

SYMPOSIUM OF
EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES
OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR



Pastoral Exhortation of the Symposium
of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and
Madagascar (SECAM)

KAMPALA DOCUMENT

*That They May Know Christ and
have Life in Abundance*

(Jn 17:3; 10:10)

To Bishops, Priests, Religious Men and Women
And All Lay Faithful of the
Church-Family of God in Africa
On the Occasion of the Golden Jubilee of SECAM
1969-2019

Kampala 2019

SECAM PRESIDENTS OVER THE YEARS



2019 -

**His Eminence Philippe Cardinal
OUÉDRAOGO
Archbishop of Ouagadougou
Appointed cardinal in 2014
Country - Burkina Faso**



2019 -

**First Vice-President of
SECAM, Bishop
Sithembele Sipuka**



2019 -

**second vice-president
of SECAM, Bishop Lucio Andrice
Muandula**



2019 -

General Secretaries



2013-2019

Bishop Gabriel MBILINGI, CSSp
Archbishop of Lubango
Country - ANGOLA



2007-2013

His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo
Archbishop of Dar-es-Salaam since 1992
Appointed cardinal in 1998
Country - Tanzania



2003-2007

His Eminence John Olorunfemi
Cardinal ONAIYEKAN
Archbishop of Abuja since 1994
Appointed cardinal in 2012
Country - NIGERIA



1997-2003

His Eminence Laurent Cardinal
MONSENGWO PASINYA
Archbishop of Kinshasa from 2007 to 2018
Appointed cardinal in 2010
Country - DR Congo



1994-1997

Bishop Gabriel GONSUM GANAKA
Archbishop of Jos, Nigeria from 1994
to 1999, year of his death
Country - NIGERIA



1991-1994

His Eminence Christian Cardinal
WIYGHAN TUMI
Archbishop of Douala from 1991 to 2009
Appointed cardinal in 1988
Country - Cameroon



1987-1990

Bishop Gabriel GONSUM GANAKA
Archbishop of Jos since 1974 then Archbishop of Jos
from 1994 to 1999, date of his death
Country - NIGERIA



1984-1987

His Eminence Cardinal Joseph
Albert MALULA
Archbishop of Kinshasa (name chan-
ged from Léopoldville in 1966) from
1964 Appointed cardinal in 1969
Country - DR Congo



1981-1984

His Eminence Paul Cardinal
ZOUNGRANA
Archbishop of Ouagadougou
from 1960 to 1995
Appointed cardinal in 1965
Country - BURKINA FASO



1978-1981

His Eminence Cardinal THIANDOUM
Hyacinthe
Archbishop of Dakar from 1962 to 2004
Country - SENEGAL



1969-1978

His Eminence Paul Cardinal
ZOUNGRANA
Archbishop of Ouagadougou from 1960 to
1995, elevated to the cardinalate in 1965.
Country - BURKINA FASO



INTRODUCTION

1. The celebration of the Golden Jubilee (29 July 1969 - 29 July 2019) of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), offers the Church in Africa and Madagascar a unique opportunity to be grateful to God for his countless blessings to the Church-Family of God in Africa, to the entire continent, and especially for these past fifty years of its creation. At the end of this jubilee celebration, and with a profound gratitude to God, we wish to intensively engage ourselves in our desire to know Christ more deeply and to follow him more closely in order to receive from him the fullness of life that he brought to humanity (cf. Jn 10:10). Strengthened by the Word of God and the Eucharist, and guided by the Holy Spirit, who leads us to “the whole truth” (Jn 16:13), we commit ourselves to return to our baptismal roots in Christ and his gospel; to deepen the knowledge of our profession of faith; to live up to our promises in all sectors of life; and to seek new strength and zeal for the mission; in order to build, for all citizens, a new Africa centred on God.

2. As we progress with zeal and in the spirit of jubilee, we wish to always emphasize our dependency on God and to repent from all failures, so as to conform ourselves to the new covenant in Christ and to express our gratitude to God for his continued presence in our daily lives as individuals and as a Church, Family of God. More importantly, we commit ourselves to live and work together as Family of God, with the Eucharist and the word of God as our source of life and strength, so as to become visible and credible signs in Africa of the “kingdom of truth and life”, “of holiness and grace”, and “of justice, love and peace.”¹ We put this initiative of the Golden Jubilee of SECAM in the overall context of the Great Jubilee of our Lord Jesus Christ, calling to mind the invitation of St John Paul II, in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, to all the people of God to reflect on their experiences of the Great Jubilee and out of this

¹ The Roman Missal, Preface of the Mass of Christ the King.



reflection, bring their contribution to bear on a renewed way of being Church.²

3. Similarly, we call upon all the people of God in Africa and Madagascar as well as our collaborators, to take this Kampala Document, not so much as a programme for the renewal of faith, or for the transformation of the life of the Church in Africa, but as a call to participate both personally and communally in this spirit of renewal. We urge each and everyone, from their experiences to contribute to this common reflection and action.

4. We count, particularly on the experiences of our churches in Africa, especially in the last fifty years of SECAM.³ Calling to mind the exhortation of Pope Paul VI, “Africans, be your own missionaries”,⁴ we propose this Document as a starting point for the guidelines to be followed by the people of God in Africa and beyond, inviting all to joyfully celebrate our life and our mission in Christ as family of God, with faith, hope and love.

5. The theme of this Document, “*That they may know Christ and have life in abundance*”, is inspired by the teachings of Jesus about the nature and purpose of his mission, as well as the challenges and hopes of Africa. During his ministry, Jesus declared that he, the good shepherd, had come so that “all may have life and have it in abundance (Jn 10: 10). In his farewell prayer to God after accomplishing his mission (John 17), he said: “Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). The different parts of this Document highlight key questions of personal and communal, theological and pastoral reflections on this theme, for the life and mission of the Church Family of God in Africa.

2 St. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, At the Beginning of the Third Millennium (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001), 3

3 SECAM was created at Kampala on 29 July 1969, hence the celebration of the Golden Jubilee on 29 July 2019.

4 Pope Paul VI, Homily, during the Eucharistic Celebration marking the end of the Symposium organized by African Bishops, Kampala (Uganda) 31 July 1969. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

6. The first part invites us to recognize that Jesus came among us in Africa. We know the different African contexts in which we received him; and how we have proclaimed the gospel, especially after the creation of SECAM at Kampala, and how we have identified the reasons to thank God for his grace up to this time of hope in order to get a renewed zeal for the mission.

7. In the second part, we recall that “to those who received him” Jesus “gave power to become children of God” (Jn 1:12). To continue growing in this divine life requires that we meet and learn to know Jesus, live in him, and with him; and like him we live the new life received from God at baptism. We do not only live this life as individuals, but as the Church-Family of God. Just as we do in our biological families, we should build Church-Family of God with greater determination.

8. In the third part of the Document, we are invited to reflect on the need to “repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15) and to work for the transformation of the world. It treats the socio-cultural, political, economic, ethical and ecological challenges confronting us today. The Gospel of the crucified and risen Christ is our strength. We should not be ashamed of him. He invites us to change our mentality; to take into account new pastoral challenges and to rethink our formation for a new method of proclaiming the gospel. Responding to today’s challenges for renewed Africa requires a spirituality of action and commitment, a deep desire to build the Church-Family of God as the visible presence of God’s kingdom among us and a sure sign of our eternal hope.

9. We conclude the Document with some reflections on the new methods of mission in view of new Africa, rooted in the Good News of God whereby God’s sons and daughters are more than ever missionaries to all nations in the spirit of *Ad Gentes*.

10. With unwavering confidence in the loving care of God, our Father, supported by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts and renews the face of the earth, we urge all the people of God to see this Jubilee of SECAM as a *kairos* for new life in Christ; and to receive this Document as a pastoral



instrument for a new missionary commitment after the example of Christ. Today, as in the past the Risen Christ invites us to go out and “make disciples of all the nations” (Mt 28:19); to proclaim the Good News of God’s unconditional love for all creatures (cf. Mk 16:15); and to work concertedly and collaboratively for a new and renewed Africa. The pastoral usefulness of this Document will depend on the commitment of individuals, families, ecclesial communities, parishes, dioceses and institutions of formation and learning to bring to life its contents in their lives at individual and community levels. SECAM itself is committed to respond with zeal to its mission of ensuring the unity and cohesion of the Church-Family of God, an ecclesial communion necessary for a new missionary commitment expected on the African continent, Madagascar and the adjacent islands.





FIRST PART

HE CAME AMONG US (Cf. JN 1: 11a)

I.1 THE CONTEXT OF MISSION

11. A land welcoming to Christ and his Good News, Africa, from the outset, was at the forefront in the accomplishment of our salvation. God-Word become flesh, fleeing the onslaught of Herod, came among us so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled (Mt 2:14-15). Simon of Cyrene, an African, helped Jesus to carry his cross on the way to Calvary (Mk 15:21) and “participated, at the cost of his own suffering, in the endless pain of the One who atoned for all human beings, including his executioners”.⁵ On the day of Pentecost, nationals of African descent were present in Jerusalem: “from Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene” (Acts 2:10). Africa, through the Ethiopian Eunuch, returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, encountered the gospel on the road to Gaza (door of Egypt) (Acts 8:27-39). Africans, Simeon called Niger and Lucius of Cyrene, were leading prophets and teachers in the first truly Christian community in Antioch where Jews and Gentiles lived together. It is from this community that the world-wide mission of the Church began through the work of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 11:19-21; 13:1-3); “And it was at Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians’” (Acts 11:26). From Alexandria, Africa, through Apollos, carried the Good News to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28); where disciples of John the Baptist later received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:5-6).

12. The proclamation of the gospel in the first centuries saw the emergence of the Church in Africa which was once a great theological

⁵ Benedict XVI, *World Day of the Sick*, Speech at the Cardinal Paul Emile Leger Centre at Yaounde (Cameroon), 19 March 2009, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009.



and spiritual centre in the patristic age, with Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Monica, Perpetua, Felicity and others, as the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of St. John-Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, reminds us; and which led to the implantation of a lively Church across the entire African continent.

13. This Church in Africa, as a sign of gratitude to God is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of SECAM, its symbol of unity and communion in mission, founded in Kampala on July 29, 1969. The Church celebrates it being very much aware of the changes that have taken place during this period and throughout history in the context of its mission and in its diverse forms of engagement in the service of the gospel on African soil. The Church in Africa wants, first and foremost to give thanks to God for this cumulative experience, a sign of his faithfulness.

Evolution of the Context of Mission

14. Twenty-five years after the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops where the Holy Spirit entrusted to the Church in Africa the historical task, at the dawn of new millennium, to build up itself as “Family of God”, the Lord has assembled at Kampala, his sons and daughters to make them hear afresh the exhortation of Pope Paul VI: “You Africans, you are now your own missionaries”.⁶ While this historical call remains more than ever relevant, the context of being sent anew to evangelise, has changed over the last fifty years.

15. In 1969, most of the young African nations, which had just gained national sovereignty, after a century of colonization and more than three centuries of slavery, were in the euphoria of independence. However, warning signs were already alight, here and there, that the continent had set off politically on the wrong footing. The dream of pan-Africanism which had led to the setting up of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, gave way to the harsh reality of international geopolitics, of which independence did not benefit, but was rather self-defeating.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, “Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration at the Conclusion of the Symposium of Bishops of Africa Kampala (Uganda)”, 31st July 1969.

With countries still subject to tutoring, states experiencing difficulty of building due to the rhythm of repetitive coups, political liberation wars which continued to be conducted in the Portuguese colonies, and the scourge of apartheid, theoretically independent Africa had very early on glided into disenchantment.

16. The fifty years that have passed since the call of Kampala have only witnessed shattered dreams of African political sovereignty: dream of independence, dream of an African socialism, dream of African authenticity and evolutionary dream. The last dream of democracy has failed in many places on the continent to become a reality. In recent years, issues relating to governance have assumed acute importance: national insecurity, civil insecurity, administrative and legal instability. Several areas of socio-political tensions are perceptible in Africa.

17. On the economic front, during this half century, Africa has equally experienced difficulty in taking off with regard to development. Caught in an unequal and unfair international trading system where raw materials are sold at low prices, Africa has difficulty in finding resources for its own economic growth. Different development plans that evolved over the past decades did not yield the expected results. The Lagos Plan of Action (1980), which, drawing lessons from the failure of National Plans of the 1960s, tried ambitiously to give a solid base for an indigenous development of Africa, succumbed to the surge of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) developed by the Bretton Woods institutions, with a heavy social cost for the continent. Neither the Omega Plan, the *Millennium African Plan*, nor the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which was a kind of amalgamation of the first two plans, managed to put the continent back into its orbit. Today, where all hopes are fixed on the African Union's 2063 Agenda of "*The Africa We Want*", there is fear that the focus of the coming decades might be on managing security issues, fuelled by religious ideologies, such as those that prevail today in the Sahel.

18. And yet Africa, which in its totality is presented on the international stage as an eternal beggar subjected to marginalization and chronic underdevelopment, is endowed by God with immense natural resources.

What baffles many Africans today is the astonishing overlap between the magnitude of conflicts, for which Africa is the theatre, and the magnitude of mining and oil resources of the continent. While African brothers are tearing themselves apart in endless conflicts for the control of their country's political system, the multinational companies calmly and unchallengingly continue their exploration and exploitation of the wealth under African soil, with the complicity of a handful of Africans.

19. The numerous human resources in Africa - whose talents most often benefit the international community - do not also seem to have considerable impact on the life of the continent. The continent continues to collapse under the weight of a multilateral debt whose internal logic is to increase the dependency of Africa, compromising the future of several generations of Africans as well.

20. On the social front, the challenges facing Africa are by no means the least. With sustained population growth - which could be interpreted as a threat or opportunity - Africa becomes, after Asia, the continent where the immediate future of humanity matters most. The educational challenges inherent in this situation, the accelerated pace of urbanisation of the continent, the effects of the digital revolution, with the development of the social networks that link Africans, even in remote villages, are indicators of the profound changes taking place today in Africa.

21. All these social changes are a concern at the international level. The end of the cold war brought hope in strained international relations. But in place of the two blocks (East-West) new blocks have been formed: around the situation in the Near and Middle East, around a geopolitical axis once presented as an "axis of evil", around the rise of a new form of international terrorism, with its religious connotations. To this would be added the difficult management of the effects of the financial crisis that shook the world in the year 2008, the threats weighing on the environment today with a kind of industrialization and technological innovation that contribute to an accelerated deterioration of our

“common home”.⁷ These are all realities of which Africa is the first to pay the price.

22. It is in this difficult context where Africa is struggling and groaning in pains for total liberation, that the Church has felt most needed to accompany the hopes and anxieties of a people called to take their destiny in their hands. The Church has been able to respond to this call since she herself has begun to realize that, as baptized people, liberated by Christ the Redeemer, she could not continue to be a Church under guardianship but ought to assume her missionary responsibility in her own land – Africa – and also in the universal Church.

⁷ Cf. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home (Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), no. 19.



I.2. COMMITMENT OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA: SECAM, THEN AND NOW

23. Founded for the proclamation of the Good News, the Church in Africa cannot but understand her historic mission on this continent in the light of this demand of evangelization: “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

24. In July 1969, when SECAM was created, one of the major actions of the African Episcopate was to celebrate the memories of the brave missionaries whom God sent to bring the Good News to the African land⁸. Twenty-five years later, the First Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa, also became an opportune moment for the Church in Africa to remember the holy Martyrs, Virgins and Pastors, that Africa has already given to the universal Church and whose martyrdom became the seed of Christian life for the continent⁹. Following these pioneers, the missionary enterprise is still on-going with new challenges being faced.

25. The indicators of this missionary work have become visible everywhere: the emergence of the new Christian communities owing to the commitment of Catechists, increase in the number of the baptized, significant numbers of vocations to the priesthood and Consecrated Life, erection of new dioceses, establishment of national and regional Episcopal Conferences, and finally at the continental level, the creation of a Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.

26. The option made in Kampala in 1969 was to have, not a new legal body which would supersede the Episcopal Conferences, but a flexible form of an organization at their service to identify the common areas of the apostolate, to ensure intercommunication and to achieve

8 Cf. Homily of Mgr Jean Zoa, Kampala, 30 July 1969, in *ACTS of the First Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar*, Kampala, 28-31 juillet 1969, p. 51-53.

9 See, Pope John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa*, (14 September 1995), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995, nos. 35-37.

the necessary coordination of the apostolate in all parts of Africa; hence the choice of the name “Symposium”. Two main areas of action were identified: information and studies. For the Founding Fathers of SECAM, this body of synodality and pastoral coordination, was to be aligned to the existing research institutions¹⁰: the Gaba Pastoral Institute of Kampala (Uganda), also called AMECEA Pastoral Institute API/Gaba¹¹; Catechetical Pastoral and Liturgical Centre of Butare (Rwanda)¹², Centre for Research and Studies of African Religions (CERA) attached to the Lovanium (Congo-Kinshasa)¹³, Higher Institute of Religious Culture (ISCR)¹⁴, the African Institute for Economic and Social Development (INADES)¹⁵, and the Centre for Economic and Social Studies of West Africa (CESAO)¹⁶ in Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper

10 Cf. *ACTS of the First Plenary Assembly*, p. 109.

11 The decision by AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) - the oldest Regional Association of Episcopal Conferences in Africa - to found the Gaba Pastoral Institute dates back to 1967. It was inaugurated on February 1, 1968. For political reasons, the Institute was transferred to Eldoret (Kenya) in 1976. Today, the Institute is incorporated into the Catholic University of Eastern Africa

12 The Centre was founded in July 1962 (the first in Africa) by the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Rwanda and Burundi (ACOREB). In 1967, it had 151 students of various nationalities: African, European and American. In 2001, it was transferred to Muyinga, Burundi.

13 Founded on May 26, 1966, and placed under the Faculty of Catholic Theology of Lovanium University, CERA received the support of the Standing Committee of Bishops of Congo during its July 1966 session. Its first Director was Father Vincent Mulago. In 1967, CERA published the first double issue of its semi-annual journal, called «African Religions' Papers.»

14 Founded in 1968 by the West African Regional Episcopal Conference (CERAO), ICRH became the Catholic Institute of West Africa (ICAO) in 1977 and the Catholic University of West Africa (UCAO) in 2000.

15 INADES is an institute established in 1962 in Abidjan by the Society of Jesus at the request of the Bishops of CERAO who wanted to establish a Christian centre for social reflection. This centre has benefited from the experience of the Popular Action/Centre for Research and Social Action (Vanves in France) and the support of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Ivory Coast). In 2002, INADES became the Centre for Research and Action for Peace (CERAP), which is now a university centre affiliated to UCAO.

16 CESAO was established in 1960 by the Missionaries of Africa to accompany young independent West African states on the path of economic and social



Volta. In doing this, the Founding Fathers were indicating the necessity to impact the pastoral with theological research and data on one hand, and on the other, to do theological research from the starting point of the life of ecclesial communities¹⁷.

27. The important themes that the Church in Africa decided to look at were in the first place, the training of the clergy, the catechists and the laity. The main concern was the formation of ecclesial agents well equipped for the missionary work. A pan-African Congress of the Apostolate of the Laity was planned for 1971. A scientific inquiry on the position of catechists in the pastoral work was carried out in 1970. The Fathers of the Symposium advocated maintaining the major and minor seminaries. The concern for an adapted method for the training of the clergy, with the introduction in the curriculum of subjects like sociology¹⁸, had been at the heart of the concerns of the nascent SECAM; to open the seminarians to new techniques in order to equip them for enlightened pastoral work and informed dialogue with the African intellectual elite, without weakening their traditional theological formation¹⁹. Solutions to the problems faced in the work of

development. Today, it is a non-governmental association with an international out-reach; it currently functions under the ecclesiastical authority of Burkina-Niger Episcopal Conference, and it is present in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Chad, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Benin.

17 Following the above mentioned theological and research institutions, several others were established in Africa; the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA) in 1981 in Port Harcourt (Nigeria) by the Association of Episcopal Conference of Anglophone West Africa (AECAWA); the Catholic University of Central Africa (UCAC) founded in 1989 by the Association of Episcopal Conferences of the Central African Region (ACERAC); St Augustine's College of South Africa founded in Johannesburg in 1999, and canonically erected by the South African Bishops' Conference in 2008, etc. All these academic institutions are grouped under one body, namely, the Association of Catholic Universities and Institutes of Africa and Madagascar (ASUNICAM), founded in Abidjan in 1989 and now headquartered in Mwanza, Tanzania.

18 ACTS of the First Plenary Assembly..., p. 20. "We need to look for formation that is better suited to today's Africa," says Cardinal Zoungwana. "Out of necessity, Africa is now entering a technological culture. We need to look for what we can bring to this new culture: we do not study it enough in our seminaries" (ibid).

19 ACTS of the First Plenary..., Appendix XXVIII, p. 108. For Cardinal Hyacinthe

evangelization, had to be sought from Africa and not be imposed from the outside even if similar issues arose elsewhere: “Our own being should not be given to us from outside; the gospel is a seed of life; and the Church in Africa should develop and build herself through her own vitality by participating in the life of the universal Church; it is up to her to define her objectives and her apostolic priorities”, Cardinal Paul Zoungrana told his brothers in the episcopate.²⁰

28. Other major issues were part of the agenda of the nascent SECAM, namely, promoting an official theology of social and national development, the problem of the financial autonomy of dioceses, more direct communications between the dicasteries of the Holy See and the Episcopal Conferences and the project of intercommunication between Francophone and Anglophone Africa.

29. In 1970, at the Second Plenary Assembly of SECAM in Abidjan, the need to establish a continental “Justice and Peace” Commission that would work with National and Regional Commissions and upstream with the Pontifical Commission for “Justice and Peace”, was discussed. At the same plenary meeting, the concern to have well trained pastoral workers was shared by all the Bishops who once again were deliberating on the formation of the local clergy and catechists.

30. The Third Plenary Assembly, that took place at Kampala in 1972, explored ways and means for a more effective pastoral action in temporal affairs: the formation of the laity, with the establishment of Pan-African structures for the laity and the setting of priorities of the apostolate of the laity in Africa. Other issues were also discussed: the collaboration between clergy, lay people and the religious in the Lord’s vineyard, and collaboration with the Protestants and the followers of non-Christian religions in social endeavours. A “Committee for Internal African Affairs” (C.I.A.A.), was even set up as an apolitical Committee

Thiandoum and the Fathers of the Symposium, “the shortage of staff suffered by the work of evangelization had its solution in the formation and participation of all members of the People of God, each according to his own vocation” (ibid).

20 *ACTS of the First Plenary Assembly*, Annex II, p. 37.



whose mission was to help the Episcopal Conferences to take up their responsibilities as regards socio-political situations in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

31. The Fourth Plenary Assembly was held in Rome in 1975. The principal theme was “Evangelization in Africa Today”. It was an opportunity for the African Bishops to reaffirm before the world that the Catholic Church in Africa was firmly implanted; a Church in Africa with her own African voice, her peculiar characteristics, and her own proper features.

32. To continue in this way, the Church in Africa needed to identify her own resources, to strengthen the role of catechists, to make the Religious Congregations more involved in pastoral work, empowering the lay faithful not only for pastorals, but especially for politics as well. The Meeting for African Cooperation (A.C.M.), established in 1974 among the members of the Standing Committee and the Superiors General, constitute a good example of co-responsibility in the mission of evangelization. With regard to the dynamism of the Pan-African Council for the Laity which emerged from the Accra Seminar in 1970, the need to establish a Permanent Secretariat of the Laity was discussed in the Assembly. The Bishops reaffirmed the major role of the lay faithful in the establishment and promotion of a well-intended dialogue between Church members and political leaders. In this respect, the work done in a short time by the Committee for Internal African Affairs was acknowledged.

33. The Fifth Plenary Assembly, in Nairobi in 1978, was devoted to the theme: “Christian Family Life in Africa Today”. It was geared towards the issue of marriage, religious education for the youth and the role of the Christian family in evangelization. Other important issues addressed were; the Church and Islam in black Africa, and the Biblical Apostolate. The Committee for Internal African Affairs, the Pan-African Secretariat of the Laity and the Meeting for African Collaboration also reported on their activities. This meeting concluded with a Declaration that was a landmark on social justice in Africa.

34. At the Sixth Plenary Assembly in Yaoundé in 1981, the question of the Family and Marriage and that of justice were taken up with a particular concern for the situation of refugees on the continent. This gave rise to the publication of an “Exhortation Addressed to All Apostolic Workers on Justice and Evangelisation in Africa”, and a “Declaration on the Respect and Promotion of Human Life.” During the same meeting, a reflection was initiated for a *Recognitio* for SECAM from Rome. SECAM is to be seen as an “Instrument of Episcopal Collaboration for Evangelization in Africa and Madagascar”.²¹

35. The Sixth Plenary Assembly of SECAM created the Catholic Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar (BICAM) as official organ of SECAM for the promotion, organization and coordination of biblical apostolate and translations of the Bible in local African languages. By so doing, the “Africa Service” of the “World Catholic Federation for Biblical Apostolate” (WCFBA) that SECAM had mandated to explore the feasibility of the biblical apostolate, was discontinued.

36. The Seventh Plenary Assembly held in Kinshasa in 1984, addressed, as an extension of the previous Assembly, the question of the revision of the Statutes of SECAM so as to make it a stronger pastoral instrument. The theme of Human Development was the major issue discussed during this Assembly. In Kinshasa, one could notice the intensification of the work of evangelisation over the years, done by the different Committees of SECAM: Committee for Internal African Affairs, Committee for Refugees, Relations with Islam, Theological Committee (COMITHEOL), Biblical Committee (COMIBIBLE), the Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS), Office of the Pan-African Coordination of the Laity, Regional Secretariat of Catholic Education for Africa and Madagascar, and Commission

²¹ A statement was made on this subject by Cardinal Paul Zoungrana on “SECAM as an instrument of episcopal collaboration for evangelization in Africa and Madagascar,” in *ACTS of the Sixth Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar*, Yaounde, 29th June – 5th July 1981, p. 14.



for Justice and Peace. It was in Kinshasa that the idea of an African Council was presented for the first time to the Episcopate of the entire continent²².

37. The Eighth Plenary Assembly, held in Lagos in 1987, retraced the history of SECAM regarding its legal nature and the future of the mission in Africa. The reports of the Working Groups on the Statutes were scrutinized in this Assembly. It was at the same Assembly that the “Declaration on SECAM (Evaluation and Recommendations for the Future)” was made. This Declaration was articulated in three sections; first Evaluative review of SECAM’s past and present activities; second, redefinition of the identity and the main objectives of SECAM, and third, recommendations and directions for the future. The four major areas which were recognized as having driven the trajectory of SECAM were:

- The responsibility of leading the Church in Africa to its full maturity
- Adequate formation of pastoral workers and the participation of the laity
- The task of inculturation of Christianity
- The Church in Africa and integral evangelization of persons and society.

38. The extraordinary structural development of SECAM in different regions and its working committees was reviewed. This brought about the necessity of redefining the identity and objectives of SECAM. For such a redefinition, it was *Ad Gentes* 22,²³ on the necessity to review the whole ecclesial tradition in each large socio-cultural territory, which served as the framework. SECAM would endeavour to coordinate the efforts of the Episcopal Conferences of the different countries and

22 This was propped by Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, then President of Comitheol. The idea of an “African Council” had already been suggested a few years earlier to the bishops of CERAO by Alioune Diop, and had even been the subject of a recommendation at the end of the Symposium on “Black Civilization and Catholic Church” organized in Abidjan in 1977 by the African Society of Culture (SAC).

23 Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes* Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (Vatican City: 1965).

regions of Africa, pursuing evangelization in depth for the inculturation of the Christian message in the direction indicated by *Ad Gentes* 22.

39. New challenges were:

- The huge number of people to whom the initial proclamation of the Good News had not yet been reached;
- The appropriate position to take with regard to Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATR)
- The challenge of inculturation
- The challenge of justice and human promotion in Africa
- The formation of pastoral workers
- The challenge of unity

Among the perspectives, we can note:

- The organisation of a big continental symposium or congress on “*Ad Gentes* and the future of evangelisation in Africa”
- The creation of a Pan-African Commission for Justice, Peace and Development
- The formalisation of relations with the African Union
- The effort of self-reliance for SECAM
- The African Council

40. The Ninth Plenary Assembly held in Lome in 1990 focussed on the preparation of a Special Synod of Bishops for Africa (but not a Council)²⁴. The Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops came in person to present to the Assembly the content of the *Lineamenta*. For the rest, the Lome meeting focussed on the main theme, “Evangelization

²⁴ Pope John Paul II convoked it on 06 January 1989.



in Africa by means of Communication”. A working document was developed for this purpose. In fact, communication constituted one of the major concerns of the Founding Fathers of SECAM.

41. The Tenth Plenary Assembly was held in Rome on May 5, 1994, as a side event to the First Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops for Africa (April 10 - May 08, 1994). For the most part, the Assembly dealt with the election of new members of the Standing Committee.

42. The eleventh Plenary Assembly, held in Midrand (South Africa) in 1997, had made it its mission to reflect on the ecclesiological option made by the Church in Africa at the 1994 Synod to build itself as the “Family Church of God”. The fact that the SECAM, as a body, did not play a decisive role in the immediate preparation and conduct of the Synod, prompted the members of the Assembly to raise the question of the restructuring of their organization. In 1995, the Standing Committee made proposals to this effect, which were sent to the National and Regional Episcopal Conferences. In other words, it was a matter of re-examining the choice of the Founding Fathers who, although having had the model of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), had preferred the form of a “Symposium”²⁵. This option had been presented as a more flexible first step in not supplanting existing Conferences. However, in order to take on more fully the role of coordination and organic pastoral solidarity recognized by Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Africa* (No. 5), the organization needed legal reinforcement. The Standing Committee was given a mandate to finalize the SECAM Pastoral Letter entitled: “The Church-Family of God; which was done in 1998. Another working document was prepared for the Plenary Assembly of the Great Jubilee Year.

43. The Twelfth Plenary Assembly took place in the year 2000 in Rome at *Rocca di Papa* on the theme: “The Church-Family of God, Place and Sacrament of Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Peace in Africa.” It was at this Assembly that a decision was made to devote the Thirteenth Assembly to the restructuring of the SECAM under the theme: “SECAM and its Role in Africa and Madagascar”.

25 Cf. *ACTS of the First Plenary Assembly...*, p. 12.

44. The Thirteenth Plenary Assembly was held in Dakar in 2003. It was an opportunity for the African Episcopate to go, eleven years after Pope John-Paul II (1992), on a pilgrimage to the island of *Gorée*, place of collective African memory, which the Holy Father had called “the shrine of black pain”²⁶. It was also an opportunity for the Church in Africa to proclaim the need for the African intelligentsia to come out of the binary pattern around slavery: “sold - buyer” to open the historic responsibility of the ‘seller’, taking care to renew the three at the foot of the cross where only the Innocent One (Jesus Christ) might restore to the sellers, buyers and the sold their humanity. Though this meeting was an opportunity to pay tribute to the Founding Fathers of SECAM and give thanks for the journey travelled so far, it did not lead to the expected restructuring of SECAM. The working groups rather called for a reorganization of the Secretariat of SECAM in view of a new impetus, in fidelity to the initial option of the Founding Fathers.

45. The Fourteenth Plenary Assembly took place in Dar-es-Salaam in 2007. It evaluated the improvements in the functioning of the Secretariat, and stressed the need to strengthen communication between regional and national Conferences. In this way, SECAM was to be an instrument of coordination, motivation and information. The need to revitalize the COMITHEOL was expressed. A communication was made on the Second Synod for Africa announced by Pope John Paul II and confirmed by Pope Benedict XVI, for 2009.

46. The Fifteenth Plenary Assembly took place at Accra in 2010. It was an occasion to celebrate 40 years of SECAM (2009): “SECAM at 40: Self-Management, Future Prospects for the Church in Africa”. A round table discussion at this anniversary put at the centre the necessary renewal of the commitment of each Bishop to the ideals of SECAM.

47. The Sixteenth Plenary Assembly took place in Kinshasa in 2013, two years after the presentation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*. It was devoted to the theme: “The Church-

²⁶ Pope John Paul II, Speech to the Catholic community of Gorée Island in the Church of St. Charles Borromeo, February 22, 1992, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992.



Family of God in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.” The Assembly mainly reflected on the continuity between *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus* and on how to implement the “Church-Family of God in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace”.

48. With the Assembly of Kinshasa, the desired revitalization of the COMITHEOL became a reality. A reflection begun in 2010 at the initiative of the Pontifical Council for Culture and of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and, supported by the Standing Committee, led to the setting up of a Department within the Commission of Evangelisation to deal with “Faith-Culture and Development”.

49. The Seventeenth Plenary Assembly held at Luanda in 2016 was devoted to the theme of the family, a theme discussed at two synods in Rome in 2014 and 2015. Theological and pastoral reflections organised at all levels within the Church in Africa (Episcopal Conferences, regional, national, COMITHEOL, Catholic universities, training institutes, etc.) enabled SECAM to carry a clear message to the universal Church on the vocation and mission of this divine institution, which is the family, and whose fate also determines the future of humanity. The Luanda meeting was an opportunity for the Church in Africa to take measures towards the SECAM Golden Jubilee, to coincide with the Eighteenth Plenary Assembly of this body, which was established in 1969 in Kampala; as an expression of African reception of the spirit of collegiality and synodality, recognised by the Second Vatican Council.

50. Accordingly, a significant progress was made towards the emergence of an African ecclesial body, even if much still remained to be done at the level of the Organization and its structures, as could be seen from the periodic return to the issue of “restructuring”. The option to build a Church, Family of God, made up of dynamic Christian Communities, at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace,

offers the Church in Africa, an historic opportunity to make a novel contribution, to think within the universal Church on synodality and its implementation. All these are motivations for thanksgiving.

51. “You Africans are now your own missionaries”; “You can and you ought to have an African Christianity”, declared by Pope Paul VI in Kampala in 1969. Over the years it proved to be so, and in Kampala in 2019, the Church in Africa reaffirms that she is on a mission for Christ and that African Christianity is not a regional Christianity but an expression within the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, confessing the one indivisible faith and putting herself at the service of the one human family. It is in this spirit that the Church in Africa celebrates the Golden Jubilee of SECAM.





I.3. THANKSGIVING AND APPEAL FOR A RENEWED IMPETUS FOR THE MISSION OF EVANGELISATION

52. The Jubilee is a marvellous moment. In celebrating it, the Christians of Africa honour the God of life who revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ. His Spirit continues to lead his Church and deepen our faith as Africans.

53. The Church in Africa is thankful to God for the Martyrs of Uganda, and for those other men and women who have resisted the forces of death to the point of martyrdom. The Church celebrates the multitude of discrete witnesses of the love of Christ in their daily lives. The Church gives thanks to God for the labour of her pastors, catechists, members of various apostolates, of Small or Living Christian Communities²⁷, biblical scholars and theologians.

54. In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus gives our Jubilee process its full meaning: when he says that he is anointed to “proclaim the year of the Lord”, to bring the good news to the poor, free the oppressed, and recovery of sight to the blind (Lk 4:17-21). SECAM’s Jubilee is also a favourable time to ask God to raise, within our continent, good Samaritans to heal hearts and bodies bruised by all forms of violence, to satisfy those thirsty for peace and justice, and to feed the hungry with bread and the word of God. But in an African cultural context, marked by the theme of life, the Prologue of John’s Gospel makes the Jubilee celebrations very significant.

And the Word Became Flesh

55. The Johannine Prologue is a poetic writing, which expands into prose, a narrative. It certainly had a liturgical function, as shown in its resemblance to the New Testament Christological hymns that have their sources in the Psalms. However, the hymn is essentially praise.

56. Already, at the end of the first century, we could see the Johannine communities celebrating Jesus, the Word become flesh, the true life, who

²⁷ The “Basic Christian Communities” (CEB) are also called “Living Ecclesial Communities” (CEV).

brings a new covenant and a new birth in him. Overcoming all barriers, Jesus made his word and his flesh food. Light of life, he is also the true shepherd who guides his people. Lord of life, he opens the minds of his disciples to the Spirit and to love and service. But as Lord of life, he also faces the forces of death buried in the hearts as well as in political, socio-economic and religious structures. His victory confirmed that he is the living Lord and God of life. His disciples, gathered in the Church, are called to be signs of his presence and his gratuitous love and as a gift.

57. We noted this clearly during the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops: “As ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (Jn 1:14), so also the Good News, the word of Jesus Christ proclaimed to the nations, must be part of the living environment of those who listen”.²⁸ This action of thanksgiving for life is a call to a new impetus for the mission of evangelisation.

A Fresh Impetus for Mission

58. Just as the Eucharistic celebration extends into being sent on mission, so also the Jubilee Thanksgiving is inviting us to make a fresh start for mission. In the Johannine Prologue, and in the first chapter of the Gospel, John the Baptist shows what mission should be for the Christian. John is neither the light nor the life. His mission is to witness to the *Logos*. He steps aside so as not to overshadow the importance of the Word; he is only a voice crying in the desert and paving the way for the Life. In fact, he sends some of his disciples to Jesus, the Lamb of God. John is only the finger which indicates the direction, which points to the Sun.

59. This self-emptying of the prophet leads to the revelation of Jesus, the true Messiah, greater than John the Baptist. By this, John is reminding every believer of the responsibility not to take the place of the light. In this regard, the struggle for power has nothing to do with the mission of

28 Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 60.



the Church. It is our duty to pursue the work accomplished fifty years ago by the bishops, priests, consecrated persons, theologians and the laity, to promote collaboration among the churches in Africa in view of knowing Christ better, who gives us life in abundance.

60. In fact, we have the mission to invest in the African quest for life and to witness to the creative dynamism of the Living One. With him, the sacred value of life is not a simple cultural fact, to manage. It is constantly received. In fact, if life is only a cultural acquisition, then its real meaning diminishes with the collapse of cultural values and is at the mercy of greedy appetites. Yet, life is given; it is, in this manner, to be cared for. More especially, it is to make it rise and adhere to him who is the resurrection and the life. In turn, it invites us to be the source of life. It is a call to creative responsibility which ought to manifest itself at all levels: personal and communal, socio-cultural and political-economic, but also ecological.

61. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says it well: “In the African vision of the world, life is seen as a reality that encompasses and includes the ancestors, the living and the unborn, all creation and all people... This wide opening of the heart and the spirit of the African tradition predisposes you, dear brothers and sisters, to hear and to receive the message of Christ and understand the mystery of the Church, to give full value to human life and the conditions of its development”.²⁹

29 Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011, no. 69.



SECOND PART

TO THOSE WHO RECEIVED HIM, HE GAVE POWER TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD (JN 1:12)

II.1. TO ENCOUNTER CHRIST AND TO KNOW HIM

Deepening Our Faith

62. The Jubilee is a time of thanksgiving, but also a call to deepen our encounter with the Lord of Life, who accompanies us in daily life and enlightens us by his word. The *Logos*, God-Word become flesh, came to walk along with us on our roads in Africa. He invites us to encounter him.

63. To be fruitful, this encounter has to go through a methodical and rigorous reading of the word of God which protects Christian communities from fundamentalist, idolatrous, mythical, esoteric, and incapacitating readings. This is the work of catechesis and the biblical apostolate to which SECAM has committed itself since its foundation. All pastoral life, all movements and associations in the Church are to be energised by God's word. This word of God structures the community towards a missionary perspective.

64. John's Prologue speaks best of this encounter with the Logos. In this Prologue, "the foundation of our life is communicated to us; the Word, who from the beginning was with God, 'became flesh and dwelt among us' (Jn 1:14). This is a wonderful text which offers a synthesis of the Christian faith".³⁰

30 Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010, no. 5.



To Those Who Received Him

65. Jesus is the Word of God offered to all. The Prologue makes of it a profession of faith of the believing community. A particular emphasis is placed on the commitment to welcome, to receive the *Logos*, the Word of God offered to the entire *kosmos*, in the ecumenical sense of the term. In Jesus, all human beings have the potential to share in God's life. But human beings may or may not accept this offer. The offer does not impose itself. It may be rejected, discarded. The Christian is invited to welcome it, receive it, and appropriate it. To welcome this offer is to believe in Jesus, to adhere to him. Faith is not a mere curiosity, but a commitment. It requires, as *Africae Munus* suggests, that the *Logos* takes flesh in our hearts and in our communities:

“Listening to and meditating upon the word of God means letting it penetrate and shape our lives so as to reconcile us with God, allowing God to lead us towards reconciliation with our neighbour: a necessary path for building a community of individuals and peoples. On our faces and in our lives, may the word of God truly take flesh!”³¹

What Are You Looking For? Who Are You Looking For?

66. Encountering the Lord of life is the result of a quest. That is why, to the disciples that John sent to him, Jesus asked: “What are you looking for?” (Jn 1:38). Or better still, “What are you seeking to know, to find”? This quest often presupposes movement.

67. But what were Andrew and the other disciple seeking (Jn 1:40)? We know that the time of Jesus was characterized by strong messianic expectations; the various religious groups that populated Palestine had diverse messianic expectations, each in its own way. So, these two disciples represent the multifaceted quests of the recipients of the gospel; just as today there are multiple quests of our African peoples. As he did with these two disciples of John, Jesus wants to guide us towards a different adventure.

31 Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 16.

68. The word of the risen Lord to the first witness of the resurrection, Mary of Magdala, picks up the question that Jesus asked his two first companions: “Who are you looking for?” (Jn 20:16). The disciples are called from looking for something, an idea, an ideology, even if legitimate, to the person of Jesus. Mary discovers in him the Son of God who ascends to the Father. She is invited to embark on an adventure that surpasses her own destiny and is now completely realised in the risen Lord (Jn 20:17-18). That is why our ancestor Augustine calls her, “an apostle of apostles”. The encounter with the Risen One is a permanent journey, illumined by God’s Spirit. In this light we understand better the beautiful prayer of St Augustine: “Lord, my God, my only hope, hear me; lest by weariness, I do not want to seek you. But grant that always, I eagerly seek your face”.³²

Eternal Life Is To Know You

69. By staying with him, the disciples came to know Jesus. But knowledge of Jesus is not primarily abstract knowledge, it is a journey of faith towards the one who is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6). It is concretised in him who has pitched his tent among us. This is why the Christian does not escape from earthly and historical realities. They do not run away from the rigours of history, because the Word-become-flesh is with us so that life continues to flower. The knowledge of Christ creates a deep conversion that manifests itself in witnessing: “The Lord offers salvation to men and women in every age. All of us recognize how much the light of Christ needs to illumine every area of human life: the family, schools, culture, work, leisure and the other aspects of social life. It is not a matter of preaching a word of consolation, but rather a word which disrupts, which calls to conversion and which opens the way to an encounter with the one through whom a new humanity flowers”³³.

32 Saint Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV, no. 51.

33 Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 93.



II.2. LIVING IN CHRIST: NEW BIRTH AND WITNESSING

Celebrate New Birth, New Life as a Child of God in Christ

70. The people of Israel had an undying conviction that on Mount Sinai, God had made them his chosen and covenanted people, not because of what they had done, but because of God's gratuitous love and unmerited grace (cf. Deut. 7:7-8). This awareness, that their identity and election were gifts from God, guided, governed and served as criterion for all that they did in life as individuals and as a nation. The New Testament similarly asserts that at baptism, believers in Jesus Christ receive new birth from God and truly become God's children (cf. Jn 1:12-13; 3:1-3), on the same basis of God's pure and unmerited love (cf. Tit 3:4-8). "To those who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God." Their birth is "not of flesh...but of God" (Jn 1:12-13). *Ad Gentes* speaks of the Christian as being "begotten from the bowels of the baptismal font".³⁴ This new life, identity and worth likewise commits believers to make their new birth in Christ the organizing principle of their lives and to bear witness to it in all that they do, as Israel did.

71. The identity of the Christian as God's child is inseparable from the mystery of the incarnation, as are two sides of the same coin; both are based on faith. The Word of God became a human being by Mary's heroic faith in God's word spoken to her by the Angel Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:26-38). In recognition of this faith, Elizabeth named her "She who believed" (Lk 1:45). At Baptism, a Sacrament which the Church administers in faith, the Christian becomes God's child and a full member of the Church through faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism configures the Christian to Christ, Prophet, Priest and King "with indelible character".³⁵ Born of God, they are truly divine and share the nature of God, just as the Word of God "born of woman" (Gal 4:4) is truly a human being sharing human nature.

³⁴ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 15.

³⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1272.

72. Jesus demonstrated he was the child of God by his entire life. He spent his life learning to be human “like us in all things, except sin” (Heb 4:15; cf. Jn 8:46); he observed and learned to do everything that he saw God doing (Jn 5:19); he desired nothing else than to do the will of God, making that will “the food” that sustained his life and mission (Jn 4:34; 17:4). Like God, he went about doing what was good (cf. Acts 10:30).

Thus, he visibly led a life of witnessing, rooted in the truth that he was God’s child; and that God lived and worked in him (cf. Jn 10:35-38). Similarly, the Christian’s faith, based on the knowledge of being truly God’s child, obliges and commits one to strive to live in all areas of life in a way that images God as Jesus did, doing good to all people without any exception or discrimination based on race, social class, nationality, sex or other. This new life demands from the Christian even to “love one’s enemies” and do good to those who wish them evil.³⁶

73. Ignorance of the Scriptures is traditionally seen as ignorance of Christ.³⁷ To be ignorant of Christ is also to be ignorant of one’s true worth as a child of God. Living the new life as God’s child requires that one assumes personal responsibility to discover Jesus: by regularly reading the gospels individually and in groups. The hortatory sections of the epistles give many examples of this new life.³⁸ As children of God, we are invited today to adhere to and complete these epistolary exhortations, with life examples drawn from our own contexts.

74. A new born baby needs different foods at different stages of its life; as it grows up, it needs to familiarize itself with the way of life and culture of its people in order to become a fully mature human being in

³⁶ In the gospels, the love of enemies required of a child of God who “is love” (1 Jn 4:8, 16) is revolutionary in character. Almost all New Testament authors insist on love of the enemy (cf. Mt 5:43-47; Lk 6:27-30; Rom 12:14; 1 Pet 3:9). However, the main purpose of the Epistles (in comparison to the Pastoral Letters), is to invite one to understand and live the new life in Christ (Cf. Gal 5:13-6,10; 1 Cor 12:14; Eph 4:6).

³⁷ PL 24: 17; cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 25.

³⁸ Usually this is found at the end of each epistle with a particular appeal to put into practice the teachings outlined in a given letter (cf. Gal 5:13-6, 10; 1 Cor 12:14; Eph 4:6).



the culture. Traditional African cultures have well-defined methods of introducing children to the life of the community. Similarly, the Church has the responsibility to accompany the new born Christians in their early stages till they assume full responsibility to keep alive their divine life received at baptism; firstly, by acquiring knowledge of the faith and keeping alive the consciousness that they are truly God's children (cf. Jn 3:1-3). Thus, by being nourished with God's life, they grow in faith till they attain "the full stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13); secondly, by faithfully bearing witness to God's ways and gospel values, as Jesus did; and working for the coming of God's kingdom. The Christian community has an important role to play to help and guide each person to be immersed in the values of the gospel.

Life of Witnessing, Rooted in Christ

75. In a law court, authentic witnesses are those who have personally seen the events to which they bear witness. One cannot testify to what one has not seen or experienced; otherwise one is a false witness. Throughout his life, Jesus pointed to the words that he spoke, the deeds he performed, and his entire attitude and commitment to his mission as convincing evidence that he was truly the Son of God (cf. Jn 14:6); even if his contemporaries saw him merely as a human being (cf. Jn 10:33). In the same way, the Christian is to live true to their faith on daily basis, not as "Sunday Christian". In this way they each prove that they live in God and God lives in them.

76. The New Testament gives many examples of what it means to live and be seen visibly as a child of God, even if that is not approved by the world (1 Pet 1:13; 2:3; 1 Jn 3:5). Christ's disciples are encouraged to identify and draw from the many passages of Scripture and other sources to enrich their knowledge, rooted in faith, of their new birth and their call to bear witness as God's children. The many saints and martyrs of Africa, in particular St. Josephine Bakhita and the Martyrs of Uganda, where SECAM was born and where we celebrated its Golden Jubilee, are living witnesses to Christ.

77. In the spirit of the biblical jubilee, which requires a return to one's roots and identity given by God, we strongly urge and encourage Christians, individually and in groups, to study, rethink, internalize and systematically deepen their faith in their new life as children of God. In this way, we will grow together in all ways into Christ and will bear a witness that will transform our lives in Christ in a renewed Africa and beyond.





II.3. TO BE AND TO BUILD THE CHURCH-FAMILY OF GOD

78. “In his preaching, Jesus clearly taught the sons of God to treat one another as brothers. In his prayer he pleaded that all his disciples might be ‘one’ ... He commanded his apostles to preach to all peoples the gospel message that the human race was to become the Family of God, in which ‘the fullness of the law would be love’”.³⁹

79. The Church, *Family of God*, composed of all peoples of diverse cultural origins, through the acceptance of the word, preached by the apostles, is nothing other than the apostolic Church. The expression *Family of God* corresponds perfectly to the fundamental vision of the Second Vatican Council’s ecclesiology of communion, in making reference to the themes of *brothers and sisters* as well as to the great prayer of Jesus: *may they all be one*. In addition to the apostolic character of the Church, it highlights the eschatological dimension of *the Church as Family of God*, on pilgrimage towards the plenitude of love of God, while emphasizing on what builds the unity, the new commandment of love.

80. Consequently, Jesus “as the first born of many brethren, and by the gift of his Spirit, established, after his death and resurrection, a new fraternal communion among all who received him in faith and love; this is the communion of his own body, the Church ...as *the beloved family of God* in and through Christ”.⁴⁰ The Church takes after the image of the family to manifest Christ, first born of a multitude of brothers and sisters, who brought salvation for all humanity. However, it remains difficult for the human mind to comprehend fully why God cannot save and sanctify persons individually, each by themselves, directly and without intermediaries.

³⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 32.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The Second Vatican Council, in its Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* teaches that, “God however, does not make humans holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link with one another. Rather it has pleased him to bring men and women together as one people, a people who acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness”.⁴¹ God, therefore, created human beings not to live in isolation, but for social unity. The aim of the life of the Church and its richest fruit is to build this unity among believers. This “communion is not an emotion but the realization of our oneness with God and with each other in Jesus Christ, which transcends all our differences and puts them in the proper perspective”. All Christ’s faithful are equally members of this communion, the Church. But the questions arise; how are we the Church? How do we build this communion?

81. The Church-Family of God in Africa implies both communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters, Christians, called to a communion of life, love and truth of action, faithfulness and of witnessing. The Church is Family of interconnected persons. Love, acceptance, forgiveness, commitment, and intimacy constitute its very fabric; as well as the celebration of faith, pardon, joy and sharing. It is a community in which justice, peace and mutual love are realized and lived. We enter into this communion of the Church through Baptism preceded first by hearing and accepting the word of God and attaching oneself to Christ, the eternal Word of God. Baptism is not merely a sign of faith or incorporation into the Family of God; it is rather real participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, the Christ event, the foundation of our oneness or unity in Christ.

82. This unity of the Church proves to be concrete and historical and not merely an ideal which is yet to be established. This unity is perceived and preserved in the experience of faith, hope and charity. The understanding that “we are the Church” flows logically and dogmatically from the fact that each baptized member is of equal dignity of son and daughter of God in the Church. This is not only a fundamental but a foundational constituent of the Church-Family of

⁴¹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 9.



God. All of us have been called equally by God to constitute the one and only Church, his Family. All are obliged to respond by accepting the Word, the Person and the work of Christ, with faith, commitment, cooperation, trust and love. The different gifts, which do exist are not based on baptism but on the charisma of the Holy Spirit for ministry. These gifts of the Spirit result in different services, tasks, functions and offices, but they are secondary to the fundamental membership in the Church which is based on baptism.

83. Our unity is expressed in our common faith and beliefs. This communion has both a vertical and horizontal dimension. The vertical communion is established between humanity and God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, it is being modelled after the communion of the Trinity. A typical model of the horizontal communion is found in the first community of disciples with “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). Brothers and sisters, the Christians within the ecclesial communion, are supposed to bear witness to the horizontal and vertical life which correspond to their very being and life in Christ. They are to live communion both with the environment and with God in Christ. It is about a life of intimate relationship to be with and for God, to be with and for the other and with all visible and invisible beings that constitute creation. The Holy Spirit animates, from within, this communion in the Church by his living and active presence; by his grace as well as by the gifts of faith, hope and love which fills the disciples of Christ. This communion is lived, at the external level, in a personal or community manner, by professing the name of Jesus Christ, by the profession of faith, participation in the sacraments and conformity to Church laws. At the intersection of all these manifestations in the life of the Church -Family of God, the Holy Spirit puts Christian communities and the baptized in a network of faithfulness to Christ and interpersonal Christian relations. These are nourished by unity, prayer, solidarity, and interest in the same cause, mutual sharing and support. Often, unity, even when it is external, is not synonymous with uniformity and does not exclude diversity. Diversity consolidates catholicity. Accordingly, unity includes diversity and manifests itself through it. Favouring unity does not pose an obstacle to diversity.

84. All Christ's faithful, through faith and Baptism, are the Church. Baptism incorporates all into the body that the risen Lord builds up and keeps alive through the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the creative and uniting force and source of life of members of the Church, because it unites each one of them with Christ himself. But the building up and safeguarding of this unity, on which diversification confers the character of communion, is also a task of everyone in the Church. We all are called to build it up and preserve it each day, above all, by means of charity which is the bond of perfection. It is through this unity expressed in the common participation in the gifts of salvation won by Christ and bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and the bond of fellowship or the community of Christians with God, that we construct and realize that we are the Church, the Family of God. The expression, *we are the Church* does not refer to the ecclesial structure, in the institutional or juridical sense of the term. We are the Family of God, *familia Dei*, the concrete reality of the Church, which indicates the type of spirit that animates all the members of the Church or the intimate life of the Church. It refers to the nature of the Church rather than its institutional and juridical structure. It is about its essence, or, as the Second Vatican Council rightly puts it, its *mysterium*. The Church is not merely the place where people feel they are in the Family of God, but also where they become in reality and ontologically a family.

85. Since the historic meeting of the African Bishops with Pope Paul VI on the soil of the Martyrs of Uganda, our Church has heard the prophetic call to be its "own missionaries". Africa has since then experienced a rapid evolution that has profoundly changed the socio-cultural and ecclesial context of mission. This comes with new challenges that call for deeper or new evangelization of peoples. The evangelizing mission of the Church needs to take a deep breath and generate a new energy to be more dynamic and innovative.





THIRD PART REPENT, BELIEVE THE GOSPEL AND WORK FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD (Cf. MK 1:15)

III.1. THE CHALLENGES

Economic and Political Challenges

86. One of the major challenges confronting the mission of the Church in Africa is certainly the socio-economic issue. We talked about it in our Pastoral Letter, *Evangelisation and Human Promotion in Africa* in 1984. *Ecclesia in Africa* addressed the same issue when St. Pope John Paul II said: “how could someone proclaim Christ on this huge continent if he forgets that it is one of the poorest regions of the world?”⁴²

87. Assembled in Kampala, fifty years ago, SECAM lamented with the same cry of anguish in these terms: “the first preoccupation of the present time is the struggle for peace and the development of peoples. The Bishops of Africa and Madagascar, cannot but face this challenge if they want to respond totally to their mission in the continent marked by misery, hunger and ignorance, ..., which afflict many people of the third world.”⁴³

88. SECAM had denounced and still denounces today, the growing imbalances between the North and the South of the world, as far as access to and distribution of resources, and the damages caused to creation, are concerned. This economic crisis, in which we find ourselves, poses a problem of exploitation and the use of material resources, which fails to grant Africa a fair and equitable market.⁴⁴

42 Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 51.

43 ACTS of the First Plenary Assembly, Kampala, p. 54.

44 *Lineamenta* of the XIIIth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on new evangelization for the proclamation of the Christian faith (Vatican City,

89. In our continent, many more people are living in subhuman conditions of life. Millions of our brothers and sisters are affected adversely by the growing poverty. It has reached an intolerable degree of misery, a devastating and humiliating scourge for many African countries. The Church, which notices the misery of the people, must constantly engage in a vigorous manner in terms of awareness and concrete action in favour of a world economic order that is respectful of the rights of our people.⁴⁵ To discover the face of God in the suffering faces of the poor requires a greater awareness of our duty to transform the earth for the benefit of all. This challenge must push all Christians to a deep personal and ecclesial conversion.

90. At the international level, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reiterated that today the available material resources to get the peoples of the South out of misery are theoretically more important than in the past. However, it is the people of the North themselves who, in the long run have been profiteers of it. The distribution of goods on a global scale must not be hampered by selfish projects, protectionist conviction or dictated by interests of the richest,⁴⁶ with the complicity of some Africans. Certainly, socio-economic realities and political situations differ from one country to another, but the fact remains that the dependence of our countries with regard to liberal capitalism, colonialist ideologies, as well as other forms of totalitarianism, continue to be perpetuated in Africa in unacceptable multifaceted situations of dominations.⁴⁷

91. An analysis of the performance of governance in Africa strongly reveals some deficits, notably: the growth in economic, social and political inequalities, which do not guarantee any peaceful future for human beings and social stability; gangrenous corruption often

2011), no. 6.

45 Cf. *Lineamenta* of the XIIIth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, no. 6.

46 Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate*, Vatican City, AAS 101 (2009) 678.

47 SECAM, *The Church and Human Promotion in Africa Today, Pastoral Exhortation of the Bishops in Africa and Madagascar* (Kinshasa 15-22 July, 1984); Accra, SECAM Secretariat, 1985.



institutionalized as a mode of governance; absence of obligation for accountability, and the reign of impunity. We equally observe a devious form of political governance. It is about the transformation of single party-political regimes into “democratic” autocracies. These are false democracies that have established themselves through several tricks and manoeuvres, of the confiscation and hijacking of political achievements in several countries. They manipulate and modify Constitutions for selfish and clannish ends. Lack of effective good governance remains worrisome. It concerns the present and the future of our societies and therefore represents a huge challenge to the Church’s mission of evangelization.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

92. One notices the rise of violence in our societies. It causes the loss of a large number of human lives on our continent. It is about the drama which results from interpersonal strife, divisions within families, clashes or conflicts among different groups, and civil wars. This situation is aggravated in recent years by the violence perpetrated by armed groups such as Boko Haram, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), Al Shasbab and Mai Mai.

93. In spite of the real efforts by parents and governments towards the construction of a new Africa, there arises also the problem of the youth. The youth who constitute the majority of the population of our continent, are manipulated by the actors of violence. They are in general disoriented after their training and usually do not have other prospects for the future besides unemployment and hustling, if they do not even give up to social resignation and fatalism at the risk of their lives. Many leave the villages for the cities where sometimes the unchanged situation, forces them into exile outside the continent. With Pope Francis, we recognize that sometimes the suffering of some young people is really heart-breaking; it is a pain that cannot be expressed in words; it is a pain that is a slap in the face.⁴⁸

48 Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), no. 77.

94. The phenomenon of migration is responsible for the dramatic scenes of the dead in the desert and the castaways at the gates of Europe. This constitutes a strong call to African governments whose responsibility it is to prevent the loss of human lives of their citizens and to reduce the brain drain. We regret that even within the Church, as has been observed by Pope Francis, these migratory movements are often treated with suspicion and hostility, even before we come to know the persecutions and misery which the migrants have endured in the course of their lives.⁴⁹

95. If these migrations enable the meeting of cultures and mutual enrichment, they are also setbacks. There are forms of acculturation, of destruction of cultures, of disintegration of the coherent meaning of the fundamentals of life, the indifference and sickening xenophobia. The question is what strategies are we to promote that could constitute enrichment, when a policy and pastoral care for migrants are established, as recommended by the St. Pope John-Paul II?⁵⁰

96. The annual growth in urban cities in Africa is another challenge. It entails an intensive and extensive occupation of space. Intensive in the sense of our old neighbourhoods becoming more and more overcrowded and unsafe. Extensively, the peripheries are also being overpopulated by the rural people whose lives degenerate and become less and less the concern of the city. The new urban dynamics urge us to rethink the African person in their relationship to themselves, to territory, political life, economic life, society, nature, culture and religions. The city is transformed, becoming the place where an important body of new cultures takes shape, imposing themselves on Africans with their new language, new symbols, new styles of life, and new social relationships.

97. It must be recognized that in the cities, traditions are being lost, many young people are disorientated or without reference landmarks and often live according to the logic of the street. This has resulted in a

49 Pope Francis, "Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees", 2015.

50 Cf. John Paul II, "Message for the World Day of Peace", Vatican City, 2001, no. 3.



phenomenon of street children; children in and of the street, children of “witches”. The cities are becoming cultural crossroads where a popular culture develops; they are also places of uncertainty, of intransigencies, of the relativity of values and morals, as well loss of identity, misguided freedom and intolerant behaviour. Urban society becomes porous and a product of best and worst situations. One wonders if the emerging neo-culture in the urban cities can welcome or reject the Gospel message. This raises the question of how we respond to the problems of rural areas and make our cities a crucible of ethical values and of humanity where God is not absent.

Ecological Challenges

98. The ecological crisis is all about the relationship between humans and their natural environment. Nature is considered to be a resource to be exploited at leisure. Natural resources are exclusively conceived as economic goods and unlimited sources of profit for humans. This has led humans to forget that nature is a gift and a task according to the intentions of God the Creator and Sovereign master of the world. We equally fail to see our destiny and solidarity with nature which, like us, is also called to experience, at the end of time, the glory of God (cf. Rom 5:20). Our cultures insist on the harmonious relationship that must exist between humans and nature in communion with God and with all those who preceded us and all who will come after us.

99. The Church-Family of God in Africa ought to listen to the suffering of “our sister, our mother Earth”, in proposing credible alternatives capable of sparking off a profound change of attitude towards her. The Church-Family of God calls for humanity’s responsibility and commitment towards the Earth, in order to guarantee the perpetual survival of human race. It is in this sense that Pope Francis says: “If the Earth is given to us, we can no longer only think according to a utilitarian criterion of efficiency and productivity for the individual benefit. We are not talking about an optional attitude, but a fundamental justice

issue, since the Earth we received also belongs to those who will come after us”.⁵¹

100. The environmental ethic must go hand in hand with environmental justice, to promote a fair distribution of the natural resources, and to combat inequalities and poverty. Africa is often presented as the place of the expression of these inequalities and poverty. Indeed, some “businessmen and women, governments and economic groups which, under the pretext of reducing poverty and working on the development of the poor, instead, engage in operating programs of exploitation, destroying arable farming “lands, and the forests, polluting the environment and causing unprecedented desertification.”⁵² With all these serious abuses against the human person and nature, “the Church ... challenges ‘the rulers, to create a new ecological consciousness that is expressed in concrete actions’”.⁵³

101. The Earth is a part of our being that we carry within us and which sustains us in daily life and in communion with God and all creatures. The Earth is the home of the human family. Taking care of the Earth means protecting our own lives, ensuring an integral human well-being, and guaranteeing our future and that of our descendants.

102. The large-scale industrial production cannot only be blamed for aggression against nature. The filth in our homes, in our neighbourhoods, in our quarters, and noise pollution night and day, are also the cause. This does not encourage a climate of peace, reflection, meditation, and rest necessary for the equilibrium of our organisms and our relationship with the surrounding world.

103. We cannot also keep mute over the question of confiscation of lands, of excessive exploitation of the lakes and rivers, of lack of

51 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, no.159.

52 SECAM, *The Future of the Family, Our Mission*, Contribution to the 14th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (SECAM: SCEAM Publications, Accra, 2015), no. 24.

53 Idem, no. 23.



responsibility and inventiveness as regards the riches of the African soil and subsoil. The challenges of the Earth are multiform in Africa. The Church must, therefore, devote her attention to the ecological dimension of evangelization as well to ethical questions that need to be analyzed.

Ethical Challenges

104. The different reflections carried out so far raise some ethical issues related to our attitudes, behaviour and specific problems of evangelization in Africa. The values that we attach to the person and society, within the traditional African society, are being abandoned to the benefit of other civilizations. All these, compounded by the problems of development, are affecting adversely our families and countries. They have become part of the mentality and practice contrary to the ethical responsibility of African Christians confronted with the demands of the future of their people. Similarly, the loss of identity and autonomy, lack of courage to stand for the truth and fidelity to our words, the lack of solidarity, of self-sacrifice and creative work, are often pervasive, and leave room for subservient dependence, corruption and injustice. It becomes difficult in Africa to resist the morals and customs foreign to our cultures.

105. We notice, for example, that sexual relations are more and more marked by a spirit of pleasure, contraceptive mentality and abortion practices which do not promote the importance and ethical requirements of conjugal love. The new *global ethic* ought to be examined from the perspective of the ennobling values of African culture and the gospel. It is with good reason that Pope Francis denounces some economic aid from richer countries or international organizations which may be related to acceptance of Western proposals related to sexuality, marriage, life or social justice.⁵⁴ This ideological colonization, which is harmful to our nations, must be denounced.

54 Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 78.

106. We cannot address this issue without an adequate response to the problem of ignorance and the precariousness of living conditions. It seems necessary to awaken our consciousness to the moral, cultural, social and economic common good. As Pope Francis has stressed: it is “a principle which plays a central and unifying role in social ethics”, that is, “the totality of social conditions which allow both the group and each of the members, to reach their perfection in a complete and easy manner”.⁵⁵

Challenges of Globalisation

107. Globalization challenges the Church and African countries in a particular way. Our countries do not sufficiently benefit from this phenomenon. In Africa, globalization imposes new ways of thinking and practices, in terms of how to be, to feel, and how to behave, which necessarily do not take into account our cultural heritage or our responsibility to enrich the universal civilization.

108. Pope Francis denounces globalisation, which does not respect the identities and cultures of peoples. Such, for example, is the case of ideologizing the important issue of the place of women in society and the Church. A certain form of ideological perception of “gender” that denies the differentiation between man and woman, is contrary to African culture and to human truths enlightened by divine revelation in Christ. This type of ideology, instead of serving the true cause of the dignity of women, destabilizes the meaning of conjugal and family life that Africa has known how to preserve up to the present, even if like every human society, it always needs conversion for the better. The Church-Family of God in Africa spoke on this subject during the Synod on the Family. She must continue to speak this word of truth and of hope; inviting Africans to take up their responsibility vis-à-vis the challenge of globalisation.

⁵⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no 156.

109. The globalization of the economy, outrageously dominated by the logic of finance, that is, profit, often results in “an impoverishment and a rising inequality” in the world. Africa, which is particularly rich in natural resources, is often the scene of clashes between Western multinationals, for the most part, seeking to exploit large scale raw materials, at the expense of local people. For their personal comfort or for their own enrichment, many African leaders take an active part in these practices of impoverishing their continent and their citizens.

110. The cultural identity of a people is its soul and its deepest being. By the effect of the globalization of information and communication, African culture is frequently subjected to assaults of other cultures, other modes of being and thinking, through movies, whose contents are undermining the foundations of the African traditional morals.

A gradual acculturation wins over more and more young people who prefer Western ways of life to their own, which they consider as outmoded. Such acculturation may have, if care is not taken, an appalling impact, in the sense of the emergence of an African society and of a type of an African man and woman, completely emptied of their essence. The Church in Africa must be vigilant to curb such a situation and prevent any inclination to yield to the ideology of a so-called “dominant culture”. Also, rather than yielding to globalization, Africa, driven by its faith in God the Creator, must promote pastoral intelligence in such a way that higher institutes of learning and universities become real places of scientific and technological research to transform the existential conditions of the populations and enter into dialogue on equal footing with other peoples in the world.

Educational Challenges

111. Education has always been a concern for the Church. The first missionary efforts of establishing schools, colleges and training centres was carried further by the Church-Family of God in Africa which itself has become “its own missionary”. Higher education and research institutions, including Catholic universities, have increased in recent years. It is also the same for Christian formation houses,

centres of awareness creation and action for the resolution of conflicts, the promotion of marriage and the family and the building of peace. The Church continues in a special way to collaborate with families and States in response to education in our countries.

112. The challenges include access to integral human education for the poor in rural and urban areas that would equip everyone to assume their responsibility individually and collectively in matters pertaining to psychological, affective, moral and spiritual maturity and in matters of employment and social integration.

113. In many parts of the African continent the phenomenon of illiteracy still persists. Pope Benedict XVI affirms that: “It is a scourge on a par with that of the pandemics. True, it does not kill directly, but it contributes actively to the marginalization of the person – which is a form of social death – and it blocks access to knowledge. Teaching people to read and write makes them full members of the *res publica* and enables them to play their part in building it up”.⁵⁶ It is, therefore, necessary that everyone in Africa has access to knowledge, requisite skills and behavioural norms permitting everyone to assert themselves in civic, personal and professional life.

114. The Church-Family of God in Africa is called to respond to these challenges in order to undertake the new evangelization of the continent. The gospel is the strength of the divine life which she needs in order to respond to the challenges of her life and mission in view of integral development and of the new evangelization.

⁵⁶ Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 76.



III.2 THE GOSPEL OUR STRENGTH

“I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Rom 1:16)

115. The Gospel is the Good News of the gratuitous gift of salvation from God, given equally to all humanity and the whole of creation. Jesus of Nazareth is this Good News “who was a descendant of David according to his human nature and was declared to be Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:2-3); “born of woman, born under the law, to redeem the subjects of law” and to give believers the status and dignity of the “children of God” (Gal 4:4-6). In Jesus of Nazareth, God himself, moved by gratuitous love, identified with all human beings, including those who were in extremely shameful and degrading situations, in order to free all equally from all oppressive and dehumanizing forces as well as from death (Jn 3:16; Rom 5). Thus, in Jesus of Nazareth, God personally fulfilled his promise to our first parents to “put enmity” or eternal separation between human beings and Satan, who had derailed them from God’s plan and his loving designs for them (Gen 3:16).

Repent and Believe in the Gospel

116. Jesus, the Gospel of God, began his proclamation of the Good News by calling all to “repent and believe the gospel” (Mk 1:15). Repentance requires a true conversion of heart, a change of direction from going against God’s direction to take one that is resolutely and unwaveringly set towards God, with a will filled with gratitude to God for his ways and values, in all aspects of life. Conversion to Christ can also entail giving up what may be considered good in itself, but which can block the total acceptance of the gospel (example, “Anyone who loves father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, children, even oneself more than me is not worthy of me”).⁵⁷ In order to believe the gospel one must personally

⁵⁷ This is a literal translation of the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:37-38; Lk 14:26-27 in their contexts. See Mark 10:29-30 on the rich and eternal reward for those who courageously leave everything, including their own life, for the love of Jesus and his gospel.

embrace the ways of the Lord and put the love for God over and above everything else, just as Jesus did.

117. Because the gospel is the fire of God's love offered to the world in Christ; only this love alone can shake, shape and transform individuals and our world; so that they can realize their full potential destined for them by God. The Sermon on the Mountain (Matthew 5 – 7) and the criteria of the last judgment (Mt 25:31-46) give a summary of what conversion to the gospel entails, and the type of social transformation that it necessitates.

Is the Gospel a Sign of Contradiction?

118. Why would the gospel, God's Good News for humanity, be a sign of contradiction? At the time of Jesus, the crucifixion was the most shameful, the most degrading and the most humiliating fate that could be meted out to anyone. The idea of a crucified Messiah, who was also God, was pure nonsense. Nonetheless, Paul and the New Testament Christians proclaimed Jesus throughout the Roman Empire as "a Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles", but for those who believed, Christ was "the power and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:18-31). He embodies in his human body "the fullness of the divinity" (Col 2:9) and thus brings humanity to the salvation of God.

119. Jesus himself is the Gospel, which he proclaimed unto death, even death on the Cross; though his contemporaries were expecting a politically triumphant Messiah. Proclaiming the gospel was the food that sustained him. After his resurrection, Jesus instructed his disciples to go out and proclaim to the whole creation the same gospel of God's love.

120. The early Christians believed in the gospel and transmitted it to us. The many saints and martyrs of Africa have done the same. Many people on the contrary have refused to allow themselves to be transformed by the Catholic and Christian faith and have allowed themselves to be swayed towards the prevailing new prosperity gospels thriving in churches and through social media. To reject God's offer of salvation and liberation from all oppressive and destructive



forces that afflict humanity, or to try to submit it to or replace it with any other values (ancient or modern, religious or secular), is to impoverish and deprive humanity of the free gift of God's Gospel, Christ, and his salvation; because there is not "another gospel" (Gal 1:7-9) or another Saviour apart from him (cf. Acts 4:12).

121. Today, many Christians are ashamed of the gospel, because its values differ more and more from what society wants and approves. Anyway, a Christian who is ashamed of the gospel is ashamed of the identity he has received from God in Jesus Christ. In so doing, he equally fails the world that desperately needs the gospel for its salvation and true orientation. Jesus strongly recommends that we should not be ashamed of him and his gospel: "If anyone is ashamed of me in front of people, I will also feel ashamed of them before the angels of God" (Lk 12:9). "Whoever denies me before humans, I will deny the person before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:33).

Work for the Transformation of the World

122. The gospel is God's reconciliation of humanity and creation to the divine self (cf. 2 Cor 5:19). It destroys all anthropological and social barriers as well as discriminations based on race, nationality, ethnicity (equivalent to "Jews or Gentiles"); class distinctions ("slave or free-born") and gender inequality ("male and female"), making all believers "one" in Christ (Gal 3:25-28). The gospel further calls believers to celebrate God's deliverance of them from all oppressive and dehumanizing forces and the powers of "darkness to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13). Christ invites believers to be ready and willing to welcome him, to accept to suffer and bear everything joyfully for the sake of God's kingdom which he embodied, lived and proclaimed, rather than adopt lifestyles contrary to it.

123. In a permissive world where humans feel they have the right to organize their life the way they want, independently of God, the urgency of being and proclaiming the gospel becomes an absolute necessity and imperative. This mission is the duty of every Christian (Gal 3:4-6; 6:28-29; Eph 2:1-22), and not only of missionaries, priests and

consecrated persons. Pope Francis has strongly reminded everyone of this mission.⁵⁸ The proclamation of the gospel does not aim a priori at converting people to Christianity. It aims, on the one hand, at letting all peoples know what God has done for them in Jesus of Nazareth by pure love; and, on the other, that, since Jesus is God's definitive self-offer to humanity, there cannot be another supreme value for humanity and for creation. There is therefore no reason to be ashamed of God's gospel.

124. The gospel is not only a creed to be professed, but also a way of life to be lived; God's way of life made visible in Jesus, from the manger to the cross. We urge you all to imitate Christ, to cultivate a Eucharistic mindset and way of life; breaking and sharing the bread of one's life so that others may eat and have life "in ever increasing measure" (Jn 10:10). This attitude explains in depth the essential character of repentance and of believing in the gospel, of working for the transformation of the world. Strengthened by our lives and faith in the gospel, let us all "*go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news*" (Mk 16:15) and "*make disciples of all the nations*" (Mt 28:20) without fear, without hesitation and without shame.

58 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), esp. Chapter 3.1: "All the People of God Proclaim the Gospel", nos. 111-134.



III.3. NEW MENTALITIES AND NEW PASTORAL STRATEGIES

The Power of the Gospel to Meet the Challenges

125. Christ's disciples are not ashamed of the gospel, since it represents the energy of the divine life which they need for meeting the challenges of their life and mission of integral human development and in-depth evangelization of their country, continent and world. The gospel of life invites to conversion men and women confronted with the problems and responsibilities of their personal and collective vocation. Conversion brings about the renewal of the individual and the community as well as of their worldview, their mindset, their choices and their behaviour in all things. Conversion which comes from the Spirit of the Lord and his word transforms hearts and human societies and makes the Church fruitful. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God that transforms the life of persons and makes "all things new" (Rev 21:5), especially where human behaviour promotes alienation from God and the absence of integral human development.

126. The situation which obtains in the contemporary story of Africa finds in the Church its solution, in the ability of the faithful to put off shame and put on the armour of the power and joy of the gospel for authentic Christian witnessing; for resolute commitment to integral human development and for the salvation of the world. It entails getting rid of the habit of thinking only of personal and family successes and even of trying to meet Africa's problems by ignoring the power of liberation and of life that comes from the word of God.

127. Consciously or unconsciously, Christ's disciples, both ordinary citizens and political leaders, tend to forget that, in truth, the gospel fully received and authentically lived, is the source of development and peace *par excellence* for the world. They often think of salvation, spirituality and the Christian life – in short, the gospel – as being ineffective when faced with concrete challenges of their society. Riches and politics have, all of a sudden, come to be regarded as things that by

nature alienate the faithful from Christ and from the gospel. They have consequently been demonized.

128. Conversely, under the influence of the African conception of well-being in concrete terms and the attraction of the “born-again” churches as well as the new Christian religiosities, Catholics have turned to spiritualities of deliverance, healing and prosperity. They seem deaf to the gospel call to conversion, change of heart, love, and the struggle against injustice and all forms of oppression: social, political and economic.

129. Given this scenario, it is urgent to make the gospel known and loved in Africa as decisive personal encounter with Jesus Christ; and as the word of life in abundance in the holistic sense of the word; that is, existential, liberative, spiritual and eternal. The faithful will be led to live this life without reducing its efficacy to the materialistic satisfaction of human desires. We have to avoid the danger of promoting a Christianity which focuses on the salvation of souls without the body, as well as a Christianity that is a recipe for fleeing from the cross in search of miracles and quick solutions to human problems.

130. Causes of the deplorable behaviour, dramatic situations and the worrisome phenomena for the future of humanity are deep-rooted in the human heart, and in ineffective practices at the individual, communal, political and pastoral levels. Our awareness of this reality should lead us to do an analysis, which holds us responsible and accountable for our problems; and which commits us to openly and fully find ethical, spiritual and Christian solutions that take root in the innermost depths of persons.

131. From now onwards, pastoral work will aim at leading every follower of Christ in Africa, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to look deeply into his own heart and into the depths of his being and to get in touch with his imagination. These are the “seats” of all psychological determinants, intellectual and spiritual judgment, choices and activity of persons, including the baptized; that need to be



evangelized in depths.⁵⁹ The biblical concept of conversion, which sums up the message and the requirements of the gospel (cf. Mk 1:15) and that of the heart, which is the whole person, the source of all their attitudes, as well as what generates and structures these (cf. Mt 15:19), go hand in hand. They complement each other and reveal in this way that the search for answers to human challenges where Jesus, the Gospel in person, is concerned, must target, above all, on the one hand, the whole person and their conversion in their relationship with Jesus Christ and the world; and on the other, the change of heart and mentality, which cause and maintain the impoverishment and misery of individuals and peoples.

132. Faced with compelling societal challenges, as people looking for life in abundance for themselves, their people and the world, Christians are called to cling intimately to Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, who came into the world so that human beings might have life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). As people endowed with life that expresses itself in terms of freedom, decision and action, Christians are invited to conversion of their heart, their mentality and their way of acting; to do so in the gospel perspective; and to take the fundamental option to follow Christ and be his witnesses for the transformation of the world. As ecclesial persons, Christ's disciples participate in the mission of the Church-Family of God and work to make her new pastoral strategies reach their desired goal, namely, the conversion of persons and the transformation of the world in the spirit of the gospel.

Pastoral Plan for the Conversion of Africa and the Transformation of the World

133. The emergence of a new Africa, reborn and made fruitful by the gospel is the preoccupation of the Church-Family of God. Indeed, the Church is the Messenger of Christ who gives life in abundance and empowers the faithful to respond concretely and prophetically to the social, ecological and spiritual challenges of the continent. The

59 Cf. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1975, no. 19.

envisaged new Africa is one where the baptized, aware that their identity and vocation are intimately linked to the person of Jesus Christ, become like the leaven of the kingdom that the Church takes and buries in the dough of African society (cf. Mt 13:33). Renewed by the Holy Spirit in the love of the Father, they will be for Africa “the salt of the earth” and “the life of the world” (cf. Mt 5:13, 14).

134. The pastoral work of personal conversion and the social transformation of society must consist in a constant invitation of the baptized to the renewal of heart and to actions for in-depth social change. It commits the pastors and the faithful to create genuine initiatives that bring both individuals and groups to realize that through baptism, they become people in whom God the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell (cf. Jn 15:4). Through them, the Holy Trinity who is Family, wants, today in the heart of the world, to think, plan, speak and act; so that God’s reign may extend and embrace the whole human race. Thus, everywhere in the world, would spring up societies that have a passion for justice and peace, and that promote integral human development, as they march towards God’s kingdom.

135. It is possible to be drawn by the desire to remain in God and work for the transformation of society, when the baptized see themselves as children of God; who belong to him without double allegiance; and lead in the Church a life of faith and of prayer. Thus, the baptized African will no longer opt to belong to two worlds: the world of the day and the world of the night, Sunday Christians and followers of fetish beliefs and practices on other days of the week, etcetera. The conviction of being with Christ, Conqueror of death, an empowering understanding of the mystique of the cross, and creative work, will help these faithful to break from pursuing human successes and enrichment that are contrary to the gospel, and which could even include cultic practices that involve trafficking in human organs and satanic rites.

136. The pastoral strategy that promotes the life of communion with Christ leads the faithful to a greater awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit who acts and transforms persons and social situations.



Energised by the breath of the Holy Spirit, Christ's disciples will come to rid themselves of the mentality of fatalism, resignation, indifference, the spirit of passivity, of idleness and lack of initiative in work, as well as the search for easy solutions to life's problems.

137. The effectiveness of these strategies for new evangelisation is the work of Christ who, on Pentecost, poured out the Holy Spirit on the Church and empowered it to take to all peoples the Good News of the Father's love. May prayers rise unceasingly to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so that our Church-Family of God may have pastors and the faithful who are borne anew by the wind of this new evangelisation. May this God whose followers and co-workers we are in the Church-Family of God in Africa create new mentalities, effect conversions of heart and ecclesial and social transformations; without which we will be unable to fulfil the mission, which he has entrusted to us; and for which it is urgent to form all members of the Church-Family of God.

Formation for the New Evangelisation

The new evangelisation

138. The Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops (4th - 25th October 2009) stressed the need to embark on the new evangelization of those already baptized (without neglecting to reach out to those who are yet to encounter Christ for the first time). This is a call to form all baptized Christians in the spirit and life of Jesus. Such formation equips Christians and enables them to become true ministers of the gospel. To be credible ministers of the new evangelisation, we first have to become gospel people. Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles, first underwent a true personal conversion from his previous, entire Jewish upbringing to formation in Christ and his gospel, before running with relentless zeal to proclaim this gospel to all peoples, throughout the Roman Empire.⁶⁰ Because Paul dedicated his entire life to proclaiming the gospel of God's salvation as a free gift to all, without discrimination, we the Gentiles of today, are now full members in the Family of God and worthy ministers and trustees of God's mysteries for our peoples.

⁶⁰ See his short autobiography in Phil 3:3-12; Gal 2:19-21.

139. At the heart of the gospel stands the gratuitous gift of God's salvation; which is not something we can merit (cf. Tit 3:4-18). This gospel solidly grounds the individual in the love of God in such a way that loving as God loves becomes the indispensable rule of life that each one must observe. This love leads us to recognize that God's grace excludes no one. Love offers itself without discrimination to all peoples, both the members of the dearly beloved Family of God, the Church, and those who do not believe in the God of Jesus Christ.⁶¹

Dimensions of Formation

140. Formation for the new way of living and proclaiming the gospel requires that baptised adult Christians commit themselves each to study the life of Jesus in the gospels, as a necessity for oneself. This is because, for one to be an effective minister of the gospel, one needs to meet and stay with Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6). One needs to know and accept what he gives freely and demands from his disciples as gospel imperative; and make these demands the organising principles of one's life and lifestyle. The efforts to understand the life of Jesus should not be left to individual intelligence alone. It is best carried out in families and in basic ecclesial communities. A solid catechesis in the gospel faith is deeply rooted in prayer and sound spirituality. This goes beyond mere memorization and recitation of the teachings of the Church in the Catechism of the Catholic Church in preparation for the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Eucharist/First Communion), and later in preparation for marriage. It also goes beyond the academic knowledge of the Social Teachings of the Church. It requires first and foremost that the people be deeply convinced of their new identity which they have received from God as his children in Christ. On the basis of this formation and the conviction it imparts, one can then give an account of one's faith to others by word and deed.

⁶¹ *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chapter II, counts non-Christians among "The People of God", because God's salvation excludes no one.



141. The new formation equally requires the evangelization of cultures. Culture here is not limited to traditional rituals. Essentially, it pertains to meaning, and the historical, ethical and spiritual formation of persons. Thus certain traditional African cultural practices were and still are deeply rooted in the values that we find in the gospel, for example, hospitality, *Ubuntu*, the sense of community and shared responsibility for the family, the treatment of people (from same place or village) as brother and sister, and other values mentioned in *Ecclesia in Africa*.⁶² Given that in the person of Jesus, we all belong to the same village and are members of the same household of God which goes “beyond ethnicity”; these cultural practices ought to serve as assets to truly understand and live the gospel fully, the traditional salvific culture that comes from God. This culture transcends all cultural traditions, because all cultures find in it their fullness of meaning.

142. Formation for evangelization must be able to identify and ascertain, by the transforming power of the Word of God on which it is grounded, all forms of cultures and modern practices that militate against human life and creation. These new cultural forms and practices are developing in the world at breakneck speed, under the guise and cover of human rights (women rights, children rights, etcetera), instead of focussing on the inalienable right of the human person. No human being has the right to belittle the life of God within them and within others. To destroy or degrade life is to make one less than human. The growing money culture by which one “appreciates God”, and by which one tends to measure the quality of faith in terms of material wealth, the primary concern being to obtain divine blessings of all kinds, undermines the gospel of God’s grace (cf. Tit 3:4-8). It must therefore be rejected.

143. Since the gospel is essentially concerned with God’s plan to unite to the divine self in Christ “things in heaven and things on earth” (Col 1:20; Eph 1:9), the new evangelization needs to address all cultures, in particular, the growing world cultures of segregation, privatization and divisions among even members of the same biological and confessional

62 Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, nos. 42-43.

family. All these cultures and counter cultures need to be evangelized in depth. It is impossible to proclaim and foster the gospel of unity with a divided cultural mindset and vision, be it personal or communal.

144. The new formation will teach with prophetic courage the truth of the gospel, Jesus of Nazareth; it does not operate outside or without the Church; it is open to traditional cultural practices that promote gospel values. A major task for personal, religious and societal conversion and the consequential work for the transformation of human society can be found here. The task should not be addressed polemically or in a bipartisan spirit, but with a sincere desire to discover and live fully in all aspects of life the “new humanity” and the “new creation” in Christ (Eph. 2:15; 2 Cor 5:17). This new humanity and new creation transcend not only the borders of race and class, but also those between man and woman who are now “one in Christ” (Gal 3:28). The task calls for faith in the gospel power of healing and salvation. For this reason, we encourage the personal possession of the Bible by the clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful; with reading guides that are in conformity with the teaching of the Church.

145. The new catechesis is proactive; it does not passively respond to crises in the community, the nation and the world. As the power of God to save all peoples, irrespective of their origin and social status, the gospel, our strength, does not need human permission to be proclaimed. Jesus came to actively seek and save sinners. He boldly proclaimed God’s gospel, in spite of all the opposition and rejection that he experienced from his own people even unto death and resurrection.

146. Fundamental concern for the poor and needy is to be at the heart of the new catechesis, as Pope Francis has repeatedly said.⁶³ The great Charter of the Kingdom (Matthew 5 - 7) begins by declaring the poor “blessed” (Mt 5:3; Lk 6:20). In addition to caring for the poor, the refugees, migrants, the excluded, exploited domestic staff and others; concern for the poor should include those who are spiritually poor. This category of persons must be invited to adopt the gospel way of

63 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 187-216.



life if we want to work effectively for the transformation of the world. Jesus reached out to all categories of people, even accepting invitations to dine with people who invited him in order to monitor his behaviour with regard to their traditional religious and social beliefs and practices. He used such occasions to invite his hosts to conversion (cf. Lk 7:36-50; 14:1-24; 19:1-10).

147. We urge pastors and the entire Church-Family of God to treat the laity with respect and as mature adults. They are invested by their baptismal commitment with the right to become God's collaborators in reconciling the world to God. With Pope Francis we regret that the consciousness of this responsibility of the lay faithful, which is born of baptism and confirmation, has not yet manifested itself in the same manner among us. The reason is because in some cases the lay faithful have not yet been formed to assume important responsibilities; and in other cases, it is because they have not found space in their local churches to speak and act, because of excessive clericalism, which places them on the margins of decision-making.⁶⁴ It is therefore imperative to cultivate a change of mentality that assures just balance between rights and responsibilities, and that promotes the spirit of service and collaboration.

148. The lay faithful act in and for the Church in the world, not only in political, social, economic, religious, and moral spheres, but also within the Church-Family of God itself. Therefore, individuals, families, married couples, basic or small Christian communities, pious societies, parishes, houses of formation, biblical scholars, theologians and theological institutions should make formation for the new evangelization the inspiration and foundation of all their programs and activities.

149. The new evangelization calls on all pastors to develop together, at local, national, regional and continental levels a new catechesis that will equip the people of God with solid knowledge of the gospel of Jesus

⁶⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 102. The Apostolic Exhortation serves as a guide for the formation process of New Evangelisation.

Christ, who is the power of God and God's recipe for the transformation of human beings, the success of all their social enterprises and the salvation of the world. In the new evangelization, Jesus remains the unique Way, the unique Truth and the unique Life that God the Father has given with love to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians have been configured to him by their baptism as well as by all the other sacraments and the love of God with which God has stamped and endowed them to be his witnesses in the world. Christians have thus received the unsurpassable gift of becoming God's children, called to live in all ways like Jesus, who became a human being to teach human beings how to be human and divine in word and deed.





III.4. SPIRITUALITY AND COMMITMENT FOR A NEW AFRICA

A Spirituality of Commitment

150 At creation and throughout the history of salvation, God gives life by his word (Ps 33:6, 9; Lk 4:21); Jesus Christ is the Word of God become flesh (Jn 1:1). He reveals in his person that his word is life (Jn 6:63) and that life is made flesh. The word of God is the word of life. It is given, it is incarnated, it is made concrete, it is geared towards the good of the other, acting in word and deed so that the logic of sin and death never prevails over that of life, in the world. Thus, God himself is by nature committed; that is, he is permanently in motion and continually working in order that his kingdom of love and life will become a reality on the earth.

151. The involvement of God in the life of the world is explained by the fact that he is life and has created humans to have life in abundance (Jn 10:10). The life of the Father is given by the Son Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that humanity is delivered from sin and death. Thus, the word of God gives life (Mt 4:4). Efficient and effective in the world, it does not return to God without accomplishing what it was sent to do (Isa 55:11; Heb 4:12). Created in the image of God who is life (Gen 1:26; Jn 14:6), the disciples of Christ are called not only to listen to the word of God, but also to serve it to achieve what it says by putting it into practice. The mystique of this commitment represents the inner strength, the power of action and how to live as Christians, bearing witness to the word of life. Attachment to Jesus Christ, faith in his Good News, conversion and the transformation of the world in response to these challenges, in Africa, is only possible through a spirituality of engagement.

Commitment, Concrete Action for the Triumph of Life over Death

152. The spirituality of commitment is an attitude of listening to the word of God in order to put it into practice on a daily basis, in response to the challenges of today's societies. It is a spirituality that puts the baptized in a constant state of awareness, alertness and mobilization of both internal and external resources to account for one's faith by witnessing: the unity of word and deed. With the spirituality of engagement in the school of the Apostle St Paul, the baptized allow Christ to live and act in them (cf. Gal 2:20). They are aware of their mission; and live in a spirit of existential responsibility and in communion with the Holy Spirit. They aim at becoming effective players in the transformation of social realities in Africa and elsewhere in the world, as the leaven of the gospel of justice and life in abundance for all.

153. Genuine Christian spirituality is always commitment; commitment to the victory of life over death, over sin and all the tragedies it causes. Indeed, at the heart of commitment lie sustained efforts at ongoing conversion, change of heart and attitudes, as well as a firm commitment to the gospel by word and deed; the type that makes of Christian witness a force of liberation from all forms of death or oppression.

154. This efficacious Christian spirituality is particularly nourished by the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. It is also based on silent and contemplative prayer, meditation on the word of God (*lectio divina*); being truthful; and making a fundamental option for a life of faithfulness to the gospel. Furthermore, this spirituality allows the baptized to become witnesses of the gospel which the Church needs, so that Africa, the "spiritual lung of humanity",⁶⁵ is not infected with all forms of vices of spiritual, cultural, economic and political impoverishment.

65 Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at the Opening of the *Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops*, on 5th October 2009, at the Vatican City.



Transformation of the World and Exemplary Life

155. We encourage all forms of Christian spiritualities, which are already in line with this perspective of our Church-Family of God, to strenuously promote the spirit of communion and concrete action. We congratulate and thank all consecrated persons, the faithful, the clergy; in brief, all members of the Church-Family of God, who pray in order to find in their communion with God, in listening to the word of life and in their intercession, the divine strength to respond to their various vocations in the world. We invite all followers of Christ never to forget that “spirituality” and action “to transform the world”⁶⁶ go hand in hand. May we find in the evangelization and the construction of a new Africa, many Christian politicians, rulers, public officials, employees and employers, women and men actors in the economic and agricultural sectors, in crafts, commerce, domestic and informal domains; who will no longer put a dichotomy between faith and politics, the kingdom of God and the transformation of the earth, salvation of souls and terrestrial life, contemplation and action.

156. We are grateful to the witness of faith of our lay faithful whose exemplary daily life, gives honour to the Christian name they bear and to the whole Church; they do so through their solidarity with the poor, well fulfilled obligations to the State, well undertaken local development initiatives, political action and refusal to compromise with the practices of injustice, corruption and illicit wealth acquisition. We do encourage them and all members of our Church-Family of God to continue resisting all vices, and remain faithful to the gospel even to the total giving up of their life; to resist temptations and practices which promote faith without works, injustice, selfish political actions, looting of the national wealth, the worship of political personalities, dishonesty, social resignation and quick enrichment by illegal, magical and fake religious means.

66 Pope Francis' Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, Vatican city, 2016, no. 324.

Renewed Life in Existing Spiritualities

157. We propose formation in the spirituality of engagement for all the beloved sons and daughters of God in the Church-Family of God. This formation should take into account the already existing spiritualities in fidelity to the teaching of Jesus Christ: that he did not come to abolish, but to fulfil God's law (Mt 5:17). The spirituality of engagement does not reject popular devotions, the "popular spirituality" or "popular mysticism".⁶⁷ As Pope Francis indicates, it is "about a true spirituality incarnated in the culture as simple prayers, Eucharistic adoration or the celebration of the faith".⁶⁸ Pastoral agents should integrate them into catechesis and the accompaniment of the faithful, so that they lead a life of communion with God and of social existence that makes them "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14).

158. Priests and other pastoral agents must therefore accompany and inspire, from the inside, popular devotions and various prayer groups and spiritualities which give more importance to exercises of piety, to continuous intercessions and a spiritual life based on reading, listening to and meditating on the word of God, as well as on conversion, practice of the sacraments and social commitment. They need to guide against spiritualities of deliverance and prosperity, which advocate a Christianity that is empty of the mystery of the cross, and is anchored principally on success and miraculous solutions to the problems of life.

159. These spiritualities may awaken the Church to be more sensitive to the different dimensions of salvation. But they express an escape from the cross based on the belief that one can have success in life without going through the hardships of life, without fighting against sin, or doing anything to transform social realities; these are all false spiritualities. Pope Benedict XVI urged Christians to lead a baptismal life, fertilized by a "healthy spirituality",⁶⁹ a spirituality through which the "yes" of acceptance to follow Christ, moves in the direction of aligning one's being and actions to the requirements of the gospel;

67 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 124.

68 Ibid, no. 124.

69 Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 116.

bearing one's cross, if necessary "until martyrdom",⁷⁰ in a "spirit of reconciliation, justice and peace".⁷¹

160. We strongly advise that in all the regions, dioceses and parishes of our Church-Family of God in Africa, Madagascar and the islands, the laity make the fundamental option to live a "healthy spirituality" [which] allows the Spirit of Christ to liberate every person to act effectively in the society.⁷² It is a great sign of the emergence of a renewed Church in Africa when her sons and daughters, weighed down by the problems of society, no longer succumb to living a life of religious syncretism, abandoning their Catholic Christian community for other religions or Christian denominations or movements of esoteric mystical-religious spiritualities. May spiritual accompaniment help all members of the Christian community, especially those men and women, young people, executives and politicians who are confronted with the problems of deliverance, protection and human success, to know the true spirit and resources of authentic Christian spirituality.

Research, Example of African Saints, Information and Communication Skills and Sacred Art

161. We encourage centres of spiritual renewal and of Christian formation, monasteries, religious institutes and congregations of the Consecrated Life, novitiates, major seminaries, catechetical schools, Catholic institutes and universities, to carry out research concerning the spirituality of engagement, taking into account the concerns of the people and the demands of their faith in Jesus Christ. This research which should be deeply contextual, inculturated and rooted in the gospel, should give a prominent place to African saints as models; especially those in Uganda who resisted the temptations and social offers that were contrary to the faith, as well as the intimidation of the king and different political leaders who could not appreciate their attachment to Christ and their fidelity to gospel values. This spirituality

70 Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 34.

71 Ibid, no. 34.

72 Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 16.

of engagement will help Africans to experience the possibility of living a saintly life within the socio-cultural and political contexts of their continent, after the example of the saints of their continent.

162. We urge each and every one to make use of the New Information Technology and Communication and sacred Art to nourish prayer, and celebrations with symbols, gestures, cultural and religious rituals expressing the rooting of the gospel in African cultures. Efforts will be made to foster a living communion of Africans with Christ, wherever they find themselves, and to remind them constantly of their duty to listen to and put into practice God's word of abundant life.

The Church Family of God, Witness of Hope

163. God's will to offer hope of redemption and salvation to humanity is related to his constant call to humanity. Several passages in the Old Testament reflect this reality. The story of the New Testament on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, with its continuation in the post-resurrection experiences of the disciples and the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20), is the highest point. It is by this great missionary mandate that the Church, which Jesus established and continues to sustain, becomes a sign and a witness of this same hope that God has constantly offered to humanity from ancient times.

164. In all its decisions, implicitly and explicitly, the Second Vatican Council represents a message of solidarity to the Church and the world, as well as a message of hope, in the history of this century, full of misfortunes. "The joys and hopes, the sadness and the anxieties of the men of our time, especially the poor and the people afflicted of all kinds, are also the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of followers of Christ".⁷³ This means that the Church is closely linked to the world, to the whole of humanity and its history. She turns to the whole human family and offers to collaborate in the existence of the authentic Family of God, fraternal community, which corresponds to the dignity of man and woman created in the likeness of God.⁷⁴ Owing to her solidarity

⁷³ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1.

⁷⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 17.



with all peoples, the Church as Family of God understands herself as “the yeast, which is the soul of human society, destined to renew herself in Christ and to be transformed into an eschatological family of God”.⁷⁵

165. “Coming forth from the eternal Father’s love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit, the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the world to come. But she is already present in this world, and is composed of human beings, that is, of members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God’s children during the present history of the human race, and to keep increasing it until the Lord returns. United on behalf of heavenly values and enriched by them, this family has been constituted and structured as a society in this world by Christ, and is equipped by appropriate means for visible and social union. Thus, the Church, at once a visible association and a spiritual community, goes forward together with humanity; and experiences the same earthly lot which the world experiences. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God’s family”.⁷⁶

166. The Church understands her role of transformation of the world here and now, as well as the assumption of all humanity in the Family of God at the end of the time. Specifically, it is a new and evangelical family, made up of sons and daughters who are born, not of blood or of the will of man, but of the mystery of the passion of Christ. Ensuing from the love of the Father for all, the Family of the Church of God is nothing else but Jesus Christ extended and transmitted to people and who then become his own body.

167. Coming from God, the Church-Family of God is made for humanity, so that she shares her life. She is in this sense a mystery of relationship and communion of people with God and with each other in God which makes them share his life of relationship, of communion and love. This participation in the life of God makes her mission closely

⁷⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 40.

⁷⁶ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 40

related to the nature of God. The Church-Family of God is a mystery of mission, because she embodies in herself a life that is the bond and communion of the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it is the same life of God, as family or Trinity, to welcome and to extend to others, to all humanity. The Church is a gift and the extension of life relationship of communion and love of God to humans. This life brings together into one family the multitude of men and women to whom it is transmitted; it commits them to imitate God, who reveals himself to them as relation and communion of love, and invites them to imbibe the life of God in their life to make it efficient in all endeavours of daily life.

168. Due to her dual nature, visible and invisible, the Church is the sacrament of the deep and intimate union of human beings with God and of the unity of the whole of humanity in the Family of God in Christ. In other words, the Church is the mystery of Christ, who was born, died and rose for all humanity. This mystery appears in the life of Christians (Eph 3:8-11). The Church-Family of God is the realization of the mystery of Christ in the world.

169. The Church is the community of persons who, having become believers in Christ, adhere to his teachings and live in the hope of future glory. This community is strongly marked by the love of Christ and the unity of the Godhead, manifested in the lives of its members. In this love and this unity, even when they are separated by national borders, of different racial, ethnic, tribal, linguistic and idealistic, a certain “unity” is always there, which is a reflection of the body of Christ.

170. In this Family of God, Christ exists at every moment in history, to manifest the love and the glory of the Father and of its members. It is this demonstration of the love and the glory of the Father which makes the Church-Family of God, not only an existing structure in human society, but a living hope, a principle that gives life, a source of living water flowing in the arid circumstances of the human world (Ez 47:8-10), giving life to the dead, invigorating the “weak” and rejuvenating the “aged” in faith, reviving the hearts of men and women in hope, and giving them a foretaste of the greatest hope to come.



171. By bringing this to bear in the life of the African, the Church-Family of God becomes both a “sign” and a “witness” to hope for the continent and its people. As a sign, the Church exists both as a body to which Africans turn to get hope, and as the greatest reality of what remains to be done. As a witness of hope, the Church herself has walked along with Christ; she has remained at his feet; has listened to him; and has been transformed by him and thus raised to a higher level of hope in her risen Lord. Knowing very well that this hope will never disappoint her (cf. Rom 5:5), the Church transmits this same hope to the entire people of Africa, through the missionary mandate that she received from her Lord, by truly and authentically bearing witness to it by word and deed; witness to the hope that she has received from her Lord and Master.

172. The Second Vatican Council, in its Decree *Ad Gentes*, On the Missionary Activity of the Church, had indicated what Christian witness ought to be: “All Christians, wherever they live, are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, that new humanity put on at baptism and that power of the Holy Spirit by which they have been strengthened at Confirmation. Thus, other people, observing their good works, can glorify the Father (cf. Matt. 5:16) and can perceive more fully the real meaning of human life and the universal bond of the community of humankind”.⁷⁷

173. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms this. The virtue of hope is the aspiration for the happiness that God has placed in the heart of every person.⁷⁸ This happiness sustains and nourishes human activities by purifying them so as to ordain them towards the kingdom of heaven. It protects persons from discouragement and supports them in times of abandonment. It opens their heart to the expectation of eternal happiness. Driven by hope, each person is preserved from selfishness and is led to the happiness that oozes from charity.

⁷⁷ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 11.

⁷⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1817.

174. It is in the tragic situation of humanity that the Church, as the Family of God, must accomplish its prophetic mission today and give witness, by its message and its actions, to the Good News of salvation and of hope given to all. The mission to witness to Christian hope, in a continent taken hostage by wars and miseries, obliges the Church, as the Family of God, to be radically committed to justice and peace in order to improve the social structures. The Church ought to commit herself to proclaim the Christian message which finds its fulfilment in the liberation of the oppressed. In the current situation of Africa, the Church-Family of God has become aware of her role in this area. For her, the transformation of cultural, social, political, economic, and ecological Africa cannot be achieved without recourse to God, and without reference to the ethical values of humanization, of living together harmoniously as a community of shared life and destiny, of respect for the common good, of sharing, of justice and peace. It is therefore, in considering the Church as a power of total and concrete change in society in the spirit of the gospel of God's kingdom, which is life and love, that the theology of the Church as the Family of God was conceived and retained as the pastoral option for the evangelization of the continent; an option that opens up to hope.

175. Hope is the virtue that the Church has recourse to in order encourage her children in their struggle for salvation. It gives them joy even in tribulations. Hope is however not always limited to human existence. It is of a higher value when it transcends the current human conditions and reflects the future reality which will reveal itself. That is what reflects the eschatological dimension of the Church, which is a sign of hope for humanity: all humanity aspires to unite in one and the same Family of God, where Christ, firstborn of many brethren, will be "everything and in everything" (Col 3:11).

176. To engage in the formation of a more just human society and a world without division and hatred is a requirement of Christian hope. This commitment comes precisely from the current expectation of salvation to come. Such hope should be the livewire of basic ecclesial communities, associations and Catholic movements.



The Kingdom of God and Signs of Its Presence among Us

177. In her self-understanding as essentially missionary, the Church as the Family of God in Africa can view herself as the place where the kingdom is realized today, and where the signs of its presence can be seen among the people of faith, hope and charity. As such, the Church is not the kingdom she proclaims. The kingdom, like a leaven is present in the Church, but it awaits its full realization at the end of time. It will not be fully present until such time the reconciliation of the world is accomplished. It will only happen when the Father has completed the work of bringing together all humanity within the same Family that he forms with the Son and the Spirit.

178. This underscores the temporary character of what seems to be for us an institutional expression of the Church as the Family of God. Put differently, as the Family of God, the Church assists in a limited capacity in the coming of God's reign. But just as she is not identical with the kingdom of God, she is not to be absorbed into the human family either. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish clearly between them, without separation or confusion.

179. What, then, is the fate of the African and his hope in the Church as the Family of God for the kingdom? The salvation of every human being, a gift of God through Christ, now starts on earth and reaches its fullness in the resurrection of the dead. Because it is part of the kingdom of God and manifests itself in the world, Christian salvation is inherently and inseparably historical and *metahistorical*, immanent and transcendent. As the Second Vatican Council, reminds us, "united with Christ in the Church and sealed by the Holy Spirit, we are called children of God and we really are; we are the Family of God on earth, but a family that will have its consummation in the glory of Christ".⁷⁹ It is the full salvation of man and woman in their relationship with God, with their brothers and sisters; with all others; and with the world and history.-

⁷⁹ Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 48; cf. 1 Jn 3:1; Eph 1:14

180. In inviting all people to salvation, Christ inserts them into his Family, and makes of them the dwelling place of God, the place of life with him. As a result, he created a new bond of family and fraternal solidarity among persons. All humanity is therefore called to form a single Family of God, a people of God who, in brotherly and sisterly love and solidarity, communion, and the same hope, journey to the Promised Land.⁸⁰ Thus, the kingdom, the destiny of the Family of God, inaugurated on earth by God himself, passing through trials and temptations, supported by the strength of the grace of God, constantly renewed by the Spirit, can grow till it receives from God its full realization.⁸¹

181. In this case, Christian hope is not only for the individual, but for the entire community. It must manifest and express itself in the structures of the Church in Africa, such as basic ecclesial communities and different Christian associations and movements; this is how Christians can contribute to extending the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of love and justice, and to awaken real hope in the presence of God among men and women.⁸² For the Church-Family of God and for Africans living in uncertainty, in a disjointed Africa, following Christ and having membership in God's kingdom will entail encouraging each and every one to seek reconciliation and perfect unity in African society, through fraternal charity, the practice of justice. Because "whoever, follows Christ, seeking first the Kingdom of God, derives therefrom a stronger and purer love for helping all his brethren to accomplish a work of justice, under the inspiration of love".⁸³ More concretely, the active existence of the African Christian, the life and the place of the Church Family of God in this passing world, testifies to the concrete presence of the kingdom on this continent, a kingdom of brotherhood/sisterhood and justice, solidarity and sharing of the goods which God has given in abundance to his children since creation.

80 Cf., Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 1, 13, 18, 24-45.

81 Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 9.

82 Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 35, 36, 48; GS 39, 93.

83 Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 72.



182. In declaring that all people are intended to participate in the coming salvation and which has already begun on earth, the Church means that God does not just focus on the simple promise of happiness in the beyond. The Church makes credible the presence of God through participation in the transformation of African realities so that they manifest the glory of God in Jesus Christ. To proclaim the kingdom of God as a sign of the presence of God without works of Christian love, without fraternal solidarity would be to discredit oneself, to give a counter-witness; to deny God's own word.

183. The Second Vatican Council on several occasions said that the current situation of the Church required profound reform and renewal.⁸⁴ It is therefore urgent that the Church in Africa liberates itself from those historical structures considered as a deformation of its gospel character and of its apostolic and pastoral mission, by conducting a critical historical and ethical review; in order to give to the Church its authentic form, in which the current generation desires to recognize the face of Christ and feel the presence of the kingdom of God in its concrete life situations. It is in this sense that the Church in Africa announces the gospel to arouse a change of heart; work for social transformation; effect her own renewal; and increasingly give birth to the new African (*novus Africanus*); in particular the African Christian, one who truly lives for Christ and whose main concern in society is to testify to God's kingdom by creating signs of its presence on the continent, in communion with the Holy Spirit.

184. All of us, African Christians, conscious that we are the Church, let us be the signs and the presence of God in our part of the world. We must begin to recognize our personal and community situation of being friends of Christ and chosen by him, though sinners, for a noble mission (cf. Jn 15:14-16); recognizing our inability to meet our mission by ourselves, so as to place our full trust in God's promise. By this, we

⁸⁴ Vaican II, *Lumen Gentium*, nos. 8, 15; *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 21, 42, 76, 88; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 6.

ensure that our current history is open to the kingdom of God. Thus, there should be neither despair nor pessimism concerning the future Africa.⁸⁵

185. Once exposed to Christian hope, the Church as Family of God will become a place and a sign of hope for Africa, *land of life yet grappling with the crises that flood her with bad news*, and for today's world; a world marked by huge injustice at the international and national levels. In this world, where technical and industrial progress is increasingly widening the gap between rich and poor countries to facilitate the accumulation of wealth by minority groups at the expense of the many needy people who live in indignity, lacking what is needed for survival; there is an urgent need for African Christians to become aware of universal fraternity and to change oppressive politico-economic and cultural structures, to bring to an end all inequalities, and introduce the spirit of sharing amongst human beings. The Church-Family of God has a duty to bring into existence another world, a world of love and fraternity, so that, always and everywhere, human beings may truly become the image of God, also worthy of their status as children of God, thanks to the sacrifice of Christ, the unique Son.

186. It is urgent and necessary to recognize, in this perspective, the radical affirmation of the right of every human being to happiness and fullness of life. It was "the dispersed children of God" (Jn 11:52) that Christ gathered in one united family, maintained and sustained by the sacraments, signs of God's reign among us. With the advent of God's kingdom, God's presence becomes an authentic reality only in concrete commitments in service to fraternity, solidarity and justice in the world: the truth of the Gospel is realized in the love of neighbour (Eph 4:15).

187. Thus, Charity, a characteristic of the kingdom of God, should be evident in all ecclesial life. The dynamism of the kingdom of God

85 Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 14.



transforms the order of temporal society by injecting the values that underpin a society worthy of the human being. If the love of all human beings is a vital issue for Africa today, such as Christ incarnates and lives it, the theology of the Church-Family of God has no other pastoral or theological project than to generate a reflection that arouses interest in a civilization of love.

188. Such love is the sign of God's presence among us. It is to this same love that African saints and martyrs bore witness. It is from the perspective of the same undeniable proof of fraternal and communal love, capable of uniting all human beings, in the darkest situation of history, and unto death itself, that the prophetic mission of the Church-Family of God in Africa is located: to reveal to humanity the nearness of a God who is Father, and who unites them in life and also in death; a God who, in Jesus Christ, came himself into this world, where he grew up, worked, died, and rose from the dead as the "firstborn of many brethren" (Rom 8:29), in order to take us with him to his Father, who is our Father, in his heavenly kingdom.



III.5. DIMENSIONS OF MISSION

Evangelization and Integral Human Promotion

189. Salvation embraces all realities; be it economic, political, socio-cultural, ecological, or ethical. It therefore covers all contemporary questions concerning globalization and education. Since the First General Assembly of SECAM, and the Sixth held in Yaoundé (Cameroun) from the 29th June to 5th July, 1981 on the theme *Justice and Evangelization in Africa*, as well as the Seventh which was held in Kinshasa (RDC) from the 15 to 22 July 1984 on the theme, *The Church and Human Promotion Today in Africa*, we have been emphasizing that justice and human promotion are integral part of the gospel of the kingdom of God. In the Church, as Pope Francis pointed out, “we acknowledge the intimate connection between evangelization and human promotion”.⁸⁶

190. Despite the great achievements that accompany it and of which the Church is proud, evangelization on the African continent is weakened by persisting intolerable misery in our different countries. We appeal to all Christians and pastoral workers as well as Christian communities to never dissociate evangelization from integral development, most especially in the areas of ecology, governance, in the fight against violence and the spread globally of the culture of death; and against the propaganda of the ethics of relativism and permissiveness.

191. Today, the mission of evangelization in Africa should consist of knowing, loving, believing and practicing the gospel as a message of life in abundance. God has poured out his Spirit upon us, through his Son Jesus Christ, so that we may become in all circumstances witnesses of his life which liberates us from sin and from all forms

⁸⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Vatican city, 2013, no. 178; see also, Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Vatican city, 1975, no. 31; and John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Yaounde, 1995, no. 68.



of oppression. The resultant spirituality is life that emanates from Christ, dead and risen from the dead. It is communion with the Son with the Father and with the Spirit; it is spirituality not dissociated from word and deed, faith and life; it is a gift of self until death for the coming of the kingdom of God.

Sowing the Gospel in African Cultures

192. In the perspective of the kingdom of God, evangelization demands that the message of Christ be sown in the cultural and historic realities of a people as spelt out in *Ecclesia in Africa*.⁸⁷ In this sense John Paul II stresses that evangelization of cultures represents a deeper and more compressive means of evangelizing a society. Through the means of culture the message of Christ penetrates the consciousness of persons and is projected into the *ethos* of a people, in their activities, institutions and structures.⁸⁸ Pope Francis reiterates: “The Church, through inculturation introduces peoples with their cultures into her own community”, because “every culture offers positive values and models that can enrich the way the gospel is being announced, understood and lived”.⁸⁹

193. We recommend the promotion of positive cultural values. We need to work hard to bridge the gap between the gospel and African cultures. The gospel will then become the source of true conversion and commitment for the transformation of our societies, and for renewed commitment to the mission of the Church and the emergence of “African Christianity” (Paul VI).

194. Our theologians are entreated to invest in this promotion of positive cultural values so that theology in this sense can open up perspectives that consider faith as a power for renewing history and society. An evangelized culture is an essential reference point for the true development of a nation. The concrete culture in which people live and grow is a meeting place with God.

87 John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 59-62.

88 Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20 October 1992, p. 9.

89 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 116.

195. There can be no true humanity or development each with its own cultures unless it opens up to other cultures without losing its own identity or being swallowed up by the new cultures. Already acculturated in her relationship with other people, Africa is being challenged by the new dominant cultures of the new global ethics with negative effects.

196. We therefore recommend that both the agents and subjects of education be exposed in their formation to a critical approach to African cultures and interculturality. Considering the noble values of African cultures and those of other peoples, and their fulfilment in Jesus Christ, these educational agents and subjects should make it a priority to invest in all the projects of development of our countries.

The Family

197. *The family, the future of Africa and humanity.* SECAM has already written extensively on the family in its preparation for the Synod on the Family. Our major concern is the involvement of the family in the mission of the Church and in the transformation of society. The family is in fact, the first and vital cell of society and of the domestic church. The family makes sure that the faithful adhere to the new vision of evangelization and education in response to their Christian vocation vis-à-vis the different challenges of our time. The political and contemporary changes, which are contrary to its vocation and nature, should not be allowed to destroy the family, particularly in Africa. Pope John Paul II reminded us “not to allow the African family to be undermined or scoffed at on its own land”.⁹⁰

198. We welcome all pastoral initiatives to protect and engage families to work to maintain their identity and to stand firm against the changes, ideologies and practices contrary to their vocation.

199. We make a strong call to our governments to evolve new policies that would empower people to recognize the surpassing value

90 Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 84.



of the family and take concrete initiatives for its re-construction. Following the recent synods on the family, our pastoral orientation will concentrate on three areas:

- a. Helping the youth to discover the values and the importance of marriage. Parishes should have a long-term preparation for marriage so as to nurture a mutually mature love among the engaged couples.
- b. Accompanying young couples in the first year of their matrimonial life. Since this period is delicate and vital for the newly married couple, the pastoral accompaniment will aim, in view of future demands, at helping couples grow in faith so as to be abreast of the challenges and the meaning of Christian marriage.
- c. Strengthening matrimonial and family spirituality. Our responsibility as pastors towards the family will be to help develop a spirituality of family communion modelled after the Trinitarian communion.

Education

200. Participatory education, anchored on African noble values that are open to the contemporary world and inspired by the gospel, is a guarantee for the new evangelization and the integral development of our people. With Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, we recognize that education is a laboratory for humanization.⁹¹ The school is an important instrument for learning to weave in the society, from childhood, the bonds of peace and harmony through education in moral and spiritual values. We should therefore make sure that every child of school going age is in school. It is simply a question of justice for each child.

201. We emphasize with St. John Paul II, the close link between education, culture and morality. Education consists in helping persons to become more human, so that they might “be” more, not

91 Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 76.

simply so that they might “have” more; and consequently, through what they “have”, what they “possess”, they might come to know what it means to be fully human. For this to happen one must learn to “be more”, not only “with others” but also “for others”. Education therefore plays a fundamental role in the formation for inter-human and social relationships.⁹²

202. Education must aim at integral formation of the human person: intellectual and spiritual development, formation of moral conscience, acquisition of human and cultural values informed by the gospel.

203. Our schools, universities and institutes of higher learning should be privileged places for the transmission of knowledge that is in love with truth, “knowing how to do”, and “knowing how to be”, sustained by Christian conscience formed in the light of the social doctrines of the Church.

204. We particularly entreat all the families of the consecrated life, whose principal charism is Catholic education, to never abandon this important field of human promotion.

205. It is our wish that the regional and national episcopal conferences establish and promote strong and excellent universities and other centres of intensive research. The mission entrusted by the Church to these universities is for them to become true places of creativity, innovation and research for solutions to the complex problems of our society. We appeal to these universities to efficiently devote themselves to making present and advancing the gospel message of Jesus Christ in the different areas of human culture.

Christians and Political leadership

206. By their closeness to Christ, Son of the Father on whom the Spirit rested, who is the manifestation of God’s kingdom of justice, life and peace, Christians are a blessing for African nations who thirst

92 Pope John Paul II, “Address to UNESCO”, 2nd June 1980, *Documentation Catholique* 1788 (1980), pp. 603-609.



for a political order marked by respect of person's rights and integral development. The identity and vocation of the disciples of Jesus Christ as salt of the earth and the light of the world assume their true meaning when politics and the project of world civilization are no longer used for selfish gains or for the dominion of one culture over the others. The faithful are therefore called to assume their political responsibilities in conformity with the dictates of the gospel and of the social doctrines of the Church. In this way they become the leaven that transforms from within national, and international institutions, and thus cause the structures of sin to disappear from them.

207. By its nature and its mission, the Church-Family of God desires and works assiduously for all peoples and nations to enable them embrace a sound, moral and spiritual life, which is the fruit of conversion of hearts, change of mentality, the testimony of love, creative work, and social practices of justice, reconciliation and peace. The Church is often wrongly understood when she denounces injustices, social resignation, political practices contrary to the rule of law and the right of nations to self-determination, to human dignity, and so forth. Her mission is divine. She will continue to be the voice of the voiceless, to be involved in social services and education for the benefit of the community, to question those who plunder the resources of their country for personal use, and those nations that interfere and impose policies on other countries; and to invite each and every one to true conversion.

208. Confronted with various problems of development related to bad governance, Christians and all men and women of goodwill would want to see, at the headship of African countries, leaders who are eager and committed to the common good of their people, who are honest and just, and who are not easily discouraged. May they find in the gospels and the social doctrines of the Church the resources of hope, patriotism and good governance, of which Africa stands in need. They should not be afraid to follow Christian principles and propose them to others, in daily life and in politics.

209. We appeal to those Christians who desire to be in governance, in the administration of public affairs and who are activists within a political party, and in the exercise of State power as well as all concerned citizens who opt to stand for the promotion of the rule of law and the development of their countries, to acquire a basic training in these matters. Equipped with professional competence and proven life experience, these Christians will be political leaders who are the pride of the Church.

210. We strongly recommend that each and every one be trained to become men and women of conviction who ground their ideals and political practices on ethical, spiritual and gospel values. Such grounding is investment in humanity and in holiness that empowers people to resist the ideologies and the practices of moral relativism and of corruption.

211. We strongly entreat Christians to distinguish themselves by their quality of life and by being witnesses in their own homes and working places, so as to be counted among the good and honest leaders of social groups, families, in the neighbourhoods of villages and towns, associations and movements. Whenever these Christians render service, they permeate with the word of God, the social realities and their criteria of judgment; as they exercise their functions in the city, the country, and internationally. In this way, they contribute to further entrench the values of the kingdom of God in socio-economic, political and cultural realities. Julius Nyerere, Servant of God, in this perspective was a good model of a Christian politician during his tenure as President of his country, Tanzania. He was not ashamed of the gospel and distinguished himself as an African Christian Head of State, by opening his culture and his political stance to the values of the gospel of the kingdom of God.



The World of Information and Communication

212. We recognize as Pope St. John Paul II did, that modern media are not just the means of communication, but a world to evangelize.⁹³ In Africa, the media are an important development tool for the continent and the building of peace. But they can also serve as an effective engine of domination, destruction and division. At the same time, on the moral plain, they can serve to spread the truth and falsehood, to propose the ugly and the beautiful⁹⁴. We have seen increasingly that some financial and political groups concede media ownership to a handful of people with enormous power, and thus manage to manipulate communication, imposing a culture that stimulates hedonism, relativism and consumerism, which hurts our cultural identity and our values.

213. We appeal to local and particular churches to be more present in the media in order to make the media, not only a tool for spreading the gospel, but also a tool for the formation of African peoples in truth and reconciliation, and for the promotion of justice and peace.⁹⁵

214. We commit ourselves to give our full support to Catholic communication professionals so that they can harmoniously carry out their mission and always seek to establish a relationship of ecclesial communication with international organizations. SECAM will further strengthen its organ of communications to optimize its evangelizing resources towards a plan of communication at the continental level.

215. We entreat the national episcopal conferences to engage fully in technical, doctrinal and moral formation of all pastoral agents working with the media. With proper guidance, they will ensure that they are not afraid to express their faith in the world of communication.

93 Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 194.

94 Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, no. 143.

95 Cf. *Africae Munus*, no. 145.

216. In collaboration with the Pan African Episcopal Committee for Social Communications (CEPACS), the Catholic universities and higher educational institutions will ensure the best training in social communication studies at both the human and professional levels. The seminaries and religious houses of formation will, in the formation of future pastors and pastoral agents, give a significant place to technique and communication skills and the media culture. It is the duty of all institutions of formation to project objective image of Africa in the local and international media in order to correct the often “apocalyptic” or “catastrophic” image of Africa.⁹⁶

96 Cf. Pope John-Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 52.



CONCLUSION

217. Africa, said Pope Emeritus Benedict, is the hope of the Church today. Before him, in 1969 in Kampala, Pope Paul VI had already seen such signs of hope. During his pilgrimage to the feet of the Martyrs of Uganda, Pope Paul VI addressing the Bishops in Africa, declared, at the birth of SECAM: “You can and you ought to have an African Christianity”. He encouraged and exhorted the Bishops, their collaborators, consecrated persons and the faithful of Africa to explore ways of sowing the gospel in the life and hopes the culture, and the economic, political, social and spiritual realities of the people. The evolution of the Church in Africa during these past fifty years demonstrates that God was already at work, preceding and accompanying his people in the work of proclaiming the gospel. Africans becoming their own missionaries at home and beyond the continent testifies to the increasing maturity and growth of the Church and of Christianity in their continent: an African Christianity that has inculturation as its theological and pastoral option; the *Church-Family of God* (First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops) is committed to be the salt of the earth and light of the world through reconciliation, justice and peace (Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa).

218. Fifty years after its creation, SECAM zealously continues this work of evangelisation along diverse paths, and amidst multiple challenges, which nonetheless are expected to make alive the presence and powerful action of God the Father almighty in his Church in Africa. The coming years will witness a greater manifestation of the coming of God’s kingdom on the continent; and the fulfilment of the signs of his salvific message. Christians in Africa, let us gird our loins for the mission of the Father through the Son in the Spirit. The mission of the new evangelization *ad intra* on the continent of *sun and life*, land of hope; and thence the mission *ad extra* to bring to other

peoples, the joy of the Good News. Let us be hopeful, have faith and act to see and experience the joy of the kingdom of God in Africa today, to which African missionaries are now bearing witness everywhere in the world. Neither hopelessness nor pessimism can be justified in all that concerns the future of the mission and Africa, which we are entrusting to the care of the Mother of the Redeemer:

*219. Mary, our Lady of life and hope,
Mary, our Lady of the New Africa,
Pray for us.
Accompany us on the road of the proclamation
Of the Good News of your Son.
Obtain for us from Jesus Christ
A renewed zeal for mission.
So that we can be
True witnesses of the gospel
To our people and everywhere in the world.
Amen.*

*Issued at Kampala, land of the Martyrs of Uganda, 28th July 2019, at the end
of the of the Golden Jubilee of SECAM and the XVIIIth Plenary Assembly of
SECAM*

*+Philippe Cardinal OUEDRAOGO
Metropolitan Archbishop of Ouagadougou
President of SECAM*



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KAMPALA DOCUMENT

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(Cf. Jn 17: 3; 10:10)*

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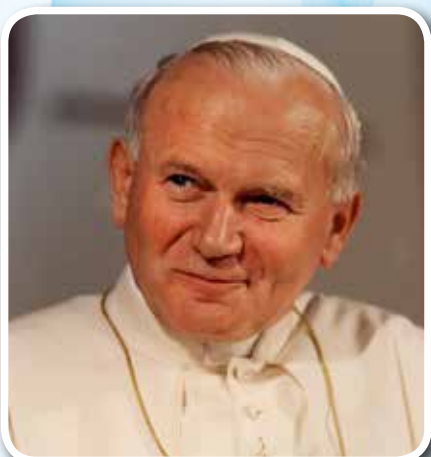
Photos des papes



Pope Francis
2013



Pope Benedict XVI
2005-2013



Pope John-Paul II
1978-2005



Pope Paul VI
1963-1978

Representation of delegates to the Golden Jubilee



ACEAC



ACHE



ACERAC



AMECEA



CEDO I



CERNA



IMBISA



RECOWA

Opening ceremony





Group photo of the celebrants at the end of the opening Jubilee Mass



Group photo of some celebrants and the Representative of the Government member at the end of the closing mass



**Photo of representatives at the end of the opening ceremony
of the Golden Jubilee of SECAM**



Family photo of the delegates during the SECAM Golden Jubilee

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MADAGÁSCAR

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EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES

ACEAC
Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa
Association des Conférences Episcopales de l'Afrique Centrale
Associação das Conferências Episcopais da África Central

ACERAC
Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa Region
Association des Conférences Episcopales de la Région Afrique Central
Associação das Conferências Episcopais da Região Central da África

AHCE
Assembly of the Catholic Hierarchy of Egypt
Assemblée de la Hiérarchie Catholique d'Égypte
Assembleia da Hierarquia Católica do Egito

CONFERENCES
EPISCOPALES REGIONALES

AMECEA
Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
Association des Conférences Episcopales membres de l'Afrique de l'Est
Associação das Conferências Episcopais-Membros da África do Leste

CEDO I
Episcopal Conferences of the Indian Ocean
Conférence Episcopale De l'Océan Indien
Conferência Episcopal do Oceano Índico

CERNA
Regional Episcopal Conferences of North Africa
Conférence Episcopale Régionale de l'Afrique du Nord
Conferência Episcopal Regional do Norte de África

CONFERÊNCIAS
EPISCOPAIS REGIONAIS

IMBISA
Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa
Rencontres Inter-Régionales des Evêques de l'Afrique Australe
Reunião Inter-Regional dos Bispos do Sul de África

RECOWA/CERAO
Regional Episcopal Conferences of West Africa
Conférence Episcopale Régionale de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
Conferências Episcopais Regionais da África Ocidental