ Also, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II defined Inculturation as "The intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through the integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures." "The bride of Christ", he continues, "becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is when the young churches contribute their genius. Inculturation, he concludes, is not the sole domain of a few experts, but belongs to the entire people of God."⁵³⁷ Following from this, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria says that "Inculturation is the process by which the mystery of the incarnation is brought home and made real to people in their various cultures."⁵³⁸

It is in this light that the African Synod papal document, "*Ecclesia in Africa*" insists that "Our local churches must be involved in the process of inculturation in an on-going manner, respecting the following two criteria: compatibility with the Christian message and communion with the universal Church" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 62). The aim of all this is to make Christ more meaningful to our lives, within our different cultures. The task is urgent and necessary and we must face it squarely, everyone in the church playing his or her role.⁵³⁹ This aspect of

⁵³⁵ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 52.

⁵³⁶ St. John Paul II, "*Slavorum Apostoli*", *Slavorum Apostoli* Encyclical Epistle, no. 21. June 2, 1985.

⁵³⁷ *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 52; *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 59; *Propositio*, no. 28.

⁵³⁸ CBCN, *The Church Teaches*, 2003.

⁵³⁹ CBCN, *Communique*, Abuja, 1997.

evangelization is what the Nigerian church is very much bent on pursuing. At present, there is a remarkable interest in this area of evangelization which deals with the incarnation of the gospel in the real life-situation (*sitz-in-leben*) of a people. From another angle, Waliggo explains that Inculturation means the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his Gospel of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It is the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought patterns of each people.... It is the continuous endeavour to make Christianity 'truly feel at home' in the cultures of each people time.⁵⁴⁰ It consists not only in the expression of the Gospel and the Christian faith through the cultural medium, but includes, as well, experiencing, understanding and appropriating the Gospel through the cultural resources of a people.⁵⁴¹

On his own account Crollius believes that the integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people in such a way that the experience not only express itself in elements of this culture, but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion not only within the culture in question, but also as an enrichment of the church universal is what should be called inculturation.⁵⁴² Referring to what is known as *Spanish-Portuguese Circle*, Ricardo Jose says, inculturation is: the penetration of the faith in the inner space of man's life, in such a way that his manner of judging, feeling and acting is engrossed by the force of the vivifying Spirit.⁵⁴³ From the already sampled definitions, we find out that the common denominator is the centrality of culture in the Church's missionary enterprise. This is not surprising because, no meaningful evangelization can be achieved without the medium of culture. No one can evangelize in a cultural vacuum, nor can the faith be considered as culture-free. God's communication to mankind has always been done through people's cultures. Jesus was born into the first-century Palestinian Jewish community. He communicated his message of the kingdom of God through the linguistic imageries, cultural symbols, proverbs and other cultural riches of the Jews."⁵⁴⁴ Consequently, evangelization that does not take account of this foundational aspect of human beings is bound

⁵⁴⁰ John Waliggo, *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency*, (Nairobi: St. Paul Publications, 1986), p. 11-12.

⁵⁴¹ Cf. Edmund Nwagbala, "Christian forgiveness (Mt. 6:12) and Igbo Traditional Concept of Sin and Forgiveness", in, *Bigard Theological Studies*, January – June, 2003, vol. 23, no. 1, p. 78-97.

⁵⁴² Roest Crollius, *Inculturation: Newness and ongoing progress* (Nairobi: Pauline, 1986), p. 43. See also, Cf. Roest Crollius, *The Meaning of Culture in Theological Anthropology*, 1986, p. 65.

Crollius, R. (1986). *Inculturation: Newness and ongoing progress*. Nairobi: Pauline. Dei Verbum (1965), in, A. Flannery (ed.), *Documents of the Second Vatican Council*, pp.750-765. (Dublin: Dominican, 1983).

⁵⁴³ Ricardo Jose, "The usage of the Inculturation definition in the Church's documents", in, *La Inculturación en los trabajos de las Conferencias Generales del Episcopado Latinoamericano en Puebla*, (1979) y en Santo Domingo (1992). Roma 2001, pages 29-91.

⁵⁴⁴ See, Michael Muonwe. *Dialectics of Faith-Culture Integration: Inculturation or Syncretism*, p. 16.

to be built on fragile foundation; it remains, as Pope John Paul II emphasized, a faith which has not become cultured, a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not faithfully lived out.”⁵⁴⁵ Secondly, and as already stated, we deduce that the concept of inculturation has not enjoyed a generally-accepted definition. And this is why we started this definitional journey with our own working definition that rests on the idea that inculturation is ... a process that leads to proper comprehension and appreciation of the gospel message and the content of missionary mandate from one’s cultural and social background Inculturation has to do with a process of how the gospel is brought to and received in a given culture. As a process, it is an on-going project because the mission of Christ is not a finished work. Mission is also a process of bringing Christ to every human person irrespective of cultural differences. On this noted, St John Paul II remarked: “...the Bishops must carry on the task of inculturating the Gospel for the good of each people, precisely so that Christ may be communicated to every man, woman and child. In this process, cultures themselves must be uplifted, transformed and permeated by Christ’s original message of divine truth, without harming what is noble in them.”⁵⁴⁶ Here, communicating Christ involves incarnational approach to inculturation which CBCN has advocated for, knowing full well that “once the church and the faith become cultural, it is very difficult, or perhaps impossible to eliminate them, short of annihilating the entire population of believers.”⁵⁴⁷

d. Incarnational - Inculturation theology: the imperative in the mission of the Church in Nigeria

In one of his encouraging statements towards the solidification of inculturation theology, St. John Paul II recommends that “holding fast to the two principles of the compatibility with the Gospel of the various cultures to be taken up, and of communion with the universal church, there must be further study, particularly by the Episcopal Conferences and the appropriate

⁵⁴⁵ This is a citation from St. John Paul II’s Letter to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli establishing the *Pontifical Council of Culture*, 20 May 1982; ORE, 28 June 1982, p. 7, and gives emphasis to the importance of the inculturation of the faith. (See. *The Evangelization of Culture and the Inculturation of the Faith in the Context of a Humanistic Society in Contemporary China: An Opportunity or a Challenge?* Jing Baolu (Dr. Jing Baolu is the Director of the Matteo Ricci Study Centre in Macerata, Italy. This text is his contribution to the 9th European Catholic China Colloquium “Challenges of Evangelisation – China and Europe,” Konstancin/ Warsaw, September 10–13, 2015.

⁵⁴⁶ *Address to the Bishops of Ghana, Kumasi*, 9 May, 1980, 3: AAS 72 (1980) 515. In this address, St. John Paul II presents a powerful support for the process of inculturation and urges the Bishops to breast up with the responsibility of pushing inculturation process to the required limit. He therefore advised that while doing so, they should try and preserve unchangeably the content of the catholic faith and maintain the ecclesial unity in the whole world. Secondly, they should try and generate original, cultural, and Christian expressions of life, celebration and thought from their own cultural background and reflecting the prevalent earthly realities.

⁵⁴⁷ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation; transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 264.

departments of the Roman Curia, and greater pastoral diligence so that this ‘inculturation’ of the Christian faith may come about ever more extensively.”⁵⁴⁸ Addressing the African Bishops, the Supreme Pontiff remarked that: “Inculturation which you rightly promote will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, when a culture, transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.”⁵⁴⁹ The element of incarnation theology in the above statement was much more emphasized during his visit to Nigeria. According to him, “... the divine message is made incarnate and is communicated through the culture of each people. It is forever true that the part of culture is the part of man, and it is on this path that man encounters the One who embodies the values of all cultures and fully reveals the man of each culture to himself. The Gospel of Christ the Incarnate Word finds its home along the path of culture.”⁵⁵⁰ Indeed, letting the gospel find home in the culture of the people has rightly been taken up by the Nigerian Bishops as the proper means of an enduring evangelization.

This is done with the firm belief that if “Inculturation is properly and theologically promoted and assimilated in the life of the people, it will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, because, when a culture is transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, it brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.”⁵⁵¹ Moreover, when the Council Fathers expressed the idea that there are many ties between the message of salvation and the human nature, they were in essence referring to the revelation which God made of Himself to His people through the full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, who also spoke according to the culture proper to each epoch. Likewise, the church, living in various circumstances in the course of time, has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching, she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful.”⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 10.

⁵⁴⁹ St. John Paul II, *Apostolic Visit to Africa, Discourse to the Bishops of Kenya, 7 May, 1980*, 6: AAS 72 (1980) 497; *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 02.06.1980, p. 3. (Synod of Bishops, Second Special Assembly for Africa, The Church in Africa in the service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. “*You are the salt of the earth You are the light of the world*” (Mt. 5:13-14) *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2009) http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1980/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19800507_vescovi-kenya_en.html

⁵⁵⁰ CBCN, St. John Paul II, Address of John Paul II to the Bishops of Nigeria, Lagos, 15 February 1982.

⁵⁵¹ St. John Paul II, *Apostolic Visit to Africa*, 6: AAS 72 (1980) 497; *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, 02.06.1980, p. 3.) (Synod of Bishops, Second Special Assembly for Africa, The Church in Africa in the service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.

⁵⁵² *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 58.

Still, in juxtaposition of Inculturation with Incarnational theology, Kroeger gave us a graphical picture that links human relevance to the Incarnated Son of God, the *Divine Logos*. His argument in favour of incarnational theology is sumptuously supported by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council as espoused in *Gaudium et Spes*. Hence, the renewal of humanity fostered by the Second Vatican Council is patterned on the person of Christ, whom the Council calls the “New Man” and the “*Alpha and Omega*.” “In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear. Christ ... fully reveals humanity to itself” (GS, 22). “The Word of God ... was made flesh, so that as a perfect man, he could save all.... The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the centre of humanity, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations” (GS, 45). “By his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each individual. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will, and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin” (GS, 22).⁵⁵³

From this insight, Rene Padilla argues that, “The incarnation unmistakably demonstrates God’s intentions to make itself known from within the human situation because of the very nature of the Gospel. We know this Gospel as a message contextualized in culture.”⁵⁵⁴ In all, we can deduce that Inculturation as incarnation, emphasizes that God is actively revealing God’s self in culture. We are charged through the gift of grace and the Holy Spirit to discover that incarnated God in all cultures.⁵⁵⁵ Thus, in their Plenary Meeting of 1976 in Lagos, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria unanimously adopted the recommendation of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar to consider and treat inculturation - the incarnation of the message of Christ - as essential to evangelisation of the continent. They came to conclusion that it is only through effective inculturation that the Christian Religion is correctly shown and proved to be universal or Catholic. Moreover, they reasoned that for effective inculturation, the provision of Priests, Brothers and Sisters in great numbers and of good quality, is of vital importance. It is for the purpose of training these indigenous personnel that we have these Seminaries, Juniorates and Novitiates for the training

⁵⁵³ Kroeger, *A Vatican II Journey*, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁴ R. Padilla, “The Contextualization of the Gospel” in, C. H. Kraft and T. N. Wisley, eds., *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1979), p. 289. – Olikenyi, p. 80.

⁵⁵⁵ John, C. Sivalon, *God’s Mission and Postmodern Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2012), p. 13. Two distinct understandings of inculturation in Tanzania were reported by Laurenti Magesa in his *Anatomy of Inculturation*, (Orbis books, 2004), p. 37. He uses two Swahili words to distinguish these understandings. One is *utamadunisho*, which denotes the process or act of making something that is alien part and parcel of a particular culture. *Umwilisho* literally means “embodiment” and, according to Magesa, refers to the event of God taking on the human condition or becoming like us. It is the *incarnation*.

of Priests, Brothers and Sisters.⁵⁵⁶ With these in place, CBCN feels highly placed and balanced for the proper implementation of the contents of theology of inculturation as has been propounded by the Magisterium and recommended by many Popes as we have seen. In the foregone analysis, therefore, we profusely quoted so many of such insights from them, especially St. John Paul II, St. Paul VI, St. Pius XII, etc. It is from them, and other Church documents, especially the Second Vatican Council, that CBCN finds leaning wall to expand and concretize inculturation as a true model of evangelization or proper paradigm for the mission of the Church in Nigeria. From all the nuances of Inculturation examined in this work and others scattered in many pages of different theological works especially the ones with African touch, CBCN tends to be more at home with the linkage of inculturation to the person of Christ, His incarnational realities and the promise of the great *parousia*. Their idea comes from the very fact that, the Incarnation or ‘the taking of body’ of God’s Word provides another reason and justification for inculturation.

According to the Bishops, the event of the incarnation does not belong entirely to the past. Rather its historical essence is of a reoccurring nature, making it possible for the *Logos* to continually assume the body of subsequent human history and culture. This is why incarnation is used synonymously with inculturation. They also fully appreciate the connection referred in *Catechesi Tradendae*, which made this identification and not in the metaphorical sense: “the term ‘acculturation’ or ‘inculturation’ may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor in the great mystery of the incarnation” (CT 53). *Ad Gentes* presents incarnation as a model of inculturation and explained that: If the Church is to be in a position to offer all the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among whom He lived (AG, 10).⁵⁵⁷ Christ’s missionary mandate has its source in the eternal love of God, who sent his Son and his Spirit because he wanted all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4).

The reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is most of the time patterned with the concrete realities of the recipient of the missionary message. This is the more reason why human persons, in their own different cultural and social environment experience the import of the Holy Spirit in their own spiritual journey and daily lives differently, and in the manner peculiar to their worldview, daily experiences and eschatological visions. Consequently, the Decree on

⁵⁵⁶ CBCN, *Communique*, Lagos, 1976.

⁵⁵⁷ CBCN, *Pastoral Letter*, 1991.

the Missionary Activity of the Church teaches that “In order to be able to offer all of them the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, the Church must become part of all these groups for the same motive which led Christ to bind Himself, in virtue of His Incarnation, to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt.”⁵⁵⁸ This is the ground on which inculturation as incarnation is built. Conclusively, CBCN, in their Episcopal Collegiality came to the understanding that, the incarnation is an adequate model of inculturation since the former is a cosmic event, that is, it encompasses the entire human history. It is in the faith and hope in the *parousia* that the Church must plunge itself into this task: “...incarnate itself in each climate, culture and race.... She must push down her roots in the spiritual and cultural soil of the place and assimilate every natural value” (Paul VI: 1970).⁵⁵⁹ This is very necessary since God wants the continuity of race, He at the same time wants the immortalization of good values handed down from antiquity. “What we have heard and known for ourselves, and what our ancestors have told us must not be withheld from their descendants, but be handed on by us to the next generation” (Ps. 78:3). It is on this ground that they rather opted for the theology on “inculturation incarnation”, which Ukpong described as attempts to make the gospel message challenge African culture. It exposes the one to the other and puts them in dialogue. Culture thus becomes enlightened by the gospel message, and from it emerges an African vision of Christianity.⁵⁶⁰ Ferdinand Nwaigbo believes that the crisis of faith and mass exodus of the catholic faithful in Nigerian church is occasioned by the failure of the missionaries to respect the culture and tradition of the natives and their unwillingness to engage in inculturation of the Church.⁵⁶¹

Perhaps the missionaries did not listen to the advice of His Holiness, when he insisted that failure to inculturate is failure properly to evangelize, as Pope Paul VI has explained in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. And not to inculturate is not to take seriously the church’s nature as a communion of local churches. The implementation of both subsidiarity and inculturation will intensify the church’s catholicity. This enhancement of the life of the local churches is by that very fact an enhancement of the life of the universal church.⁵⁶² Consequently, St. John Paul II, while speaking to the church hierarchy in Nigeria said: “having herself embraced the Gospel,

⁵⁵⁸ *Ad Gentes*, no. 10.

⁵⁵⁹ CBCN, *Pastoral Letter*, 1991.

⁵⁶⁰ Cited by Patrick E. Nmah, *Conflicts between Two Religious Cultures: Achieving Reconciliation*, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jrhr/article/viewFile/87323/77039>.

⁵⁶¹ Nwaigbo, *Church as Communion: An African Christian Perspective*, p. 223.

⁵⁶² Bishop P. J. Cullinane, *The Universal Church as a Communion of Particular Churches* (Address to Australia-New Zealand & Canon Law Society 2 November 1987). <https://pndiocese.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/1987-11-02-The-Universal-Church-as-a-Communion-of-Particular-Churches.pdf>.

the Church is called to communicate it by word and action. The Catholic people, under your pastoral leadership, have the opportunity, the privilege and the duty to give a corporate witness to the Gospel of Jesus in the culture in which they live. They have the power to bring the Gospel into the very heart of their culture, into the fabric of their everyday lives. It is above all when the Christian families have been truly evangelized and are aware of their evangelizing role that there can be an effective evangelization of culture – an active encounter between the Gospel and culture. The need is great, for as my predecessor Paul VI pointed out: “*The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time*” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 20).⁵⁶³ While praising the cultural ingredients enshrined in the social life of the people, His Holiness is of the opinion that the real mission of the Church should be targeted at giving the gospel of Christ proper landing ground to operate within the confines of the positive cultural values of the people since the Church cannot truly divorce herself from the culture of her host country without recording shallow missionary enterprise. This happened in the past. Its repetition is what CBCN wouldn’t want. CBCN, as we already indicated, has accepted the above ideas expressed by His Holiness. This is seen from their resolve to make Inculturation theology a guiding star, since “A faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived.”⁵⁶⁴ Again, this conviction is strengthened by the linkage which the Supreme Pontiff made with his concept of “*New Era of Evangelization.*”

According to Bishop Obot, CBCN understood this call as effective catechesis, a deepening of the faith of the people and Christian commitment in all spheres of life.⁵⁶⁵ Therefore, to translate this belief into action, Nigerian theologians organized a seminar with the theme ‘The Church in the era of Cultural Revival and ‘New Era of Evangelization’ in 1984.”⁵⁶⁶ Moreover, to show her commitment to this project, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) organized the first International Seminar on Inculturation in November 1988. It was the first time the Bishops decided to take seriously the task by discussing thorny issues on the state of the Nigerian Church vis-à-vis Inculturation. They highlighted the urgency of inculturation and as a result recommended the training of people and personnel for the work of inculturation. The special target was seminarians, who eventually would not only implement

⁵⁶³ St. John Paul II, Address to the Nigerian Bishops at Lagos, February, 15, 1982, during his first Apostolic Visit to Nigeria.

⁵⁶⁴ John Paul II, in a “Letter Instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture,” 20th May 1982, AAS LXXIV (1982) 683-688.

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. E. S. Obot, Forward to *Inculturation in Nigeria: Proceedings of Catholic Bishops’ study session*, November 1988, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁶ CBCN, *The Nigerian Church: Evangelization through Inculturation*, Pastoral Letter, Catholic Secretariat publications, 1991, p. 1.

inculturation but would train grass root Christians.⁵⁶⁷ The Bishops' Conference also followed this up in 1991 with the publication of "*magna charta*", a pastoral letter entitled; '*The Nigerian Church: Evangelization through Inculturation.*'

In the introduction, the Bishops recognized inculturation as a method of propagating the gospel message in the areas of faith such as the spiritual, the pastoral and the liturgical. They gave credence to the fact that the century old Nigerian Church is finding her footing in the new order – inculturated evangelization. The Bishops also appreciated the efforts made so far to educate themselves on the areas of Inculturation.⁵⁶⁸ Other individual efforts on Inculturation as cited by U. Aba, include; Francis Cardinal Arinze's, "The Church and Nigerian Culture" Lenten Pastoral (1973); Bishop Gbuji's, "Pastoral on Title Taking; Pastoral Letter (1984); S. Ezeanya's, "Lord Increase our Faith" Lenten pastoral (1973).⁵⁶⁹ Nnamani also contends that, "since 1960, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have tried in at least eleven different pastoral exhortations to take a stand and to deepen the gain of inculturation process. For instance, they have spoken on the need for Inculturation as Africanization (1972) and Indiginization (1985) of the gospel, and have called on African Christians to see inculturation as an irreversible option and a duty for all evangelizers (1991), and to understand it as an ongoing exercise (1996), which is truly African and truly Christian (2002).⁵⁷⁰

The vibrancy in the liturgical ceremonies in all the parishes in Nigeria, with the colourful traditional musical beatings is testamental to the growing awareness of the the importance of theology of inculturation in the practical implementation of the missionary mandate. The church, indeed, is now enjoying the cultural environment of the host. With this type of acceptability, the church in Nigeria definitely has a brighter future. Nevertheless, there is no gainsaying that the road to proper integration of the gospel in the daily life of the people is surely a tedious one, but not impossible. It is only left for the Bishops to come up with more positive strategies and most importantly, better organised programme of catechesis aimed at proper interpretation of the incarnational missiology. St. John Paul II used the same system to touch the lives of his people in Poland. Consequently, the role which St John Paul II's Polish experience played in his pontificate could strengthen our local church (laity, clergy and

⁵⁶⁷ Uchenna Aba, *The Reception of the Second Vatican Council's Liturgical Reforms in Nigeria (Nsukka Diocese)*, (Zurich: LIT VERLAG GmbH & Co. KG Wien, 2016), p. 143.

⁵⁶⁸ Cf. CBCN, *The Nigerian Church: Evangelization Through Inculturation*, p. 6. See also, Uchenna Aba, *The Reception of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 144.

⁵⁶⁹ Aba, *The Reception of the Second Vatican Council's Liturgical Reforms*, p. 144.

⁵⁷⁰ A. G. Nnamani, "What is an Inculturating Church," in, I. M. C. Obinwa (ed.), *Collaborative Ministry in The Context of Inculturation*, p. 356), Cf. Uchenna Aba, *The Reception of the Second Vatican Council*, p. 145.

hierarchy) to be real to their own local experiences and see in them the vehicles through which they can uplift their local Churches and make contributions to the universal Church. From this perspective, the pontificate of St. John Paul II challenges religious leaders to be part of the living experiences of their people. This would include experiencing their pains and joys, their frustrations and hopes, and identifying with them in their problems and searches for solution. This is one of the unmistakable legacies of St. John Paul II.⁵⁷¹ In order that the theology of Inculturation really performs its duty of touching the lives of the people and as the best option for the mission of the Church in Nigeria, CBCN drew up five phases or steps for proper implementation of Inculturation. When these phases are put in place, then “A Model of Inculturation for the Nigerian Church” would have been achieved for the mission of the church to experience more energized vitality.

e. A Model of Inculturation for the Nigerian Church

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria is very much aware that there is an absence of cultural homogeneity in Nigeria. And this continues to raise the question, ‘Nigerian Culture or Nigerian Cultures?’ For clarity, they explain that the description “Nigerian culture’ refers to a typology, meaning that certain structural and elemental constants exist in all the cultures of the nation. But it is true that the over 250 ethnic groups in the country possess significant specific cultural differences. And since inculturation refers to an intimate relationship, polycentric inculturation is logical in Nigeria. What is referred to therefore, as a model of inculturation for the Nigerian church is that which may constitute the source of valid principles for the different Nigerian cultural contexts. The common validity of such principles derives from the commonality of experience.⁵⁷² This model consists of *five phases or moments*,⁵⁷³ which are not necessarily successive but rather are simultaneously in operation.

i. First Phase: Reaffirmation of the Indigenous Culture

It is an historical fact that among many peoples of Nigeria as in most African countries the encounter with colonialism and Christianity caused partial or total split between the individuals and their cultures. “It was a difficult task to persuade an educated African that he was not

⁵⁷¹ Jude, Uzochukwu Njoku, “Solidarity and Collaboration without boundaries: shifts in the Social Teachings of John Paul II”, in, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 17, 2005, p. 49-69.

⁵⁷² See, CBCN, *Pastoral Letter*, 1991.

⁵⁷³ *These phases are treated compoundly in the document which the Bishops produced in 1991 where they devoted much time in appreciation and recommendations of the theology of Inculturation as properly needed for their own interpretation of the mission of the Church in Nigerian society. These phases are reproduced here with few ideas from this researcher.*

European.”⁵⁷⁴ This attitude had spread beyond the elite group, sometimes in modified forms, but always with the same effect; greater enthusiasm and appreciation of foreign cultures and products. Often cultural affirmations by many Nigerians amount to mere *flatus vocis*. What has persistently been lacking is recognition of and pride for their culture. People for whom inculturation is intended must give the basic acknowledgement to the culture, to its very existence and influences, and be proud of it whether it is weak or strong, rich or poor.

ii. Second Phase: Study to discover the Positive Values of the Culture

Here, the evangelizer ought not to be ignorant of the culture he intends to evangelize and so the moment of study is a starting point of inculturation. The study is not anything superficial but rather deep and thorough. It begins with speaking the language of the culture. It must seek to discover the positive values in the culture that means ‘the seeds of the word’. These values are “the traces of God’s action on this culture, the vestiges of this God who has passed over it and who is present in it even before the arrival of the evangelizer” Values will be accepted as authentic following their humanness and their closeness to the message of Christ.

iii. Third Phase: Study to discover the Culture’s Disvalues

The object of study in this instance is the identification of the culture’s disvalues or those elements that are ultimately detrimental to man or incompatible with the gospel. At this stage, all the facilities for study available to the second phase are needed. What is intrinsically opposed to man and the gospel ought to be seen as a disvalue. When it is an absolute disvalue it has to be rejected outright. However, tact must prevail lest the people think that their culture is being rejected.

iv. Fourth Phase: Explicit Proclamation of the Gospel Message

Evangelisation requires explicit proclamation of the gospel message. To this culture which has discovered itself and recognised the fundamental importance of man, a new message is proclaimed. For no matter what values a culture possesses and no matter how deep the vestiges of God present are, it would remain unevangelized until it receives the good news.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. E. A. Anyadele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1966), p. 245.

v. Fifth Phase: The Christian Community becomes the evangelizer

The new Christian community announces itself. “It will make itself known as it is: with its coherence and incoherence, its wealth and poverty, its unity and diversity.” This community will declare her fundamental option for the gospel and will undertake to denounce all forms of injustice and discrimination that dehumanize the human person; in the family, society, in politics, religion or economy. For the very culture it is a moment of upliftment and renewal. Inculturated evangelisation is not a haphazard exercise conducted in isolation and ignorance. Opted for by a local church, prepared for in terms of enlightened evangelizer, monitored, coordinated and evaluated periodically, the process yields the right fruit. Finally, according to CBCN, Inculturation is gradual but ought not be sluggish. Though a calculated adventure, it still involves some risk and does admit mistakes. However, risk exposure must not be unreasonable. It requires experimentation and patient observation. Above all, it requires determination, good will, prayer, and discernment. Conclusively, one sees from the above analysis that the collective voice of CBCN is that Inculturation theology remains the most appropriate means of the interpretation of the mission of the church in Nigerian context.

Summary

The integral missionary approach of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria was treated in this chapter. This dwelt on the concrete and various ways where the local church has so far tried to interpret the universal mission of the church in the language and actions most appropriate to the hearers of the gospel. In the process, we established the fact that integral mission theology which focuses on the human person and his holistic redemption involves his spiritual life with an eye on the eschatological finality without neglecting the earthly realities that pose tremendous challenges to the Universal Church and her mission. This idea was very much brought to focus by the Second Vatican Council, which, following other authors, Avery Dulles sees as the “single most dramatic shift that has occurred within the Church since Vatican II; a development that has been leveraged on the shift from a static, institutional model of being Church to a missionary-minded evangelistic self-understanding.”⁵⁷⁵ This new dimension of the understanding of the Church in the modern world presents an important platform for a better comprehension and assimilation of the mission which the Church has been saddled with. The *theologico-pastoral* challenge thrown to the African Bishops by St Paul VI, as seen in his

⁵⁷⁵ Avery Dulles, ‘John Paul II and the New Evangelisation: What does it mean?’ in, R. Martin and P. Williamson *Pope John Paul II and the New Evangelisation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

statement, “By now, you Africans are missionaries to yourselves,”⁵⁷⁶ sets the tone for the Nigerian local church and other episcopal conferences in Africa to be on the road in search of a relevant missionary identity and proper appropriation of the various new insights offered by the Council Fathers. The extent they have gone in this regard formed the basis for the completed chapter and based on their willingness and readiness to work with government and non-governmental agencies, “to pool all our available resources, for the relief of suffering and the building of a better nation and to push for the most Christian fruit of peace which is reconciliation.”⁵⁷⁷ In the chapter that follows, we are going to see the structural patterns and pastoral agents established by CBCN for the accomplishment of their desired ambition in making the church more relevant to the people of God in the context under review.

⁵⁷⁶ St. Paul VI, Address to the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar, Kampala, Uganda, in July 1969.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. Peter Schineller (ed.), *The Voice of the Voiceless: Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria 1960- 2002*, Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited, Ibadan 2002, p. 61.

Chapter Four

IV. Agents of evangelization: dynamic structures, progress and challenges for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria

Introduction

As also indicated variously in the work, with *aggiornamento*, the Second Vatican Council ushered in a new life of ecclesial inclusivity and practical universality in terms of broadened missionary outreach. Indeed, as Karl Rahner puts it, the church is becoming conscious of being “*world-church*.”⁵⁷⁸ The idea of Episcopal Conferences and their juridical horizon was also strengthened and which has helped to give verve to the *ecclesia localis*. Thus, with fifty ecclesiastical jurisdictions and millions of Christ’s followers, the Church in Nigeria stands a better chance of improvement with a well-organized hierarchy. This entails a co-ordinated agents of mission and dynamic structures. It is our contention that when these structures are put in their proper places, positive missionary activities would have been achieved, but not ruling out some ‘bottle-necks’ in the form of contemporary challenges.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria as a body understands that proper interpretation of the mission of the Church in terms of practicality is an intricate one; especially when one considers the perennial problem of ethnicity and religious intolerance in Nigeria. In the preceding chapter, we analysed how they have been able to flow with the Universal Church to bring home to the people the fruits of post-conciliar ecclesiology, 1965-2017. In the process, specific areas of interest were put in the praxiological perspective of their comprehension of the Church’s mission. In this chapter therefore, we intend to give a synoptic approach to the question of administrative structural apparatus that has helped in pushing the mission of the church to the level we have it today with the hope of a more positive future. In consonance with the already established arguments and analysis, we now see how the collegial unity which has existed among the CBCN can help to fashion an *imago ekklesia localis* most relevant in the interpretation of the *missio ecclesia* in Nigeria with the hope of enriching the *ecclesia universalis*.

⁵⁷⁸ Karl Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in, *TI*, vol. 20 (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 77-89.

1. Administrative structures for the effective evangelization.

In the second and third chapters of this work we did examine in details some of the stumbling blocks which missionary activities in Nigeria encountered from 1966 to 1970. This was the period of devastating civil war that engulfed the entire nation, thereby stifling positive missionary activities. As we indicated while examining education as a veritable means of evangelization, one of the negative impulses of this was the expulsion of missionaries from Nigeria by the Federal Government. This expulsion posed enormous problems as well as challenges to the indigenous bishops. For the bishops to adequately tackle the problems and challenges in their various dioceses, they had to develop new pastoral structures on the diocesan and on parish levels. One of these was the formation of pastoral and parish councils to function as advisory boards to the bishops and priests in the various dioceses and parishes respectively. These councils were also charged with the responsibility of promoting the Apostolate of the Laity in accordance with the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay people of the Second Vatican Council; to assist the hierarchy of Nigeria with advice, suggestions and practical help etc.⁵⁷⁹ Furthermore, they encourage the development of lay apostolate work at grassroots level, especially at the individual Church and parish levels, linking such organisations and other national Catholic organisations with the National Laity Council of Nigeria.⁵⁸⁰ However, though most of the above mentioned groups or statutory bodies are actively found in individual dioceses and parishes, the central controlling body and administrative headquarter remains Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.

a. Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN): A definition

The Mystical Body of Christ cannot functionally exist without a hierarchical structure to ensure its organic unity. From the very beginning, for the Christian community to endure and organize itself after the departure of Jesus, it was necessary to institute governmental functions. It is in relation with other civilizations that our Christian identity emerges historically; Christianity must express and *display* its identity as a visibly gathered community.⁵⁸¹ The Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) is the Church's highest governing and decision-making body in Nigeria. It exists in line with the above expressions of Bishop Robert Carlson as the highest

⁵⁷⁹ G. J. Afolabi, "Emergence of Laity Organization of Nigeria", in, O. A. Makozi/G. J. Afolabi Ojo (eds.) *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p. 71-86, 77. Cf. Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*, p.105.

⁵⁸⁰ Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*, p.105.

⁵⁸¹ Most Rev. Robert James Carlson, "The Duties of the Bishop", in, *Catholics United for the Faith*, March 199. <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=89>

in the ecclesial hierarchical order in the Nigerian local church. The bishops beat the drum and thus determine the rhythm. It is the organ of unity, communion and solidarity for the millions of Catholics spread across the thirty-six states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. It is the forum wherein the collegiality of the Nigeria Catholic Bishops, as successors of the Apostles union with the Pope, is expressed and where the idea of the Church as family is signified. Through the conference, the Archbishops and Bishops of the fifty four Ecclesiastical jurisdictions, as shepherds of souls in their archdioceses and dioceses, are able to pray together, study together and work together; and with one voice, are able to speak and spearhead the teaching, prophetic and pastoral ministry of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, in its present organigramme was formed in 1977.

At present, the Conference comprises of three (3) Cardinals, fifteen (15) Archbishops, and fifty nine (59) Bishops. The Bishops' Conference is headed by an executive body, made up of the President, the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary. The Plenary session of the Conference holds twice a year, for prayer, study and deliberations on important issues regarding the evangelizing mission of the Church in Nigeria, the pastoral care of the faithful, and the promotion of human dignity, human rights, truth, justice, reconciliation, peace and wholesome development in the wider society. The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria is the administrative headquarters of the Catholic Bishops' Conference. It is the most symbol of the unity of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Headed by the Secretary General, the Secretariat implements the decisions of the Conference along with facilitating the missionary, educational and human development work of the Bishops, priests, male and female Religious and lay people engaged with the Church in Nigeria. The Secretary General and his staff of nearly 60 persons distributed among four Departments and the Social Communications Directorate as well as a National Catholic Service Centre are engaged each day in the promotion of the good image of the Church, governmental and non-governmental agencies within and outside Nigeria. They also facilitate the participation of the Nigerian Clergy, Religious and the Lay Faithful, at the numerous meetings, workshops, congresses, retreats and seminars that are held at international, regional, sub regional and local levels.

i. Episcopal Departments and Pastoral affairs

The Episcopacy is but one ministry in the Church's variety of ministries, (*Lumen Gentium*, 18). From the Scriptural point of view, St. Paul advised Timothy in these words: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience

in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.”⁵⁸² With the above pieces of admonition and encouragement, Paul, the great missionary reminded Timothy of the seriousness and attendant difficulties involved in the work of evangelization. At the same time, as bishop, his primary and most important mission is to preach the gospel of Christ in season and out of season with the spirit of dedication and steadfastness even in a troubled water. Needless saying that from their missionary efforts, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria has tried to appropriate the above wise counsel from St. Paul. Surely, the environment in which they operate has never being always rosy, or favourable (to use the words of St Paul), especially with political instability and religious unrest recorded over the years in Nigeria.

Proper organization is therefore a *sine qua non*. The Episcopal Departments of CBCN, has five major segments that touch on the general mission statement of the collective hierarchy of the church. Each of these departments is under the leadership of a Secretary General. Also, the Pastoral Affairs Department of the CBCN is the office charged with issues relating to Theological Reflection and Religious and Biblical Education. They include: Catechesis/ Bible Apostolate/ Religious Education; Pilgrimages/ Synod/Congresses; Canon Law; Inculturation and Translation; Theology; Ethics and Department of New Evangelization. Inclusive in this area is the section that is dedicated to the affairs of the church as a living organism in the society. The Church and Society Department is the arm of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria which co-ordinates the work of the Catholic Church in Nigeria as it relates to human society in general. Specifically, it promotes social development, human dignity, democracy, justice, equity, reconciliation and peace. Justice, Development and Peace Commission, together with Caritas Nigeria play important part in this department. Other sub sections include: Justice, Development, Peace and Caritas; Health; Family and Human Life; Education; Migrants and Nomads.

ii. Pastoral Agents and directorate of social communications

The Pastoral Agents Department is set up by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) to co-ordinate the life and activities of the Clergy, Seminaries, Religious and Laity, all of which are administered through appropriate committees such as: Clergy; Seminaries;

⁵⁸² Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5.

Religious; Laity and Youth. This Department functions as the voice of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. Apart from publishing newsletter of the Catholic Secretariat, it also projects the image of the Church and the missionary activities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria as well as providing Catholic programs for Radio and Television in the country. It is a link between CBCN and the external world. This Department is very important. In fact, since the world needs Christ, and it is the Church that must bring Christ to the world,⁵⁸³ this department plays important role in this regard.⁵⁸⁴

b. Episcopal commissions on mission and dialogue

The Department of Mission and Dialogue co-ordinates and facilitates activities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in the area of Missions and Missionary Animation, Ecumenism, Dialogue within the family of the Church and Dialogue with other religious bodies. These activities are executed under the auspices of Mission, Dialogue and Ecumenism. Among the segments of the administrative structure of CBCN, *Department of Mission and Dialogue* is of great interest to us in the perspective of our set-out objective in our research. As already explained variously in our work, the soul of the Church is mission. The missionary character of the church and the Church is so intertwined that without it the Church ceases to exist. The separation of the two is as dangerous as the separation of fish from water or seizure of air from our environment. Having said that, it is also very pertinent to note that CBCN sees this department as the best window through which one can decipher the Church's collective understanding of herself *ad intra* as well as *ad extra*. In it too, the two major working concepts expressed by the Second Vatican Council – *dialogue and ecumenism*, play important role in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria's interpretation of the universal ecclesial interpretation of her mission. Therefore, through the Department of Mission and Dialogue, better co-ordination and facilitations of the activities of the Catholic Bishops' Conference in the area of Missions and Missionary Animation, Ecumenism and Dialogue is achieved. This department is also charged with the task of monitoring the training and sending of priests, Religious and lay missionaries to needy parts of our country and of the world. The unit is in touch with all agencies within and outside the country that are committed to the Church's missionary mandate. The department has three units and each unit is headed by a secretary. The Director of the department is also

⁵⁸³ Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Radio Message to the Faithful of the world*, a month from The Second Vatican Council (Vatican Publishing Library Tuesday, 11 September 1962).

⁵⁸⁴ Most of the information as expressed in this section came from *Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria* (CSN), Abuja.

the secretary of Dialogue.⁵⁸⁵ This department has also a committee on mission. The Committee focuses on animation of priests, Religious and lay faithful and on creating awareness for full participation of the People of God in the universal mission of the Church. It operates with a National Missionary Council which draws its membership from the Clergy, Religious and Laity. It co-ordinates the missionary activities of the Dioceses and Religious Congregations, especially in the area of mission and *ad gentes* sending out missionaries to other dioceses and countries. It promotes the activities of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS). Considering the religious-pluralistic nature of the country, the committee on ecumenism and dialogue is saddled with very important and delicate responsibility. Reaching out to other Christian denominations and creating better atmosphere of understanding has been a herculean task for the Church. This is not unconnected with the rate at which new Pentecostal churches spring up in Nigeria today. The inability of our Anglican brethren to join hands with the Church in such moral issues as abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, etc., puts this Committee on a difficult pedestal.

However, its responsibility is to work for the promotion Christian unity at human, social, political and strictly religious areas. It aims at bringing the various Christian denominations in the country together to study and understand each other better, to work together in identifying areas of agreement and deepening them, while seeking solutions to areas of disagreement.⁵⁸⁶ It is the responsibility of the committee on dialogue to seek to interact with other believers, especially of the African Traditional Religion and the Islamic Religion. Attempt is made to build bridges, and to recognize and act as people who believe in the supremacy of God, to co-operate in the promotion of the good of all in Nigeria, and to cultivate the culture of respect for other people's Religion. The unit helps dioceses, parishes and Religious Congregations in their own efforts at ecumenism and dialogue on the local level. This Department is in touch with world bodies with Mission and Dialogue, especially the relevant Vatican Dicasteries.

c. Family as the nucleus of the Church's Mission in Nigeria

In the third millennium of its history, the Church is still sent to bring together the scattered children of God into the one Family by its missionary endeavours. Every local Church is commissioned to live out this missionary mandate: 'Go therefore, make disciples of all nations'

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Christian Anyanwu, *Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, Communication Department*, <http://www.csnigeria.org/>.

⁵⁸⁶ Anyanwu, *Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja*.

(cf. Mt. 28:28). From the magisterium point of view, “Christian spouses, in virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony, signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and his Church, (Cf. Eph. 5, 32). The spouses thereby help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and by the rearing and education of their children.”⁵⁸⁷ In this part of our work, we shall see how different Pontiffs have supported the above magisterial explication of the importance of family. This will then avail us of a more grounded platform for understanding the teachings of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria on family as an important instrument of evangelization.

Family as the foundation of CBCN’s missionary effort

In his address to the Catholic Bishops of Spain during their *ad limina* visit, Pope Francis noted that “An evangelized family is a valuable agent of evangelization. Moreover, being by nature the ambit of generosity, it will promote the birth of vocations to the following of the Lord in the priesthood or consecrated life.”⁵⁸⁸ The connection which His Holiness made between family and priestly vocation is very apt considering the nature of the missionary mandate. On another occasion, he emphasized that all the virtues of Christian life are first learnt in the family before they are used in the larger society. According to him, “It is in the family that we first learn how to see ourselves as members of God’s greater family—the Church. In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, and to move beyond our own needs, in order to encounter others and share our lives with them.”⁵⁸⁹ This summarises the immediate role which families play in the development of human person that is expected to be evangelized. What it means then, is that the gospel of Christ which is the main apparatus of evangelization can be given a sure foundation in the hearts of the people when the family prepares the ennobling environment. Also, in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI, succinctly stated that the importance of our sacramental life cannot be possible without the family life. Hence, “In pastoral work it is always important to make Christian families part of the process of initiation, and this should be supported in its educational role by the various elements of the ecclesial community.”⁵⁹⁰ At the same time, His Holiness, St. John Paul II, while referring to Christian family as “*the*

⁵⁸⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

⁵⁸⁸ Pope Francis, Address to the Bishops of Spain during their *ad limina* visit, March 2014.

<http://amazingcatechists.com/2014/03/family-its-role-in-the-new-evangelization/>, [Accessed: 4 April, 2019].

⁵⁸⁹ Pope Francis, *Faith and Family: The importance of Family*,

<https://blog.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit/pope-francis-on-the-importance-of-family,12/10/2018.>, [Accessed: April 4, 2019).

⁵⁹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Church’s life and Mission, no. 19. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html.

domestic Church,” appreciates the inherent values embedded in the Nigerian family heritage which he sees as a solid vehicle for profitable missionary evangelization, and *ipso facto*, building the Kingdom of God in Nigeria. According to him, already “there exists in Nigerian culture, a great sense of the family bond which can greatly serve the Christian vision of married life in a community of conjugal love.”⁵⁹¹ However The Supreme Pontiff therefore noted that despite the practices of polygamy and divorce, which are accepted by many people today, you must never grow tired of proclaiming the truth about marriage. As “a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union, as well as the good of children, imposes total fidelity on the spouses and argues for an unbreakable oneness between them” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48). Thus you are called to insist that the conjugal communion of marriage is characterized by its unity and also by its indissolubility. He went further to affirm the place of importance which the hierarchy of the church has for family in their mission. And according to him, The Christian family exercises its role as an evangelizing community in Nigerian society by believing in the Gospel, steadily maturing in faith and in turn proclaiming the Good News of salvation through the witness of an exemplary Christian life.

Also, in his address to the Polish Community in Detroit, United States of America, on “*Family-the domestic Church*,” St. John Paul II remarked that the family is the first place of rendering Christ, becoming what one should become and then bemoaned the situation which makes the same family the most threatened institution in today’s world. He therefore insists that the fundamental task of the family is to serve life, and faithfulness to the family extends also to education.⁵⁹² On this note, Pope Benedict XVI also urges the Africans thus: “Rise, the Church in Africa, the family of God, for the Heavenly Father is calling you.”⁵⁹³ Concerning the Christian family’s role of evangelization, Pope Paul VI wrote: “The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates. In a family which is conscious of the mission, all members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but through it, such a family becomes the evangelizer of many other families, and of the neighbourhood of which it forms part.”⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ St. John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of Nigeria on occasion of their “Ad Limina” visit*, 3 September, 1987 (Libreria Editrice Vaticana).

⁵⁹² St. John Paul II, *Address to the Polish Community in Detroit, United States of America* (September 19, 1987) <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/index.html#speeches>

⁵⁹³ Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily during Holy Mass at the end of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops* (October 25, 2009):AAS101 (2009), 918; *L’Osservatore Romano*, p. 41.

⁵⁹⁴ St. John Paul II, “*Ad Limina*” visit of Nigerian Bishops, 3 September, 1987. See, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 71.

In the African cultural setting, the family is regarded as the first school for every child. In Nigeria, particularly from the south-eastern part of the country (*Igbos*), whatever one becomes in life has much to say about his family upbringing. Family life is held in high esteem. The child learns the rudiments of moral life, cultural values and the proper initiation into the larger society. Over the years therefore, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have relied on the parents' effort in teaching their children the fundamental rudiments of the catholic faith. In the light of this, they argue that the family which consists of father and mother and children, is the first and most fundamental community since within this community the human young undergo the long training that they need for life.⁵⁹⁵ In spite of the fact that polygamous family system still abound in many parts of Nigeria, the bishops, following the mind of the Universal Church expressed their belief in monogamous marriage noting that only in monogamous marriage can children be properly formed and only in such marriage is the status of wife and mother really provided for, while at the same time laying good foundations for a progressive and enlightened nation as well as fostering vocations to priestly and religious lives.⁵⁹⁶

Moreover, the Church as Family is the idea of the Church which CBCN has tried to appropriate in their missionary endeavour. This, they have shown in practical terms through seminars, communiques, catechesis, joint declarations, etc. From the 11th to the 15th of November 2002, the Catholic Church in Nigeria held its first National Pastoral Congress at the Seminary of SS. Peter and Paul, Ibadan. The theme of the congress was "*The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission.*" This theme clearly indicates a self-understanding of the Church in Nigeria as, first the 'Family of God', and as a 'Church on Mission'.⁵⁹⁷ The implication is that the Bishops from beginning made family apostolate an integral part of their mission. The linkage of ordinary Nigerian family life to the daily life of the people helped to deepen the faith. Contemporarily, the structure of evangelization in most of the parishes in Nigeria is modelled with the Nigerian family structure. Again, the Annual National Episcopal Conference of Nigeria meeting in Ibadan, February 14th-18th, 1978, focused special attention on the family, on its cherished ideals of love, loyalty, discipline and stability and on its problems, with the theme, *Family and Nation Building*. The Bishops treated the Family, its problems, their remedies and Nation Building, concluding that the individual is born into and grows up in the family. He never grows out of the family. Indeed, they believe that nature has intended the family to be the first school, the basic unit of all groupings, big and small of

⁵⁹⁵ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy*. October 1st 1960.

⁵⁹⁶ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy*. October 1st 1960.

⁵⁹⁷ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, p. 78.

societies, developed and developing, insisting that if the family life is in disarray, the nation is likely to be in disarray. Each family is in itself a symbol of unity, a veritable nucleus embracing home, mother, father and children. The family builds a home happily united and prosperous thus bringing to society responsibility, industry and love that by extension are vital for the binding, unifying and building of the nation. The nation is ideally a vast family - a family of families. The family is the only natural foundation upon which the nation can build. The strength of a nation, the moral fibre of a nation, must draw upon the inherent strength of the family.⁵⁹⁸ Again, as a follow-up to the Synod of Bishops in Rome, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria issued a pastoral address with the title, *"The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World."* In it, while retaining the notion of family as a domestic church, the Nigerian Church Hierarchy emphasised that the family is the way normally chosen by God for men and women to grow more fully in His "image and likeness," in love to achieve the "cleaving together of two in one flesh," and thereby to "increase and multiply" and share in His own creative love. Thus God's first call for the building of His people is to the family. Thus the first Church, "the first assembly of those hearing His word" is the family Church, "the Church in miniature," as Pope John Paul II described the Christian family to the Synod.⁵⁹⁹

In 1994, after their First Plenary Meeting for the year, the Bishops revisited the issue of family with the caption, *Save the Family, Save the Nation*, in which they once again highlighted the importance of family in the mission of the church. From this caption, they noted that the survival of family life is intrinsically linked to the life of every nation. In what they labelled as *"the burden of cultural baggage"*, the Hierarchy of the local church regrettably noted that some of the problems of the family in Nigeria today derive from a carry-over of some negative aspects of our traditional culture. These include the subordinate position of women, cultural parameters of discrimination, tribalism, degrading myths and practices about widowhood, customs and laws of inheritance as they affect women. Incidentally, the above observations of the bishops, coheirs with what John Paul II noted that form the bedrock of family decay in our traditional cultural environment. Traditionally, your culture did not exclude polygamy, even though most marriages were and are monogamous. Sometimes women were deprived of some of their rights. And the modern enemies of the family, the disturbing degradation of some fundamental values – divorce, contraception and abortion – have not

⁵⁹⁸ CBCN, *Save the Family*, Communiqué, at Ibadan, February 14-18, 1978.

⁵⁹⁹ CBCN, *The Domestic Church*, Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Catholic Bishops, 1981.

spared your country.⁶⁰⁰ In one of their many Communiques, the Bishops devoted their First Plenary Meeting from 20 to 26 February, 2015 in Abuja, on the theme “*Good Families Make Good Nations*”. In it, they expressed their hope that the celebration of the World Day of the Family in Philadelphia from 20 to 27 September, 2015 and the General Assembly of the Synods of Bishops in Rome in October that year, would be a success story, while re-affirming the validity of the family as a divinely instituted community of persons made up of a man and a woman who are open to life in love, together with their children and relatives.⁶⁰¹ The Catholic Bishops’ Conference, has also issued many other documents in praise of good family structure as suited for the administrative setup for the proper evangelization work in Nigeria. These include: “The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission” (2004); “Good Families make good Nations” (2015); “The Christian family is the domestic Church, the first school of evangelization, the first school of faith, and an indispensable pastoral collaborator” (2014); “The Family and Human Life” (2012); “Good Families Make Good Nations” etc.⁶⁰²

d. National Laity Council of Nigeria (NLCN)

In our first chapter of this work, some of the images of the Church both from the Magisterium and the Holy Scriptures, used to describe it because of the attendant difficulties involved in defining the concept. But, whether seen from the idea of the People of God (LG, 9); the Universal sacrament of Salvation (LG, 48); or even *as* Family of God, the common denominator remains the idea that the Church is not a preserve of the hierarchy – bishops or priests. The Church, seen as a family, is also made up of both male and female, each with specific responsibilities ordered for the good of the family. The Church, seen as a Universal Sacrament of Salvation incorporates both the ordained ministers and the laity people. All need the salvation of God. All desire the mercy of God. All have hope and desire for eschatological vision at the end of the earthly life and struggles. Therefore, Anthony Chiegboka opined that “this Church as both people of God and communion is composed of clerics, religious and laity. The clerics are the Bishops, Priests and Deacons (cann, 207; 1008; 1009; Vatican Council II: LG, 18-29), while the Religious are drawn from both the clergy and the laity (can 207 para 2) but marked with unique identity of vows or promises of evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and

⁶⁰⁰ St. John Paul II, *Homily* during Holy Mass at Onitsha, specifically addressed to families, February, 1982, p. 11-12. Cf. *Familiaris Consortio*: “Family” become what you are.”

⁶⁰¹ CBCN, *A Communique*, Port Harcourt, September 10-18, 2015.

⁶⁰² *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*, A Publication by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria on the state of the Church and Nigerian Nation, from 1963 to 2015, ed. Chris Anyanwu and Otunba Jide Fadugba-Pinheiro.

chastity, and the laity are those who are not clerics (LG, 31).”⁶⁰³ In the life of the Universal Church and her mission on earth, this group (laity) remain indispensable for proper evangelization. In Nigeria, the Church owes at least 70% of her successes to the efforts and sacrifices of the lay persons in the church. Their services are seen in different levels of the church administration –Deaneries, Regions, Parishes, Dioceses, and at the national level where CBCN remains the rallying point of church administration in Nigeria. Our interest here is not to give a holistic approach as to their roles in the mission of the church. This, and other related topics have been given adequate treatment at different levels by many Nigerian theologians especially as they relate to evangelization in Nigeria and Africa. Our concern is to show how they have impacted on the life of the church, the dynamic general administrative setup of CBCN, and how indispensable they have been in the framework of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria’s interpretation of the mission of the Church.

i. The Magisterium teachings on laity

The term “*laity*” has its root in the Greek adjective, *aiko*, whose Latin equivalent is *laicus*, meaning, “belonging to the people.” However, in various Scriptural texts, this meaning enjoys other deeper meanings that have been basically connected with Israel being a special group of people elected as “God’s people”, with of course some attached special privileges. On this note, R. D. Bucy, as quoted by Anameje, noted: “the *laos* as a whole is God’s possession chosen not for privilege alone but for privilege of service... Israel is called from among all the people to serve as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation on behalf of the kingdoms and nations of the world.” Consequently, “the people of God are called to fulfil God’s redemptive mission of reconciliation in this world.” The Old Testament attests to God’s dealing with his people: “I will be your God and you will be my people” (Lev. 26:12; Jer. 31:1-33). It is a relationship that was progressive with the purpose of establishing new covenant. This new covenant found its fulfilment in the New Testament in the person of Christ.”⁶⁰⁴ The specified characteristic nature of the laity is very well expounded by the very Document dedicated specifically to laity because of its importance in the mission of the Church, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* which was promulgated in 1965. Again, *Aggiornamento* which forms part of the major theological

⁶⁰³ A. B. C. Chiegboka, “Put on the amour of God” (Eph 6:13): *The Identity, Rights and Challenges of Knights in the Church*; Being a Paper to the Conference of Papal Knights from Nine Eastern States of Nigeria, (REPACCO, Okpuno, on October 17, 2009), p. 3. <http://revfrprofabcchiegboka.com/img/paper/paper-to-papal-knights-in-nine-eastern-states-October-17-2009.pdf>.

⁶⁰⁴ Humphrey, C. Anameje, *The Laity as Participants in the Mission of the Church: A Theological Reflection in the light of the Ecclesiology of Vatican II with particular reference to the Church in Southeast Nigeria* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Publishing, 2017).

impulses of the Second Vatican Council had a special vision for the universal Church. Before the events of the this Council, some scholars felt that the Church acted as being too self-sufficient, and maintained that she alone had all truths in her stores. She was afraid to face the dangers of the world around her, but with the vision of *aggiornamento*: the Church became more *Christocentric* and *poor* like Christ in order to bring salvation to the world. To put in a simple form, the pre-conciliar Church was satisfied with monologue. On the other hand, following Nwaigbo's impression, the post-conciliar Church seeks dialogue with cultures, with the various Churches and Religions: the Church became very pneumatologic and admitted charisms in every part of her members. The *aggiornamento* extended this angular distance of ecclesiology in all the antenna of the members of the Church: the lay people turned from the object of ministration of the clergy into the subject of communion.⁶⁰⁵

From all intents and purposes therefore, the Second Vatican Council holds a lot of promises for the emergence of authentic African churches across the continent if its teachings are understood and implemented. For this reason, the ecclesiology of the Vatican II Council and the post-conciliar documents have been the object of a vast amount of scholarly study. In the perspective of our study then, we continue to examine how the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria have tried to maximize the 'open-door policy' of the ecclesiastical years following the Council through incorporation of major statutory laity bodies in the Church's dynamic administration. These include Catholic Men Organization, Catholic Women Organization, Catholic Youth Organization, Catholic Knights Association, etc. These organs and personels have given rise to the vibrancy which the Church is enjoying today in our country. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, in various ways adheres to the above instruction for by giving adequate respect and encouragement to the laity as partakers in the missionary mandate of the Church.

ii. The collaborative work of the Laity in the mission of the church

Lay men and women are those people who share in the same baptism with the ordained ministers in the Church as Christians, but with different roles in the evangelization mandate of the Church. As Christians therefore, they have an indispensable role to play in the Church's apostolate. They do this in a special way through the evangelization of the temporal order by witnessing to Christ and His Church in their daily life and work. The temporal order as mentioned above includes: family life and values, culture, economic interest, the trades and

⁶⁰⁵ Nwaigbo, *Church as a Communion*, 1996, p. 178-179.

professions, institutions of the political community, international relations, etc. By these means, they support the clergy in very special ways in their material needs. They do this through both individual and individual and organized apostolate as well as prayers. In Nigeria, the umbrella organisation that holds the laity together is known as the *National Laity Council of Nigeria* (NLCN). It coordinates the activities of the laity in Nigeria as a whole. The National Laity Council of Nigeria was formally inaugurated on March 16, 1973, at Holy Cross Cathedral Lagos. At the 13th Annual General Conference of the Council held at Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, the National Laity Council of Nigeria was renamed the “Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria” (CLCN). The reason behind this was to reflect a Catholic identity on the Council’s name in order to avoid any ambiguity. The objective of CLCN, among others include, “to promote the apostolate of the laity in accordance with the Decree of the Apostolate of the Laity of the Second Vatican Council, and the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.”⁶⁰⁶ The missionary importance which the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria places on Laity has its root in two different documents of the Church. First is, St John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Missio* which emphasizes that “Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church’s universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support.”⁶⁰⁷

While addressing a large group of representatives of workers in the serves of the Church, St. John Paul II has this to say: “I appreciate the way in which you the laity of Nigeria work together with your bishops and priests in order to bear witness to Christ, in order to communicate Christ to others. This unity with the pastors of the Church is indeed an essential condition for the supernatural success of your efforts. Under their guidance you have the National Laity Council and the Catholic Women’s Organization at all levels: national, provincial, diocesan, parochial and stational. There is much grassroots activity, and there are many worthy organizations. In all of this you are striving to activate the grace of your Baptism and your Confirmation.”⁶⁰⁸ The Laity Councils organise annual conferences in which they discuss issues affecting the roles and apostolate of the laity in the mission of the Church. They use the opportunity of the meetings to contribute to the political discussions in the country. Through the national body, the Laity Council participates actively in the political discussions

⁶⁰⁶ Humphrey, C. Anameje, *The Laity as Participants in the Mission of the Church*, 2017.

⁶⁰⁷ *Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, n. 2.

⁶⁰⁸ St. John Paul II, “Address to a group of representative of workers in the service of the Church at Kaduna, February 14, 1982,” in, *Papal Message to Nigeria, a collection of speeches delivered by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the occasion of his visit to Nigeria, 12th – 17th February, 1982.*, p. 25.

in the country. Our members must be guided by the dictates of Christian conscience and work out a temporal order to facilitate the unity which exists in the man, normally the man who is a composite of body and soul, a child of the world and heaven.”⁶⁰⁹ Indeed, the laity has fundamental and overwhelming roles to play in the mission of the Church. What they need is proper direction from the hierarchy, a little bit of freedom and trust to operate. Therefore, the evangelizing mission of the church in Nigeria is truly a task incumbent on each and every one of Christ’s faithful. It is also worthy to note that cooperation with laity brings forth many dividends to the Church and to the pastor as the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, stated: “Many benefits for the Church are to be expected from this familiar relationship between the laity and the pastors. The sense of their own responsibility is strengthened in the laity, the zeal is encouraged, and they are more ready to unite their energies to the work of their pastors. The latter, helped by the experience of the laity, are in a position to judge more clearly and more appropriately in spiritual as well as temporal matters. Strengthened by all her members, the Church can thus more effectively fulfill her mission for the life of the world.”⁶¹⁰ What this means is that, with well organised apparatus and spiritual guidance from CBCN, the mission of the Church becomes more realistic with the full participation of the laity.

e. Major statutory bodies in the Nigerian Church administration

The few groups or organizations we are going to discuss here and many others belong to the laity which we have examined above. It is from this laity that they form smaller groups for a more effective and organised family of God. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, St. Paul VI asked a fundamental question regarding constituents of the agents and missionary personnel for proper evangelization. In his words: “*But who then has the mission of evangelizing.*”⁶¹¹ The Holy Father, drawing inspiration from The Second Vatican Council gave a clear reply to this question. According to him, it is upon the Church that “there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the gospel to every

⁶⁰⁹ Hillary, Okechukwu Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation: A pastoral-theological appraisal of the relevance of Dialogue in a Nigerian context based on the experience of Igboland*, Dissertation, Wurzburg, Julius-Maxillan University, 2002, p.105. Cf., Ojo G. A., *Emergence of Laity Organization in Nigeria*, in, A. O Makozi /G. J. Afolabi Ojo (eds.), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*. 71-86, 79.

⁶¹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 37. See also, A. B. C. Chiegboka, “Shepherd of God’s Flock” (1 Pet 5:2): The Parish Priest and Parish Administration, 2011.

⁶¹¹ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 59.

creature.”⁶¹² Of course, as we have noted in many areas of this work, is inclusive of both the clergy and the laity. Invariable, the mission of evangelization is the responsibility of every baptized faithful. The mission of Christ is a shared responsibility.

i. Catholic Men Organization (CMO)

Axiomatically, from the point of view of vision of the Church as a Communion and as a Family, proper understanding, cooperation and solidarity between the Hierarchy and the Laity brings forth many dividends to the Church. Within this group of laity as described above is a special group of Catholic Fathers. Under the strict directive of CBCN, these men are brought together under one umbrella known as Catholic Men Organization CMO). It is an umbrella that brings together all the catholic men in parishes, dioceses and national circles. By way of proper catholic designation, the Catholic Men are Christians and adult male members of the Catholic Church. They belong to the Lay members of the Christ’s Faithful people. They acquire their identity through Baptism.⁶¹³ The Catholic Men are by this fact identified as physical persons as contained in many in the Church and are by this fact persons (can 96), members of the people of God (can 204), subjects of rights and duties, and are fundamentally equal with others in the Church (can 208) and in Marriage (can 1135). In fulfillment of one the rights of Christ’s Faithful People which is forming Association (c. 275), the Diocesan Catholic Men have gathered themselves into an umbrella union called “Catholic Men Organisation” (CMO) operating along that of their wives called “Catholic Women Organization” (CWO).

In some dioceses and parishes, this association is known as Christian Fathers Association. However, with the approval of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, ‘Catholic Men Organization’ became a generally acceptable name. In many traditional cultures and families in Nigeria, men are held in high esteem as the owners of the family. Like in other countries in the contemporary world, Nigeria is a male-dominated nation, (especially in terms of policy formulations and leadership). This is highly evident in social settings, political representations, employment opportunities, education, and even freedom of speech and movement. As heads of the families, they determine how the families are organized, and by extension, how the entire society is fashioned. Their words carry heavy weight in the areas of decision-making and how

⁶¹² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 59. See also, Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 13: AAS 58 (1966), p 939; Cf., *Lumen Gentium*, 5: AAS 57 (1965) pp. 7-8; *Ad Gentes*, 1: AAS 58 (1966), p. 947.

⁶¹³ *The Code of Canon Law* in English Translation, London: Collins. 1983, cann 96, 204; also I. K. Ngwoke, *Introducing Instruments of Ecclesiastical Administration*. Paper at the Canon Law Society of Nigeria Conference. 1987). As quoted by A. B. C. Chiegboka, *Challenges of Catholic Men in the Church and the World*, file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/87328-216064-1-PB.pdf.

their children are trained. In most cases, their wives (women), look up to them as the “pillars” of the family. It is therefore ironical and disappointing that in matters of ecclesiastical functions, voluntary works and administrations there is always lesser zeal from the men. But the positive side of it is that most of the important projects in different churches in the country are sponsored by men, though most of the time not as a group. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria has therefore tried to organize them as a group in different dioceses, parishes and the national level. The idea is to help the men to put more effort in the mission of the Church as much as they do in political and other societal life. This has yielded much fruit, and today, the Catholic Men Organization (CMO) of Nigeria has vastly helped the mission of the Church in Nigeria. Indeed, in the Catholic Church today, the men are generally nicknamed the “*Ide*” (pillars). Both at the parochial, diocesan and national levels, their services are very much needed. Most of the time, they form the main-stay for the Parish Council and Diocesan Pastoral Councils as close advisers to the bishops and the Parish Priests. Indeed, the formation of Catholic Men Organization has in many instances helped the growth of the mission of the church in Nigeria. However, it must be said that they owe their corporate existence to the challenges posed by another group known as Catholic Women Organization.

ii. Catholic Women Organization (CWO)

Addressing the representatives of the Catholic Women Organisation at Kaduna during his visit to Nigeria, St. John Paul II remarked: You are convinced Catholic women, worthy wives and esteemed mothers. You have learned to love your husbands, care for your children, and spread your love to members of your extended family and to society as a whole. You are diligent in bringing up your children and in helping to prepare them for their vocation in life. In particular you educate them in charity and chastity, in generosity and discipline. These are truly vital roles. I am informed that you are a well-organized, disciplined and effective group at the various levels. Your officers also take part in the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations, the World President of which attended your National Convention at Onitsha last April. You organize leadership training courses, home-keeping seminars and Christian doctrine conferences. For all this I praise you. You are particularly active in your various initiatives in favour of the family. You help to arrange and run marriage training centres for girls. You work in Diocesan Marriage Advisory Councils. You help families in difficulty. And you defend life at every stage, from the first moment of conception. I praise you in particular for your firm stand against abortion. Abortion is the murder of an innocent child. It has to be condemned by society. I also praise your efforts to help unmarried mothers and offer them an acceptable

alternative to abortion. In all of this you mirror the human tenderness and the divine love of Jesus Christ. Your struggle for the Catholic religious education of your own children and other children merits strong support. Religion is central in education. The Church must be involved in the education of the young. To do this, she needs your help. Respected leaders of the Catholic Women's Organization of Nigeria, through you the Church is able to have a great impact on society. Through the many and varied activities that express "the fullness of true feminine humanity" you are able to work for the transformation of the world – to permeate all creation with the spirit of Christ.⁶¹⁴ With the above long citation, His Holiness summarised the missionary efforts of the Catholic Women who work closely with the hierarchy of the church in Nigeria. Of course, they form part of the laity; corresponding to the idea of two forms of apostolate. Hence, "The laity can engage in their apostolic activity either as individuals or together as members of various groups or associations"⁶¹⁵, but, the individual apostolate, flowing generously from its source in a truly Christian life (cf. John 4:14), is the origin and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even of the organized type, and it admits of no substitute.⁶¹⁶

The Catholic Women Organization fits into the group apostolate even though many of them participate actively in individual corporal works of mercy and charity in different capacities. Motivated by Christ's assurance that "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20), and Pope Pius XII's advise that the faithful should participate in the apostolate by way of united effort,⁶¹⁷ the Catholic Women Organization are expected to be apostles both in their family communities and in their parishes and dioceses, which themselves express the community nature of the apostolate, as well as in the informal groups which they decide to form among themselves.⁶¹⁸ As I already stated, in the traditional Nigerian culture, as in any other country in Africa, women generally are not heard in the society. Their services revolved around the kitchen and cleaning the compound. Although Africans, and especially Igbos of Nigeria are religiously-driven in all their activities, the role of women is not also noticeable. Their role was in most cases secondary and supportive to that of men. This can be attributed to a number of factors: the place of women in African traditional religion, the delay in the education of girls, the *celebrate* priesthood, the presence of women

⁶¹⁴ St. John Paul II, *Address to the Laity, Catechists, and Catholic Women*, at Kaduna, Nigeria, 14 February, 1982. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/february/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19820214_laici-nigeria.html.

⁶¹⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 15.

⁶¹⁶ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 16.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Pius XII, allocution to the first convention of laymen representing all nations on the promotion of the apostolate Oct. 15, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) pp. 787-788.

⁶¹⁸ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 18.

religious (nuns or sisters) and the general absence of leaders among the women themselves. Basically, their contribution to the religious life of the society was limited to two: cleaning the premises of shrines and providing the food or animals used in sacrifices.⁶¹⁹ It should not therefore be surprising that Igbo women in general did not play any major role in the direction of Catholic Church growth in *Igboland* until the late fifties. Recalling such activities by the Christian women, a woman leader says, “They organized the scrubbing of church floors, supplied firewood to the Father’s house, collected eggs and fruits for the Reverend Fathers, and carried stones and sand to *Adazi* and other towns for building schools and churches.”⁶²⁰ The delay in according girls equal education opportunity as boys also very much reduced and delayed women’s contributions to church growth.

This prejudice against women’s education was, of course, not peculiar to Igbo society. It was common to many African societies. These differences in educational opportunity for boys and girls had far-reaching effects on their respective role as men and women in church affairs in *Igboland*, as in other parts of Nigeria with a similar situation.⁶²¹ Also according to Okafor, the need for manual work for the church was the commonest cause of such associations among Christian women. As their number increased, and some converts became fervent, the women began to add activities of a more spiritual nature. “The few women (church members) founded their organisation as a lay apostolate group. Their main objective was to help themselves maintain the doctrine of the church. So they had fines for their members who were guilty of proved marital infidelity, fighting with their husbands or performing pagan practices, etc. they spoke to pagans ... helped the poor and the aged... All their activities were subject to the approval of the men.”⁶²²

It was from here that Christian Mothers Association was born and in 1945, St. Anne’s Society was formed at Onitsha. At this point, the membership was restricted to pious elderly women and women who were seen as matured enough to handle certain issues both privately and as members of a group. However, as the missionary enterprise progressed positively, and education gaining more ground, many women became educated. Collective participatory action and inclusivity concerning the mission of the Church became obvious. In 1964, when the Second Vatican Council was still in progress, Archbishop Heery of Onitsha Archdiocese

⁶¹⁹ V. A. Nwosu, *The Laity and the growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria, The Onitsha Story, 1903-1983*, Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana-FEP Publishers Ltd., 1990, p. 96.

⁶²⁰ Mrs Regina Okafor, leader of Catholic Women, Awka Diocese; as recorded by V. A. Nwosu, *The Laity and the growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p. 97.

⁶²¹ V. A. Nwosu, *The Laity and the growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p. 97.

⁶²² Regina Okafor, as quoted by V. A. Nwosu, *The Laity and the growth of Catholic Church*, p. 104.

amalgamated the original Christian Mothers and St. Anne's Society from where "Catholic Women Organization" was latter born. "Like a mustard seed..." (Mk. 4:31), the Catholic Women Organization that was sown with a few devoted women in Igboland, has now become the big tree in the mission of the church in Nigeria. Today, they have become the most organized and powerful group in the Catholic Church in this part of the world. With the backing of the hierarchy of the Church, the Catholic Women Organization has become an indispensable tool which the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Nigeria has used to make remarkable inroads in the mission of the church in Nigeria. As such, there has been an appreciable representation of women in the administration and progress of the mission of the church. Their supportive presence for the welfare of the bishops and clergy, seminarians, catechists and pious societies in different parishes have marked them out as veritable tools for the mission of the Church. It can be rightly said that Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with the highest number of priests and bishops, and with the highest percentage of vocation. This can greatly be attributable to the efforts of the Catholic Women Organization and the CBCN who have given them enough freedom to operate. From 1973, this Organization, in an effort to give a boost to vocation, established what is known today as "*food apostolate*." This has to do with their monthly contribution and distribution of food items of different sizes and types to all the seminaries. The Bishops and priests are also beneficiaries to this apostolate.

Apart from this, they have built many rectories and what is known as "CWO Parish Halls" in different parishes. They have also completed bigger projects like primary schools, secondary schools and vocational schools in different parishes and dioceses. As seminarians, the anticipation of "*Uka Nne*" (Mother's Sunday) brings inner joy to us because of the contributions of the CWO. Moreover, the Catholic Women Organization have so organised themselves and stamped their feet on the mission of the church that the month of August is now *kept sacred* for all the women in Nigeria. This is the period all the Catholic Women in Nigerian have what is called "August Meeting," which is normally a time of checks and balances for their spiritual life and the progress of the mission of the Church. Moreover, in the area of spiritual life, the Catholic Women remain the pillars for the sustenance of most of the pious societies in the Church in Nigeria, such as: Sacred Heart, Legion of Mary, Blue Army, Block Rosary Crude, St. Anthony, St. Jude, Divine Mercy, Charismatic Renewal, Knights of the Church (Knight of St. Mulumba, Knights of St. John International, Papal Knights). All these are parts of the administrative instruments which the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria have been able to organize for the progress and good of the mission in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

iii. Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON)

Another important administrative tool which CBCN have used to bring the Gospel of Christ to the door steps of the people is Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria. As already indicated and analysed, in a simple term, the Catholic Men Organization is the umbrella that unites all the married men in the church. Also, the Catholic Women Organisation unites all the married women in the church; while the Catholic Youth Organisation covers all those not yet married (both boys and girls). These three groups make up the laity in the Church. However, even though each of the groups has peculiar qualities and expected responsibilities in the church, there is no rigidity in terms of age-bracket regarding membership. Considering the nature of Catholic Youth Organisation of Nigeria (CYON), we have to assert, *ab initio* that its membership has always created problematic scene regarding their eligibility of membership since some of them who belong to the group are also married people. As such, we maintain that the simple demacatory terms used above is more descriptive and perspective-coloured than proper definitional attempt. Having said that, we go further to group the youth into two as we have it in Nigeria – Boys and Girls. The girls have also their own special group known as Mary League Association. This moving principle behind this group is the eagerness and efforts of the members to imitate the Mother of Christ, Blessed Virgin Mary in her simplicity and decency of life. They have their monthly and annual meetings which are spiritual and moral-based. Since the Youths are the life-wire and the future of the society, so also the Church.

The dynamism and vocation-boom that the Church enjoys today owes its sustainability to the quality of the youths being nurtured by the Church. This is why the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria pays great attention to their activities and supports them as much as possible. With the directives of the CBCN, the Catholic Youth have their Chaplains, both on the parochial, diocesan and national levels. In many dioceses, they are well represented in the Parish Councils and Diocesan Pastoral Councils. Also, through their respective Chaplains, the Church Hierarchy organises annual retreats, seminars and intermittent conventions for them. The bishops also believe that considering their age, much spiritual attention and counselling should be given to them since they are the future of the church and her mission. Most of the voluntary works done in the church in Nigeria are executed by members of this group. It is also in this group that vocation to priesthood and religious life is nurtured. The Catholic Church in Nigeria, no doubt, is blessed is the greater percentage of the faithful fall within the age bracket of 15 to 45 years of age. In an environment of multi-religiosity, the services of the laity, especially the youth is very much needed and highly indispensable in order to bring positive dividend to the mission of the Church. In the foregone analysis therefore, we made effort to

bring to limelight those areas where the contribution of the laity is commendable and as co-partakers in the mission of Christ have helped the hierarchy of the Church in the proper administrative set-up for the progress of the church since “the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God.”⁶²³ The Catechism of the Catholic Church also confirms that from the Church’s beginning, this mission was accomplished by all Christians.⁶²⁴ In the next segment of this chapter, we shall try and look deeper into the agents and missionary personnel used for the evangelization in Nigeria. In other words, evangelization is for no one individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial. What is projected here is that the mission of the Church is for everyone, but has to be done in the mind of the universal church who represents Christ, the owner of the mission. And this is what Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria represents. Therefore, for the Bishops, Mission is not for a selected few, it is a mandate given to each of us at baptism and we all have to find ways of fulfilling this injunction of Christ in accordance with our various vocations and states of life.⁶²⁵

f. Holy Spirit as the principal agent of the Church’s mission

In consideration of the nature, birth and exigencies of Christ’s mission on earth and the mission of the Church, which is a carry-over of the Saviour’s fundamental plan of man’s salvation, one would always feel that the Church is essentially pneumatological in nature. In other words, from its inception, the presence of the Holy Spirit has never been anonymous. His presence has always been felt from the prophetic annunciation of the birth of Christ, through His Nativity, earthly life, His resurrection and eventual foundation of the Church through His missionary mandate to His disciples. One can also argue that the prominence of the Trinitarian involvement in the missionary mandate is vividly spelt out in the baptismal formula as recorded in Matthewan account of Christ’s ministry (Mt. 28: 18-20). The Trinitarian *perichoresis* is very much expressed in the *communio Ecclesiarum* which gives adequate interpretation of the ‘fellowship of the Holy Spirit’, and which also, essentially forms the fulcrum of the Church’s mission. The main thesis here is that the primary agent of the Church’s mission is the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit – the life-giving Spirit – through whom the risen Christ is always present in the world and transforms the “old person/society” into “new creation,” the Church can do nothing (cf. Jn. 15:5). The Holy Spirit is the Church’s advocate (cf. Mk. 13:10-11) and

⁶²³ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 59. Cf. *Ad Gentes*, 35: AAS 58 (1966), p. 983.

⁶²⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 775. Cf., Acts 8:4; 11, 19.

⁶²⁵ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, 2011, p. v.

principle of life (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13).⁶²⁶ In the Catechism of the Catholic Church also we see that: “The Church’s mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.”⁶²⁷ From this perspective, we believe that the events of the Pentecost as recorded by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles still remain a decisive moment in the Church’s Missionary experience. In this drama of her birth, the Church, which is still in its embryonic stage of development, received the beaming light of its catholicity and universality, and more so, a cultural and linguistic intermingling. It is still this Holy Spirit which continues to animate the mission of the Church in Nigeria through the collective efforts of the Church’s hierarchy and other relevant agents of evangelization. The Church’s journey which began in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and its original expansion was centred around Peter and the Eleven (cf. Acts 2:14) (see, John Paul II, “Ut unum sint”, 55), and continues today since the mission of the Church is a continuum.

g. Priests and Religious as agents of evangelization

Since “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and men’s concrete life” (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 29), the priest will be deeply concerned with bringing the light of the Gospel and the power of God’s word to touch the many different issues of family life, fundamental human rights and duties, justice and peace, development and liberation, culture and learning. He will endeavour to make Christ and the Church present in the fields of the arts and science, culture and the professions. With the following words, the Supreme Pontiff, St. John Paul II firmly initiates the Nigerian priests into the missionary challenges ahead.⁶²⁸ With it too, one sees the need for indigenous priests as essential agents of the Church’s mission especially with the novelty of ‘New Evangelization.’ Making Christ and the Church present in the fields of the arts and science, culture and the professions requires the priests, using their own cultural and social experiences to interpret the message of the gospel to the people in their own cultural experiential domain. The effectiveness of the mission of the church in this regard depends to a greater extent the availability of priests who will be able to meet the people with the sacrament of salvation. The assimilation of the church’s teaching requires also the church to see the recipients in their own cultural realities as

⁶²⁶ Cf. F. Porsch, “Holy Spirit”, in, K. Muller et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 190-191.

⁶²⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 738.

⁶²⁸ St. John Paul II, *Address of John Paul II to the Priests and Seminarians of Nigeria*, during his first Apostolic visit, at Enugu, 13 February, 1982.

well as earthly realities. The good news is that the Church in Nigeria enjoys as it is today, enough availability of such priests as agents of evangelization. This is highly desirable so that the church in Africa, not just in Nigerian will be able to face the challenges to her by His Holiness, Pope Benedict VI when he said: Africa is now a “spiritual lung for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope.”⁶²⁹ Moreover, in Catholic doctrinal tradition, a priest is described as “teacher of the Word, minister of the sacraments and leader of the community entrusted to him.”⁶³⁰ In connection with immense responsibilities attached to the priestly ministry, St. John Paul II says: “This ministry demands of the priest an intense spiritual life filled with those qualities and virtues which are typical of a person who presides over and leads a community.”⁶³¹ Indeed, for a proper rewarding mission, the missionary mandate of Christ demands unalloyed collaboration and mutual understanding between the priests and their bishops. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria also sees the need for cooperation between them and their priests for the effective evangelization in this part of the word for the benefit of the Universal Church. Since Mission, is a “single, complex reality,” (Redemptoris Missio, no. 41), it requires the combined efforts of the Bishops and their Priests to make people feel the presence of Christ and the Church in Nigerian environment. This is again emphasized by St. John Paul while addressing Nigerian Bishops. According to him, “an important aspect of your own evangelizing role is the whole dimension of the *inculturation* of the Gospel into the lives of your people. Here, you and your priest co-workers offer to your people a perennial message of divine revelation.”⁶³²

h. Catechists as indispensable agents of evangelization

The Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples (CEP), stated under the caption, *Vocation and identity*, that “Every baptized Catholic is personally called by the Holy Spirit to make his or her contribution to the coming of God’s kingdom. Within the lay state there are various vocations, or different spiritual and apostolic roads to be followed by both individuals and groups. Within the general vocation of the laity there are particular ones.”⁶³³ It is within this ‘particular ones’ that *Catechist* is located. It is a special vocation that is reserved for those

⁶²⁹ *Africae Munus*, no. 13.

⁶³⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium*, no. 4.

⁶³¹ St. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, On Priestly formation (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, March 25, 1992), no. 26.

⁶³² St. John Paul II, Address to the Nigerian Bishops at Lagos, February, 15, 1982, during his first Apostolic Visit to Nigeria.

⁶³³ Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP), *Guide for Catechists: Document of vocational, Document of vocational, formative and promotional orientation of Catechists in the territories dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Vatican City 1993.

who are willing to accept the attendant responsibilities that go with such a vocation. Therefore, at the origin of the catechist's vocation, apart from the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, there is a specific call from the Holy Spirit, a "*special charism recognized by the Church*" and made explicit by the Bishop's mandate.⁶³⁴ In actual missionary practice, the catechist's vocation is both *specific*, i.e. for the task of catechizing, and *general*, for collaborating in whatever apostolic services are useful for the building up of the Church. The CEP insists on the value and distinctiveness of the catechist's vocation. Each one, therefore, should try to discover, discern and foster his or her own particular vocation.⁶³⁵ In short, the catechist in mission territories is identified by four elements: a call from the Holy Spirit; an ecclesial mission; collaboration with the Bishop's apostolic mandate; and a special link with missionary activity *ad gentes*.⁶³⁶ Nigeria is surely part of this mission territories and have continued to benefit from the services of the catechists which St. John Paul II described as a "*fundamental evangelical service*".⁶³⁷ The *Code of Canon Law* describes catechists as "lay members of Christ's faithful who have received proper formation and are outstanding in their living of the Christian life. Under the direction of missionaries, they are to present the Gospel teaching and engage in liturgical worship and in works of charity."⁶³⁸

This description of the catechist corresponds with that of the CEP in its 1970 Plenary Assembly: "The catechist is a lay person specially appointed by the Church, in accordance with local needs, to make Christ known, loved and followed by those who do not yet know Him and by the faithful themselves".⁶³⁹ Indeed, to talk about Catechists is to dwell on the realm of grass-root evangelization. They are the evangelizers who eat, work, dance, and feel the pains of the parishioners in the remotest parts of the country, in the dioceses and in the local parishes. While presenting the document on Guide for Catechists: Document of vocational, formative and promotional orientation of Catechists in the territories dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, to the public, Jozef Card. Tomko, Prefect for the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples remarked: "Catechists have always had a very important role in the secular journey of evangelisation. Even today, they are considered to be irreplaceable evangelisers, as the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* so rightly states. In his message to our Plenary Assembly, the Holy Father confirmed the uniqueness of their role: "During my

⁶³⁴ CEP, 1993, no.1.

⁶³⁵ CEP, 1993, no. 2

⁶³⁶ CEP, 1993, no. 2.

⁶³⁷ Cf. CEP, no. 1.

⁶³⁸ Cf. CEP, no. 3.

⁶³⁹ CEP, no. 3.

apostolic journeys I have been able observe personally what the catechists offer, especially in mission territories, an ‘outstanding and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and the Church’” (AG 17). The Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples experiences directly the undisputed effectiveness of lay catechists.⁶⁴⁰ Tomko went on to give a synoptic look at various areas where the services of the catechists are very glaring. According to him, under the direction of priests, in fact, they continue with frankness to announce “the Good News” to their brothers and sisters of other religions, preparing them for entry into the ecclesial community through baptism. Through religious instruction, preparation for the sacraments, animation of prayer and other works of charity, they help the baptised to grow in the fervour of the Christian life. Where there is a shortage of priests, the catechists are also entrusted with the pastoral guidance of the little community separated from the Centre. Often, they are called to witness to their faith by harsh trials and painful privations. The history of evangelisation past and present attests to their constancy even to the giving of life itself. Catechists are truly the pride of the missionary Church!”⁶⁴¹ Jozef Card. Tomko, was so much appreciative of the sacrifices which the catechists have made and will continue to make that he called them, “deserving band” of lay-apostles; while the document referred to them as “praiseworthy army” of lay apostles.⁶⁴²

In Nigeria, especially in Igboland (where this researcher comes from), the Catechists were everything to the mission of the Church. They were to the missionaries what Onesimus and Barnabas were to St. Paul in his missionary ventures (Acts 4:36; 11:24; 15:36). In the early stages of the Church mission, the catechists were the link between *Fadaa onye ocha* (the white priest) and the local people. Indeed, they were the first and highest theologians we experienced. Their mastery of “Catechism Book” and availability to the villagers endeared them to the new converts. Therefore, for many missionaries they have been absolutely indispensable, serving as their close assistants and at times interpreters, as well as being “fraternal animators of young communities.” In his address to the Laity, Catechists, and Catholic Women, at Kaduna, Nigeria, during his Apostolic Visit, St. John Paul II corroborated the above useful qualities of the catechists for the good of mission in Nigeria. His Holiness singled out catechists and remarked:

⁶⁴⁰ Jozef Card. Tomko, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Guide for Catechists: Document of vocational, formative and promotional orientation of Catechists in the territories dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Vatican City 1993.

⁶⁴¹ Jozef Card. Tomko, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Guide for Catechists: Document of vocational, formative and promotional orientation of Catechists in the territories dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Vatican City 1993.
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cevang/documents/rc_con_cevang_doc_19971203_cath_en.html.

⁶⁴² *CEP*, no. 3.

“From the very beginning when the first missionaries arrived in Nigeria more than a hundred years ago, you have been constant and indispensable partners of the priests. You assisted them at every turn. When they did not know the local languages, you acted as interpreters. You prepared people for the various sacraments. You baptized the dying when no priest was available. You animated the local Catholic community and led it in Sunday worship when there was no priest. You spearheaded most Church development projects. In all this you have abundantly contributed to the spreading of the Gospel. My beloved catechists, the Church needs you. She continues to need you. No matter how many priests or religious the Church may have, you remain irreplaceable. You are nearest to your fellow laymen. You give them an idea of the Church at close quarters. You silently offer them models to imitate. You show them that commitment to the faith and the sacrifice needed to spread it are possible for lay people and not only for clerics and religious.”⁶⁴³ The above complementary expressions of His Holiness, aptly give a ground synopsis of the works of Catechists in the evangelization of this great nation, especially in the early stages of Church mission in Nigeria. In the contemporary era too, the importance of Catechists have not waned. Rather, CBCN has in various ways and in different dioceses have continued to encourage the younger people to join this group. In not too distant past, it was a taboo to think of a lady coming to the pulpit to make announcement on Sundays as Catechists. However, this is not unconnected with the traditional understanding of the mission of the Church as primarily a male-oriented mission.

In the Nigerian cultural background, being a male-controlled society, women are seldomly heard in the public. The Pauline letters to Corinthians and Timothy, to some extent, gave credence to this situation, (1 Cor. 14:34; 2 Tim. 2:12). On a positive note therefore, considering the urgent need for grassroots evangelization, and the teeming population of Catholic faithful in many dioceses, CBCN, has continued to encourage the Catechists spiritually and otherwise. They have also gone further to encourage the admission of women in this ministry. Hence, it is now a common sight to see many female catechists working in many parishes and remotest areas of the nation. Continuing his appreciative expression to the missionary contribution of the catechists, His Holiness, Pope John Paul II said: “I am anxious to give thanks in the Church’s name to all of you, lay teachers of catechesis in the parishes, the men and the still more numerous women throughout the world, who are devoting themselves

⁶⁴³ St. John Paul II, *Address to the Laity, Catechists, and Catholic Women*, at Kaduna, Nigeria, 14 February, 1982.
https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/february/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19820214_laici-nigeria.html.

to the religious education of many generations. Your work is often lowly and hidden but it is carried out with ardent and generous zeal, and it is an eminent form of the lay apostolate, a form that is particularly important where for various reasons children and young people do not receive suitable religious training in the home. How many of us have received from people like you our first notions of catechism and or preparation for the sacrament of penance, for our first communion and confirmation! The Fourth General Assembly of the Synod did not forget you. I join with it in encouraging you to continue your collaboration for the life of the Church.⁶⁴⁴ As a determinant force in the implantation and expansion of Church in Africa, according to A. B. C. Chiegboka, the same Holy Father in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa, *Ecclesia in Africa* charged bishops and priests “to have their catechists at heart, seeing to it that they are guaranteed suitable living and working conditions so that they carry out their mission properly. In the midst of the Christian community the catechists’ responsibility is to be acknowledged and held in respect.”⁶⁴⁵

With optimistic voice regarding due respect for the catechists and their contribution to the Church, Chiegboka went further to argue that, these exhortations are enough for us to experience a new healthy dawn of recognition and exaltation of dignity of catechists in our local diocesan Church. Thus, in his directive, the diocesan bishop of Awka said: “As pastoral agents in the parish, the parish priest and the catechist should maintain cordial relationship and exhibit reciprocal respect and support for one another.”⁶⁴⁶ The missionary success recorded in Nigeria owes much to these dedicated men who also doubled as local teachers because of shortage of qualified teachers. As we indicated in the previous chapter of our research, education was an indispensable tool for evangelization in Nigeria. As such, in many towns and stations, the catechist was both the theologian, the seminarian, the headmaster, interpreter and the “*priest*” that the converts knew (*Fadaa anyi huru anya*). Of course many of the converts felt more at home with them because they spoke their language and shared in their cultural festivities. The priest was not easily accessible to the people, not because of his pastoral neglect, but more

⁶⁴⁴ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On the Catechesis in Our Time, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 66, in AAS 71 (1979), pp. 1277-1340.) See also, A. B. C. Chiegboka, “Shepherd of God’s Flock” (1 Pet 5:2): The Parish Priest and Parish Administration, (Being a Paper Presented to the newly appointed Parish Priest for the 2010/2011 Pastoral Year in Awka Diocese on October 27, 2010 at Retreat and Pastoral Centre, (REPACCO).

⁶⁴⁵ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On the Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Yaounde, Cameroon, 14 September, 1995, No. 91; Simon A. Okafor, Synod Acta...op cit. Nos 87, “From the very beginning of evangelization of Igboland, including Awka Diocese, catechists have played an indispensable role as pastoral agents. They deserve to be accorded enhanced status, to enable them better fulfil their principal role as teachers of catechism”. Cf. A. B. C. Chiegboka, “Shepherd of God’s Flock” (1 Pet 5:2).

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. A. B. C. Chiegboka, “Shepherd of God’s Flock” (1 Pet 5:2), no. 89.

because the people saw him more as “*semi-god*” (*obere Chukwu*). His colour and language combined to give vent to the above assumptions, such that the people even doubted his ability to eat, or even whether his legs touched the ground as he walked. It was therefore only reasonable that the catechist whom they knew became the real missionary they knew, approached and trusted. Indeed, the Church owes a lot to the catechists for the positive missionary work recorded in Nigeria. In the contemporary mission of the church in Nigeria, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria still regard the catechists as co-workers and important collaborators in the mission of Christ. Consequently, the Bishops support them both morally and otherwise by incorporating them within the administrative structure of the church. They also go further to organize on-going formation and retreats for them. With the directive of CBCN, each diocese has a chaplain assigned to the Association of Diocesan Catechists. However, considering the deplorable economic situation in the country, the remunerations given to the Catechists still remain on the level of unacceptability. Catechists have families. They have children to be taken care of. They have other societal responsibilities irrespective of their missionary status. Consequently, greater percentage of the catechists in many dioceses have passed retirement stage.

Younger generation has little or no interest in joining this missionary train. In appreciation of their enormous contribution to the mission of the Church, the Church Hierarchy remarked: In Nigeria we need only think of the role played in times past – and still in greater and lesser degree – by our catechists. ‘The remarkable and vital service they have rendered is emblazoned in the annals of our Catholic Missions from the remotest times’ (Pope John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*). And if we mention a specific group, we must give a place of honour to our teachers. The Church owes them a great debt for their deep loyalty and steadfast devotion. For many years they have been the principal co-operators with priests and religious in the organised work of the Church. A large section of our people owes them a good part of the knowledge of the faith and has learned from them much of the example of the Christian life.⁶⁴⁷ Indeed, the history and success story of missionary activities in Nigeria over the years cannot be retold without special mention of the Catechists. They occupy very important position in the mission of the church, especially in Nigeria. However, to some extent, their missionary zeal, dedication and sacrifices are under-appreciated by the priests and the hierarchy of the Church. It is only hoped that the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria should look into ways of reorganizing them for better evangelization strategies. This they can do through on-going formation, better

⁶⁴⁷ CBCN, *Joint Pastoral Letter*, Lagos, 1960.

remunerations, proper modern education especially the use of modern educational facilities like internet and computer literacy. This will surely facilitate the missionary efforts of the Church in this part of the world for the advantage of the Universal Church. In this regard, the Church in Nigeria, and indeed, CBCN, has another willing group of missionary personnel which has proved to be of immeasurable importance to the proper interpretation of the mission of the church in Nigeria. Here, we are talking of the *Catholic Knights* of the Church of different groups.

i. Catholic Knights as agents of evangelization

It is not within the confines of this work to delve into global definition or foundational analysis of the nuances of different Orders in the Universal Church. However, suffice it to remark that the membership of this group is drawn from the laity who are willing to go beyond the ordinary life as Christians in preaching the gospel of Christ in concrete terms and in different areas of human endeavour as it relates to the mission of Christ. In other words, Knighthood remains a lay apostolate aimed at strengthening the faith of the faithful and supporting the Hierarchy of the Church in their missionary projects. This is rooted in their avowed readiness in defending the Church in all the strata of the society. The membership of this Order belongs to individuals who are willing to sacrifice for the good of others and the good of the Universal Church as well as their personal spiritual growth. Another salient point worthy of note is that Knighthood was not originally of religious significance. It was a reward for those who participated in crusades and other wars especially at the Middle Ages.⁶⁴⁸

Some historical facts regarding the foundation of Knighthood and their missionary contributions in the church

In the earlier section of this work, precisely “on the laity”, we did mention that members of the *Knighthood* in the Catholic Church, especially in the local Church in Nigeria, as a group of lay people have so distinguished themselves in many areas of evangelization, under the leadership of CBCN, that it cannot be treated as a mere footnote in a work of this nature. Long before the Catholic Church got rooted on the Nigerian soil, St Pope Pius XII came up with the idea of formation of lay people in different groups so as to have personal and collective participation in the mission of the Church in different parts of the world. It remains ingenious of His Holiness

⁶⁴⁸ B. A. C. Obiefuna, “Titles and Conflicts of identity in the Igbo Christian: A Reflection from Ozo and Knighthood Titles,” in, *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, p. 59-85, p. 67.

in his vision of the Church as an all-inclusive entity. By this we mean to emphasise that His Holiness saw the need to incorporate the lay people in the workings of the Church long before the Second Vatican Council which is regarded as the “mother of the inclusive Church.” Thus, in his *Evangelii Praecones*, the Supreme Pontiff succinctly expressed the desire that “there be everywhere erected as far as is possible, associations of men and women, and also of students, of workers, of artists, of athletes, and other clubs and sodalities, which can be considered the auxiliaries of the missionaries. In the erection and constitution of these organizations, let character, virtue and zeal be preferred to numbers.”⁶⁴⁹ This desired intention of the Holy Father was met with positive result in 1953, when, through Reverend Father Abraham Anslem Ojefua, the first Knighthood in Nigeria and of Nigerian cultural setting, was formed, known as *Order of the Knight of St Mulumba*. This was followed by the arrival of the *Order of Knight of St. John International* in 1976.

The cardinal focus of this research does not permit us to have a holistic treatment, regarding the historical excurses of Knighthood in the Church. We therefore intend to give rather a synopsis of the contributions of this group of lay people in helping CBCN in their efforts for proper interpretation of the mission of the Church in Nigeria. “Originally, knighthood was an honour conferred by kings to noblemen who distinguished themselves in service as attendants or champions at war. But later on the church adopted it to compensate or encourage personalities who spend their time, and money for the up-keep of the church.”⁶⁵⁰ The controlling factor for knighthood is an assessed integrity of life of the candidate in Christ manifested in a Christian and social community; a life of prophetic witnessing....⁶⁵¹ In other words, a knight in the Catholic Church is a man who has received all the necessary sacraments required of being called a catholic and who aspires to go further beyond the ordinary Christian life in defending the Church in matters of faith and social responsibilities. This includes, *inter alia*, time and huge financial sacrifices in order to enhance the mission of the Church in whatever capacity. This also entails periodic spiritual renewal and ongoing formation as may be directed by CBCN and moderated by individual bishops in and priests in their respective dioceses and parishes. They do all these in response to the ideals of the Fathers of the Second Vatican council who advised that “All sons of the church should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world” (AG 36). In the present section, we already stated that the

⁶⁴⁹ *Evangelii Praecones*, no. 38.

⁶⁵⁰ G. E. Shiweobi, *Understanding the Catholic Knighthood* (Nigeria: Okpala, Aba Seminary Publications, 1992), p. 15. See, B. A. C. Obiefuna, *Titles and Conflicts of identity in the Igbo*, p. 67.

⁶⁵¹ Obiefuna, *Titles and Conflicts of identity in the Igbo*, p. 68.

first known Knighthood in Nigeria is Order of the Knight of St. Mulumba (KSM). The founder, Reverend Father Abraham Anselm Isidahome Ojefua, was a Monk and a priest. Within the period of 1950-1960, when the Catholic Church was still struggling to find her footing under the leadership of expatriate missionaries, the Nigerian society was bedevilled by powerful secret societies and occult associations of different orientations. The most prominent among them is known as *Ogboni Fraternity*. This was most visible in the Western and Eastern parts of the country. This ugly phenomenon attracted the wealthiest class in the society with vain-promise of more wealth to the members. The promises were so attractive that the young church started having more of her members joining these groups. To counter this problem was the primary motive behind the formation of Order of Knighthood in Nigeria. With the support of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, the membership of this Order started to increase through evangelization strategies employed to counter the teachings of the members of the secret cults. This progress was unfortunately short-lived because of the outbreak of the civil war.

At the end of the war, and with the repatriation of foreign missionaries by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Church started almost from the scratch. Acute shortage of priests and missionary volunteers really affected the church. However, with the willing few members of the laity, so many other Catholic Associations sprang in different parts of the few dioceses in the country. It was therefore a welcome development when another Order of Knighthood was introduced in Nigeria, known as Knight of St. John International. It is worthy of note that these two Order of Knighthood have really piloted the missionary endeavours of the church in the remotest parts of the country. Like any other organization of association, Knighthood has its own objectives, which include the following: The desire to fight for the Church, to sponsor mission and to establish good relationship among the same class of people in the society and the church. Another motivating factor in the formation of the knighthood is to foster a fraternal relationship of people who are willing to use their resources to encourage the clergy and also to help the poor members of the church. Today, as the society is becoming more complex and with the increase in the number of Christ's faithful, the Knights have stepped up to the challenges by establishing a number of charitable organizations to cater for the needs of the poor in the society. They have remained the main sponsors of capital projects in different parishes, dioceses and the national levels. At the inception of the Catholic University of Nigeria (CUNA) by CBCN, the Knights distinguished themselves by sponsoring the construction of the major buildings and also offered free professional supervision of different projects. The same can also be said of Catholic Institute of West Africa, Major Seminaries established in different dioceses, and many hospitals and colleges owned by CBCN. Of no less importance is the fact

that the knights have continued to sponsor uncountable seminarians to the vocation of priesthood and religious life, especially those from poor backgrounds. Indeed, the establishment of knighthood in Nigeria has remained a blessing to the mission of the Church in Nigeria and the Universal Church. In matters of political and conflict of ecclesial and traditional issues, the bishops have always counted on them as faithful collaborators in the mission of the Church. On their own part, CBCN has continued to provide the members with necessary spiritual support and have given them ennobling environment to operate in the local church. Their incorporation into the administrative set-ups of the Church, both on the local and national levels have also encouraged them to do more for the Church. Being part of the laity, one can chiefly assert that the vision of the Fathers' of Second Vatican Council concerning the laity participation in the mission of the Church is on the right track.

Hence, "As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness. In the manner of the men and women who helped Paul in spreading the Gospel (cf. Acts 18:18, 26; Rom. 16:3) the laity with the right apostolic attitude supply what is lacking to their brethren and refresh the spirit of pastors and of the rest of the faithful (Cf. 1 Cor. 16:17-18). On this note, Bishop Godfrey Onah of Nsukka Diocese, while appreciating the sacrifices of the Knights, reminded them that their roles as knights in Catholic Church are now more important than it were in the past and more vital in the church today because the Catholic Church is currently threatened from all squares and from all corners. He therefore maintained that if knights who are servants of God in the Church failed to collaborate with the priests to defend Catholic Church, the Church will not be recognizable in Nigeria in the next 20 years.⁶⁵² Complexed and challenging the missionary environment in Nigeria may be, CBCN has relied immensely on the faith and practical life of the knights and other lay faithful to give proper interpretation of the mission of the Church a greenlight.

2. Challenges and obstacles facing missionary endeavour in Nigeria

At a pre-conclave Mass of April 16, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI noted that the boat of Christian thought had been tossed by different adverse waves, ranging from materialism to liberalism, agnosticism to radical relativism, individualism and "form atheism" to false religious

⁶⁵² Bishop Godfrey Onah, Address to the members of the Knight of St Mulumba, Nsukka, 3rd May, 2015. Cf. <http://nsukcatholicdiocese.org/your-role-in-church-is-important-than-ever-bishop-onah-tells-knights-and-ladies.html>.

mysticism.⁶⁵³ Indeed, the Church has always had problems and obstacles in her resolve for a better society and God's reign on earth. However, in a Local Church, such as we have in Nigeria, the Nigerian Episcopal Hierarchy battles with her own peculiar problems too. These include: poverty and illiteracy, influence of Pentecostal churches, unhealthy political atmosphere, ethnicity, etc. We shall try and bring them under few umbrellas.

a. High level of poverty and illiteracy

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor..." (Is. 61: 1-3; Lk. 4:14-21). Christ, the owner of the mission in which we participate set the tone for the real missionary intent with the above statement. His love for the poor is never in doubt. Thus, the theme of poverty is central to and pervades the whole bible. Poverty is therefore a basic category of biblical theology.⁶⁵⁴ In the same way, the first evangelizers that visited Nigeria, showed enough concern for the poor. Coming to the continent that was ravaged by poverty, poor health facilities and illiteracy, the missionaries grappled with the dilemma of presenting the good news to "empty and illiterate stomachs." With the help of their home dioceses, they were able to supply the material needs of the people before they could concentrate to preach the gospel. The situation they met on the ground propelled them to form charity organizations in order to take care of the material needs of the people.

Today, the situation continues to stare at the face of CBCN considering the number of the people that have no shelter, no food, and no money to continue their education, and no employment after graduation. The bishops are daily confronted with the question of "*how the good news should in reality become good*" in an environment ravaged by poverty and illiteracy such as we have in Nigeria. The instruction of Christ to his disciples to "*give them something to eat*" (Mk. 6:37; Mt. 14:16; Lk. 9:13), is still relevant in the contemporary understanding of the mission of the church. Aware of this challenge, the bishops stated: "There are still large swathes of this blessed soil of Nigeria that are yet to be reached effectively with the Good News of Christ. The Good News must be brought to them. That is the task of primary evangelization."⁶⁵⁵ In various ways, the Church Hierarchy in Nigeria has tried to see this as an integral part of the mission of the church. They have tried to make the alleviation of the poor

⁶⁵³ Quoted by Christopher Umoh, "Common Principles in Catholic Theology in the 21st Century: African Voice", in, *The Oracle*, International Journal of Culture, Religion and Society, vol. 2, December, 2006, no. 2, pp. 3-17.

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. T. D. Hanks, *God so loved the World*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983, p. 4; See, Hillary Mbachu, Theological Appraisal of political power and poverty in West Africa today, in, *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, no. 3, 1991, p. 79.

⁶⁵⁵ CBCN, *Communique*, 2004. See, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, Abuja, p. 18.

and education as integral part of their mission. In 1972, when the country was on the path to recovery after the civil war, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria expressed their desire to join hands with the Nigerian Government in giving enough attention to the plight of the poor and the disadvantaged in the society. Therefore, in their memorandum of social action, they emphasized that: “The strength of the Church lies, not in any technical, economic or political power, but rather in the light she draws from the Gospel, a light which illuminates life, brightening the consciences of men, and transforming their personal and communal relations and activities. She is not afraid of raising her voice and committing herself to the poor whenever she sees the powerful, and the power-conscious, privileged pressure groups browbeating the weak. Following Christ’s example, she is always on the side of the poor. Her mission, like His, is to serve them and to liberate them. Her Christ-like charity is the soul which vivifies her pronouncements on human justice. The Church is the church of the poor and it is to the needy that we dedicate our services and our lives. But we recognise the need, on our own part, to make a humble examination of conscience. Our hearts are given to the poor and we accept that we must be grateful to ensure that the poor see this and accept it as true.”⁶⁵⁶

Their decision to make the above resolve coheirs with the idea of the missionary objective as expressed by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI when he established the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission, 1967. The Supreme Pontiff opined: “Taking into account the immensity of the hardships which still afflict a large section humanity, and with a view to fostering everywhere the justice and love of Christ for the poor, the Council suggests that it would be most opportune to create some organization of the universal Church whose task it would be to arouse the Catholic community to promote the progress of areas which are in want and foster social justice between nations.”⁶⁵⁷ Without mincing words, the mission of the poor is an ongoing project which each bishop has seen as a missionary priority in their different dioceses. As such, in many parishes, special collections are made for the poor, coupled with free education projects. But considering the staggering number of the expected beneficiaries, it still remains a herculean task for the CBCN. Nevertheless, since, “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well” (G S: 1), the Church

⁶⁵⁶ CBCN, *The Church and Nigerian Social Problems*; Memorandum of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, February 1972. Cf., *The Catholic Church in an Independent Nigeria*, Joint Pastoral Letter of the Nigerian Hierarchy, 1st October, 1960 (Peter Schniller, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, *Pastoral Letters and Communiqués* – 1960 – 2002).

⁶⁵⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 90.

Hierarchy in Nigeria has no option than to maintain the status quo already established by the universal church as enunciated above.

b. Religious syncretism

According to A. G. Leonard, for the Igbos, “they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously and sin religiously.”⁶⁵⁸ The above statement aptly describes the religious consciousness of the Igbos of Nigeria and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. This aspect of their life helped in no small measure in their acceptability of Christianity. However, it is sad to remark that many still don’t know how to draw the line in the traditional way of worship and the Christian life. This unfortunately has given rise to high degree of religious syncretism in Nigeria and thus continued to pose problems to the bishops in their missionary efforts and programmes. Therefore, syncretism in simple form and in our context, could be seen not necessarily as a conflict between Christianity and Traditional Religion but the practice of mixing elements of African Traditional religion with some of the tenets of Christianity. In which case, it is now a common practice of seeing the faithful who finished receiving Holy Eucharist in the morning Mass and going to the traditional diviners for consultations. The Catholic Bishops themselves have continued to express sense of dismay that all over Nigeria, Catholics are flocking to the church for liturgical activities and devotional exercises. The churches are literally packed full on Sundays and on several days during the week. But one notices a disturbing lack of personal conversion in regard to Gospel values among many of the faithful who go to church.

According to CBCN, “The lack of personal conversion has been blamed partly on an insufficient catechesis of the lay faithful. The great majority of adult Catholics in Nigeria ended their catechesis with the lessons they received while preparing for confirmation either as teenagers or as young adults. As a result, they have not been challenged to a personal and mature commitment to Christ and his Gospel. Therefore, this lack of lack of authentic spiritual growth has given rise to syncretism among Nigerian Christians. Hence, it is often the case that when they are faced with crisis situations, many Catholics will not hesitate to secretly seek out the traditional medicine man or witch doctor to find a solution or protection against their real or imagined enemies.”⁶⁵⁹ The afore-stated worrisome situation as expressed by CBCN is

⁶⁵⁸ A. G. Leonard, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes* (London, 1906, revised edition, 1968), p. 429. Cf. Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, “The Challenge of Africa to the Western Conscience: US Bishops and Solidarity with Africa,” in, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 17, 2005, 3-28.

⁶⁵⁹ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 14.

collaborated by Hillary Achunike who posits that “the truth about Christianity in Igboland is that there are many who are Christian in name but pagan in practice.”⁶⁶⁰ One of the interpretations that could be given to this trend is shallow pedagogical paradigm which was used in the conversion of the natives. There was no deep-rooted theological foundation given to the people. Being enshrined in their traditional religion, it was basically difficult for the missionaries to get real conviction from them. That problem still lingers in the church today and continues to place the missionary efforts of CBCN on the negative line. Cardinal Arinze therefore contends that while in many of its elements, the traditional religion did prepare Nigerians to embrace Christianity, it is also a fact that many Christians are tempted to have recourse to practices of the traditional religion at such moments of crisis as marriage, birth of a child, sickness, and funeral. The answer lies in a deeper grounding in the faith and in more meaningful inculturation.⁶⁶¹ He went on to condemn this syncretic practice which Luzbetak calls “*Christopaganism*”⁶⁶² while observing that “the people attend [...] Church service in the morning only to consult the diviner [*fortuneteller*] in the day. They call a fortune-teller to advise them whether the spirits would allow them to build a big house and live in it in peace. And they invite then a (Catholic) priest to bless the finished house. They receive Holy Communion while they have charms in their pockets or around their babies’ waists.”⁶⁶³

c. Influence of Pentecostalism

Despite the pomp and vibrancy of the Nigerian Church, argues Asogwa, there are signs symptomatic of a gnawing and virulent malady, vitiating the validity and questioning the authenticity of the Catholic faith on the Nigerian soil. The outflow of Catholics, especially Catholic youth to the Pentecostal/ evangelical churches is simply staggering. From the fold of a Catholic family that apparently manifest a great vigour and vitality of faith, this outflow raises a question mark. In this same vibrant Church of Nigeria, many are Catholics in the body and traditionalist in the soul and when the ‘going gets tough’, many revert to their ancestral shrines for a salve.⁶⁶⁴ The above ideas expressed truly sets the tone for what many authors in Nigeria see as the most dangerous obstacle towards a better appreciation of the church’s mission in

⁶⁶⁰ Hillary, C. Achunike, *Dreams of Heaven: A Modern Response to Christianity in North-Western Igboland 1970-1990* (Bloomington, Indiana: iUnivers, 2017), p. 137.

⁶⁶¹ Francis Cardinal Arinze, Arinze. *Looking for light series*, edited by Lambert Ejiofor, 1990, p. 118.

⁶⁶² Luzbetak L. J., *The Church and Cultures* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), p. 360.

⁶⁶³ Francis, A. Arinze, *Answering God’s Call* (Glasgow: A Geoffrey Chapman Book, 1983), p. 22. Ochulor, *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation*, p.106.

⁶⁶⁴ Chika Asogwa, & Damian Amana, *Communication: A Challenge to the Nigerian Church*, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4280/c0d9f5c27e8a37fd530fdc4e8a6b3631d624.pdf> , URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ach.v4n1p90>, January 2012, vol. 4, no. 1.

Nigeria. Put in another form, it has been generally accepted that the serious problem militating the mission of the church in Nigeria is the influence of Pentecostalism. This is a phenomenon which the bishops themselves agreed is a cankerworm in the progress of mission in Nigeria. According to them, Pentecostalism has made serious inroads into the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Even among the catholic fold, there seems to be an invasion of Pentecostal ideologies and praxis which are not readily compatible with the catholic faith and praxis. Among them are a fundamentalist interpretation of the Scripture, an overly emotional style of worship, an unhealthy preoccupation with demons and demonology, and excessive insistence on miracles, signs and wonders. Perhaps the most noticeable among the objectionable aspects of Nigerian Pentecostalism is an undue emphasis on material prosperity, success, financial “breakthrough” over and above spiritual well-being and an upright way of life. All these things have invaded the Catholic Church and are being peddled even by catholic priests and religious.⁶⁶⁵ However, the most disturbing aspect of this problem is that many priests have been infected by this trend of evangelism, so much so that many have fallen out of favour with the their bishops and invented their own *Pentecostal theology of public relevance*.⁶⁶⁶ The faithful themselves have labelled such priests as the powerful priests (*ndi Fadaa kara aka*).

The Hierarchy of the Church has tried to solve this problem by several pronouncements and episcopal directives. However, the most challenging aspect is that most of the individual bishops are not as willing and straightforward in implementation of certain laws as others. Therefore, one may conclude that there is a regrettable divergence of opinions from the high echelon of ecclesial administration in the local church. Commenting on this, Elochukwu Uzukwu, remarks: the problem of “priest-healers” has not left the Nigerian bishops at ease. A conference or consultation held in 1991 in which most of the well known “healers” participated does not seem to have introduced order and restraint in the exercise of this charism. Again I see the problem as related to the “sacred power” of the priest. In Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Enugu, Orlu, and Aba dioceses, to name a few, our bishops find it difficult at times to exercise their supervisory ministry over the powerful “priest-healers.” The charismatic priests appear to be very conscious of their power – a power which is often times maintained through the

⁶⁶⁵ CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*, p. 15.

⁶⁶⁶ The current trend in the Nigerian church as well as other African countries is “*healing ministry*.” This is not unconnected with the level of poverty and unbridled quest for material acquisition among the priests as we already indicated. Secondly, because of the traditional belief practices in most of the Nigerian ethnic groups, where there is prevalent conviction about misfortunes, diseases, demonic attacks, untimely death, etc., people cluster those healing houses in search of relief. Here, the pastors try to use manipulative and psychological manoeuvring on the poor faithful. This has so touched the foundation of the Catholic Church that in most cases, a visitor finds it difficult to convince himself that this is really the Church with a long standing tradition of organized Christ-centred liturgical worship.

exploitation of the superstitious and the irrational, of which distressed faithful are easy victims.⁶⁶⁷ This is truly, to say the least, not good for the mission of the church. On his part, Bishop Godfrey Onah of Nsukka diocese, pointed out that one of the greatest problems confronting the church today is neo-paganism that is being promoted by pentecostalism. He lamented that even as people are trying to shield themselves away from paganism, the coming of Pentecostalism has pushed them more into paganism thereby making Christians not to have absolute faith in God anymore.⁶⁶⁸ Udoette warns that, if the evangelizing mission of the Church in Nigeria is to be relevant and successful in this present era, she must take into serious consideration the challenges posed by Pentecostalism.⁶⁶⁹ Donatus Ukpong, on his part is more concerned with the flamboyancy which is associated with Pentecostal churches, and which is seriously being emulated by many catholic clergy. Thus, he contends that this flamboyant lifestyle, according to him, is not affecting the clergy only, but is becoming a terrible virus among the laity too. Pentecostalism with the message of abundant life and blessing, is making material prosperity a yardstick of the divine favour. Its being affirmed that whoever is poor, is a sinner and not born-again. It is the prosperity of members of a church that shows which church is really worshipping God rightly. Therefore, it becomes pertinent for members to be prosperous and to abound in wealth as a testimony of divine encounter in the church.⁶⁷⁰

Cosmas Ebebe prefers the concept of *prosperity gospel group* to describe this menace. He therefore cautions that: prosperity gospel are impacting on the Catholic Church. Unsuspecting Catholics, according to him, are meditating with King James Version of the Bible while some preachers are abandoning more authentic translations for loose versions. Fundraising activities in the Church is gradually witnessing Pentecostal like anchor on prosperity like promise of automatic reward for every donation.⁶⁷¹ The theme of the gospel now everywhere in Nigeria is 'earthly city' devoid of heavenly anchor. Payment of heavy tithes and donations are what give the worshippers easy access to the keys of heaven. Consequently, the churches are no longer for the poor and everyone much be expected to be rich.

⁶⁶⁷ Elochukwu, E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, p. 123. See, Donatus Ukpong, *Nigerian Pentecostalism: Case, Diagnosis and Prescription* (Uyo, Fruities' Publications, 2008), p. 44.

⁶⁶⁸ Bishop Godfrey Onah, Homily at St Theresa Catholic Cathedral, Nsukka, 3rd May, 2015, <http://nsukcatholicdiocese.org/your-role-in-church-is-important-than-ever-bishop-onah-tells-knights-and-ladies.html>.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf., Donatus Udoette, *Christianity in Nigeria: Trends and Interpretations*, (Uyo: Alcollins Printers Nig., 2012), p. 160. See also D. Ukpong, *Nigerian Pentecostalism: Case, Diagnosis and Prescription*.

⁶⁷⁰ Donatus Pius Ukpong, *The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, 2006, p. 39. <https://www.glopent.net/.../presence-and-impact-of-pentecostalism.../>.

⁶⁷¹ Cosmas, O. Ebebe, The Impact of Pentecostalism on the Catholic Church, 36-37. See also, Donatus, Pius Ukpong, *The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, 2006, p. 41.

Consequently, for some priests and pastors, there is nothing sacramental about healing and deliverance, but simply a ministration of a personal spiritual power by an individual. The Christian faith is seen as a manifestation of the power of Jesus in the everydayness of life. This unfortunately is degenerating into a superstitious Christianity, where experience is separated from doctrine.⁶⁷² Some of the healers are exercising power in a tyrannical and dictatorial fashion, creating a kind of serfdom and harem around themselves, transforming the spiritual hunger and desire for God of the faithful into religious enslavement. They hold on to their power with the threat of curse, making their victims to believe that a separation from their “feudal holds” is an automatic malediction.⁶⁷³

d. Ethnicity and religious violence

In September of 2010, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, during their First Plenary Meeting, stated that “The last fifty years in Nigeria have been a period of blessings. While God has blessed us with abundant resources, our resources have not been sufficiently developed in this period much less put to the benefits of all Nigerians. Instead, our resources are constantly being dissipated “through acts of injustice, bribery and corruption as a result of which many of our people are hungry, sick, ignorant and defenceless. The result is that the educational and health care systems are at best limping, our roads and highways are in a state of collapse, the electricity supply is epileptic and soaring unemployment.”⁶⁷⁴ This description on the economic and social situation in Nigeria sums up the agony of a failed country. And this is the environment where CBCN must operate. However, one of the few Nobel Prize winners in Nigeria, Chinua Achebe sees the situation in a slight different way. According to him, “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership.”⁶⁷⁵ The social, cultural and political problems hampering Nigeria’s quest for unity and appropriate human development have become major staples of contemporary concern of the Church in Nigeria. This is also basically the summary of Nigerian situation offered by Archbishop Obinna. Indeed, the environment where CBCN is expected to

⁶⁷² Donatus, Pius Ukpong, *The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, 2006, p. 39.

⁶⁷³ Donatus, Pius Ukpong, *The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, 2006, p. 44.

⁶⁷⁴ CBCN, *Communique*, February, 2010, p. 4.

⁶⁷⁵ Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble With Nigeria* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1984), p. 1.

carry out the mission of the Church is regrettably littered with a litany of social, political, ethnic and religious maladies. But the mother of these is ethnicity. This has been described as canker-worm which has thoroughly retarded the progress of this country, and *ipso facto*, the mission of the Church. Nwaigbo did not mince words in these remarks: “divisions in the church of God and the body of Christ due to tribalism are scandalous to the witness of the gospel.”⁶⁷⁶ The witness of the gospel which Nwaigbo alluded here is the core mission of the Church. And where this type of division exists because of ethical and religious differences, the carriers of the gospel will surely never be on the same wavelength when issues of national interest is discussed. Because of ethnicity and cultural differences, it is difficult for the Church Hierarchy in Nigeria to have a uniformed blueprint for the implementation of such missionary ideals as Inculturation. By way of definition, David Parkin sees ethnicity as basically a cultural system denoting group boundaries. And the very fact of participating within such boundaries means sharing certain patterns of interaction using specific channels of communication.⁶⁷⁷ This is a positive definition which unfortunately may not be obtainable in the Nigerian situation. According to him, the common ground for ethnicity is “channels of communication.” But in this channel, there should be some elements of uniformity. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Nigeria with whooping 352 (three hundred and fifty two) ethnic groups, different languages, different dialects, different cultural backgrounds and different orientations. In this scenario, one fundamental question that should be asked remains: how can the CBCN succeed in making laws and principles that should be uniformly implemented in all the ethnic groups?

This problem therefore remains the foundation on which the definition of ethnicity offered by Abner Cohen could be properly comprehended. According to him, ethnicity is “fundamentally a political phenomenon ... it is a type of internal interest grouping” which is called into being as a result of the intensive struggle between groups over new strategic positions within the structure of new state.”⁶⁷⁸ Ethnic politics is a phenomenon which has always plagued the contemporary multi-ethnic state of Nigeria. Ethnic politics may be seen as being loyal to one’s own ethnic group in a multi-ethnic state through social and political behaviour. Ethnic pluralism is a major factor in Nigerian politics. In view of this, it has been a very difficult task to build a healthy national state in Nigeria. The ethnic, cultural and linguistic

⁶⁷⁶ Ferdinand Nwaigbo, “Tribalism Versus Evangelization in sub-saharan Africa”, in, *African Ecclesiastical Review*, 2005, 131-158.

⁶⁷⁷ Parkin David, *The Cultural Definition of Political Responses: Lineal destiny among the Luo* (London: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 2 & 5.

⁶⁷⁸ Abner Cohen, *Two dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in complex Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), p. 96-97.

diversities among the people of Nigeria created diversity of interests, opinions and political leanings as well as endemic and epidemic rivalries.⁶⁷⁹ Other aspects of mission that have been greatly affected by ethnicity include dialogue, ecumenism and interreligious moves. On this note, Bishop Anselm Umoren argues that Ethnic colouration of Religion has been a major challenge to the principles and teachings of the Catholic Church on interreligious dialogue and ecumenism while maintaining that the effective evangelization in Nigeria can only be possible by witness to dialogue in mission. “If mission must attempt to realize its objectives in Nigeria, he noted, the unity of Christians is very essential. This is why ecumenism is at the centre of the Church’s identity since Mission and dialogue are two intrinsic dimensions of the life of the Church. Thus, to effectively carry out these tasks, Christians must strive to build relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment.”⁶⁸⁰ The issue of ethnicity is not only problematic to the mission of the church but to other social life of the people. Access to natural resources and state representations at the political administrative setups in the country. Nevertheless, the bishops should not be discouraged. They should continue to focus on those ideas and legislations that can always foster unity and a healthy environment for the mission of the church. It is therefore necessary for them to heed to this fraternal piece of advice: “The Bishop is a herald of hope by pointing to the things of heaven, tirelessly directing the hearts and minds of his faithful, in contrast with the materialist message of the secular world, toward enduring spiritual realities and the happiness to which they are called. Today, more than ever, we witness a deficient understanding of the faith among believers. What this entails is the need to re-catechize people at every level.”⁶⁸¹ However, this task is not an easy. It needs courage and collegial co-operation.

e. Inadequacy of formative strategies for the seminarians

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, St. John Paul II noted that: “The formation of priesthood candidates is the task of the pastoral care of the Church’s vocation, and the Church must be recognized *as* its communal subject: for it has been grace and is entrusted with the duty

⁶⁷⁹ Francis Usuh, “True Federalism as a remedy for ethnic politics in Nigeria”, in, *The Oracle*, International Journal of Culture, Religion and Society, vol. 2, no. 2, December 2006, p. 92-109; Dukor Maduabuchi, “Ethnic Nationalism and A Theory of Nation building”, in, Maduabuchi Dukor, (ed.), *Philosophy and Politics: Discourse on Values and Power in Africa* (Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd., 1998), p. 131.

⁶⁸⁰ Anselm Umoren, International Colloquium on the Catholic Church and Pentecostalism, held recently at the Daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre (DRACC), Lugbe, Abuja.
<https://www.csnigeria.org/newsdetail.php?tab=748>.

⁶⁸¹ Bishop Robert James Carlson, “The Duties of the Bishop”, in, *Catholics United for the Faith*, March 199.
<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=89>.

to look after all those whom the Lord calls to become His priestly ministers.”⁶⁸² In no. 75 of the same document, the Supreme Pontiff went on to assert that, “formal formation is to develop in priests, awareness of participation in the Church’s salvific mission. In the Church as a “mission”, a permanent formation of a priest is not only its necessary condition, but also an irreplaceable method of constant reminding about the importance of mission, so that it is faithfully and selflessly carried out.”⁶⁸³ The Holy Father is very much aware that the continuation of the mission of the Church depends to a larger extent the quality of the candidates to the priesthood. The seminary is therefore to be seen as a nursery ground for the future of the Church. As such, the presence of the bishop is of special importance, not only because it helps the seminary community to join the local church and to strengthen the relationship with the pastor who governs it, but also because it confirms and strengthens the pastoral character of the entire formation of priesthood candidates, which is its specific feature. Above all, through his presence among priesthood candidates and experiencing with them all the pastoral problems of the local Church, the bishop contributes in an essential way to shaping the “sense of the Church” as a spiritual and pastoral value of central importance to the priestly ministry.⁶⁸⁴

What this entails is that in the local church, such as the one under review, CBCN, should pay special attention to the seminaries because the seed of the idea of the church is sown here. Bishops are the first to be aware of their great responsibility for the formation of those who will be entrusted with the education of future priests. For this ministry should be chosen priests characterized by exemplary life and possessing such qualities as “human and spiritual maturity, pastoral experience, competence, certainty of one’s vocation, ability to cooperate, good and corresponding to the preparation function in the field of human sciences (especially psychology), knowledge of working methods in a group.”⁶⁸⁵ While appreciating the gift of flourishing vocations in Nigeria, the Bishops have continued to express fear and uncertainty whether or not the candidates for priesthood and religious life are receiving the level of formation that they require as enunciated by the above document. Given the large numbers in our seminaries and houses of formation, the formators are finding it increasingly difficult to follow each candidate as closely as they should. It is doubtful whether this goal is being adequately met in some of the overcrowded seminaries and other houses of religious formation that operate in Nigeria. Added to this is the questionable competence of some of the formators

⁶⁸² *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 65.

⁶⁸³ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 75.

⁶⁸⁴ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 65.

⁶⁸⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 66.

entrusted with this all-important responsibility. This is further complicated by a lack of renewal centres and resources for updating of the formators.⁶⁸⁶ It is also a truism that wind of material projects is affecting the desired attention needed from the bishops. What do we mean by this? Experience has shown that, perhaps, because of economic situation being experienced in the country, the formators in the seminaries are not given adequate attention regarding their upkeep. Many dioceses have other projects like private universities and colleges as their priorities, thereby depriving the seminaries the required episcopal touch. In most cases therefore, the best are not found in those seminaries since many priests who are adequately prepared as formators are no longer willing to answer that call. Instead, many priests now prefer to be lecturers in many circular universities. This trend, without doubt, portends gloomy future for the church's mission.

In one of their joint Pastoral Documents, the Nigerian Church Hierarchy also expressed fear that the flowering of vocations is not evenly spread across the country. There are still areas experiencing an acute shortage of local vocations. They have to rely on personnel coming from outside to meet their local needs. Beyond this shortage, there is a need for exchange of pastoral agents for mutual enrichment which is an essential aspect of the universal character of the Church. "This recommended exchange of personnel is impeded by a lack of coordination and proper cultural orientations in the process of evangelization."⁶⁸⁷ Apart from the problem of uneven distribution of vocation in the country, bishops also noted that despite the missionary thrust of the Church in Nigeria, signified by the numbers of its personnel on mission both within and outside the country, there is a lack of documentation and coordination of their missionary activities and experiences. Moreover, there is an absence of a functional structure for reflection, articulation and implementation of policies with strategies to tackle the missionary challenges of the twenty-first century. To situate the mission of the Church on a more progressive ground the CBCN collectively agreed that there is a need to establish structures that will facilitate the transition of the new and emerging realities of contemporary missiology in Nigeria and in the world at large. This remains one of the sure ways of fulfilling the expectations of the Universal Church in the Nigerian mission. From chronological and statistical points of view, it remains indubitable that Catholic Church truly come to stay on the Nigerian soil. But there is still lack of adequate personnel in many parts of the country to adequately manage the growing Catholic

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: A Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 13.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. CBCN, *The Church in Nigeria: A Call to Mission*, 2011, p. 14.

population. Such areas that are greatly ravaged by the insurgences plaguing the country should be properly given particular attention by CBCN.

Summary

So far, we have laboured to analyse the mission of the church by using the lens of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. This search eventually brought us to locate the proper mission of the church in the given culture of the people. Many theologians and missiologists call it theology of Inculturation, while others prefer to call it Incarnational theology. The vibrancy seen today in the church in Nigeria remains the fruit of tedious labour and sacrifices of worthy missionaries, and the laity, living and dead. What remains is the sustainability of the tempo considering the unhealthy environment in which the church lives in Nigeria. The hierarchy of the Church in Nigeria is saddled with the responsibility of continuation of the mission of the Church using proper evangelization tools and strategies that can deeply touch the lives of the people. So far, we can rightly deduce that: they are on the right track. But that is not to say that there are no lacks both pastorally and structurally. This is the main focus of this last chapter. The idea brought out is that a vibrant faith-filled Church is an affirmation of an ordered Church. There is therefore a call for CBCN to look into their present structure and see how it can truly reflect on the lives of the people in the spirit of participatory ecclesiology in the mind of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Ad Gentes*. Hence, to become a single praying community, a single-minded People of God and the love-filled Body of Christ, this is the goal of the Bishop's *munus sanctificandi* and the goal of his *munus docendi*. "The responsibility of sanctifying in the person of Christ, the supreme and eternal High Priest, is borne by the Bishop, and this office stands as the summit and source of the other ministries."⁶⁸⁸ The formation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria is geared towards a realization of the above principles for the fulfilment of missionary mandate. Indeed, the Catholic hierarchy in Nigeria fully understands that Mission is not an option for the Church. Mission is the route to becoming an authentic Body of Christ, if the Church is to be true to herself. However, we wish to conclude this work with reference to the discussion between Brutus and Cassius as they prepared to face Julius Caesar in a battle of all battles in Phillipi.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

⁶⁸⁸ Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, no. 75; Cf. *Lumen gentium*, no. 21; Pope Pius XII, *Christus Dominus*, no. 15. As cited by Robert James Carlson, "The Duties of the Bishop", in, *Catholics United for the Faith*, March 199.

Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”⁶⁸⁹

The post conciliar Church has remained “good news” for the mission of the Church, especially from the point of view of universality and positive expansive results but not in negligence of her Catholicity. Surely, the Holy Spirit is still at work in the Church irrespective of contemporary global challenges. Nigeria stands out as one of the beneficiaries of the “opened windows” of the missionary spirit of the Second Vatican Council. This is evidenced in the astronomical increase in the number of catholic faithful and vocation boom recorded from 1965 till date. The vibrancy of the Church is therefore not unconnected with the increased faith and trust which the laity have on their Bishops and Priests. A well-organized and co-ordinated Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria is, without doubt the spring of the above positive missionary results. However, since the mission of the church is a *continuum*, CBCN should not yet rest on their oars. Like Brutus and Cassius, the Church in Nigeria is hilariously *on a full sea*. It is therefore left for CBCN to take the advantage of the abundant human resources, exemplified in the dedicated laity and rich *vocational currents when it serves* or the Church loses her missionary ventures and *sinks*.

CONCLUSION

In this concluding part of the work, we want to summarize what we have done in this four-chapter-dissertation. We intend to do this under two specific captions: *appraisal* and *recommendations*. In the appraisal, we shall, to some extent have a recapitulation of the essence of the church and her mission as reflected in the Second Vatican Council and see how it fits properly in the work we have done. Of course, this will help us to appreciate the root of our discussion which is *the Mission of the Church* seen from the Nigerian perspective under the leadership of CBCN. We also reaffirm that our choice of periodization 1965-2017 is to properly bring to focus that this is the most important period of Church’s missionary activities in Nigeria.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3, p. 11. Here, we see Brutus in dialogue with Cassius, trying to weigh the best possible option to attack Julius Caesar, whether in Philippi or elsewhere. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria is therefore expected to weigh the most suitable methodology and systematic approach needed for a proper interpretation of the mission of the church in Nigeria.
https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/juliuscaesar/page_186/.

It comprises the period of indefatigable efforts of the European missionaries to Nigeria, the missionary competence of the local church hierarchy and the unprecedented flowering of vocation in our land. Some recommendations will then be offered as to show the best path for the futuristic ecclesiology of the local church.

a. Appraisal

In assessing the Mission of the *Church in the light of the teachings of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria*, we reaffirm our starting point in this dissertation. Christ's incarnation was for a purpose. It was a Divine Mission. But this mission has to be interpreted in the context of the living conditions of the people who receive the message of Christ. And this is where the relevance of the Church's Constitution, *Ad Gentes*, cannot be ignored. It is the document for the cultural evangelization of the people in their tradition and daily life. The idea is that the people should also be inculturated in the course of evangelization. CBCN favours this missionary paradigm in the form of theology of inculturation or incarnation of the gospel. The redemptive work which God initiated for the fallen world was brought to fruition because of the availability of His Son, Jesus Christ to fulfil that mission.

The institution of the Church by Him was out of his desire for the continuation of the mission with eschatological finality. However, it is obvious that Christ, who instructed and mandated the Church under the leadership of the apostles on going out to the whole nations to proclaim the content of that mission did not give them a clear-cut curriculum of action regarding the model of evangelization. But he did not fail to remind them of the attendant obstacles, temptations and problems they were to face.⁶⁹⁰ The pre-eminence of persecution, suffering and temptation associated with the mission of Christ is such that the whole bible is littered with instances of that, including Christ himself. However, the assurance of his ever presence has sustained the Apostles and indeed the Church (Jn. 16: 33). Consequently, the Church has for centuries been trying to live up to the will of her founder by traversing through the globe. And as society changes, so does the manner and strategies of the evangelization. The Mission of the Church from the point of view of Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria falls within the purview of Karl Rahner's categorization, "the period in which the church's living space is from the very outset the whole world."⁶⁹¹ This is the post-conciliar era of evangelization. The

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Jn. 15:18-25; 16:1-4; 17: 14-18; Mt. 10:22; 24:9; 5:10-12; 10:16-20; Rm. 8:16-18; 2 Cor. 4:7-11; 12:9-10; Mk. 13: 11-13; 8:34-36; 2 Tm. 3:1-5; 10-14; 1 Pt. 2:20-22; Acts 4:18-20, etc.

⁶⁹¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. xx, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1988), p.83.

concern was to figure out the extent to which the Bishops have been able to maximise the opportunities presented to the local church in pushing the mission of the church to the next level using the local apparatus. In doing this, the prevalent question was: How far have the highest church hierarchy as agents of evangelization gone in their attempt to pass on the message of Christ through culture? How have they been able to manage the available material and spiritual resources within their reach to improve and actualize the missionary mandate of Christ? How can the Church still remain relevant and the last hope for the people of God in the present economic quagmire, informal *jihad* being carried out against the Christians and political imbalance in the country?

In the course of doing this, we established concrete areas where the Bishops have stamped their missionary zeal despite a string of challenges occasioned by the negative political situations in the country. The Bishops are very much aware of the magnitude of the responsibility bestowed on them as shepherds of Christ's flock in bringing the gospel to the people. They are also in touch with the reality that the mission of Christ is not just a one-way exercise of preaching, the sense of praxis should always coat the word of God being preached. Therefore, the bishops are expected to appreciate more the reality of the hardships which their faithful experience on daily basis. Hence, the Church having found herself in an unsteady political and multifarious religious groups has no option than to show the light and become a beacon of hope to the less privileged in the society. Their prophetic roles is not also hidden as they try constantly to address social and political issues through their Communiques and various Pastoral Letters. However, in saying this, we do not preclude the possibility of minuses and negative possibilities in this regard because of human imperfections. Consequently, we devoted some time in giving synoptic treatment on the attendant problems associated with carrying out Christ's mission in the country of our research focus. We believe that if such problems are not given adequate attention by the church hierarchy, the mission of the church will be greatly affected and the image of the church and her future dainted.

The importance of the Second Vatican Council in the contemporary ecclesiology and missiology coloured our entire work since our topic was founded on the ground of post-conciliar ecclesiology. The sacred dimension of the Church is to be found in its divine nature as a mystery and constituted as a special family or community. However, it still remains a social organization in so far as it is managed and structured by men who also live in the same cultural environment. In this regard therefore, the importance of the collegiality of the Bishops cannot be overlooked in the mission of the church in the contemporary world. The theology of the Second Vatican Council can be properly viewed from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,

Lumen Gentium, and the pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes* which has its concentration on the mission of the church in the world that is greatly ravaged by moral, economic, political, cultural and environmental challenges. The new interpretation and understanding which the Church tries to give to her mission through these documents was amply examined in the mission as comprising of *missio ad intra* and *missio ad extra* in the spirit of the Council's *aggiornamento*. The most relevant impulses that accrewed from this council in an attempt to present an inclusive Church in its universality include: the appreciation of the laity as fellow sharers in the mission of Christ and the indispensability of human culture in an authentic evangelization. Reliving with a positive tone of fulfilment the event of the opening session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, (in which he also participated), Pope Benedict XVI summed the enveloping felicitous atmosphere which they experienced in this way: "It was a splendid day with the solemn procession into St Peter's Basilica in Rome of more than two thousand Council Fathers, symbolising an image of the Church of Jesus Christ which embraces the whole world."⁶⁹² No doubt, the Council has remained a splendid gift to the Church through the foresightedness of Pope John XXIII.

From this first-hand account of the atmosphere in which the Council took place as noted above, I would then, in the context of the present research describe the event of the Second Vatican Council as "Second Pentecost Experience", a happy and unforgettable experience in the ecclesiological history. It was an event where Pope John XXIII's "*aggiornamento*" really emphasized the need, according to His Holiness, for "Christianity to be in the present if it is to be able to form the future so that it might once again be a force to shape the future." It is only left for the individual episcopal conferences like that of Nigeria to maximise the "fresh air" brought by the Council. Hence, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria have pitched their tenth with post-conciliar ecclesiology by establishing the fact that the Church in Nigeria has two wings to fly: Theology of Inculturation as the best suited model of evangelization in Nigeria and the Theology of the Laity because of the indispensable roles in the propagation of faith in collaboration with the dedicated local clergy. These working principles ran through the entire work. This is what the topic of our research is all about, a probe into what it takes the Church in Nigeria to be really present in the people, with the people and around the people; a call for the Local Church Authorities to be truly the light in the darkened Nigerian environment; a search for a better missiological paradigm in cognizance of their cultural values and earthly

⁶⁹² Pope Benedict XVI, "*It was a Splendid day*", Fifty years Commemoration Speech of the opening of Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 11 October 1962, by Pope John XXIII, Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct. 11, 2012. <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/it-was-a-splendid-day-benedict-xvi-recalls>

realities, a call for a deep-rooted faith among the faithful and need for a sustained missionary upbeat. This is a challenge to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria.

b. Recommendations

The Decree on the Mission Activity of the church (*Ad Gentes*) remains one of the most important documents for the achievement of the missionary mandate. In it, the Council Fathers urge the Local Ordinaries to build on the faith rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, and take to themselves all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). And through "the economy of the Incarnation," "borrow from the customs, traditions, wisdom, learning, teaching, arts and sciences of their people everything which would be used to worship their Creator so as to enhance their Christian life."⁶⁹³ This cannot be done in a vacuum. It needs the spirit of collegiality. The Bishops must be ready to speak with one voice, without cultural or ethnic sentiments in matters of religious freedom and education of their faithful. Hence, to achieve this goal, the Council Fathers stated that it is necessary that in each major socio - cultural area, "episcopal conferences with one mind and with a common plan should be encouraged as explained by the magisterium."⁶⁹⁴ Indeed, the extraction of those cultural values is very necessary for the proper internalization of the message of the gospel. This follows from the fact that "in his search for identity, man naturally is influenced by his cultural, religious and political environment. As such, assimilation of other ideas in life, including new religious practices can always be measured from the background of this environmental indices."⁶⁹⁵ These and other ideas expressed in the main work, go to show in a way the appreciable efforts of CBCN in carrying out the missionary mandate.

However, on a broader spectrum, we see that there is still much to be done and it is left for them to come up with better strategies in order to sustain the missionary spirit. In the contemporary ecclesial world, the influence of neo-paganism is sweeping across the entire Christendom. The Church in Nigeria is not left out. It is a serious problem that needs urgent attention from the Church's hierarchy. Not that we don't have enough vibrant faithful, not that we do not have enough vocation, perhaps not that we lack convinced clergy or religious. Far from it. What we need is proper harmonization. Our recommendation is therefore, a reassessment of the strategies of evangelization, a reappraisal of the seminary curriculum and

⁶⁹³ *Ad Gentes*, no. 22. Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 13.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ad Gentes*, no. 22.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. Theodore Ikemefuna Iloh, "African Cultural Identity in the light of the theology of Inculturation" (*Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne*, 17 (2018), s. 39–52.

a total refocus of our minds on the need for proper catechesis. Francis Cardinal Arinze argues that “*Traditional Religion*” while in many of its elements did prepare Nigerians to embrace Christianity, “it is also a fact that many Christians are tempted to have recourse to practices of the traditional religion at such moments of crisis as marriage, birth of a child, sickness, and funeral. The answer lies in a deeper grounding in the faith and in more meaningful Inculturation.”⁶⁹⁶ This idea is well-reasoned. However, we stand to say that there is still a serious problem to its implementation based on the foundation on which such theological idea can survive. The foreign missionaries have gone. The ecclesial administration and mission of the Church is now in the hands of the local clergy. But many who were trained in a more rigid conservative European environment still find it difficult to adapt to the spirit of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. It remains a fact that man generally lives with his past, positively or negatively. Therefore, the events of the historical past do not easily vaporize from the mind and the psyche of individuals, and most importantly, when it happened as a collective negative event. After many years as a Catholic priest, and having worked in many parishes and Catholic schools and formation houses, and having seen how many people, especially the younger generations are developing a sense of apathy to the church, and pitching tenth with the Pentecostals, I felt that it is time for us to look inwards and fathom solutions to this ugly trend, lest, the future of the church in Nigeria will hang on the imbalance.

From my investigations too, I came to understand the effect of the utterances and ‘unholy’ impressions which the early missionaries to Africa had on African cultural values and psyche. This generation therefore grew up from this background of utter condemnation of their fathers’ cultural celebrations and practices, with tags of fetishism and penalties that ranges from denial of the reception of the Holy Communion, to excommunication, even on account of the minutest offences like ‘reading a book written by a non-Catholic author’ (*Igu akwukwo n’abughi nke ndi Katolik*). This method of catechetical pedagogy is theologically unfounded. This Church has, over the centuries continued to make use of theological ideas developed by Protestant theologians. Another important observation is that, it sounds absurd and ridiculous that in this our intellectually globalized world of internet and technology, some Nigerian parents still undergo psychological trauma of stigmatization from the church because one of their daughters got married to a non-Catholic. But unfortunately, this cultural stigmatization is still very much a thing of great worries and concern in different parishes today. Many of such parents are denied reception of Holy Communion or Church burials on account of their

⁶⁹⁶ Arinze, “*Looking for light Series*, p. 118.

daughters getting married outside the Catholic fold. Yet, another worrisome situation still prevalent in Nigeria is that many children are still denied Sacrament of Baptism or Confirmation because their parents would prefer to use traditional names. It is on record that many of such parents end up developing lukewarm attitude to the Church or even end up joining the Anglican Church or other Pentecostal churches. It is therefore, from this point of view that the Catholic Bishops' Conference should come up with a clear-cut directive as a body regarding this ugly experience. On another note, we are aware of the fact that success is all about strategic and conscious planning and proper implementation. The need of the Church in this part of the world is enormous. But without sustained faith, a beautifully built cathedral will collapse, a well-furnished parish hall and a diocesan architectural masterpiece will surely decay. The sustainability of the Church's Mission depends on how solidified the faith of the faithful is, not so much the size of the parish podium, parish hall, etc. Hence, His Holiness, Pope Francis opined that "the spirit of mission reminds the Church that she is not an end unto herself, but a humble instrument and mediation of the Kingdom. Therefore a Church that is content with earthly success, is not the Church of Christ, his crucified and glorious Body."⁶⁹⁷ The contemporary mission of the church demands a solid concentration on faith formation based on what we can call *cultural catechesis*.

At the birth of the Church and her mission occasioned by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost day, more than 3000 people were converted. This was possible because Peter spoke to them with conviction concerning the resurrected Christ and our eschatological agenda. Their faith was enlivened by hearing his sermon because the foundation of faith is laid through hearing the word of God (Rm. 10:14-18). It has been observed that more than 1000 Catholics join other churches annually. Some also prefer to go back completely to the traditional worship system. We therefore repeat that the reason is not unconnected with lack of proper Christian catechetical methods of evangelization. CBCN should come up with better strategies that would capture the attention of their youth. We therefore recommend that Homiletics should be made a major theological subject in the Senior Seminaries, not just as a one-year-course as we have it now. In the course of this work, we did refer to the Lukean account of Christ entering the synagogue and reading the passage: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18; Is. 61:1). This scriptural passage clearly shows the targeted audience for Christ's mission and which has been transferred to his disciples. Invariably, the Church of the poor is simply a *Christ-like-Church*. The mission

⁶⁹⁷ Pope Francis, *Message for the World Mission Day*, no. 7. 4 June 2017, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

of Christ in which the church participates, a church that does not negate the poor earthly realities that the faithful face daily. We already analysed it as one of the challenges facing CBCN. Here, we try to proffer solution to it for a more meaningful and deep-rooted mission of the church in this part of the world. Albert Obiefuna, (He was once the president of CBCN), titled one of his pastoral letters: “Give them something to Eat Yourselves.” In it he wrote: “My dear brother priests, and religious, today more than ever our ministry must care for both soul and body. Sometimes we lament that our Catholics are moving over to the mushroom churches that crop now here and there. Often they go there to get a solution to their bodily need.”⁶⁹⁸ In our research, we delved into the evangelization strategies which these *mushroom churches* use to get their members. These include, *inter alia*: a well-planned scholarship programmes, economic empowerment through soft loans to individual members, food apostolate, shelter for all programmes, free education, etc. Of course, people ordinarily would want to be where their material problems can be solved before giving listening ears to the spiritual exegesis. The first crop of missionaries to Nigeria employed this strategy and made an appreciable number of converts. It is therefore disheartening that those converts, and of course, their children are now being converted to other churches.

In this regard, the efforts of Archbishop Albert Obiefuna should challenge CBCN in their missionary strategy. Cletus Umezina noted that: “As the Chief Shepherd of Awka Diocese, Archbishop Obiefuna took special care of the sick and the poor. He set up a department at the Cathedral that was fully in charge of the welfare of indigent people. He appointed a Reverend Brother to direct the affairs of this department. This brother was responsible for the distribution of gifts to the poor who came to the Secretariat and also to those at home to whom he paid visits. The diocese also offset the hospital bills for the sick and built small houses for the poor.”⁶⁹⁹ A good number of other individual Nigerian bishops have also written their own pastoral letters to towards this angle. However, it needs to be put into concrete and realistic form. Considering the rate at which we lose our members today, we feel that this strategic evangelization can be copied. In which case, CBCN can make it mandatory for such department to be created in different dioceses. As a panacea to the above problems and others, we recommend the establishment of what we call the “*Ministry of the Poor and Faith Formation*

⁶⁹⁸ A. K. Obiefuna, *Give them something to Eat Yourselves* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1992), p. 31.

⁶⁹⁹ Cletus Umezina, “The Pastoral Strategies of Late Archbishop A. K. Obiefuna in Awka Diocese,” in, *Bigard Theological Studies*, January – June, 2019, vol. 39, no. 1, p. 109-122. Cf. A. K. Obiefuna, *Give them something to Eat Yourselves* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1992), p. 21.

(MPFF).”⁷⁰⁰ The individual bishops can at the same time replicate it in different parishes so that the benefits derivable from this can reach the grassroots. We are of the opinion that if well-organized, the Church in this part of the world and indeed, the Universal Church, can stand to benefit immensely and the future of the mission assured. This is the real mission of the Church and she cannot shy away from that since her mission is not only spiritual but the realities of life which is hinged on economic situation of the faithful. The Church in Nigeria is highly blessed with rich and generous laity who can volunteer to sponsor this project, both on the local and national levels. Our contention for the formation of MPFF is that an empty stomach is less likely to listen to a well-researched and sweetly delivered sermon. Pentecostal church use such related strategies to lure Catholic faithfuls away from their faith. Moreover, the formation of this ministry does not in any way diminish the importance of the already existing structure of Justice Development Peace Commission (JDPC). It will rather complement its effort by dissecting the activities of JDPC into a more microcosmic entities in the regional, deanery, parish and zonal structures. The mission of the church is to bring Christ to the people in their real life and not vice versa. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria will be doing the Universal Church and the particular Church a disservice if this aspect of their mission is ignored. This is the real content of Pope Francis’s remark when he noted that we are challenged “to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 20). The Church’s mission impels us to undertake a constant pilgrimage across the various deserts of life, through the different experiences of hunger and thirst.”⁷⁰¹

Finally, our research topic remains: *The Mission of the Church in the light of the teachings of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, 1965-2017*. This is a postconciliar theological enquiry. It was not in any way meant to be interpreted as if the Nigerian Hierarchy has their own teachings outside the teachings of the Universal Church. Rather, the effort has been to figure out how this body has been able to put into practical terms the magisterium’s dictates in the church’s efforts to fulfil Christ’s missionary mandate through the local churches. We were able to present the work from the perspective of prevailing social, religious, political and cultural realities in Nigeria. In the process, we were able to expose the challenges they face

⁷⁰⁰ “*Ministry of the Poor and Faith Formation (MPFF)*. This is my pet-project, which I think should be used to propel the mission of the church to greater height qualitatively and praxiologically. Throughout his earthly life and ministry, Christ was more at home with the poor and the less-privileged in the society, especially the widows. As a priest, I feel that my life should be able to reflect the life of Christ. Therefore, in future, I intend to develop this idea in a more practical way so as to touch the lives of the people from the perspective of mission.

⁷⁰¹ Pope Francis, *Message for the World Mission Day*, no. 6.

daily in this work especially regarding the unhealthy political environment in Nigeria. We have also been able to put up some salient points regarding the future of the Church's mission. Nevertheless, we do not claim to have done it all. Rather, we see this our little theological contribution as a way of strengthening the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria in the enormous responsibility of shepherding the flock of Christ in a highly heated political and multi-religious country as seen in Nigeria. Therefore, instead of seeing the effort as the final probe, we therefore see it as a *prolegomena* to future theological enquiry into the mission of the church in our own particular ecclesial jurisdiction. Consequently, we posit, for further research: "*The impact of Ministry of the Poor and Faith Formation (MPFF)* in the Church's Mission for the rural faithful." Our contention is that in collaboration with the clergy and support of the laity, Christ's faithful will be able to understand fully and 'deeply' the content of their faith in other that the mission of the church in the *ecclesia localis* can always be renewed in their concrete lives to the benefit of the *ecclesia universalis*.

Bibliography

A. Official Ecclesiastical Documents

First Vatican Council. “*Pastor Aeternus* Dogmatic Constitution.” Dz 1821 (3050s) [Collantes 7.176]. <https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/la/documents/constitutio-dogmatica-pastor-aeternus-18-iulii-1870.html>

Second Vatican Council. “*Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.” November 21, 1964

———. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963.

———. “*Unitatis Redintegratio*, Decree on Ecumenism.” November 21, 1964.

———. “*Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.” December 7, 1965.

———. “*Optatam Totius*, Decree on the Priestly Training.” October 28, 1965.

———. “*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.” November 18, 1965.

———. *Ad Gentes Divinitus* Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. ” December 7, 1965.

———. *Nostra Aetate*, October 28, 1965.

———. “*Gravissimum educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education.” October 28, 1965.

———. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, On the ministry and life of priests, 1965.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_po.html

The Catechism of the Catholic Church. English translation. African-Kenya: Paulines Publications, 1994.

The New 1983 Code of Canon Law. London: Harper Collins Publications, 1994.

B. Papal Encyclicals and Apostolic Addresses

Pope Leo XIII. *Praeclara gratulationis Publicae*, On the reunion of Christendom. June 20 1894.

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13praec.htm>.

———. *Orientalum Dignitatis*. On the Churches of the East. 30 November, 1894.

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo13/l13orient.htm>.

- Pope Benedict XV**, *Maximum illud*. On the Propagation of the Faith throughout the World, November 30, 1919. <https://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/docs/encycl/mi-en.htm>.
- Pope Pius XI**. *Divini Illius Magistri* On Christian upbringing of Youth. December 31, 1929. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divini_Illius_Magistri.
- . *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* On Catholic Action in Italy. June 29, 1931. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non_abbiamo_bisogno.
- . *Rerum Ecclesia*. On the Missions of the Church, February 28, 1926. http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_28021926_rerum-ecclesiae.html
- Pope Pius XII**. *Evangelii Praecones*. On the Promotion of Catholic Mission, 1951.
- . *Christus Dominus*, Apostolic Constitution Concerning the Discipline to be observed with Respect to the Eucharistic Fast, January 6, 1953.
- . *Summi Pontificatus*, On the Unity of Human Society. 20, October, 1939.
- . Address to the Second World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity. October 5, 1957, in *Discorsi e Radiomessaggio di Sua Santità Pio XII*, XIX, Tipografia poliglotta Vaticana.
- . Pius XII. Allocution to the first convention of laymen representing all nations on the promotion of the apostolate. Oct. 15, 195.
- . Pope Pius XII. *Address to the International Union of Institutes of Archaeology, History and History of Art*. March 1956.
- Pope John XXIII**. “*Princeps Pastorum*, On the Missions, Native Clergy and Lay participation.” Nov. 28, 1959.
- . “*Mater et Magistra*, On Christianity and Social Progress.” December 8, 1961.
- . “*Humanae Salutis*, Constitution for the Convocation of the Second Vatican Council.” December 25, 1961.
- . “Opening Address at the Council.” Oct. 11, 1962, in, *The Documents of Vatican II in a New and Definitive Translation With Commentaries and Notes by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*. Ed. Walter M. Abbot, New York: Herder and Herder, 1966.
- . John XXIII. *Gaudet mater ecclesia*. Opening Speech to the Council. No. 11, 1962. Translated from the original Italian version by J. A. Komonchak, <http://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>. [Accessed: 2 June, 2015].
- St. Paul VI**. “*Ecclesiam Suam*, On the Paths of the Church.” August 6, 1964. http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html [Accessed: 29 July, 2017].

- . “*Address to the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.*” SECAM, Kampala Uganda, 31 July 1969.
- . “*Homily*” The Eucharistic Celebration at the conclusion of the Symposium organized by the Bishops of Africa. Kampala, Uganda, 31 July 1969. [Accessed: 2 June, 2015]. <https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.
- . “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelization in the Modern World.” Dec. 8, 1975.
- St. John Paul II.** “*Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture.*” January 7, 1978.
- . “*Catechesi Tradendae*, On Apostolic Exhortation of Catechesis as an Instrument of Evangelization.” October 16, 1979.
- . *Familiaris Consortio*, On the Christian Family in the Modern World. November 22, 1981.
- . “Letter of Foundation of the Pontifical Council for Culture.” May 20, 1982, in, AAS, 74, 1983.
- . Address of the Holy Father to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria on the occasion of their “*Ad Limina*” Visit. 26 September, 1987.
- . *Address to the Polish Community in Detroit, United States of America.* September 19, 1987. <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987.index.html#speeches>.
- . *Christifideles Laici*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On the Vocation and Mission of Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1988.
- . *Redemptoris Missio*. On the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate, December 7, 1990.
- . *Pastores Dabo*. On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present day, 1992.
- . *Ut Unum Sint*. On commitment to Ecumenism (May they Be One), May 25, 1995.
- . *Ecclesia in Africa*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On the Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000. 14 September 1995. Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- . “Letter Instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture.” 20th May 1982.
- . *Ad limina* address to the 13th group of American Bishops, *L’Osservatore Romano*. October 28, 1998.
- . Address on the occasion of Plenary session of the second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. 2 September, 1987, <https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987.index.html#speeches>.

- . *Mulieris Dignitatem*, On Dignity and Vocation of Women. August 15, 1988.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.
- . *Address to the College of Cardinals.* 22 June 1973. <https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1973/june.index.html>
- . *Apostolos suos*; On the theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, May 1, 1998.
<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/document/apostolos-suos-on-the-theological-and-juridical-nature-of-episcopal-conferences-734>
- Pope Benedict XVI.** *The Nature and Mission of Theology*. San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1.
- . *Address to members of the Special Council for Africa of the Synod of Bishops*. Yaounde, March 19, 2009.
- . *Africae Munus*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, On Africa's Commitment. November 19, 2011.
- . *Sacramentum Caritatis*. On the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Church's life and Mission. February 22, 2007.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pl/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html
- . Pope Benedict XVI. "Address to New Cardinals." <http://www.zenit.org/en/article/pope-benedictxvi-address-to-new-cardinals-and-their-families>. Accessed November 10, 2017.
- Pope Francis.** *Evangelii Gaudium*. Apostolic Exhortation, On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, 2013. [Accessed: 11 May, 2018].
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html
- . *Faith and Family: The Importance of Family*.
<https://blog.franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit/pope-francis-on-the-importance-of-family>
 [Accessed: April 4, 2019]
- . Address on World Mission Day, 2013. [Accessed: 9 December, 2018]
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/missions/documents/papa-francesco_20130519_giornata-missionaria2013.html
- . Address to Participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, October 14, 2013.

———. *Mission at the heart of the Christian faith*, Message for World Mission Day, June 4, 2017, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

C. Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN): Books and other Documents

Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. *Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria 1960-2002*. Edited by Peter Schineller, S.J, *The Voice of the Voiceless*. Ibadan-Nigeria: Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited, 2002.

———. *Papal Message to Nigeria: A Collection of Speeches Delivered by His Holiness Pope John Paul II On the Occasion of His Visit to Nigeria*. From 12th to 18th February 1982. A Publication of Catholic Bishops Secretariat, Abuja Nigeria.

———. *The Church in Nigeria: Call to Mission*. Abuja: Mac-Pama Prints Ltd., 2011.

———. *Inculturation in Nigeria*, Proceedings of Nigerian Catholic Bishops Study Session, November 1988.

———. *Our Concern For Nigeria*, (Communiqués issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, on the State of the Church and Nigerian Nation from 1963 to 2015, Compiled and edited by Rev. Fr. Chris Anyanwu, GAZUB Prints Limited, 2016.

———. *The Church Teaches, The Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on Issues of Faith and Life*. Edited by Rev. Peter Schineller, 2003.

———. *The Catholic Church Policy on Education in Nigeria*, June 2015.

———. *Catholic Education in Nigeria. Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education in Nigeria*, 2006. Published by Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria. Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja.

———. *Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission. Lineamenta for the First National Pastoral Congress*. A Publication of Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. Lagos-Nigeria, Sovereign Ventures, 1999.

———. *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission. A Pastoral Exhortation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, To the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful 'On the First National Pastoral Congress' Enugu-Nigeria*: A Publication of Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, CIDJAP Press, 2004.

———. *Restoring the Dignity of the Nigerian Woman: A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria*. Lagos-Nigeria: Sovereign Ventures Press, 2002.

———. Letter No. 91/10 from the Apostolic Nunciature in Nigeria to the President of the CBCN, 22/4/2010. Abuja: Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2011.

D. Other relevant Church documents

- Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. *Guide for Catechists: Document of vocational, formative and promotional orientation of Catechists in the territories dependent on the* Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Vatican City 1993.
- Document of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, Saptienti Consilio*. 1909.
- Congregation for Catholic Education (of Seminaries and Educational Institutions). *Educating together in Catholic Schools a shared mission between consecrated persons and the lay faithful*, 8 September, 2007.
- Editorial of *Missio Africanus*, Journal of African Missiology (Ed.). Harvey C. Kwiyani, vol.1, issue 2, January 2016. missioafricanus.org/.../Missio-Africanus-Journal-Vol-1.-Iss-2.pdf.
- The LEADER*, Editorial: *Nigeria and Religion*. No. 33, 1991.
- Collections of Documents of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith. Vol. I, No. 135.
- Vanguard Newspaper, 12 January 2018; <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/10/poverty-112m-nigerians-live-poverty-line/> [Accessed: 12 April, 2018].

E. General Works

- Aba, U. *The Reception of the Second Vatican Council's Liturgical Reforms in Nigeria (Nsukka Diocese)*. Zurich: LIT VERLAG GmbH & Co. KG Wien, 2016.
- Achebe, C. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1986.
- Acquah, F. *The Impact of African Traditional Religious Beliefs and Cultural Values on Christian-Muslim Relations in Ghana from 1920 through the Present: A Case Study of Nkusukum-Ekumfi-Enyan area of the Central Region*. December 2011.
- Adamu, T. *Boko Haram and its havoc on Nigeria*. Paper presented at the meeting of Nigerian Priests and Religious in Austria (NIPRA). Austria: 29th March, 2016.
- Aguwa, J. C. "Christianity and Nigerian indigenous Culture," in, *Religion, History and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in honour of Ogbu U. Kanu*, (ed.). Chima, J. Korieh, G. Ugo Nwokeji. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2005.
- Aigbadumah, C. A. *An Overview of the Historical Development of the Churches in Nigeria, from the Pre-Colonial Period to the Present Day*. [Accessed, 17 June, 2018]. <https://research.vu.nl/files/42205207/chapter%20Three.pdf>. 2011.
- Ajayi, J. F. A. *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 The Making of a New Elite*. London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd. 1965.

- Akinwale, A. A. *How have we received Ecclesia in Africa?*
<http://dominicaninstitute.academia.edu/AnthonyAkinwale> [Accessed, 17 June, 2018].
- Akpunonu, P. "The Church and Churches in Acts of the Apostles," in, *Journees Bibliques Africaines*. Kinshasa, 1990.
- Alemika, E. and Okoye, F. *Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges*. Kaduna, Nigeria: Human Rights Monitor, 2002.
- Alberigo, G. "The Announcement of the Council. From the Security of the Fortress to the Lure of the Quest," in, G. Alberigo (ed. of the engl. version) *History of Vatican II: (vol. I) Announcement and Preparing Vatican Council II Toward a new Era in Catholicism*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- . *A Brief History of Vatican II*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006.
- Aliyu, J. S. "A Review of the Catholic Nursery and Primary Schools," in, Catholic Education in Nigeria, Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education in Nigeria, edited by Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, for CBCN, 2014.
- Amadi, R. N. "The Nature of the secondary school and vocational curriculum," in, Catholic Education in Nigeria, Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education in Nigeria, edited by Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, for CBCN, 2014.
- Anameje, H. C. *The Laity as Participants in the Mission of the Church: A Theological Reflection in the light of the Ecclesiology of Vatican II with particular reference to the Church in Southeast Nigeria*. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Publishing, 2017.
- Anasiudu, R. C. "The Christian in Public Life", in, *Religion in a Secular State: Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Christian Association of Nigeria*, 15 – 17 November, 1988.
- Anyandele, E. A. *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1966.
- Anyanwu, C. & Otunba, J. F. (eds.), *Our Concern for Nigeria: Catholic Bishops Speak*. A Publication by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria on the state of the Church and Nigerian Nation, from 1963 to 2015, 327.
- Arbuckle, G. A. *Earthing the Gospel: A Handbook of Inculturation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.
- Arinze, F. A. *Partnership in Education, Between Church and State in Eastern Nigeria*. Nigeria: Ude's Printing and Publishing Company, 1965.
- . *The Church and Nigerian Culture*. Onitsha: Tabansi Pub. Co., 1973.

- . “Christianity meets Igbo Traditional Religion,” in, *Interface between Igbo Theology and Christianity*. Keynote address given in the International Interdisciplinary Conference, “The Interface of Igbo Theology and Christianity. Owerri, 6th July 2012.
- . *Church in Dialogue: Walking with the Other Believers*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990.
- Ayandele, E. A. *The Missionary Impact of Modern Nigeria*. London: Longmans, 1966.
- Azevedo, M. *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*. Rome, 1982.
- Baawobr, R. K. *Biblical Foundations of Mission and Current Challenges m.afr.* March 2013 <https://slidex.tips/download/biblical-foundations-of-mission-and-current-challenges>. [Accessed: 12 May, 2017].
- Badke, W. *Research Strategies, Finding your way through the Information Fog*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, Inc., 4th edition, 2011.
- Baker, S. “The Races of the Nile Basin.” In, *Transactions of Ethnological Society of London*. 1867.
- Baur, J. *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62 – 1992*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994.
- Bediako, K. *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992.
- Bevans, S. B. *Models of Contextual Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992.
- . *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2009.
- . “Roman Catholic Perspectives on Mission”, *The Ecumenical Review* vol. 66, no. 1, March 2014. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/erev.12082>. [Accessed: 9 July, 2017].
- Bevans, S. B. & Roger P. S. *Constants in Context. A Theology of Mission for today*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- . *Prophetic Dialogue, Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.
- Bolt, P. G. “Mission and Witness.” In, *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*. Edited by I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Bosch, D. J. *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, fifth edition, 2016.
- Bulus, Y. G. and Yusufu, T. *Christianity in Nigeria. Part 1*. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/20-1_085.pdf [Accessed: 9 July, 2017].

- Buhlmann, W. *Wo der Glaube lebt. Einblicke in die Lage der Weltkirche*. Freiburg i. Br. 1974.
- Carlson, R. J. "The Rights and Responsibilities of Bishops: A Canonical Perspective." In *Cooperation Between Theologians and the Ecclesiastical Magisterium*, L. J. O'Donovan (ed.), Canon Law Society of America, Washington, D.C. 1982, 37-47.
- Chiegboka, A. B. C. "*Shepherd of God's flock*" (1 Pet 5:2): *The Parish Priest and Parish administration*. (Being a Paper Presented to the newly appointed Parish Priest for the 2010/2011 Pastoral Year in Awka Diocese on October 27, 2010.
- . *Challenges of Catholic Men in the Church and the World*, 2009.
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jrhr/article/view/87328>
- . "*Put on the amour of God*" (Eph 6:13): *The Identity, Rights and Challenges of Knights in the Church*; Being a Paper to the Conference of Papal Knights from Nine Eastern States of Nigeria. REPACCO, Okpuno, on October 1, 2009.
<http://revfrprofabcchiegboka.com/img/paper/paper-to-papal-knights-in-nine-eastern-states-October-17-2009.pdf>.
- Claude, G. "Theological Reflections on a New Age of Mission." In, *International Review of Mission* 284, 1982.
- Cohen, A. *Two dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in complex Society*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974.
- Crowder, M. *The Story of Nigeria*, London: Faber and Faber 1962.
- Crollius, R. A. "Inculturation: Newness and ongoing Progress." In, *Making a Church that is truly African in Inculturation: Its meaning and Urgency*. Edited by J. Walligo. Nairobi: Paulines, 1986.
- . *The Meaning of Culture in Theological Anthropology*. 1986.
- Cote, R. G. *Re-Visioning Mission: The Catholic Church and Culture in Postmodern America*. New York/New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Colleen, M. M. "Globalisation at Large: approaching the Ecclesial Question of Tradition in the Twenty-First Century." Vol. 50, in, *New Horizons in theology*. Edited by Terrence Tilley, 135-159. New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Connors, M. *Inculturated Pastoral Planning: The U.S. Hispanic Experience*. Roma: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001.
- Cullinane, P. J. The Universal Church as a Communio of Particular Churches, *Address to Australia- New Zealand & Canon Law Society* 2 November, 1987.
<https://pndiocese.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/1987-11-02-The-Universal-Church-as-a-Communio-of-Particular-Churches.pdf>.

- Curran, C. E. and R. E. Hunt. *Dissent in and for the Church, Theologians and Humanae Vitae*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969.
- Dike, K. O. *Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891*. A paper read at the Centenary of the Mission at Christ Church, Onitsha, on November 13, 1957. Published for the C.M.S. Niger Mission by the Ibadan University Press, 1962. [Accessed July 30, 2017].
http://anglicanhistory.org/africa/ng/dike_origins1957.html.
- Dim, I. O. *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese*. <https://www.peterlang.com/view/title/45407> [Accessed: 18 February, 2019].
- Dodo, D. D. "The Priest in Nigeria, a Layman's Perspective." In, *The Clergy in Nigeria Today*. Edited by L. N. Mbefo & E.M. Ezeogu. Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd. 1992, 31-48.
- Donald, S. and Carroll, S. *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983.
- Dorr, D. *Mission in Today's World*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Dozie, O. *Historical Missionary Activity, Schooling, and the Reversal of Fortunes: Evidence from Nigeria*. Dalhousie University Roland Pongou: Department of Economics, University of Ottawa, August 18, 2014.
- Dhavamony, M. "Evangelization and Dialogue in Vatican II and in the 1974 Synod." In, R. Latourelle (ed.) *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives: Twenty-five Years After (1962-1987)*. Vol. III, New York: Paulist Press, 1989, 264-281.
- . "The Kingdom of God and Religious Pluralism" in *SM*, vol. 46, 1997, p. 234.
- Dukor, M. "Ethnic Nationalism and A Theory of Nation building." In, Maduabuchi Dukor, (ed.), *Philosophy and Politics: Discourse on Values and Power in Africa*. Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd., 1998.
- Dulles, A. "John Paul II and the New Evangelisation: What does it mean?" In, R. Martin and P. Williamson *Pope John Paul II and the New Evangelisation*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995.
- . *"The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System."* New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 1992.
- Ekechi, F. "The Consolidation of Colonial Rule, 1885–1914," in, Toyin Falola (ed.), *Colonial Africa, 1885–1939*, vol. 3 of Africa, 27. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002.
- Ekechukwu, A. U. "Theology of Religions and the Theological Problematic of Inculturation." In, E. E. Uzukwu (ed.), *"Religion and African Culture."* Nigeria: Spiritan Publications, 1988.
- Ekeokpara, C. A. *The Development of Islam after the Death of Mohammed*. An Unpublished Handout, University of Calabar, 1996.

- Ekpu, P. E. *History of the Church of Benin City*. Benin, Nigeria: Floreat Systems Ltd., 1984.
- Enwerem, I. M. *A Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*. Ibadan: IFRA, 1995.
- Enweh, I. "African Christian Spirituality: A Prophetic Spirituality." In, J. Obi Oguejiofor and Innocent Enweh, (eds.), *Ecclesia in Africa: The Nigerian Response*. Nsukka, Nigeria: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1997.
- Evely, L. *The Word of God*. Translated by Mary Agnes. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.
- Eze, I. P. *Being a Christian in Igbo land: Facts, Fictions and Challenges*. Logos Verlag Berlin: GmbH, 2013.
- Ezeanya, S. N. *The Church Speaks to Africa, Some Aspects of Christianity in Nigeria*. Enugu: 1976.
- Ezenezi, F. *Contemporary Challenges for Vatican II's Theology of the Laity: The Nigerian Church Experience*. A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Regis College and the Theological Department of the Toronto School of Theology, 2015.
- Ezenweke, E. O. and Kanu, A. I. "The Church and National Development: towards a Philosophy of Collaboration." In, *African Research Review*, vol. 6, 2012. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v6i2.9>, IAARR 2012: www.afrrrevjo.net.
- Ezeokafor, P. *Bearing One Another's Burdens (Gal 6:2): Towards a Befitting Living – Care for the Poor, Sick, and the Aged*. Lenten Pastoral Letter. Awka, Nigeria: Fides Publication, 2018.
- Falk, P. *The Growth of the Church in Africa*. Michigan: Zondarvan Pub. House 1979.
- Federici, T. *Study Outline on the Mission and Witness of the Church*. https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/Federici.htm [Accessed July 30, 2017].
- Flannery, A. ed., *Vatican Council II, Vols. 1 & 2, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. New Revised Edition. Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996.
- Glasser, A. F. and Charles, E. E. *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible*, Grand Rapids. Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003.
- . "The Whole-Bible Basis of Mission." In, A. F. Glasser and D. A. McGavran, *Contemporary Theologies of Mission*. Grand rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983.
- Gregory, W. P. "Catholic Theology of Mission." In, *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*. Edited by Stephen B. Bevans, SVD, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, volume 15.

- Gyekye, K. & Wiredu, K. (Eds.). "Person and Community." In, *Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*. Washington, D. C: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992.
- Hanks, T. D. *God so loved the World*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983.
- Hanson, B. C. *Introduction to Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997.
- Hastings, A. *Church and Mission in Modern Africa*. London: Burns & Oates, 1967.
- Howard, P. and Vinoth, R. "The Message of Mission." *The Bible Speaks Today Series*. Edited by Derek Tidball. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.
- Healey, J. & Sybertz, D. *Towards an African Narrative Theology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996.
- Hoc, V.P-XI-CO. *Introduction to missiology* 2014. <http://docplayer.net/20972592-Introduction-to-missiology.html>
- Idowu, B. E. *Towards an Indigenous Church*. Ibadan: Olusey's Press, 1973.
- . *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. London: Longman Group Ltd., 1977.
- . *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM Press, 1973.
- Ikenga-Metuh, E. E. *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion*. Onitsha: Imico Publishers, 1985.
- . "Muslim Resistance to Christian Missionary Penetration of Northern Nigeria 1857-1960: A Missiological Interpretation." In, *The Gods in Retreat: Continuity and Change in African Religions*. Edited by Metuh, I.E. Enugu: Fourth Dimensions Publishers, 1987.
- Ilogu, E. "Christianity and Ibo Culture." New York: NOK Publishers Ltd., 1974.
- Iloh, T. I. *African Cultural Identity in the light of the theology of Inculturation*. Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne"17 (2018), s. 39–52.
- Imokhai, C. A. "The Evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria." In, Makozi A. O., et al., (ed.) *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*. Nigeria: Macmillan Publishing Co.1982.
- Inyanwachi, E. *A content analysis of church documents relative to the role of Catholic schools and universities in Nigeria in the process of inculturation*. A Dissertation Presented to The Faculty of the School of Education Department of Leadership Studies Catholic Educational Leadership Program, The University of San Francisco, May 2007.
- Isichei, E. *A History of Christianity in Africa. From Antiquity to the Present*. London: Africa World Press Inc., 1995.
- Ivowi, U. M. O. Corporate Challenge to Nurturing and sustaining Catholic Tertiary Education, in, *Catholic Education in Nigeria, Proceedings of the first Summit on Catholic Education*

- in Nigeria, edited by Education Unit of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja, for CBCN, 2014.
- Jenkinson, W. and O'Sullivan, H. editors. *Trends in Mission: Towards the Third Millennium*. New York: Orbis Books, 1991
- John, W. M. *What happened at Vatican II*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Johnson, B. W. <https://brianwjohanson.org/2013/04/12/ad-extra/>. See also Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, Current version, 2005.
- Jørgensen, K. *Biblical and Theological foundations: The Triune God and the missionary Church*. Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, Volume 25. *Called to Unity For the Sake of Mission*. Edited by Gibaut, John and Knud Jørgensen. Oxford: by Regnum Books International, 2014.
- Kaigama, I. A. *Evangelization and Pastoral Progress*. Homily, on the Canonical erection of the Catholic Diocese of Bomadi and the Installation of Most Rev. Hyacinth Oroko Egbebo, 15th December, 2017.
- Kanagaraj, J. J. *Missiological Significance of Bearing Witness in John's Gospel: Witnesses of Jesus and the Church*.
https://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/religious_studies/SNTS/kanagaraj.htm
- Kenny, J. *The Catholic Church in tropical Africa*. Ibadan-Nigeria, 1982.
- Knitter, P. F. *Introduction to Theologies of Religions*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Komonchak, J. "The struggle for the council during the preparation of Vatican II." In, G. Alberigo, 1995.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19620911_ecumenical-council.html.
- Kraft, C. H. *Christianity in Culture, A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.
- . Kraft, C. H. *Communication Theory for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Kress, R. *Theology of the local Church*.
<https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ctsa/article/.../2770/2405>, 2012.
- Kroeger, J. H. *A Vatican II Journey: Fifty Milestones*. Philippines: St Pauls, 2012.
- Kukah, M. H. *After the Insurgency: Some Thoughts on National Cohesion*. Being a lecture delivered at the 43rd Convocation at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, on March 27th, 2014.

- .Kukah, Matthew H. *Sharia Law in Africa: The Nigerian Experience*. Draft Paper presented at a Conference on Islam & Mission in Africa organised by the *Fondazione Ambrosiana Paulo VI*, in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Milan, September 2-5th, 2015. <http://catholicdiocese-sokoto.org/article/sharia-law-africa-nigerian-experience>.
- Lamin, S. *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. London: C. Hurst & Company 1983.
- Lauren, P. "Nigeria: Current Issues and U. S. Policy." Congressional Research Service. www.crs.gov. 1.
- Leonard, A. G. *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes*. London, 1906, revised edition, 1968.
- Luzbetak, L. J. *The Church and Cultures, New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988.
- Magesa, L. *Anatomy of Inculturation; transforming the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- . *Rethinking Mission: Evangelization in Africa in a New Era*. Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 2006.
- . *What is not Sacred?* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2013.
- . *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997.
- Makozi, A. O. "Contemporary Trends in the Growth of the Church in Nigeria," in, A. O. Makozi & G. J. Afolabi Ojo (eds.) *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*. Nigeria: Macmillan Nig. Pub. 1982.
- .Makozi, A.O. and Gabriel J.A. Ojo, Editors. *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*. Lagos-Nigeria: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Limited, 1982.
- Mbachu, H. "Theological Appraisal of political power and poverty in West Africa today." In, *West African Journal of Ecclesial Studies*, no. 3, 1991.
- Mbefo, L. N. *Towards a Mature African Christianity*. Nigeria: Spiritan Publications, 1989.
- . *Coping with Nigeria's Two-Fold Heritage*. Onitsha: Spiritan Pub. 1996.
- Mbiti, J. S. *African Religion and Philosophy*. New York: Praeger Publishers 1970.
- . *Introduction to African Religion*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Books Ltd., 1978.
- McBrien, R. P. *Catholicism*. Study Edition. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984.
- Mokwugo, O. "Leadership within the Nation's Economy." *African Guardian Newspaper* (October 5, 1992). See, Soronnadi A. Njoku, "Problems and Prospects of the 21st Century Nigerian Society." In, R.C. Onwuanibe (editor). *The Relevance of the Church in the 21st Century Nigerian Society*.

- Moyo, A. "Missional Strategies from Antioch: Lessons for African Missionaries in Britain", in, *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology*. Edited by Harvey C. Kwiyani. Volume 1, Issue 2, (January 2016). missioafricanus.org/missio-africanus-journal-of-african-missiology/
- Muller, K. *Mission Theology: An Introduction*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1987.
- Muonwe, M. *Dialectics of Faith-Culture Integration*. USA: Xlibris, 2014.
- Nebuchukwu, A. "The prophetic mission of the Church in the context of social and political oppression in Africa." In, Justin Ukpog (ed.), *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millenium: Challenges and Prospects*. Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1992.
- Neil, S. *History of Christian Missions*. Penguin Publications, 1964.
- Ngwoke, E. *The Gospel and Church in service of Society*. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., Ltd., 2016.
- Ngwoke, I. K. *Introducing Instruments of Ecclesiastical Administration*. Paper at the Canon Law Society of Nigeria Conference. 1987.
- Njoku, U. J. "Solidarity and Collaboration without boundaries: shifts in the Social Teachings of John Paul II." In, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 17, 2005.
- Njoku, R. A. *The advent of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Its growth in Owerri diocese*. Owerri, Nigeria: Assumpta Press, 1980.
- Nmah, P. E. Conflicts between two Religious Cultures: Achieving Reconciliation.
<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jrhr/article/viewFile/87323/77039>.
- Nwaigbo, F. *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective, Theology of the Local Church in the Light of the Second Vatican Council*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996.
- . The Christians in Politics and the Social Mission of the Church in West African Sub-region, in, *The Christian in Politics and the West African Experience*, eds. Ferdinand Nwigbo, Jude Asanbe, Camillus Umoh, Onyema Anozie, John Gangwari, Innocent Ejeh, Austin Echema and Emmanuel Nwaoru, *Proceedings of the Conference of the Eighteenth CIWA Theology Week held at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, 26th - 30th March 2007*, CIWA Publications, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 2007.
- . "Tribalism Versus Evangelization in sub-saharan Africa," In, *African Ecclesiastical Review*, 2005, 131-158.
- . "Ethnicity and New Image of Nigeria, explorations in Creation Theology." In, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*. Edited by Elochukwu Uzukwu, vol. 17, 2005.

- Nwanaju, I. U. *The Contributions of Ecclesia in Africa and Africae Munus to Dialogue with Muslims in Nigeria*. www.iiste.org, Historical Research Letter, ISSN 2224-3178 Vol.34, 2016.
- Nwedo, A. G. *Centenary Celebration in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1995, Homily delivered at Onitsha*. December 7, 1985.
- Nwosu, R. A. *The Church and Inter-tribal Harmony. A Study in the Nigerian Perspective*. Roma 1986.
- Nwosu, V. A. "The Civil War: A Time of Great Trial." In, Obi C. A. et al., (ed.) *Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 -1985*.
- . *The Laity and the growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria, The Onitsha Story, 1903-1983*. Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana-FEP Publishers Ltd., 1990.
- Obi, C. A. (ed.) *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 – 1985*. Onitsha: Africana-Fep Publishers, 1985.
- . "Background to the Planting of Catholic Christianity in Lower Niger." Edited by Celestine A. Obi, et al. *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria*.
- Obiefuna, B. A. C. *Titles and Conflicts of identity in the Igbo Christian: A Reflection from Ozo and Knighthood Titles*. In, *Bigard Theological Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005
- Oborji, F. A. *Trends in African Theology Since Vatican II: A Missiological Orientation*. Leberit, Rome, 1989.
- . *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006.
- . *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religion: Issues of Interpretation and Mission*. Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, 1998.
- . *Archbishop Stephen Ezeanya: The New Era and New Evangelization in Nigeria, the Onitsha experience*. Pontifical Urban University, Rome 2003. [Accessed: 18 August, 2018].
<https://www.foborji.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Archbishop-Ezeanya.pdf>
- . *Mission and Reconciliation Theology and Pastoral Challenges of Social Violence*. MMXV Aracne editrice int.leS.r.l, 2015. [Accessed: 12 December, 2018].
- . *The Mission ad gentes of the African Churches*. [Accessed: 12 December, 2018].
https://sedosmission.org/old/eng/oborji_2.htm
- . *New Evangelization in the context of the Church in Igboland: Prospects and Challenges*. A paper delivered at the meeting of the Association of Igbo Priests, Religious and Seminarians in Rome. Pontificio Istituto di "Sacra Musica", Rome, 19 March 200.

- O'Brien, P. T. "Mission, Witness, and the Coming of the Spirit." In, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, no. 9 (1999).
https://www.ibr-bbr.org/files/bbr/BBR_1999_12_Obrien_MissionSpiritComing.pdf.
- Ochulor, O. H. *The Function of Dialogue in the Process of Evangelisation A pastoral-theological appraisal of the relevance of Dialogue in a Nigerian context based on the experience of Igboland*. Dissertation, Eingereicht Bei Der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät Der Julius-Maxillian-Universität, Würzburg, 2002.
- Odoemena, A. Current Problems of Evangelization in Our Country/Diocese, in: I. Ugonna & O. Ike (eds.) *Evangelization 2000: The Task before Us (Proceedings, Lectures and Communique of the 3rd Enugu Diocesan Priests' Annual Seminar April 2 - April 4)*. Enugu: Lay Apostolate Publications, 1990.
- Odozor, P. I. "The Challenge of Africa to the Western Conscience: US Bishops and Solidarity with Africa." In, *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*. Vol. 17, 2005, 3-28.
- Oforchukwu, J. I. *A Theological and Biblical appraisal of Ozo Title taking and its implications for current leadership issues in Igbo Catholic Church (Nigeria)*. Dissertation for the degree of doctor of philosophy (Ph.D) in Practical Theology at The Southern African Theological Seminary. May, 2011, p. 134.
- Ojo, A. A. *Catholic Laity in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Daily Graphics Publishers, 2004.
- . "Emergence of Laity Organization in Nigeria," in, *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*. Edited by A. O Makozi and G. J. Afolabi Ojo.
- Okafor, G. M. *Development of Christianity and Islam in Modern Nigeria*. Altenberg 1992.
- Okafor, J. *The Theological Literacy, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Practices of Lay Catholic Administrators of the Catholic Secondary Schools in the Awka Diocese of Nigeria*. Doctoral Dissertations, 2013.
- Okafor, P. "Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church: Challenges to the Twofold Apostolic Heritage." in, Elochukwu E. Uzukwu. C.S.Sp, ed. *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*. Vol. 17, 2005, 103-127.
- Okere, T. "Collaborative Ministry and Renewal in the Church: Comments on the Nigerian Context." Edited by Elochukwu E. Uzukwu. C.S.Sp. *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, Vol. 17, 2005, 89-102.
- Okike, B. O. *The Practice of Sharia in Nigeria: a Democratic Secular State*. Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd. 2000.

- Okoye, J. C. "The Bible in Catholic Mission, 1910-2010." In, *A Century of Catholic Mission, 123 – 132 A Century of Catholic Mission, Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*, Edited by Stephen B. Bevans, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series. Volume 15. Regnum Books International, 2013, 133-154.
- Olaniyan, R. *African History and Culture, Nigeria*: Longman Publishers, 1982.
- Olikenyi, G. I. *African Hospitality: A Model for Communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural context*. Steyler Verlag Nettetal, 2001.
- Oliver, R. and Atmore, A. *Africa since 1800*. London: SCM, 1978.
- O'Malley, John W. *What Happened at Vatican II*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008.
- . "The Hermeneutic of Reform': A Historical Analysis," *Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2012): 517-546.
- Omenka, I. N., edited. *The School in the Service of Evangelization; The Catholic Educational Impact in Eastern Nigeria 1886-1950*.
- . *The Church in Nigeria: Studies on its Religious and Socio-Cultural Challenges*. Enugu-Nigeria: Snaap Press Ltd, 2003.
- Omolade, R. "Challenges for Catholic Schools in Nigeria." In, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, vol. 1, Issue 1, 2009.
- Onah, G. Address to the members of the Knight of St Mulumba, Nsukka. 3rd May, 2015. <http://nsukkacatholicdiocese.org/your-role-in-church-is-important-than-ever-bishop-onah-tells-knights-and-ladies.html>. [Accessed: 2 February, 2019].
- Onayikan, J. "*What We saw and heard at the African Synod*." *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, vol. 6/2.
- . "Return of Missionary Schools." 2013. www.vanguardngr.com/2013/02/return-missionary-schools-to-original-owners-cardinal-onaiyekan-tells-govts/.
- Onwuanibe, R.C. ed. *The Relevance of the Church in the 21st Century Nigerian Society*. Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995.
- Onwubiko, O. A. *Theory and Practice of Inculturation: Christian Mission & Culture in Africa*. Vol. II, Enugu, Nigeria, SNAAP Press, 1992.
- . *The Church in Mission in the Light of Ecclesia in Africa*. Kenya-Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001.
- Onwubiko, K. B. C. *History of West Africa Book One A. D. 1000 -1800*. Onitsha: Africana Educational Pub. Co., 1967.
- . *The Catholic Church and the development of education in eastern Nigeria, 1885-1994*, 1985.

- Onwuliri, C. E. C. "The Church as an agent of progress and development." In, I. Onyeocha (edited).
- Onwunata, C. O. G. *Towards an Inculturated African Communal Model of Ecclesiology: Clergy-Laity Collaborative Ministry in Igboland of Southern Nigeria*. Faculté de théologie et de sciences des religions Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiae Doctor (Ph.D.) en théologie, June 2007
file:///C:/Users/Dell/Documents/Onwunata_Clement_OG_2008_these.pdf
- Onwurah, E. "Mission Christian Converts in Traditional Igbo Society in Nigeria." In, *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, Vol. 54, No.6, 1990.
- Oputa, S. C. "Shanahan Planted: Heery Watered...." an unpublished paper presented to the Immaculate Heart Sisters of Nigeria on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the foundation, 1937-1987.
- Oranusi, T. C. *Mission as humanisation in the life and work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan: A theological evaluation of an intercultural encounter in South-East Nigeria*. Thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy (Religion and Culture) in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University, 2018.
- Orobator, A. E. *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in its Social Context*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 2000.
- Ozele, T. M. "Catholic Social Thought: Contemporary Challenges for African Church." In, *NACATHS Journal of African Theology*, no. 2, March, 1992.
- Ozigbo, I. R. A. *Igbo Catholicism: The Onitsha Connection 1967 – 1984*. Onitsha: Africana FEP Pub. Ltd. 1985.
- . Ozigbo, Ikenga R. A. *A Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria: A Study in Colonial Evangelism*. Onitsha: Etukokwu Pub. (NIG) Ltd., 1988.
- Ozor, F. "Return mission schools to owners, NCE urges state governments." *Daily Independent*. Retrieved November 6, 2003. [Accessed: 10 February, 2019].
<http://www.odili.net/news/sources/2003/nov.6/303.html>. 2003.
- Padilla, R. "The Contextualization of the Gospel." In, C. H. Kraft and T. N. Wisley, eds., *Reading in Dynamic Indigeneity*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1979.
- Parkin, D. *The Cultural Definition of Political Responses: Lineal destiny among the Luo*. London: Academic Press, 1978.
- Paul, R. and Elder, L. *Critical Thinking, Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2014.

- Pobee, J. S. "I am first an African and Second a Christian?" In, *Indian Theological Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, July 1988.
- Porch, F. "Holy Spirit." In, K. Muller et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Porter, L. B. *A Guide to the Church, Its Origin and Mission, Its Mission and Ministries*. St. Pauls Publications, 2008.
- Preez, J. du. "Mission in the Biblical Text." In, H. L. Pretorius et al. (eds.), *Reflecting on Mission in the African Context: A Handbook for Missiology*. Bloemfontein: Pro Christo Publications, 1987.
- Rahner, K. *Concern for the Church: Theological Investigations XX*. Translated by Edward Quin, New York: Crossroad, 1981.
- . *Basic Theological Interpretation of the Vatican II Council*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981.
- . *The Council: A New Beginning. The Church after the Council*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966.
- Ratzinger, J. *Ecumenism and Politics*, London: 1988.
- Rausch, T. *The Roots of the Catholic Tradition*. New York: 1986.
- Sanneh, L. *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989.
- . *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. London: C. Hurst & Company 1983.
- Saro-Wiwa K. *A Month and a Day. A Detention Diary*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Schillbeeckx, E. *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry*. New York: Crossroad, 1985.
- Schinneller, P. (ed.). *The Voice of the Voiceless: Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria 1960-2002*. Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited, 2002.
- . *A Handbook on Inculturation*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.
- Schreck, A. *Vatican II: The crisis and the promise* (Cincinnati. OH: Servant Books. 2005.
- Schroeder, R. P. *What Is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008.
- Schreiter, R. L. *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985.
- "SEDOS", *How Africa is changing the face of Mission*. Vol. 49, number 11/12, February, 2018.
<https://sedosmission.org/article/how-africa-is-changing-the-face-of-mission/>.
- Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 3. [Accessed: 25 February, 2019].

- http://shakespeare.mit.edu/julius_caesar/julius_caesar.4.3.html.
- Shiweobi, G. E. *Understanding the Catholic Knighthood*. Nigeria: Okpala, Aba Seminary Publications, 1992.
- Shorter, A. *African Culture and the Christian Church: An Introduction to Social and Pastoral Anthropology*. London: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1973.
- . *Toward a theology of Inculturation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988.
- Sivalon, J. C. *God's Mission and Postmodern Culture*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2012.
- Stott, J. R. W. "The Biblical Basis of Evangelization." In, G. H. Anderson and T. F. Stransky (eds.), *Mission Trends*, no. 2: *Evangelization*, New York: Paulist Press, 1975.
- Sullivan, M. *The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology*. New York: Mahwah, NJ., Paulist Press, 2007.
- Tomko, J. Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Guide for Catechists: Document of vocational, formative and promotional orientation of Catechists in the territories dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Vatican City 1993.
- Trimingham, J. S. *A History of Islam in West Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Uchem, R. N. "Collaborative Ministry and Inculturation: Experiences in Two Countries." *The Nigerian Journal of Theology*. Vol. 20 June, 2006, 16-25.
- . *Overcoming Women's Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women*.
- Udeafor, I. N. *Inculturation: Path to African Christianity*. Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1994.
- Udoette, D. *Christianity in Nigeria: Trends and Interpretations*. Uyo: Alcollins Printers Nig., 2012.
- Uka, E. M. "Is Religious Education Necessary in Contemporary Schools?" In, Nwachuku, D.N. (ed.), *Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Education and Development*. Enugu: Sam & Star Group Company, 1990.
- Ukpong, D. P. *Nigerian Pentecostalism: Case, Diagnosis and Prescription*. Uyo, Fruities' Publications, 2008.
- . *The presence and impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria*, 2006, p. 39. <https://www.glopent.net/.../presence-and-impact-of-pentecostalism.../>.
- Ukpong, J. "Proclaiming the Kingdom of God in Africa Today." In, J. Ukpong (ed.), *Proclaiming the Kingdom: Essays in Contextual New Testament Studies*. Port Harcourt: CIWA Publications, 1993.
- Umoh, V. A. *The Challenges of Mission in Nigeria*. May 15, 2018.

- <https://valentineumoh.com/2018/05/15/the-challenges-of-mission-in-nigeria1/>
- Umoh, C. "Common Principles in Catholic Theology in the 21st Century: African Voice." In, *The Oracle*. International Journal of Culture, Religion and Society. Vol. 2, December, 2006, no. 2.
- Umoren, A. International Colloquium on the Catholic Church and Pentecostalism, held recently at the Daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre (DRACC), Lugbe, Abuja. <https://www.csnigeria.org/newsdetail.php?tab=748>.
- Umoren, U. E. "Symbols and their Meaning in West Africa." In, *Evangelizing Mission of the Church in West Africa*. Edited by Rev. Sr. Ugochukwu Agbakwuru. Nigeria: AWACC Publication, 1993.
- Usoh, F. "True Federalism as a remedy for ethnic politics in Nigeria." In, *The Oracle*, International Journal of Culture, Religion and Society. Vol. 2, no. 2, December 2006.
- Uwalaka, J. "The Church as Conscience of a Nation." In, I. Onyeocha (ed.), *The Church as agent of progress and Development*. CIP Jubilee Essays. Owerri: Imo State University press, 2008.
- Uzo, L. N. *Missionary apostolate of Bishop Shanahan in Igboland of Nigeria*. Rome: 1988.
- Uzukwu, E. E. *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996.
- . "Missiology Today: The African Situation." In, *Religion and African Culture*, Band 1. Inculturation – A Nigerian Perspective. Enugu-Nigeria: 1988.
- Vasumu, A. et al, "Mission and Discipleship: A Call for Self-emptying." In *NACATHS Journal of African Theology*. Vol. 22, March 2012.
- Walligo, John. *Inculturation: Its meaning and Urgency*. Kenya: St Paul Publications, 1996.
- Walker, C. *Missionary Pope: The Catholic Church and the positive elements of other religions in the Magisterium of Paul VI*. New York: IVE Press, 2009.
- Walton, Isaac. *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr Richard Hooker, His Life and Death*. Oxford: The University Press, vol. II, March, 2012. Accessed: 6 June, 2018. [https://www.amazon.com/Learned-Judicious-Divine-Richard Hooker/dp/1276967934](https://www.amazon.com/Learned-Judicious-Divine-Richard-Hooker/dp/1276967934).
- Warnack, V. *Encyclopaedia of Biblical Theology* (ed.) Baur, J, vol. 1. London: 1970.
- Wayne, C. B., Gregory, G. Colomb and Joseph, M. W. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 3rd edition, 2008.
- William, P. Gregory, "Catholic Theology of Mission, What is the Church's Mission"? In, *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*. Edited by Stephen B. Bevans. SVD, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series: Volume 15.

- William, R. S. "Lectures on the Religion of the Semites Second and Third Series," edited with an Introduction and Appendix by John Day. In, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 183.
- Wright, Christopher, J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aggiornamento>. [Accessed: 29 January, 2019]
- Yakubu, Ibrahim Bawa. "Evangelization 2000: Tasks and Challenges for the Nigerian Church." In, *NACATHS, Journal of African Theology*, vol. 2, 1992.