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TRAINING OF LAY CATECHISTS AND NEW EVANGELIZATION IN IGBO  
LAND NIGERIA , PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT  
FOR DOCTORAL DEGREE IN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

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**TRAINING OF LAY CATECHISTS AND THE NEW EVANGELIZATION  
IN IGBO LAND NIGERIA, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 0.1 Abstract

Presently, attention to catechesis in Igbo church as well as outside Igboland is dwindling. Experience shows that many of the catholic Youth and adults are getting more and more confused on the very teaching of the church. At the provocation of poverty, misery, lack of jobs and also because of the overriding belief in fatalism, in Spiritism and miracles, the youth (and others) run from one miracle - promising mushroom church to another. In their contacts with these mushroom churches and “healing ministries” this youth hear different and conflicting teachings about life and about some elements of our faith. The pastors of the churches preach prosperity and miracle at all cost. They tell the youths what they would want to hear in order not to lose them. In fact, many families because of church are divided, hence, according to Boeve Lieven, “in general, it seems no longer possible to pass traditions effortlessly from one generation to the next, which in the Christian tradition is commonly referred to as catechesis”.<sup>1</sup> This is true whether in Africa or in the western world. There was a time a whole family or community belong to a particular christian denomination simply because their great grand father was one of them. In our generation, everything has ended whether in Africa or in the western world. There is now a search for identity and tradition.

Sometimes, the priests themselves are not able to accompany the youth alone, for example in the schools, in the villages and in the age groups or action groups. Here, it falls directly on the lay workers and catechists who live closer to the youths to help and evangelize or guide them pastorally. But often, these lay catechists are not catechetically trained to be able to exercise this duty well. Even those of them who help the priests in the exercise of the ordinary pastoral apostolate like the teaching of catechisms in the churches, sometimes are not well trained for the service. For example, in 2014, I interviewed a catechist at Nsukka in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province on how he became a catechist. I asked him: What catechetical school did you attend? And he asked me: what do you mean by catechetical school? I told him it is the school where

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<sup>1</sup> Boeve, L, “Katechese als Offenes christliches Narrative”, in: Christliche Katechese unter den Bedingungen der “flüchtigen Moderne, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 2016, p. 38 (Allgemein scheint es nicht mehr länger möglich zu sein, Traditionen mühlos von einer Generationen an der nächste weiterzugeben, was in der christlichen Tradion üblicherweise als Katechese bezeichnet wird)

catechists are trained. And he responded like the Ethiopian eunuch: How could I have known since no one told me about it? I then asked him: then, how did you become a catechist? He said he was called one day in the church by his parish priest. I asked him: then, what do you teach or how do you know what to teach? He said it was catechism about the Holy Communion and other sacraments. This catechist's situation surprised me. It pained me to know that, although he had the passion and love for the teaching of catechism, however he did not attend a catechetical school, he was not trained as a catechist, he does not even know that there is something like a catechetical school. In this case, not only that he lacks the pedagogical formation, he also lacks the correct didactical preparations. He does not have the correct knowledge of what and how to teach.

Unfortunately, this situation is almost the same with vast majority of the catechists in Igbo land, Africa and Western World. In a situation like this, both the catechumens and the church suffer. The catechumens might not learn the correct thing and the Churches pastoral activity would be suffering. As it is true that *nemo dat quod non habet*, (no one gives what he has not), a catechist who has no knowledge to disseminate may end up in transmitting erroneous teachings that would harm rather than help the people of God.

On the question of method, some of the catechists rely exclusively on the use of the old method "notional" memorizations method. In fact, according to Saint John Paul II, this method of memorization is not good, because it "lends itself to insufficient or, at times, almost non - existent assimilation; reducing all knowledge to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood".<sup>2</sup> With the advent of computer technology, internet and the social media, the world has become a global village and no one can afford to remain behind anymore. The means and methods of pastoral educations have changed. A vast majority of the youths and adults in the whole world today use facebook, whatsapp, twitter and blog; they watch tv shows and comedies. All these avenues can no longer be overlooked today in the education of youth. The lay catechists in Igboland therefore need to be trained so as to understand and transmit adequately the current

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<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Catechesis Tradendae*, no.55

teaching of the Church at all times using current method. They must speak the language of the youth in order that the youth might understand them.

*Training of lay Catechists and New Evangelization in Igboland, Problems and prospects* is purposely addressed to the church in Igboland. It tries to study the situation of the Catechesis in the Church in Igboland. To be honest to ourselves, we have to admit that there is a problem with Catechesis in the Church in Igboland. Majority of the Lay Catechists especially those in rural areas are not trained. Those who are trained or educated are not theologically trained. These Lay catechists are closer to the Faithful than Priests since they live and work together in the society. The Faithful feel comfortable and at home discussing their problems with them. These Lay Catechists discharge also their various duties especially in the teaching of Catechism which comprises preparation for the reception of various Sacraments in the Church. Now since majority of them in rural areas are not well educated and those in urban areas who are educated are not catechetically trained; what will be the end product of those who pass through them. The chance of not being effective Christians are there since we cannot pluck a mango fruit from Orange tree.

I am motivated as an Igbo catholic priest. I have had the privilege and the opportunity of working in so many parishes in Igboland. During my apostolates, I have encountered so many catechists and lay workers. Some of them are very motivated and full of passion for God's work, but they lacked the basic catechetical formation to be able to be more efficient in their services.

I have also met so many youths and adults who suffer because of the confusions they are deluded with because of lack of proper catechesis. How to find a solution to these problems of incompetence among the catechists and how to accompany the youth with good Christian education is what motivated this research.

Without overlooking other socio-cultural and economic challenges that could render this dream a bit complex, I am convinced that if it is true that:

1. The catechetical instruction in Igboland is dwindling, making the youths to be confused and disoriented and incapable of making proper Christian oriented choices,

2. This problem is caused by the low quality of education or guide which they get from their lay catechists who, perhaps are not catechetically formed

3. The solution therefore is to give the lay catechists a catechetical training so that they would have a good knowledge of both the didactics and the pedagogy of the youth education and general apostolate.

In this case therefore, I wish to join John Paul II in calling for a new era of evangelization, ‘an evangelization new in zeal, new in method, and new in expression.’<sup>3</sup> My task in this research is to discuss the training of lay catechists as a means of improving the catechetical activity in Igboland, especially at this time of a clarion call to new evangelization.

## **0.2 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this work is the thirteen (13) dioceses in Igboland; although the problem can be seen in the Church in Nigeria as a whole. But then considering how vast Nigeria is with different customs, languages and religions, we deem it necessary to concentrate only on the church in Igboland. However, references would always be made to the universal church. The work also researched on the status quo in Germany, from where this research was carried out. Some working structures in Germany is set as paradigm from which the nascent church in Igboland can glean. The documents of the church are of paramount importance in this research, these tools help to trace routes to better catechesis in Igbo land.

## **0.3 Who are the Igbo People**

The word "Igbo" applies to both the language and culture of the ethnic group. It applies also to a person or persons from Igboland; and it is in this latter sense that the term is used in this study. Igbo people speak a language called Igbo. The theory about the origin of the language basically came from the study of Armstrong which indicates that it came from “Kwa sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of languages”.<sup>4</sup> It is the largest language group in Southern Nigeria,

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<sup>3</sup> Address to the Bishops of CELAM, Haiti: 9 March, 1983

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong, R. G, *The Study of West Languages*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1964, p.19

East of the River Niger. A major characteristic of the language is its tonality.<sup>5</sup> This makes the language difficult for the foreigner but not for the indigenes, however, the tonality signifies lexical economy as one lexical unit or morpheme can mean several things depending on the accents. For instance, the same lexical unit ‘‘igwe’’ can mean ‘‘sky’’, ‘‘multitude’’, ‘‘metal’’, or ‘‘to grind’’.<sup>6</sup> Economy in the Igbo ideal of structure and performance of language should not be interpreted to mean that the Igbo are a taciturn race. On the contrary, the traditional Igbo were renowned as men who made a great art of conversation.<sup>7</sup> Their economy was a feature of the artistry of language as they know it.<sup>8</sup> The Igbo language in the mouth of a typical Igbo orator is always in parables, poetic and proverbial. In fact, the meaning of Igbo language gets deeper when spoken with idioms and proverbs which the speaker is not expected to explain except to non-Igbo. Any Igbo man or woman, who does not use idioms and proverbs in speech in Igboland, is considered a novice, unworthy son or daughter among Igbo people. They believe ordinarily that reality has more than one face, and also for them, it is childish to speak always in plain and simple language. This was a great advantage to Bishop Shanahan. He claimed that: ‘‘He found that the parables had a great appeal for his pagan listeners. They themselves were inclined to divide men into two groups, good and bad. A division therefore into ‘‘good and bad fishes,’’ into ‘‘wheat and cockle,’’ seemed to them quite obvious’’.<sup>9</sup> Igbo language is one of the prides of Igbo people.

In describing the characters, marks and identity of Igbo people, Amaegwu has this to say; ‘‘Igbos are not difficult tribe to identify either in a group or where they do their legitimate business. They could be identified by: tribal marks, language, mode of dressing, dancing, food,

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<sup>5</sup>Madubuko, L., ‘‘Igbo World-View’’ (art) In Bigard Theological Studies July-December, 1994 Vol. 14 No. 2 Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1994, p.27

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> John P Jordan, Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria, pp. 94 – 95

greetings, housing, hard work, love of freedom, self-determination, bravery, self-reliance, hospitality and community oriented spirit of ‘be your brother’s keeper’ onyeaghalanwanneya. But above all these qualities, language ranks highest. They are the only people who speak the language superbly with correct idioms and proverbs.”<sup>10</sup> It is a language of over 25 million people of the South-East and some parts of the South-West of Nigeria. Just like any other language, the Igbo language is born out of the need for human interaction in various levels of interpersonal relationships, and community coexistence.<sup>11</sup>

The Igbo race is the largest single ethnic group in Eastern Nigeria and is also clearly one of the most distinguished ethnic groups in the continent of Africa. The Igbo territory has proved to be the most populated region of Nigeria and the most populated of the West Africa. The present population of Igbo land is relatively large and assuming an annual growth rate of 2.75% ... thus ranking higher than 153 countries of the world and lower than only 147 countries.<sup>12</sup> A current census will put the figure above twenty five million or more. Their population is a matter of estimation as there are no accurate population figures in Nigeria.

About the Characters of the Igbo people, they are generous and courteous people. According to Basden, an Englishman, the excellent qualities of the Igbo are many namely: tenacity of purpose, quiet unobtrusive effective manner, strong tribal bond of union, generous in their gifts, astute in business affairs, support of their teachers and clergy and finally, assistance in schemes for the general benefit of communities.”<sup>13</sup> In the same strain, Okwu said: “Overall, the principal distinguishing features of the Igbo include a strong taste to travel, the enabling and

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<sup>10</sup>Amaegwu, Onyeka. J, Dialogue with Culture: A New Method of Evangelization in Igboland, Enugu: San Press Ltd, 2010, p.37

<sup>11</sup>Uzoh, Alexander, J. L. Austin’s Concept of “Performative Word”. A Systematic Theological Analysis in Sacramental Theology and in Igbo Traditional Religion: Its impact on the Use of Igbo Language for Effective Evangelization in Igboland, Frankfurt am Main: InternationalerVerlag der Wissenschaften, 2012, p.93

<sup>12</sup>Ofomata G.E.K, A survey of the Igbo nation, p.6

<sup>13</sup>Nwaelom, Paul.A, Religious Education in Igboland, Roma: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, 1979, p.30

compensating attributes of uncommon regard for individual achievement and unobtrusive hospitality for strangers, faculties that promoted their special cooperative relationship with the missionaries in the phenomenal development of educational programs in the region.<sup>14</sup> One common characteristic that can never be neglected by any writer on Igbo people is their generosity and hospitality especially to the stranger and the missionaries. In Igboland, the Catechist-Teachers as well as the missionaries when they visited the out stations were generously supported by the members of the community, Christians and pagans alike, with livestock, eggs, agricultural products, food, salt, fish, meat, fruits, and yams with the result that despite the hardship of their work, they lived comfortably.<sup>15</sup> This was also noticed and so much appreciated by the missionaries. According to Bishop Shanahan one of the pioneer missionaries in Igboland:

The Father's visit to a station is now a red-letter day. They love to see us enter their town and stay overnight with them. You cannot imagine the reception we get, it is almost embarrassing! First the pagan chief and elders come and present a big, fat sheep. Then the local committee of Catholic head-men arrives with a few cocks and a dozen of yams. The catholic women follow with a basket of eggs and dozens of oranges and bananas. Christians in towns around bring presents also. After a few weeks of trekking I go back to Onitsha looking like an advertisement for a circus, with a line of sheep and goats and fowl and fruit in my wake. It is all very amusing.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, if I were not an Igbo born and bred, I would have accused Bishop Shanahan of an over statement. But the fact is that the generosity of the Igbo amazes one even today, more especially during the "pastoral visitation"<sup>17</sup> of every Bishop in his diocese.

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<sup>14</sup>Okwu, Augustine .S. O., *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions 1857-1957*, Maryland: University Press,1992, p. vii

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*,191

<sup>16</sup> John P Jordan, *Bishop Shanahan of southern Nigeria*, p.121

<sup>17</sup> Canon 396-§ 1.The bishop is obliged to visit his diocese annually, either in its entirety or in part, in such a way that the entire diocese is visited at least every five years; he may make this visitation personally or if he is

For Afigbo, "the Igbos are among the few African people who probably require little introduction to the outside world."<sup>18</sup> They are found today in almost all the continents of the world pursuing business, education and sundry interests. The only place where the Igbo do not live in the world is the Antarctica. In fact, if there was no global "Antarctic Treaty" prohibiting activities and mineral mining within the Antarctic region, there probably would have been some Igbos living and fishing on the ice-desert of the Antarctica today.<sup>19</sup> The veracity of the last two quotes of Afigbo about the Igbo cannot be doubted by anyone who has closely encountered them. They are in actual fact, hardworking people, determined and resilient.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the origin of the Igbo people has remained a hydra-headed-problem despite their importance in the world. But the search to unravel the roots of the Igbo people continues to be a subject to a variety of speculations. Virtually every missionary, colonial administrator, merchant, ethnographer, anthropologist or historians who had worked in Eastern Nigeria had always identified the Igbo with certain common attributes but uncertain as to their historical

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legitimately hindered from doing so personally, he may do so through the coadjutor or auxillary bishop, through a vicar general or episcopal vicar, or through another presbyter.

<sup>18</sup>Afigbo, A.E , *Ropes of Sands: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*, Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, p. x

<sup>19</sup>Onwu E. N: "Towards an Understanding of Igbo Traditional Religious Life and Philosophy" In: Uzoh, Alexander, J. L. Austin's Concept of "Performative Word". A Systematic Theological Analysis in Sacramental Theology and in Igbo Traditional Religion: Its Impact on the use of Igbo Language for Effective Evangelization in Igboland, Frankfurt am Main: InternationalerVerlag der Wissenschaften, 2012, p.82

<sup>20</sup> As a resilient people, Igbos are remarkable and outstanding for their resistance to injustices. This often resulted to revolts and wars. The first revolt and rebellion carried out in the Caribbean (Jamaica) by the slaves were orchestrated by a group of Igbo slaves who seized up their masters and demanded that they be given an "Ebo" King to rule over them. The first slave who seized his master's gun and shot his master in Sierra Leon as a revolt for the maltreatment he received from the master, was an Igbo. The first black man to publish a book and became a millionaire in the 18th century, was Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo. The first women riot in Nigeria to protest against British oppression of the local people was orchestrated by Igbo women at Aba in Igboland in 1929. The Igbos are a people who fought a war against the Nigeria government in a quest to liberate themselves from genocide and intolerable oppression (cf. Onwu E.N, Towards an understanding of Igbo Traditional Religious Life and Philosophy in: 2002 Ahiajioku lecture(art) In Uzoh, Alexander, J. L. Austin's Concept of "Performative Word". A Systematic Theological Analysis in Sacramental Theology and in Igbo Traditional Religion: Its impact on the Use of Igbo Language for Effective Evangelization in Igboland, Frankfurt am Main: InternationalerVerlag der Wissenschaften, p.82

origin.<sup>21</sup> The above statement about the unknown origin of the Igbo was confirmed by Baden thus: “Before the British Government assumed control on January 1, 1900, very little was known about the Ibo people and less still of their country. All my attempts to trace the origin of the name “Ibo” have been unsuccessful. My most reliable informants have been able to offer no other alternative than that it is most probably an abbreviation of a longer name connected with an ancestor long since forgotten.”<sup>22</sup> The above statement about the origin of the Igbo is supported by Arinze born and brought up in Igboland. According to him: “Ibos have of course their history, but it is mostly oral and often local. Written history does not date back to many centuries.”<sup>23</sup> It is a reality hence that Igbo people document their history in proverbs and folk-tales and hand it over from one generation to another. The disadvantage of this medium of documentation is that such important history can easily be lost or seriously distorted within the course of handover.

The origin of the Igbo race is therefore obscure and disputed. Its obscurity further hangs on the fact that it is difficult to find any clue given either in the etymological root of the word “Igbo” or in its variant “Ibo”. Neither is its lavish use in proper names like “Igbokwe” (the people allowing, permitting, agreeing, concurring), nor in common names like “Igbo-Ukwu” (the great Igbo people), “Igboama” (the Igbo people living on the way, at a distance, far away), etc, of much help in determining its origin and significance.<sup>24</sup> What appears undeniable is that the name Igbo has experienced some evolution in its application, and that many Igbo-speaking communities who today would rather not be identified as Igbo, were at certain points in the history of the people, proud to claim Igbo identity. According to Afigbo, until three or four

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<sup>21</sup>Okwu, Augustine S. O., *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions 1857-1957*, p.3

<sup>22</sup>Leith-Ross, S., *African Women (art)* In Nwaelom, Paul. A, *Religious Education in Igboland*, Roma: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, 1979, p.27

<sup>23</sup>Arinze, F. A., *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, Ibadan: University Press, 1970, p.2

<sup>24</sup>Aligwekwe P.E., *The Continuity of Traditional Values in the African Society: The Igbo of Nigeria*, p.19

decades ago, there were many Ijaw and Efik-Ibibio communities which proudly laid claim to Igbo origin, but today would treat such a suggestion as an affront.<sup>25</sup>

The relentless effort of the Igbo Scholars to find out their origins, has produced multiple results. They have given rise to the theories of Igbo origins which can be divided into three broad categories:

(a) The Oriental Hypothesis: This theory came up as a result of similarity of culture found between that of Igbo and Eastern peoples such as circumcision, system and manner of naming children, sentence structure and similarity in some words, religion and ritual symbols, love of adventure and enterprise etc.

(b) Niger/Benue Confluence Area Theory: This idea of Igbo origin would appear to have been introduced after the rich NOK<sup>26</sup> archeological findings and other discoveries connected with the area. The attribution of Igbo origins to the area has been based mainly on linguistic theory. In any case, the theory came as a result of the supposition that all speakers of the Kwa sub-family of languages such as Ijo, Edo, Yoruba, Idioma, Nupe, Igala etc had initially lived in this (Niger/Benue) area before they dispersed to their present locations in parts of West Africa. Incidentally, no plausible explanation has been offered why this spot must be regarded as the birth place of all speakers of the Kwa sub-family of languages.

(c) The Igbo Homeland Hypothesis: This speculation is based on the clues provided regarding human habitations and exploitation of the long Plateau such as: (i) Archaeological excavations in the Ezi-Ukwu Ukpa Rock shelter, near Afikpo, yielded some tools and pottery sherds dating between 2935 B.C and 15 A.D. (ii) Artifacts recovered at Isi-ugwu Obukpa Rock Shelter and University of Nigeria Agricultural Farm Site, both in Nsukka. (iii) From linguistic

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<sup>25</sup>Ihenacho, David Asonye, Christianity Rises, Volume One: A Critical Study of the Catholicism of the Igbo People of Nigeria, p.5

<sup>26</sup> The NOK is a cultural centre identified with the ‘‘Hahm’’ or ‘‘Jaba’’ people of Northern Nigeria. NOK, which possible means ‘‘to start’’ in Jaba language, is the village where NOK terra-cotta excavations were started in 1936. The famous archeological findings were made in this area.

evidence, the speaking of Igbo language, probably in its present ecological location, has a great time depth and must have lasted thousands of years.<sup>27</sup>

It is observable that even in the prevailing theories of non-migration, there are still usually some allowances made of short-distance migrations and movements within the southern regions of the present day Igbo nation; and with the expansion and migration came the borrowing from non-Igbo cultures. Thus Benin Kingship patterns entered Abo and Onitsha perhaps as early as the fifteenth century just as Igala Kingship had a similar impact on north-western Igboland as from late seventeenth or early eighteenth century<sup>28</sup>. One thing certain and fundamentally clear is that, migration or non-migration, the Igbo are black and therefore belong to the black or Negroid race of the world. This observable feature at least enables one to associate them with other black peoples of Africa, Asia and America.

### **0.1.1 Member States and Dioceses**

Igbo people inhabit the south-eastern part of Nigeria on both banks of the River Niger. Igboland covers the present-day Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi and Enugu States of Nigeria, as well as a good portion of Delta state and some bits of Rivers state. Modern scholars, considering the dialectical and sub-cultural differences among the Igbo divided Igboland into zones.<sup>29</sup> The result was that Igboland east of the Niger comprised of six sub-divisions:

The Northern Igbo comprising of communities located around Onitsha, Awka, Udi, Awgu, districts and also parts of Nsukka and Okigwe areas. The North-Eastern Igbo sub-culture area embraces Abakaliki and Afikpo, while the Cross River or eastern Igbo is made up of parts of Afikpo, Bende, and the whole of Arochukwu. The Southern Igbo sub-culture

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<sup>27</sup> The famous archeological findings were made in this area (cf Ofomata, G.E.K (ed), A Survey of the Igbo Nation, pp.40-41

<sup>28</sup>Nnabuike, Fredrick Chukwudimma, The History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria the Foundation Period 1884-1905, p.19

<sup>29</sup>Yako, Studies, Forde, D. and Jones, G.I, ed., The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria, London: Oxford University Press, 1950, pp. 9-12

group would include Owerri, Aba South, parts of Okigwe, Bende and Ahoada areas. The central Igbo or the heart of Igboland has been located around the present Awka, Orlu and parts of Owerri with the southern part of Okigwe.<sup>30</sup>

Igboland is flanked on all sides by various other Nigerian ethnic groups which have, over the ages, experienced mutual cultural contact with Igbo people. Towards the Atlantic Ocean to the South are the Ijaw and Ogoni and also Annang and Ibibio. To the North they have the Igala, Idoma and Tiv. The Nembe and Ekoi live on their eastern boundaries while the Edo and Isoko hem them on the West far beyond the Niger.

On the ecclesiastical stand point, there are two provinces, viz: Onitsha Province which in addition to the Arch Diocese of Onitsha, include the following suffragan Dioceses: Nsukka, Enugu, Abakaliki, Awka, Awgu and Nnewi. Owerri Province which also in addition to Owerri Arch Diocese include the following dioceses: Aba, Okigwe, Orlu, Umuahia, Ahiara. Thus, there are thirteen dioceses making up the Igbo region. This region has homogenous language although there are noticeable differences in the dialect.

### **0.3.2 Climatic Condition**

The Igbo has a tropical climate with vegetation belts, mangrove forests, water-swamps and rain forest. The Igbo territory lies between latitude 5 and 7 degrees north and latitudes 6 and 8 degrees of the Greenwich line. The area covers approximately 15,800 square miles. It has a tropical climate with average annual temperature of about 80F and annual range between 5 and 10 degrees.<sup>31</sup> In Igboland, the year is clearly divided into two seasons: wet season and dry season. Wet season, which spread from April to the end of October (or even early November) with a break in August, and the dry season, characterized by the drying effects of the “Harmattan” wind

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<sup>30</sup>Ifemesia, C.C., *South-Eastern Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century. An Introductory Analysis* New York: 1976, p.9

<sup>31</sup>Okwu, Augustine.S.O, *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions 1857-1957: Conversion in Theory and Practice* , Maryland: University Press, 2010, p.1

blowing southwards from the Sahara desert.<sup>32</sup> Many areas in Igbo land experience well over 70 inches of rainfall. Down in the extreme South, the rainfall is more constant on account of the nearness to the Atlantic Ocean. Average rainfall here sometimes reaches 105 inches. The rainfall registers less and less as one goes northwards; and this naturally affects vegetation. In the Northeast areas of Igboland, like Ehamufu, Abakaliki, Afikpo, the land is very fertile; and like most areas of tropical Africa, agriculture was the mainstay of the people's economy. The Igbo were mostly subsistence farmers. Regarding the economic pursuits of the ancient Igbo society, Equiano tells us that: "Agriculture is our chief employment, and everyone even the children and women, are engaged in it.... Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful. All our industry is exerted to improve blessings of nature."<sup>33</sup> Up till date many parts of Igboland are still blessed with naturally fertile land.

### **0.3.3 Political Life**

Unlike Bini, Igala, Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, and some other ethnic groups in Nigeria who had kingdoms or city states under the effective control of a monarch, the Igbo socio-political system is a democratic republic in which basic equality of all individual members are ontologically respected and intimidation or imposition of one man's opinion on others is outrightly rejected.

Nevertheless, some parts of Igboland such as Onitsha, Nri, Oguta, Arochukwu and Aboh developed one form of monarchical system of government or the other. However, the difference was clear in the sense that, the system was marked by a diffused rather than a centralized or unified authority. Onwuejeogwu acknowledges this fact even while arguing for the centrality of the person of the 'Eze Nri' (the King of Nri): "The holder of the lineage alo and ofo<sup>34</sup> in Nri," he

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<sup>32</sup> Leonard, A.M.G, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes*, London: Frank Cass and Winston, 1995, p.1

<sup>33</sup> Edwards, P (ed). "Equino's Travels"(art) In Ofofata, G.E.K , *A Survey of the Igbo Nation*, p.44

<sup>34</sup> The Ofo is a symbol of truth and justice. It is the most prominent of such symbols and an important instrument of Igbo morality. It is usually held by the oldest male (called Okpara) of an extended family, lineage, or village. That makes such a person a ritual and moral agent. This symbol links the holder to the ancestors, and he invokes them to

writes, “is regarded as the center of both ritual and political power and authority. Because every family has its *alo* and *ofò*, and because every lineage has its own, the centers of power and authority are many.”<sup>35</sup> At its most basic, Igbo political leadership is lineal, inhering on a man, ward, village group, or clan by virtue of their position on their genealogical tree. In this we see the Igbo respect for age. Hence, Njoku is right when he writes that in traditional Igbo society, “the socio-political organization was basically gerontocratic in so far as age attracted respect, and leadership normally came from elders.”<sup>36</sup> Age among the Igbo is a source of power and influence. The *Okpara* (eldest man) in every clan holds *ofò*, the symbol of authority which automatically makes him the priest of the family (*Patria familia*). He communicates with the ancestors on certain occasions on behalf of the family.<sup>37</sup>

It is also observable in traditional Igbo society that besides age and wealth, another avenue through which an individual may exercise authority is through strength of character. Meek’s observation is correct: “It may also happen that the recognized leader of an *Umunna* or “*ndi Ichie*” is neither an *Okpara* nor a rich man but owes his position to his own ability and uprightness and force of character.”<sup>38</sup> In fact, one can rightly assert that neither age nor wealth could confer power and authority if not combined with upright living. In *Igboland*, there was no respect or honor for crooked old men or wealthy rogues. Even today, if any man who is a wealthy rogue climbs the stage of power in *Igboland*, it could most probably be that he was imposed on the people through a corrupt government. This is why everybody cannot be conferred with the ‘*ozo*’ title. In *Igboland*, there are lots of expectations for an ‘*ozo*’ titled-man. The ‘*ozo*’ titled

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anchor his authority. cf Ebelebe, Charles. A, *Afrika and the New face of Mission: A Critical Assessment of the Legacy of the Irish Spiritans among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria*, Enugu: San Press Ltd, 2009, p.11

<sup>35</sup>Onwujejeogwu, M. A, *An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony*, (art), In Ebelebe, Charles. A, p.16

<sup>36</sup>Njoku, O. N, “*Igbo Economy and Society*” In Ebelebe, Charles. A, *Africa and the New Face of Mission: A Critical Assessment of the Legacy of the Irish Spiritans among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria*, p.17

<sup>37</sup> Dine, George. U, *Traditional Leadership : As Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd, 2007, p.152

<sup>38</sup> Meek, Charles K, *Law and Authority in Nigeria Tribe* (art) In Ebelebe, Charles. A, p.20

man, for instance, is expected to be an upright man, one who provided “shining examples in the observance of the moral and religious codes of the land.”<sup>39</sup> This offers the reason why everybody is not accepted as a member despite their massive wealth and also why they are so influential and respected.

For the Igbo people, their village square or the house of the eldest man of their clan, village or community serves as their court (although in this modern age, majority of the communities have built town halls). It is here that cases ranging from land dispute, theft, murder, witchcraft, fighting, illicit sex, abortion etc. are handled. Every grown-up man, especially if he is a house holder, is directly involved in the task of government. He has a right to attend any meetings of the kindred or village or town assembly; a right to contribute to discussions and to protest or lead protest against decisions he considers unfair. For them, political decisions are arrived at by consensus and the executions of decisions are based mostly on voluntary actions. The eldest man of the kindred or of the village is just a ritual leader and not a monarch or executive head of a state or a republican president.

In execution of the laws of the village or towns, there are pressure points which perform varying roles in the political process at one time or the other. For example, Olisa prefers to speak of age-grades within the larger context of what he calls “pressure groups or “interest groups in traditional Igbo society. For him, there were a large number of these groups in traditional Igbo society and they “played very important-if not decisive roles in the governance of every community.”<sup>40</sup> Olisa lists some of these groups to include, the council of elders, council of titled men, age-sets, club of women of kindred (Ndiinyom), club of daughters of the kindred (Umuada), medicine men (Ndidibia), diviners (ndidibia-afa), priests of Earth Goddess (NdiEze-ala), masquerade groups (Ndimmanwu).<sup>41</sup> These groups, Olisa rightly holds, participated in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 21-22

government from time to time after which they continued regularly with what were essentially pressure group activities. Hence, he sees in this another important demonstration of the fact of diffusion of political authority and functions in the traditional society.<sup>42</sup>

Offenders of societal norms do not go unpunished in a typical Igbo community. The punishment of the offender depends on what he/she has committed. The pressure groups facilitate the effective and efficient execution of punishment. There are categories of sanctions in Igboland such as

- (I) Moral sanctions are forms of ridicules meted out to notorious characters or outright offenders through gossips of women, satire songs of night masquerades and of dancing groups, proverbs and innuendoes in daily conversations, all aimed at making the misbehaving individual feel shame or guilt.
- (II) Ritual sanctions are applied in Igbo society when abominations or pollution of the land are committed. An example is in the case of homicide. A person who kills a member of his own kindred or community, first of all moves away with his family for a period ranging from one to several years. At the end of his exile, he comes home to perform numerous purifications rituals before becoming free again in his community.
- (III) Legal sanctions in traditional Igbo society were in forms of hanging (when irreparable homicide occurred or society decided to rid itself of notorious persons), fines, ostracism, mutilation and selling into slavery.<sup>43</sup>

Only a few of these sanctions have survived in individual Igbo communities such as property seizure and ostracism. Town Unions in Igbo communities still apply property seizure and ostracism to collect the constant money levies they impose for financing diverse community development projects. Although ostracism is illegal in all parts of the country but even if the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22

<sup>43</sup> Ofomata, G. E. K, A Survey of the Igbo Nation, p.232

individual successfully challenges the imposition of ostracism in the courts, he does not and cannot effectively compel his kinsmen to interact with him.

#### **0.3.4 Religious Life**

Igbo people are born religious. It is an ethnic group that can be said to be already over 90% evangelized, within barely one century of the arrival of Christian missionaries there, who were part of the European colonial movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> There is no culture of atheism in Igbo society. Igbos, like their African neighbours, are deeply religious; and this permeates all aspects of their life - social, cultural, and political: in their daily prayers, their speech, myths, eating, dressing, recreation, and work.<sup>45</sup> In affirmation of the above statement, Sigo writing on the Igbo in the wider sense of African community says:

In Africa, religion involves the whole of the African personality. This includes his emotional, economic, social, intellectual and spiritual integrity. Thus, Professor John Mbiti confirms: ‘wherever the African is, there is his religion; he carries it to the field where he is sowing the seeds or harvesting a new crop: he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend funeral ceremonies and if he is a student, he takes religion with him to the examination room, at school or in the university and, if he is a politician, he takes it to the House of Parliament.’ Religion gives the African the way to understand the world. It supplies the answer to many problems and questions that face him in this world....<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Onyeneke, A African Traditional Institutions and the Christian Church: A Sociological Prologue to Christian Inculturation, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd, 1993, P.8

<sup>45</sup>Nwajojie, B.K, Indigenization of the Liturgy in Igbo Traditional Marriage Customs. An Anthro-po-Liturgico-Pastoral Study, unpublished Doctoral Thesis in Sacred Theology Rome,1976, p.22

<sup>46</sup>Sigo, John, Sharia: Blessing in Disguise,(art), In Uzoh, Alexander, p.152

What Sigo and Mbiti say of the African in general is typical of the Igbo in particular. From the above statement, it will not be an overstatement if we say that religion in Igboland is as old as the Igbo man himself. According to Uzo, “It is therefore wrong to say that the white man brought religion to Igboland. Instead, that the white man brought Christianity to Igboland is a better way to put it.<sup>47</sup> This conception that the white man brought religion to Igboland was born out of the domineering attitudes and the prejudicial views missionaries<sup>48</sup> had against the indigenous culture. This was the state of monologue, when the validity of Christianity stood over and against any other belief system. European agents believed they were bringing civilization, superior culture, and belief to unfortunate and primitive savages. Transition from this monologue stage to the most rudimentary form of dialogue occurred with the first generation converts when their practice of Christianity involved blending some practices of the Nigeria culture and Christianity. This tendency is one of the reasons the Independent Churches developed and flourished ... In the Independent Churches, allegiance to Nigeria culture is foremost, strong and overt. There is usually resistance to the imposition of European culture as well as the unsympathetic European rejection of Nigeria cultural practices.<sup>49</sup> Subjecting Igbos to a religionless group before the arrival of the early missionaries is a misconception. Instead, the missionaries brought a new religion that aimed at replacing the already existing Igbo traditional religion through conversion.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Missionaries, who came to Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa, were burdened with inherited prejudices, and these manifested in the strict intolerance they exhibited toward the indigenous culture. Depictions of the culture as primitive or savage and the religion as fetishism, heathenism and animism underscore the intolerance informed by the prevailing anthropological views of the time in European nations. In retrospect, it is certain that the application of such concepts to the African cultural and religious realities derived from some abysmal ignorance of the true nature of the object that is thus represented. However, the fact is that such concepts which autonomously could hardly capture even the minimal structure of the religion, point to the condescending attitudes which Europeans showed toward African culture. Such patronizing attitudes underpin what Okot p’Bitek has called “the myth of superiority. Cf. Okot p’Bitek, *African Religions in Western Scholarship*, Kampala: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1970, p. 44, Also cf. Korieh C. J and Nwokeji G.U (ed.), *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria*, Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005, p.20

<sup>49</sup> Aguwa J.C, “Christianity and Nigeria Indigenous Culture,” , in: Korieh C. J and Nwokeji G.U (ed.), *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria* (Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu), Maryland: University Press of America, 2005, p.21

<sup>50</sup>Uzoh, Alexander, p.86

The Igbos exhibit their religiosity by setting sacred places aside for the performance of acts of religion. They maintain this practice despite the scarcity of land in some parts of Igboland. However, the reason is not far-fetched. This is precisely because, for the Igbo, whatever is realized by the living is due to the strong backing of the spirits just as misfortunes are readily attributed to them. Many Anthropologists familiar with the Igbo have described the religious inclination of this people in ways that apparently would seem exaggerated and a play on words. For instance, Leonard among others, has said of the Igbo that "...they are in the strict and natural sense of the word a truly and a deeply religious people... they eat religiously, drink religiously, bath religiously, dress religiously and sin religiously."<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Jordan who was once a missionary and an education officer in Igboland for many years wrote: "Every Ibo believed that an invisible universe was in action all around him, and that his term of life was short if he happened to fall foul of its denizens. He felt that it was up to propitiate them, and to treat them with courtesy and deference."<sup>52</sup>

Their deep sense of religion is also shown in their belief in Supreme God. In fact, Igbos had a concept of the Supreme Being (God), before he was announced by Christian missionaries as the Creator and Father of Jesus Christ. Bishop Shanahan confirmed the above assertion when he said:

Many Pagan<sup>53</sup> ideas were not so much incorrect as incomplete and required only completion and sublimation. Such for instance was the Ibo idea of God. The people knew

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<sup>51</sup> Leonard, A. M. G, *The Lower Niger and Its Tribes* London: Frank Cass and Co.,Ltd.,1964, p.429

<sup>52</sup> John P Jordan, *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria*, p.126

<sup>53</sup> Paganism seems to be the oldest and most common name used to describe the religion of the so-called "Primitive People". This word, too, is traceable to a Latin origin, 'Paganus'. It originally meant a village dweller or a country man, a person who lives away from the city or urbanized community. The fact that evangelization first took off in most places in the cities made it a domestic Christian terminology to describe the non-Christian Villager as a Pagan. This was applied in a religious sense, and his non-Christian religion was called Paganism. It must be observed here that paganism has a specific Christian connotation, because the Christian does not always call a Moslem a pagan to mean a non-Christian. Therefore, paganism, often used to imply that an African tradition religionist had no religion is a misnomer, just as it is to describe his religion (cf Onwubiko, Oliver .A., *Christian Mission & Culture in Africa*(Vol.1): African Thought, Religion and Culture, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1991, p.64

nothing about the Blessed Trinity, but they did believe firmly in the existence of one Supreme Spirit who created all things and controlled them. He is known in some places as Chukwu or Chi-ukwu (the Great Spirit) and in others as Chi-neke (the Creating Spirit). He had no equal. But he had one great enemy called Ekwensu or Devil. Ekwensu was the source of all evil and misfortune. In between the two was a host of smaller spirits, some good, some bad. Such concepts of the world of spirits offered a good groundwork for the absorption of Catholic ideas on God, the devil, the good and bad angels.<sup>54</sup>

Their recognition of the Supreme Being and his attributes especially of uniqueness and intimacy are easily discernible from their behaviours and linguistic sources. The first thing the adult Igbo man, especially the head of a family or a priest of deity does in the morning is to offer the ritual kola to the spirits. In such invocation the Supreme Being has a prominent place.<sup>55</sup> Apparently, Tanye is of this view when he says that He is conceived of as the origin and sustainer of all things, He may be likened to the Overlord of society for He is the Final Authority in all matters.<sup>56</sup> For Bishop James Johnson, Supreme Being is the Being particularly to whom all their prayers, atonement sacrifices and other offerings are generally made and these are generally presented to Him without the intervention of a Mediator.... The Ibos believe ... in a future state, in the immortality of their soul, in the existence of a place of bliss in the great hereafter for the good and which they speak of as “Eligwe” (Heaven) .... They also believe in an abode of misery after this life for the wicked (Hell).<sup>57</sup>

The Igbo do not attempt cultic images of the Supreme God. The apparent lack of shrines to the Supreme Being may be attributed to the very high regard with which the Igbo held this God

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<sup>54</sup> John P Jordan, Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria, p.55

<sup>55</sup> Madubuko, L , “ Igbo World-View” (art) in Bigard Theological Studies July-December Vol 14 No 2 Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1994, p.1

<sup>56</sup> Tanye, Gerald. K, The Church-as-a Family and Ethnocentrism in Sub-Saharan Africa , Münster: Lit Verlag Münster, 2010, p. 99

<sup>57</sup> CMS:G3/A3/0, Bishop Johnson’s report of Journey into the Interior of Igboland (1903), In Ekechi, F.K., Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914, London: Frank Cass and Co Ltd, 1972, p.160

and their reluctance to anthropomorphize him. Or it may be attributable to Ikenga-Metuh's suggestion that: he has delegated the work to minor deities<sup>58</sup>, who are his messengers on earth.<sup>59</sup> His existence is ingrained in their minds and lives. According to Okoh, "the people portray him in their creation myths and stories as the only creator of the world. For them, he created all that exists above the earth, on earth and under the earth including the deities and other spirits."<sup>60</sup> They strongly believe that he is all-powerful by such names as Ikechukwu (The power of God), all merciful by such name as Eberechukwu (God is merciful), and all knowing by such name as Chukwuma (God knows). Sacrifices rendered directly to the Supreme Being are few and far between. But many ritual Leaders would readily point out that the "Supreme Being is the ultimate receiver of all prayers and acts of worship."<sup>61</sup> Igbo worship the Supreme Being mostly through the channels of high gods such as Amadioha (the god of thunder), Anyanwu (the sun god), Igwe (the sky god) which are regarded by the Igbo as direct messengers of the Supreme God and minor deities such as Ndimuo(spirits), Agbaranweala (the earth goddess) have their cults.

The Igbo have the belief that human life comes from the Supreme Being in direct association with the deities, ancestral spirits and other cosmic forces. For them life is intricately bound up with the activities of the spiritual beings and cosmic forces. One's life force could either be enhanced and increased or diminished. The traditional Igbo indulge himself in very extensive religious and ritual acts to harness all available forces to enhance his life. While exploiting the material skills he equally prays, divines, sacrifices, celebrates at the shrines of the

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<sup>58</sup> The Igbo deities and spiritual forces are invisible creations of the Supreme Being. They are considered to be the supernatural beings and /or forces that are the authors of good and evil, which they shower on the visible world of men (cf Onwuejeogwu, M.A, An Igbo Civilization, (art) in Ebelebe, Charles. A, Africa and the New Face of Mission: A Critical Assessment of the Legacy of the Irish Spiritans among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria, p.3

<sup>59</sup>Ikenga-Metuh, "Igbo World View" (art), In Ebelebe, Charles. A, p.3

<sup>60</sup>Okoh, Michael, Fostering Christian Faith in Schools and Christian Communities through Igbo Traditional Values: Towards a Holistic Approach to Christian and Religious Education and Catechesis in Igboland (Nigeria), Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2012, p.34

<sup>61</sup>Ofomata, G.E. K, A Survey of the Igbo Nation, p.360

deities in a persistent effort to ensure that he lives out the full span of this life in a way that will guarantee him a blissful continuation of the same in the next life, as a glorified ancestor.

The Ancestors are those members of the spirit world of the African world view who had been members of the African human society.<sup>62</sup> According to Dine, these spirits are held to be the spirits of those who lived their earthly lives and after death passed into the land of the spirits called ‘alamuo or alandu’. There are two categories of these agents the ancestors who lived a good moral life and gained entry into alandu (land of the fullness of life) and the spirits of evil men, and all who are on their way to alamuo or alandu.<sup>63</sup> For Uchenna A. Ezeh “the ancestral cult is the heart of the African tradition and culture since the presence of the ancestors is felt in the daily life of the traditional African community. They are God’s agents in the maintenance and control of the universe and act as intermediaries between God and man. This is vital for Africans”.<sup>64</sup> They are the benign ambassadors of their succeeding children in the-spirit-world. They are said to watch over the interests of their children, and reincarnate in the young ones to ensure that their respective lineages are continued. The traditional Igbo man believes that there is normal reincarnation for all persons that have realized the happy status of ancestorhood hence the name ‘’Nnenna’’ (father’s mother), ‘’Nna Nna’’ (father’s father), ‘’NneNne’’ (mother’s mother). This reincarnation stretches out to what is known in Igbo land as ‘’Ogbanje’’.<sup>65</sup> That this system worked for many cannot easily be explained. Some elders and medicine men get people convinced by showing some marks which the child bore in his or her first life. Modern explanation for the causes of high rate of infant mortality is sweeping this belief in ‘’Ogbanje’’ underground; nevertheless the Igbo man’s belief in the spirit of their ancestors is still strong.

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<sup>62</sup>Madubuko, L, ” Igbo World-View” (art) In Bigard Theological Studies July-December Vol 14 No 2, p. 22

<sup>63</sup> Dine, George. G. Uchechucku, Traditional Leadership as Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation, p.20

<sup>64</sup>Ezeh, U.A, Jesus Christ the Ancestor, An African Contextual Christology in the Light of the Major Dogmatic Christological Definitions from the Council of Nicea (325) to Chalcedon (451), In Tanye, Gerald. K, The Church-as-a Family and Ethnocentrism in Sub-Saharan Africa, p.126

<sup>65</sup>“Ogbanje”means when a child dies young and the mother gives birth to another of the same sex is the belief that the same child is repeating.

To them, a family is made up of those who are alive and those who are dead. The ancestors were the deceased members of the community who had gone to live in the spirit world and from the land of the dead had a duty to look after their families and lineages which lived in this world, and to protect them from evil. The ancestors were not adored in the proper sense of the word but special cults were reserved to ask for their aid or to complain of the inadequacy of their protection. Sacrifices were not offered to the ancestors in the same way as they were offered to gods. The ancestors were treated as members of the family of the living. Offering to the ancestors consisted of ordinary edibles such as water, palm wine, and kola nut. Once a family meal is brought, a few lumps are thrown out for the ancestors to eat. The father of the family pours out the first drop of wine on the ground for the ancestors with this words ‘Nna anyi ha nuo nu mmanya’ which literally means (our forefathers, have a drink). Igbos believe that their ancestors have entered the spirit world from where they would intercede for their children who are still in the world. In fact, ancestorhood is the clearest expression of the traditional Igbo belief in the after-life. It marks the fullest realization of personal salvation.

This state of ancestorhood, is the preserve of good men and women who lived out their full span of earthly existence in strict compliance with the corpus of norms of morality obtaining in their community. Nyamiti writes that ancestors, by way of their life style, have become models of behavior, as well as sources of tribal tradition and its stability for their living relatives.<sup>66</sup> In the course of their life on earth, they enhanced their life by taking the noble ranks of titled men and women, begetting children who will ensure that at their parent’s death they receive appropriate funeral rites.

Appropriate burial for a matured Igbo traditional religionist involves among other rituals, the slaughter of a funeral cow. For them, killing the cow and other funeral rituals facilitate the passage of the deceased to the domain of his or her ancestors. Such elaborate funeral rites are for

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<sup>66</sup>Nyamiti, C, „Christ as our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective“, In Tanye, Gerald. K, The Church-as-Family and Ethnocentrism in Sub-Saharan Africa, p.105

those who attained the qualities of ancestorhood as we mentioned above. Therefore for them, a cow is not slaughtered for children, or for men and women who died before marriage because according to Opata: “It is argued that these people have not lived a full life. The reason for exclusion would also appear to be obvious. The Igbo do not want to remember people who have not met their expectations of life. One is to grow up, get married, and have children.”<sup>67</sup> These arguments do not consider the fact that these categories of people who die early or before their parents are not responsible for their death. There is nothing they have done to be the cause of their death. However, that is the way it is in Igbo culture.

Those who led immoral lives while on earth fall under this group of those who are not accorded full funeral rites. The non-law-abiding people who die wander homelessly and dispossessed, expressing their grief by causing harm among the living.<sup>68</sup> They are known to have committed one abomination or another while they lived. Supposing one died while ostracized from his or her society, such a fellow will not be accorded full funeral rites and he will be denied of joining his ancestors. Consequently, anything that would deprive Igbo man the chance of joining his fellow titled men and women in the ancestral world is totally avoided.

Bishop Shanahan once tried to convince a chief of the joys of heaven which could be achieved in the next life by those who became Christians in this life. The chief listened attentively and then asked him:

That is Heaven, you say. But tell me, will all the other chiefs be there too? Or . . .?’’ They all live the same way as you do yourself, I suppose?

‘They do! ‘

‘Well I’m afraid . . .’T will be doubtful anyhow, if they’ll get to Heaven at that rate! ‘

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<sup>67</sup>Opata, Damian, Faith, Culture, and Individual Freedom: Notes and Extrapolations from Lejja Catholic Parish, Nsukka Diocese, Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd, 2011, p.36

<sup>68</sup> Dine, George. G. Uchchucku, Traditional Leadership as Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation, p.20

‘Umm-m-m . . . ‘ Here was a difficult hurdle. ‘You see...If I go to Heaven and they go off somewhere else...I’d be up there in Heaven all by myself...while all my brother chiefs would be down in the other place you speak of...No! I’d rather be with my own!’<sup>69</sup>

This dialogue illustrates the continued and general interest of the Igbo in the matter of ancestorhood. The summary of our discourse on ancestors is that they are the fathers of families, village groups and towns in the spirit world. They are elevated invisible parts of the living lineage, who have taken a privileged leap into the spirit world, stand higher than the living but next to *ala*, the earth spirit. There is a direct link between them and the living. The living looks to them for perfection of their government.<sup>70</sup> Anything that will attract the angers of the ancestors are totally avoided.

Finally, the use of ‘Ofo’ in Igbo traditional religious worship is directly linked with the ancestorhood cult. The ‘Ofo’ is a sacred object used in Igbo religion as a symbol of authority and justice. Often the ‘Ofo’ of a family has been inherited from their fore-fathers who have become their ancestors. It is therefore not surprising that ancestral cult and the vital symbol, Ofo, are the most important aspects of ritualization exercise in all parts of Igbo land. The Ofo is widely manipulated by the dominant male group and titled individuals to gain the obedience of the others. It is the most diffused symbolic representation of the close association of religion and politics among the Igbo.<sup>71</sup> Ezeanya describes it as the Igbo traditional symbol of justice and truth which occupies a place of honour in the religious life of the Igbo people.<sup>72</sup> It is generally believed in Igboland that any Ofo holder stays on side of honesty and truthfulness.

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<sup>69</sup> John P. Jordan ed., Bishop Shanahan Southern of Nigeria, p.30

<sup>70</sup> Dine, George. G. Uchechucku, Traditional Leadership as Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation, p.20

<sup>71</sup> Ofomata, G.E. K, A Survey of the Igbo Nation, p.362

<sup>72</sup> Dine, George. G. Uchechucku, Traditional Leadership as Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation, p.21

#### **0.4 Research Methodology**

Like a study in pastoral theology, my method will be theoretical and practical; with pastoral and analytic dimensions. I shall also apply inductive and deductive methods by appealing to other theological disciplines for answers.

The chapter one is expository and investigative in asking the correlation of poverty, Christianity and catechesis and the status quo of these factors especially in Germany where this research is carried out. This exposition among other things shows that the phenomenon of poverty on which the decline of catechesis is always blamed, is ubiquitous. However, the difference lies in how it is managed.

In chapter two through three and four, the expository method continues mixed with analytic and descriptive methods. Chapter two is especially expository in studying the challenges of catechesis in Igbo land who are the primary target of this work. No position is taken. No party is blamed. It is just an exposition of the status quo. In Chapter three, the descriptive and analytic method is used to study *Catechesi Tradendae*. This is a *documenta legenda* a must-read document for any meaningful study in catechesis. The document was also studied with a pastoral method of finding its significance in pastoral ambient. In chapter four, the same descriptive and critical method is used in studying another important document. New Evangelization is a concept very important to this work that the study of the document on new evangelization cannot be done without maximum attention.

The chapter five that one can rightly call the acme of this research work employs all the aforementioned methods. Beside the traditional methods employed in this work, I also employed the oral questioning method for obtaining information. This field work method was necessitated in major part because, the study of this kind is not common in Igbo land yet. Thus, the dearth of literature cannot be disproved. Moreover, the catechists themselves, through this method are freer to express their feelings: positive and negative objectively without fear.

### **0. 5 Brief History of Christianity and Catechesis in Igbo land**

The birth of Catholicism in Igboland in 1885 takes a picture of divine providence. This is because the eventual settlement of Father Lutz and his co-missionaries at Onitsha was largely fortuitous. The decision of the C.S.Sp<sup>73</sup> to establish itself at Onitsha was not made before the pioneer team arrived at the Niger Delta.<sup>74</sup> As recently as sixty or seventy years ago Nigeria was a comparatively unexplored country. The ports and creeks and waterways had been opened in parts from the fifteenth century onwards in the interest of commerce and imperialism. The interior had, however, been left almost untouched. It had the reputation of being primitive, and rather lawless. Quite possibly it had as much regard for law and justice as most of the exploiting powers.<sup>75</sup> However, the first attempt of evangelization of Nigeria by the Catholic Portuguese dates back to A.D. 1485 and 1500 although it failed to last for political reasons.

Another attempt by the Catholic missionaries society was made in Southeastern Nigeria in 1885 by Society of the Holy Ghost (C.S.Sp) which eventually sowed a permanent seed of Catholicism and Catechesis in Southern Nigeria. But before then, the Propaganda Fidei in Rome had received the news concerning populous tribes which inhabited both banks of the mighty River Niger and knew no God. These reports received clarification through the initiative and enthusiasm of a young Holy Ghost missionary named Lejeune, who halted near the main mouth

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<sup>73</sup> It is a congregation that has its foundation in France and is founded by Father Francois-Claude Poullart des Places along with a Seminary consecrated to the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday in the year 1703, for the training of vicars, and missionary priests and of ecclesiastics to run hospitals in poor parishes and other abandoned zones for which the Bishops could not provide personnel. Around 1848, with instructions from the Propaganda Fide in Rome, it combined its members with the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary-a new missionary congregation founded by Francis Mary Paul Libermann. (Cf. Richard Gray, "The Origins and Organisation of the Nineteenth Century Missionary Movement", in Obi C.A etc (ed.), A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985, Onitsha: Africana FEP Publishers Ltd, Nigeria, 1985, pp. 7-8

<sup>74</sup>Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931: A Study in Colonial Evangelism, Onitsha: Etukokwu Publishers ,1988, p.41

<sup>75</sup> Holy Ghost Fathers, Short Life of Bishop Shanahan C.S.Sp, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1996, p.17

of the Niger on his way to Gabon Vicariate, and succeeded in obtaining fairly definite information from an intelligent River chief.<sup>76</sup>

Now the Propaganda Fidei invited the Holy Ghost Fathers to undertake the evangelization of the Lower Niger tribe and they (Holy Ghost missionaries) out of generosity and obedience to the Vicar of Christ who assigned them to seek the welfare of the black race accepted this uphill task. It was really a difficult task indeed since both the Jesuits and the Dominicans declined the offer, probably because West Africa was then known as the White man's grave "...where many go in but very few come out..."<sup>77</sup> It was indeed so as Brother John Jacob died exactly two weeks after their arrival in Onitsha. Perhaps it would be more true to say that the companions who came out to help father Lutz, only one survived the regours of the climate for more than five years. Most of them died from yellow fever and sleeping sickness, two diseases against which no remedy was then known. In fact, the acceptance of the Holy Ghost missionaries to evangelize the Lower Niger should be seen as an act of generosity at the altar of their life.

On August 10, 1885, the Very Rev. Fr. Ambrose Emonet, the Superior General of the Spiritan Congregation of the Holy Ghost in Paris applied for funds up to the tune of 8, 000 Francs from the Vatican department for the propagation of the faith, to this effect: "to open up this new mission on the right bank of the River Niger and its affluent Benue. The timely provision of this financial support ushered in a new zeal that would characterize the missionary activities of the pioneer missionary team heading down the Niger for proper evangelization of the black Africans occupying the areas. The missionary chosen to open up this new area to the Gospel was Father Joseph Lutz, aged 32, a French Alsatian priest, a man of energy, unusual intuition, enterprise and intelligence, till then the Superior at Rio Ponge. He was accompanied by Father John Horne, aged 27, who had been ordained and professed barely a month before the expedition left Paris on 29<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> John P Jordan, op. cit., p.7

<sup>77</sup> Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, Africa Since 1800, In Obi C.A etc (ed.), op. cit., p.5

September 1885.<sup>78</sup> The two Brothers Hermas Huck and John Jacob of Gotheau, aged 20 and 28 respectively, made their religious professions in 1885.<sup>79</sup> They had a well-defined objective-to plant the catholic Faith in Southern-Eastern Nigeria, at that time referred to as the Lower Niger.<sup>80</sup> In fact, they were all young men in their prime, deliberately picked for a hazardous and dangerous enterprise. It really proved to be so or even worse than they expected.

They travelled through Liverpool and on Friday, 20 November 1885, they arrived Akassa, where they have reckoned they would embark another boat to go up stream until Lokoja but they met a problem that later resulted into a blessing as one Captain Christian, an agent of the Royal Niger Company<sup>81</sup> denied them a free passage down to Lokoja their definite destination on the pretext that they were unknown passengers and had no recommendation or letter of any kind from the direction of London. That unfriendly and unwelcoming attitude left these missionaries disappointed but not discouraged. It only altered their plan hence their original intention for the evangelization in Lower Niger was to settle at Lokoja and from there, move down to the communities bordering on the Atlantic Ocean. This obstacle should already have been envisaged from the letter Crowther wrote on the 2 March, 1863 urging the CMS and the British Consul to get the British cotton merchants interested in the Niger trade:

The natives (i.e. Lower Niger) know no other European nation in that river but the English, who have explored it, prepared the people to call forth the vast resources of the country and who ought also to reap them as they are now ready to be bought of the people. I have heard with some solicitude by a letter from England, that the French, had an eye to the Niger, which I am inclined to believe; and if decided steps are not taken by the English

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<sup>78</sup> Journal of An Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers, In Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria, op. cit., p.41

<sup>79</sup>Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria, Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, Africa since 1800, In Obi C.A etc (ed.), op. cit., p.11

<sup>81</sup> The Royal Niger Company (N.R.C.) was the commercial body that took monopoly of European Trade with the natives at the coasts in 1886 by a charter but withdrew from being Agents in 1900 as Britain took over control totally through governors and administrators.

Government to occupy the Niger (,) I am afraid the French will step in on a sudden and occupy it in the same or like ways as they have done Porto Novo.<sup>82</sup>

This letter was written twenty-two years earlier before the arrival of Father Lutz and his companions to Lower Niger. Now, in this case, should we say that Father Lutz was the architect of their problem? If we say so, the truth may not be far-fetched. This is because he exposed himself during their stopover in London. It was here that he approached the London ‘agent’ of the United African Company, the English Company then in control of trade on the Niger, possibly for further informations.<sup>83</sup> We have to remember that in actual fact, French Companies on the Niger had sold out to the United African Company (later Royal Niger Company) by August 1884 and it was one of the representatives of this Royal Niger Company, Mr George Goldie Taubman that Father Lutz approached for a piece of information in London, who denied them passage. But no blame for Fr Lutz as he did this with the purest of motives.

Nevertheless, Lutz with his team never lost hope by this initial drawback; rather, by the next day Father Lutz led his party to Brass, the next possible port of call before ascending the Niger. Providentially, at Brass, the Missionaries met with unforgettably, better treatment and favour that gave birth to Catholicism in Igboland. In fact God works in ways that are not always clear to man. On arrival at Brass on Saturday 21 November 1885, providence rewarded them. They sought for and obtained, not only all the assistance they could wish for, but the hospitality of an accommodating and obliging protestant trader of English origin, a certain Mr Charles Townsend<sup>84</sup>, who had good memories of his acquaintanceship with a Catholic Bishop in Gabon. He not only welcomed these missionaries into his house but noted their plight, and immediately offered them his motor-boat for a voyage of exploration. He not only received them with

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<sup>82</sup> CMS: CA3/04(a), Crowther to H:S. Freeman, In Ekechi, F.K., *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, op. cit., p. 40

<sup>83</sup> Nnabuife, F.C, *The History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1905*, op. cit., p.96

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 100

unreserved cordiality but with his forty employees formed the congregation during the first Holy Mass which the missionaries celebrated on Nigeria soil.<sup>85</sup>

Four days after their arrival at Mr Charles Townsend's base, the Missionaries have postponed their original plan of proceeding to Igbebe at the confluence of the Niger and the Benue. Obviously they had been convinced by Mr Charles Townsend that Onitsha would be a good place to start, although the Protestants<sup>86</sup> had long established there...and consequently went further than mere persuasion; he offered to bring them to Onitsha with his out-of-date motor boat to introduce them to the King.<sup>87</sup> In fact, the warm reception they received from Mr Charles Townsend gave them the conviction to trust his suggestions as sincere.

Then the two priests left for the hinterland, sailing up-river with Mr Townsend. The two brothers and their 70-piece luggage were left at Brass. It was an extremely stressful journey. However, by the afternoon of December 5, 1885, they arrived their destination and Mr Charles Townsend presented them to the King who received them in a most excellent way, expressed his contentment at having them in his country and granted them a piece of land that he had previously assigned to the CMS (Church Missionary Society)<sup>88</sup> for four years. Father Lutz wanted an uncontested land but the King did not share his apprehension. "Go and see Bishop Crowther, 'the King advised, "and everything will be arranged," According to Roman Catholic accounts the bishop was contacted, and he replied: "I acquired the land for the cause of God; take it."<sup>89</sup> In fact, this is an answered prayer to Taylor,<sup>90</sup> after twenty-eight years the request was

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<sup>85</sup> Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.12

<sup>86</sup> The establishment of a CMS mission (Church Missionary Society) on the Niger really began in 1887

<sup>87</sup> Nnabuike, F.C, op. cit., p.100

<sup>88</sup> Ekechi, F.K., *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, op. cit., pp. 73-74

<sup>89</sup> Ibid 74

<sup>90</sup> John Christopher Taylor was born around the year 1815 in Sierra Leone of Igbo parents and had earlier been sold into slavery from the Igbo country of present Nigeria, but were later rescued and settled with other freed slaves in Sierra Leone. He was tremendously influenced by its Christian environment which eventually culminated in the

made. A protestant missionary on the Lower Niger, who in 1857 realizing the enormity of work involved prayed thus: “Merciful God, raise up more of thy faithful servants from whatever section of the Church of Christ, to engage more effectually in a grand spiritual welfare” of the Igbo people.<sup>91</sup>

Father Lutz with his team was the first missionary Catholic team to come to Onitsha and settle in Igboland on the eastern side of the Niger. That was after nearly thirty years the Protestant missions, especially the CMS, maintained an unchallenged missionary influence on the Lower Niger. This warm reception is not unassociated with selfish interest. Onitsha from the time of the arrival of CMS missionaries was at war with her neighbours and “intensely competitive in the pursuit of wealth and power.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the idea behind accepting the missionaries is not unassociated with the spirit of competition, emulation and rivalry. Ekechi affirms that the chiefs to a large extent patronized missionary work in their districts partly because of the material benefits which they expected from the missionaries, and partly because it was fashionable to have missionaries and traders in one’s town as a sign of sophistication.<sup>93</sup> This is true since majority of the Chiefs never embraced Christianity.

On the other side of the coin, outside the persuasion and convictions of Mr. Charles Townsend; Father Lutz considered also their own interest and safety before choosing Onitsha as their base. He made some inquiries all along the coasts and at the few scattered trading establishments on the suitability of Igbebe and had come to the conclusion that Onitsha offered

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ordained ministry of the church. It was under his leadership that the first Christian mission in Igboland was established at Onitsha, in 1857. (cf[http://www.dacb.org/stories/nigeria/taylor\\_jc3.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/nigeria/taylor_jc3.html))

<sup>91</sup>Cf Samuel Crowther and John C.Taylor, *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger, 1857-1859* in In Ekechi, F.K., *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, p.70

<sup>92</sup>Cf John E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria*, In Ekechi, F.K., *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, p.7

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

more advantages than the former.<sup>94</sup> Also Onitsha has a ‘pagan’ population which is the raw materials any missionary need for his work. The staggering populations of 8,000 to 10,000 and even 15,000 people; made Onitsha and its neighboring villages “a field very fertile in souls.”<sup>95</sup> Igbebe then being a predominantly moslem domain, would possibly expose them to certain death through exposure since it was most likely that they would be deprived of a comfortable house such as was at their disposal at Onitsha, a comfort their wearied limbs needed most at that time.<sup>96</sup> Other added advantages are that Onitsha “appeared to afford better communication facilities with the regions in the north and with other Igbo districts, and it was the best gateway to all the towns in Igboland.”<sup>97</sup> Over and above all these reasons, Onitsha was ideal for the new - comers. Its daily Market offered them the facility of procuring provisions especially livestocks and yams.<sup>98</sup> Onitsha then was one of the greatest centers of commerce along the west coast of Africa. Already from 1870s, Onitsha, to a large extent, became the commercial nerve Centre of the palm oil revolution. Many commercial firms moved from the Delta to Onitsha where merchants expected “certain and immediate returns for a moderate investment of capital.”<sup>99</sup> In the opinion of Baikie, therefore, Onitsha was the most strategic trading nucleus on the Niger River.<sup>100</sup> Till date, Onitsha has maintained its economic importance as the Onitsha Main Market is reputed to be largest market in West Africa.

The origin of Catholicism in Igboland is a typical example of the mustard seed in the Bible (Lk 13:18-19). It is really rare, in the existence of human history to record such unquantifiable

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 105

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 109-110

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 110

<sup>97</sup> Ekechi, F.K., *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, op. cit., p.8

<sup>98</sup> Ibid 111

<sup>99</sup> Cf. F.O. 84/1351, Simpson to Granville Confidential, 21 November 1871, In F.K. Ekechi., *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, op. cit., p.49

<sup>100</sup> F.O. 2/23, Baikie to Claredon, 28 September 1857, Ibid., p.8

success within such period of time. A mission that began with only two priests and two religious brothers. A journey in which the Congregation for the first Holy Mass were not up to fifty persons. These missionaries came with nothing, although the King of Onitsha welcomed them and gave them land; there was nothing on the ground. The coast was disease infested, the people were all still pagans; literacy was at zero point; the Royal Niger Company had established a trading post at Onitsha, antagonizing the local people with the “white race” by buying slaves and intimidating the people. In actual fact, they had nothing except a message to deliver, a strong will to work, faith and trust in God, and love for the people. They struggled and toiled for this mission which they bequeathed to us, a great heritage.

From these spiritual powers, the Old Onitsha diocese is now made up of three Ecclesiastical provinces namely Onitsha (Abakaliki, Awka, Nsukka, Enugu, Awgu, and Nnewi dioceses), Owerri (Umuahia, Orlu, Okigwe, and Ahiara and Aba diocese) and Calabar (Ogoja, Ikot Ekpene, Port Harcourt and Uyo dioceses) together made up of eighteen (18) dioceses. At the moment what used to be Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province has twenty-one (21) living bishops, over one thousand, six hundred Catholic priests and millions of catholic faithful.<sup>101</sup>

This Catholic Church in Igboland was not established in a platter of gold. We have to remember that West Africa in which Igboland is inclusive was then regarded as “a white man’s grave” and indeed that is precisely what it soon proved to be. The Missionaries came to Nigeria without a hope of ever seeing their native land again. They all died young, dying almost as they arrived. Brother John fell sick a few days after landing, and within two weeks he was dead. When he was buried on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1886, only Father Lutz was strong enough to follow him to his last resting place. Brother Hermas lay dying, and Father Horne showed all the signs of sleeping sickness.<sup>102</sup> With the exception of Father Lutz whose immune system has already adapted to African soil because he worked as a missionary in Sierra Leone for over ten years before he was appointed to this new team to Eastern Nigeria, nobody else survived from this team. But one

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<sup>101</sup> Valerian M. Okeke, *Our Glorious Heritage* (A pastoral letter at the beginning of the First Onitsha Archdiocesan Synod), Onitsha: November 6, 2005, p.11

<sup>102</sup> John P Jordan, *op. cit.*, p.10

wonderful and surprising thing is that this neither stopped other missionaries from joining them nor slowed down the enthusiasm of those already at work. A typical example is a young man in his prime age who volunteered himself as Jordan puts it:

It was the sixth death that year, and left only two Fathers alive in the Mission. The second to die, a young man in his twenties, had implored the Superior General to let him be a missionary in following terms: “On my knees I beg the favour of devoting my life to the salvation of souls in Africa, even though it means death. Let me save but a single soul, and I shall die with the desire of my hearth fulfilled.”<sup>103</sup>

His request was granted and he was sent as one of the missionaries to Nigeria. He died shortly after his arrival. Jordan went further and writes how they died almost as quickly as they came; yet, not as a single one ever asked to be relieved of his post. Hence, as man followed man into the soft red clay of Africa, the survivors gathered round his grave, crossed hand, and kneeling with bent heads, made this solemn appeal to God: “Accept O Eternal Father, they prayed, the sacrifice of this, our brother in Christ; the sacrifice of our lives, too. But grant that over these bones and ours, a great church will arise amidst the people whom we serve. Here was a missionary heroism at its most sublime degree. Here was the kind of faith that had made martyrs’ blood run red in Rome; that had raised the cross along the Amazon and the Hudson....”<sup>104</sup> Thus, the record of the Catholic Mission for the first fifteen years of its existence East of the Niger was a record of suffering and death. Man after man out, and man after man went to the grave, often in the first year of his ministry. It was the same with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, who first reached Nigeria in 1888. Sickness and death was also their portion. At any rate these missionaries came, served and died and the seed of Catholicism was sown in Igboland. The Catholic Church in Igboland is indeed a church built with the sweat and blood of our missionaries as well as over their bones. It is really a church acquired at the price of life after the example of Christ, an inheritance undefiled, a fortress that cannot fade away, a patrimony kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5).

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 17

We intend in the next section of this study to briefly look at the life and works of some of these outstanding early missionaries in Igboland. Our emphasis will be on their catechetical and evangelical approaches and accomplishments. We shall also give an insight into how catechesis and evangelizations have continued in the contemporary period in the Catholic Church in Igboland. It is anticipated that such inquiry will help us to discover both what has been archived already as well as point out the appropriate direction to follow so as to effectively handle catechesis in our own time.

### **Father Joseph Emile Lutz 1885-1895**

Joseph Emile Lutz was born at Dauendorf, Alsace on January 8, 1853. He was ordained priest in the Congregation of the Holy Ghost on December 23, 1876 and was sent out to the Mission of Sierra Leone in August 1877 where he devoted his attention to medical work and conversion. On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1885, he was appointed Superior to lead the team to open a new mission in the Lower Niger. Since he (Father Lutz) had some missionary experience in Sierra Leone, he knew what it costs to make an impact on the local population on the West Coast.

Father Lutz was endowed with very laudable attributes. For him evangelization meant more than merely teaching the natives to read the Bible in their own language. He came to win the whole man-body and soul for Christ. Charity, commiseration and seeking the well-being of the natives marked his evangelization method.<sup>105</sup> Among his main contributions (which we already mentioned some of them earlier in this chapter), were his choice of Onitsha as operational missionary base, establishment of the Holy Trinity mission, Onitsha in 1886, St. Joseph's mission at Aguleri in 1891 and the Notre Dame residential station at Nsugbe in 1894. Fr Lutz outside the usual direct means of winning converts (preaching, catechesis, religious worship and rituals) inaugurated a series of indirect means of evangelization.

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<sup>105</sup>Cf C:S:E. B/191/A/05 "Notice Biographique du Pere Joseph Lutz 1853-1895, In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.29

He introduced the use of the school for boys and for girls, and also charitable works like dispensaries, hospitals, orphanages and asylums. In the Gospel of Matthew 25: 35-36 Christ says, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat ..., I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Father Lutz did not only understand this word of Christ but assimilated and manifested it in his daily life. In his era, the hungry were redeemed from hunger by being given food, shelter and security in the Christian Villages and in the mission house. Kidnapped persons were brought back from their inhuman oppressors. The sick received special attention. Jordan affirming this said:

The method of approach adopted by Father Lutz and his companions was the charitable one of erecting hospitals and dispensaries, where the sick and the suffering were treated free or at a normal charge. In addition to hospitals, houses of refuge were built. In these, run-away slave or slaves redeemed by Mission money were protected and educated in the Christian way of life.<sup>106</sup>

Father Lutz did a few courses in simple medicine. Thus he treated the sick to restore them to health and baptized those in danger of death.<sup>107</sup> A typical example could be seen during the war between the Royal Niger Company and the Obosi in 1890. As Ekechi puts it:

...the Roman Catholic threw their weight behind Obosi. Acting as medical chaplains the Catholic missionaries treated the wounded soldiers, adopted some of the children whose parents had been killed during the war, and rendered various other forms of assistance.<sup>108</sup>

In fact, the joy of Obosi people knew no bounds. They were deeply impressed by the Catholics. Ekechi goes further to describe their joy as follows:

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<sup>106</sup> John P Jordan, op. cit., p.14

<sup>107</sup> Cf C.S.E. B/191/A, Report by Fr. Horne, In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., pp. 29-30

<sup>108</sup> Bulletin de la Congregation, XV (1889-90), In Ekechi, F.K, op. cit., p.70

Thanking Father Lutz profusely on behalf of his people, the chief of Obosi said: “Whiteman, I salute you. God is with you, man from Oyibo country. Providence has brought you to this country to render us needed assistance ... I salute you, Whiteman. For diseases you give us a box of medicine which we knew nothing of...”<sup>109</sup>

We have to acknowledge also that this work of charity is combined with catechesis. It has also very often been charged against the pioneer Catholic Missionaries to Eastern Nigeria that they demanded baptism before medical care.<sup>110</sup> The fact was that the missionaries hoped that these children would eventually become converts to the Catholic Church. The Catholic Missionaries fully recognized that the approach they had adopted was “a powerful means of evangelization and conversion.”<sup>111</sup> In fact, majority of them never turned back to their old life.

This method of charity helped in bringing Christ’s redemption to the unfortunate poor and the downtrodden and also disposed the villagers very well towards the missionaries. Father Bubendorf puts it thus, “each time we came to the village, we were greeted with joy; swarms of black people would run out from their huts and pursue after us shouting: Ekene! Ekene! [i.e. Thanks! Thanks!].”<sup>112</sup> At one point in time, Father Lutz reported thus to the Mother House: “Many sick people come to ask for cures. Very often I am called to their houses to care for them. It is for us a means to win their confidence and to do some good to them.”<sup>113</sup> This method brought about the mass movement towards the Roman Catholic Church at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Nnabuike, F.C, op. cit., p.142

<sup>111</sup> CSE: Paris,192/AI/, Father Lutz’s Report for 1 December 1892, In Ekechi, F.K.; op. cit., p.75

<sup>112</sup> Bulletin de la Congregation, bXVII(1893-5), In Ekechi, F.K, op. cit., p.97

<sup>113</sup> Nnabuike, F.C, op. cit., p.143

Furthermore, Father Lutz tried to assimilate the instructions of St. Paul to Thessalonians which stated that “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2Thes 3:10). He put it into practice by establishing trade and industrial institutions (for carpentry, mason, tailoring, shoe-making etc.), farming and gardening, as a means of attracting and retaining converts to the Catholic religion.<sup>114</sup> He was a man of all the people. They really trusted him and chose him as an arbitrator in their inter-town battles and land disputes. In fact, his word became law for them. The methods of evangelization employed in Eastern Nigeria up-till and including the time of Father Shanahan were introduced by him though not in their most advanced and developed forms.

After nearly four years of his pioneering work, Onitsha Mission was raised to the status of Prefecture on July 25, 1889. With the letter of appointment dated September 1, 1889, Propaganda Fidei completed the protocol of the erection and the document nominated Father Lutz, the Roman Catholic pioneer missionary Prefect Apostolic of the Lower Niger “ad suumbeneplacitum”, which means that he would be Prefect until revocation or resignation ratified by the Propaganda,<sup>115</sup> therefore making him, who was the rector and founder of the mission, the first prefect. He worked for another five years before he was compelled by sickness to retire. His health was ruined not because of the work of evangelization alone but above all, the persecutions he suffered at the hands of the British Administration in Onitsha. The Royal Niger Company got Father Lutz tried and technically condemned by the Chief Magistrate at Asaba during the sad “Fatouma” or “Fatima” episode.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> I.R.A, Ozigboh, “Catholic Pioneering in Southeastern Nigeria during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Journal of Liberal Studies*, In I.R.A, *Igbo Catholicism, The Onitsha Connection 1967-1984*, (Nsukka, Nigeria: Africana-FEP Publishers Limited, 1985), pp.6-7

<sup>115</sup>Nnabuiife, F.C, *The History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1905*, op. cit., p.124

<sup>116</sup> C.S.E. (Paris) B/191/A/06, In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.58. According to the report, he flogged this girl very severely for repeated acts of sexual scandal bringing a bad name for the Mission. He even tied her hands and feet to see that she did not sneak out to town at night anymore. The Royal Niger Company considered the punishment to be too severe. George Goldie capitalized on the incident to take his revenge against Father Lutz and his missionaries for long-standing. C.S.E B/191/A/06/ and also C.S.E B/191/A/03, in Obi C.A etc (ed.), op. cit., p.58

Father Lutz before his retirement had really built up the Prefecture of the Lower Niger. He did magnificent work in church music, sowed the seeds for formal literary education and laid the foundation for the teaching of religion not merely out of catechism but by incorporating it in hymns sung in church and during other religious functions.<sup>117</sup> He retired to France in December 1894; and shortly before his death in 1895, a team under Father Cadio had produced the first catechism books. The catechism, the beautiful church music and a liturgy rich in symbols that gave evangelization in Eastern Nigeria a good start.

### **Alexandre Leon Lejeune 1900-1905**

Father Leon Alex Lejeune was born in Tournai-sur-Dives (also in France) on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1860. After his priestly ordination and subsequent profession as a Spiritan priest in 1885, he was sent to Gabon for missionary work. He later arrived in Nigeria on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 1900<sup>118</sup> and took over from Father Rene Alexis Pawlas who was Prefect of the Lower Niger from 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1898 till his death at Onitsha on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1900. The sudden death of Father Rene Alexis Pawlas provided Bishop Le Roy (the C.S.Sp Superior General) with an opportunity which he astutely exploited by calling Father Leon Alex Lejeune to take charge of the missionary affairs on the Lower Niger Prefecture as the worthy successor of this position. Le Roy had been the bishop of Gabon (1892-1895), and thus Lejeune's local superior, before becoming the Superior General in 1896. Thus, he knew Lejeune's abilities at first hand. It was through Father Lejeune that the Propaganda Fidei came to have the knowledge of the Lower Niger. Jordan succinctly puts it thus:

... reports has seeped into Propaganda in Rome concerning populous tribes which inhabited both banks of the mighty River Niger and knew no God. These reports received clarification through the initiative and enthusiasm of a young Holy Ghost missionary named Fr Leon Lejeune, who halted near the main mouth of the Niger on his way to Gabon

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp 58-59

<sup>118</sup> Anusionwu, V.O. The Role of the Laity in Missionary Activity of the Church in Igboland of Nigeria: A Historical and Pastoral Approach, (Rome: Pont. Univ. Urban., Diss, 1987), p.18

Vicariate, and succeeded in obtaining fairly definite information from an intelligent River Chief.<sup>119</sup>

The love Father Lejeune had for the Lower Niger made him to halt near the main mouth of the Niger and was so enthusiastic in obtaining information from an intelligent River chief about this Lower Niger. Therefore, sending Father Lejeune to be the Prefect of the Lower Niger is a typical example of a round peg in a round hole. Before the arrival of Father Lejeune, the mission was already in crisis due to the vacuum created by the death of Father Lutz which the Fathers like Reling and Pawlas could not fill because of ill-health and short period in office. Furthermore, the missionaries had to battle against poverty, climate and the unfriendly attitude of the Royal Niger Company which contributed to the sickness of Fr Lutz and his earlier retirement. A Vicar Apostolic fresh from Europe, with no experience of missionary work in the West Coast, would be totally unsuitable for the post.

Father Lejeune was the right choice for Onitsha. He knew Onitsha well for he worked in Gabon when Onitsha was an outstation and later a parish in the Diocese of Gabon.<sup>120</sup> He had thirteen years of experience in Gabon<sup>121</sup> and performed extraordinary things there and should have acquired the adequate experience and understanding of the nature, mentality and tendencies of the local and native people of Africa. He was indeed a providential gift to the prefecture. He was both able and willing to read the signs of the times. He became very sensitive and open to the changing circumstances and the new challenges that were posed to catholic evangelism as he wrote in one of his early letters from the Niger. He remarked quite laconically:

The charge on me is a heavy one. All the houses have to rebuild at Onitsha, Aguleri, Osomari and Nsugbe; all the chapels too including the children's home and the leper settlements. The works have to be continued and new ones begun. But there are only five

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<sup>119</sup> John P Jordan, op. cit., p.7

<sup>120</sup> Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.63

<sup>121</sup> John P Jordan, op. cit., p.20

priests, all tired and sick. All the three brothers are young and inexperienced. The two nuns are absolutely confined to bed; each takes her turn every other week, often both are down together. What sorrows! What difficulties!<sup>122</sup>

Before Father Lejeune, there was no much emphasis on saving the life of the missionaries. He insisted that the agents of evangelization should have good living houses in order to have good results from their evangelical labours. He insisted also on efficient Catechist-teachers, well planned and sustained use of funds given for works of mercy, and finally a determined, on-going self-help projects which would enable all Catholics, Catechumens and school children including all the destitutes living in the mission to be self-reliant. In fact this heralded better health for the missionaries, more food for the Christians in the Christian village produced by Christians themselves, and better health as well as self-reliance for the dependants on the mission. Shanahan in commenting on the right choice of Father Lejeune declares: “In this Mission, then, I found myself in 1902, and it was my good fortune that some time previously the one man in Africa who was capable of achieving the impossible had been appointed to take charge of it. That man was Father Lejeune, one of the finest and bravest missionaries I have ever known.<sup>123</sup> Father Lejeune indeed re-defined the missionary policies and strategies of the Prefecture. Perceiving the evangelistic potentials of the school in changing colonial circumstances, he made it the Prefecture’s chief instrument for evangelization.<sup>124</sup> This school project never stopped with Lejeune but was inherited by his successor Shanahan.

In fact, Father Leon Alex Lejeune left such an indelible missionary impression on Shanahan that he describes his last meeting with Father Lejeune as follows:

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<sup>122</sup> APS, B191/B/1, Au Bas-Niger, In Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria, op. cit., p.120

<sup>123</sup>John P Jordan, op. cit., p.19

<sup>124</sup>Ozigboh, op. cit., p.9

Never will I forget my last night with Father Lejeune in Africa. To me he has always been the picture of the perfectly dauntless soldier of Christ, the ideal missionary. Big and gruff of voice but with a heart of gold and the straightforwardness of a child, utterly fearless, utterly selfless, a giant in soul as in body. Nothing was more typical of the man than this last gesture of affection for us, his fellow workers, coming over two hundred miles unaccompanied, just to say goodbye to us. It shows the kind of man he was.<sup>125</sup>

Shanahan never stopped here in describing who Father Leon Alex Lejeune was for him. He goes further to talk of him when the news came from France that Father Leon Alex Lejeune was dead. His reaction was:

I cannot talk of him without tears, "he said as many as thirty years later. ... The death of Fr. Lejeune was not merely a just cause for tears. It was in a way the most pregnant single event that had occurred in the Southern Nigeria, the final act in the long story of sacrifice that marked the setting up of the Mission. After it, things began to look up. Men ceased to die in rapid succession. Indeed, something like an era of health set in.<sup>126</sup>

With the number of deaths reduced due to better houses and good health, Father Lejeune had the time to go into palaces to preach the gospel and make new converts. John Samuel Okolo who was baptized by the protestants in 1862 but went back to paganism soon after, got definitely converted during the time of Father Lejeune. He was zealous in his faith that he became a full-time catechist. It was while Mr. Okosi was on active service as catechist that he was chosen as the King of Onitsha in October 1900. The foresight of Father Lejeune brought a positive change and fast growth of catholicism in the Prefecture of the Lower Niger.

Father Lejeune returned to France for medical treatment in April 1905. Unfortunately, he did not return to Onitsha but remained in France where he died on 6 September 1905. One of the

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<sup>125</sup> Journal (October 4, 1905), In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.103

<sup>126</sup> Jordan, op. cit., p.27

most important thing that happened after the death of Father Lejeune was the appointment of Fr. Shanahan as his successor. It was attributed to Fr. Lejeune's "fight from Heaven." Hence it occurred in 1905 as a result of a dying request by Fr. Lejeune to the General.<sup>127</sup> As he lay dying in Paris in 1905, he made one last request from the Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers. It was that Father Shanahan would be appointed to succeed him in Nigeria.

### **Bishop Joseph Ignatius Shanahan 1902-1967**

Joseph Ignatius Shanahan was born on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1871 near Templederry in the parish of Glenkeen Co. Tipperary, in the archdiocese of Cashel.<sup>128</sup> He entered the Holy Ghost Congregation at the age of twelve and was sent to Auvergne in France, for his secondary studies and philosophical education. His theological studies took place at the Lake House in Rockwell College. He was ordained on April 22, 1900 at the Blackroll College Chapel. In September that same year, he was appointed the Dean of Discipline in Rockwell Colleges. Shanahan's love and enthusiasm to work in Southern Nigeria developed through the Lecture of Father Francis Xavier Lichtenberger<sup>129</sup> to the young students in Rockwell College where he spoke of the great harvest in Africa going to waste for lack of reapers to gather it in. Hence he challenged the youths to come and "seek martyrdom" in Southern Nigeria. The young priest, Father Shanahan wrote application to Paris for missionary apostolate and within three weeks, he got a positive reply appointing him as an apostolic missionary to help Monseigneur Leon Lejeune at Onitsha in the Prefecture of Southern Nigeria.<sup>130</sup> The arrival of Father Shanahan at Onitsha towards the close of 1902 marked what could be called the Irish missionary movement to South-Eastern Nigeria.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup> John P Jordan, op. Cit. P.1

<sup>129</sup> Father Francis Xavier Lichtenberger was a missionary priest working in Souther Nigeria but came to Europe on leave and paid a visit to Ireland.

<sup>130</sup> Sister Mary Brigid Ryan, In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.6

Father Joseph Ignatius Shanahan, the fifth Prefect, was appointed on 26 September 1905 in succession to Father Lejeune. The Onitsha Mission was then 20 years old.<sup>131</sup> He was a great admirer of his predecessor Father Lejeune. He followed the pattern initiated by him and gave missionary evangelism in Southern Nigeria a new twist that yielded abundant fruit. He gained tremendous insight into the worldview of the people through his encounter with the chief who had told him: "If I go to heaven and ... my brother-chiefs will be down in this other place you speak of, oh no! I would rather be with my own."<sup>132</sup> This discussion made him to seek the best way for evangelization which he discovered in education. Shanahan consequently rightly reasoned that if the chief is not willing to go to heaven because his blood and companions are going to hell, what would he not do to avoid perdition if all his own grandchildren and his sons and daughters are going to heaven? Would these children not want their father and mother to be with them in heaven? This led Father Shanahan to the resolution to provide many schools where these children could learn the principle of the faith and later on pass them on to their parents.<sup>133</sup> For him, unlike some other missionaries, education was not limited to evangelization alone. He gave it a wider meaning by increasing its contents and scope. It was not education merely to train the people to read the Bible in the vernacular; they also needed to acquire knowledge to improve them spiritually and materially.

The high points of Shanahan's missionary strategy include building schools in almost all the villages within his prefecture, building training centers for teachers and catechists, building a Seminary for indigenous seminarians with the intention of having indigenous priests, and founding a religious congregation for women with the intention of having young professed nuns who would teach and educate their Nigerian counterpart. The Teacher-Catechists were of so much help in catechesis. They were the wheel without which the missionaries could not steer. Both the Protestants and the Alsatian Spiritans began their pioneering work with the Igbo

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<sup>131</sup> Ozigboh, op. cit., p.10

<sup>132</sup> Jordan P Jordan, op. cit., p.30

<sup>133</sup> John P. Jordan ed., Bishop Shanahan Southern of Nigeria, In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.120

catechist-Teachers as a means of making contact with the Igbo. Their importance will all the more be appreciated when we consider that they alone had a sufficient knowledge of the English language to understand the missionaries and were well at home in the local dialects to act as interpreters between the missionaries and the local population .... Catechists, no doubt, were very much in demand because of their indispensable role.<sup>134</sup> For example, by 1889 there were 8 Reverend Fathers, 3 Reverend Brothers and 12 Teacher-Catechists in the Southern Nigeria Roman Catholic Mission land.<sup>135</sup> With the penetration of the Spiritans into the Igbo hinter-land; the use of Teacher-Catechists increased even more enormously.

In fact, the effect of Shanahan's apostolate was enormous. With so many educationists produced through the teacher training colleges, so many catechists through the catechetical institutes and so many young graduates from the Catholic secondary and primary schools, there was a remarkable transformation of the people. They could enroll in the register of children of God through baptism and their knowledgeable pursuit of sanctity, while at the same time they could join the march of civilization by joining the literate world. No wonder King James Okosi II could say without fear of contradiction that Shanahan and missionaries gave even political independence to the people by educating them.

On 17th April 1920, the Prefecture of the Lower Niger was raised to the status of a Vicariate. Two days later, Fr Shanahan was appointed its Vicar Apostolic<sup>136</sup> and the first Bishop of the Vicariate of the Lower Niger, now known as the Vicariate of Southern Nigeria on April 19, 1920.<sup>137</sup> In 1926, he handed in his resignation to Rome due to ill-health, and through the instruction of Rome, Charles Heerey was ordained bishop on May 29, 1927 and succeeded in 1931. In fact, the 26 years administration (1905-1931) of Bishop Shanahan can be divided into

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<sup>134</sup> Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.122

<sup>135</sup> Cssp: Sacred Returns, Bulletin, 21 (1889-1901)

<sup>136</sup> C.S.Sp., Generall Bulletin, Vol.29. pp. 643-645, Ibid., p.16

<sup>137</sup> Obi C.A etc (ed.), op. cit., p.165

two marked, though unequal, periods: the period of aggressive expansion (1905-1919) and the reorganization and incipient process of consolidation (1920-1931). Early in 1932, he left Nigeria for good to return to Ireland except for a brief visit to consecrate the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Onitsha in 1935.<sup>138</sup> He quickly left again to Ireland and in 1938; he retired to Nairobi and died on Christmas day in 1943.

### **Contemporary Period**

This is an era of indigenous evangelization made up of indigenous clergy and the laity. With the repatriation of almost all the foreign missionaries especially during the Nigeria Civil War, the indigenous clergy and the laity took over the leadership of the church in Igboland. When the war began, a good number of the missionaries freely left Nigeria, either for another African country or back to Europe. In fact, over 200 expatriate priests left the Catholic dioceses of Igboland before the war ended.<sup>139</sup> There are also cases of those who were captured during the war and sent home. According to an entry made by an Irish missionary in the Mission Journal at Maku in July, 1967; “Some of our missionaries were, during the early stages of the war, captured and sent home, namely, Fathers MacGlade, Hannan, White and Heerey.<sup>140</sup> Also after the war, some missionaries who remained in the country either because of the love they had for their flock or for their own selfish interest were deported from the country, after having been charged with and found “guilty” of illegal entry into Nigeria.<sup>141</sup> Those who were deported include priests and Sisters plus a few lay workers.

This forceful repatriation of Catholic missionaries hitherto working in Igboland before and during the war was one of the saddest episodes of the war so far as the Catholic Church was

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid 168

<sup>139</sup> In Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, Igbo Catholicism, op. cit., p.26

<sup>140</sup> A History of the Catholic Church in Enugu Diocese, In Obi C.A etc. (ed.), op. cit., p.363

<sup>141</sup> Obi C.A etc (ed.), op. cit., p.374

concerned.<sup>142</sup> But the last straw that broke the Carmel's back was the Federal Government promulgation of her edict which eventually tied all private agencies' hands from school management and this culminated in the arbitrary taking over of all schools by the Military Government of Nigeria. Nwosu succinctly puts it thus: "The end of Nigeria's civil war (1970) was followed almost immediately by the compulsory take-over of all primary schools, including the voluntary agency schools, by the Government of the former East-Central State of Nigeria, headed by Ukpabi Asika."<sup>143</sup>

The immediate effect of this was that the Church for the first time could no longer lay hold legally of thousands of Catholic Teachers teaching in her former schools.<sup>144</sup> This ugly phenomenon also translated into acute shortage of manpower for the propagation of the Catholic faith in Igboland. Similarly, since the Church used the schools as a vital means of evangelization, their seizure was therefore, a major hinderance to effective and continuous evangelization. Hence the negative effect of the war on the Catholic Church in Igboland was so enormous. Almost all the dioceses were suddenly deprived of their services, especially at the post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation.<sup>145</sup> To add salt to injury, after the seizure of schools, the chapels were converted into classrooms.

### **The Rise of Indigenous Clergy and Religious**

Incidentally, the civil war fought in Nigeria against the Igbo has been described by some of the authors like Ozigboh as a *Felix culpa* (a blessing in disguise);<sup>146</sup> because of the opportunity it offered the indigeneous clergy and religious for indigenous evangelization. It seems that without

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid 375

<sup>143</sup> Nwosu, V.A, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria: The Onitsha Story 1903-1983*, Onitsha: Rex Charles and Patrick Ltd., Religious publications, 1990, p.117

<sup>144</sup> Ibid; By 1964, out of the 5, 986 primary schools in Eastern Nigeria the Catholic Church owned 2,406. See also Eastern Nigeria Ministry of Education: *Directory of Elementary Schools 1964*, Enugu: Government Printer, 1965

<sup>145</sup> Obi C.A etc (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.375

<sup>146</sup> Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, *Igbo Catholicism*, *op. cit.*, p.26

the war, indigenous evangelization might not have been realized. This view is defensible because despite the extraordinary movement towards the Catholic religion in Igboland by 1917, there were still hardly any Igbo in the Church hierarchy. Neither the Roman Catholics nor the Protestants trained Igbos to become priests or pastors. The first Igbo Catholic Priest, Father Paul Emecheta (SMA) from Asaba, was ordained in 1921. By the time of the Nigerian Civil war, the number of the indigenous clergy and religious were unfortunately very limited owing to the extreme reluctance of the missionaries to admit the natives into the hierarchy of the church. Few as the indigenous clergy were, the mantle of church leadership fell on them with the sudden departure of most of the missionaries during the war. Consequently, in so many areas, the administration of the parishes fell more and more to the Igbo priests. The same was true of the main functions of the central administration-the Archbishop's secretary, the Chancellor, the Diocesan Secretary etc.<sup>147</sup> Thus, one of the great consequences of the civil war was that the indigenous priests and religious took over the administration of the church affairs.

Another remarkable development within this period was the boom of indigenous Religious Congregations. Before this period, the only indigenous congregation was the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (I.H.M) founded in October 1937 by Bishop C. Heerey. This contemporary period witnessed the existence of other indigenous religious congregations in Igbo dioceses like the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (1961), and the Society of the Sons of Mary Mother of Mercy (1970), both Umuahia dioceses. Others include, the Daughters of Divine Love (1969), for Enugu diocese, and the Congregation of the Brothers of Saint Stephen, founded in 1975 by Archbishop Francis Arinze (now a cardinal) for Onitsha Archdiocese. These congregations have continued to grow impressively.

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<sup>147</sup>Ozigboh, Ikenga R.A, Igbo Catholicism, op. cit., p.26

## CHAPTER ONE

### POVERTY, CHRISTIANITY AND CATECHESIS

This Chapter studies the relationship between poverty, Christianity, and Catechesis. At the centre of discussion here is the scientific study of poverty carried out in Europe precisely in Germany. The chapter studies also the proposed models for better catechesis in Germany. The chapter targets, in addition to clearing the ground for effective discussion in the following chapters, a reflection on how this study can widen the vista of understanding the dynamics of poverty, Christianity and catechesis in Igbo land.

#### 1.1 Theological Background of Catechesis and the Catechists.

The Church is entrusted with the task of making God known in the history of human salvation. "That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (John 17:3)". This is what the Church has done and is still doing in human history. In this process the Church has used various means to bring about the knowledge of God to the understanding of human beings. Among these means Catechesis has played a significant role. Hence Catechesis can be seen as an intrinsic and integral aspect of the Church's life. Therefore Catechesis is inevitable in the life of the Church. This is evident with Jesus Christ who began Catechetical activity during his earthly ministry. Being an all knowing God, Christ knows the value of catechesis, thus he laid its foundation, the Church. After his death and resurrection, he commanded his disciples to teach and make disciples of all nations (*Matt 28:19-20*). In this manner of Jesus' command to his disciples, we can agree with Reinhold Boschki that catechesis can mean, "to teach orally, ... in the general sense of communicating, reporting or being passively taught, experiencing, (Apg 21, 21:2), teaching several times in the more profound sense, teaching the message of Jesus Christ" (Lk 1, 4; Apg 18, 25, Röm 2,18; 1Kor 14,19).<sup>148</sup> So we can infer that catechesis implies to teach, to instruct, and to educate people about God. Through catechesis human beings come to know God and appreciate him more in their lives. As the

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<sup>148</sup> Boschki Reinhold, Einführung in die Religionspädagogik, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2017, p.23 (Es kann „mündlich unterrichten“ .... zum Teil in der allgemeinen Bedeutung von „mitteilen, berichten“ bzw. im Passiv „unterrichtet werden, erfahren“ (Apg 21, 21:2), einige male im tieferen Sinne von „unterweisen, lehren in der Botschaft Jesu Christ“ (Lk 1, 4; Apg 18, 25, Röm 2,18; 1Kor 14,19).

knowledge gained helped human beings to live life of justice, peace, love among themselves; so it strengthens their faith in God. This is akin to the position held by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council when they said, "if catechesis is done well, Christians will bear witness to their faith, hand it on to their children, make it known to others, and serve the human community in every way."<sup>149</sup> One notices immediately that in the Old Testament, the message of God was handed over through repetitive and narrative pedagogy. Over and over again the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, his life, suffering, death and his resurrection was told to other people.<sup>150</sup> Thus, from frontiers to frontiers, the message multiplied, the gospel grew and Christianity came to many people.

Just as St Paul said: "But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him. And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? (Rom. 10:14), there is need for transmission. The good qualities of life the Christians learnt are expected to be transmitted from one generation to another. This transmission begins first and foremost with the family and extends to the wider community, the society. Therefore, catechesis is an ongoing event expressed through the mission of the church. It is in the context of this transmission, that the missionaries brought Christianity to the part of Nigeria, the Igboland in 1885. This was through the arrival of the Catholic Missionaries, later called the team of Father Lutz; composed of four missionaries from Alace in France, of the Religious Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers.<sup>151</sup> As the church finds itself in this region, it continues to teach, educate, evangelize, and instruct the people about God through catechetical means by the early missionaries. Even when the natives took over the handling of the church in their land, catechesis was still the means through which they hope to continue the work of evangelization. In every aspect of the church one finds catechesis as the basic means for the conversion of new members in the church. But catechesis presupposes catechists and the

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<sup>149</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, Vatican City, 16 October, 1979, no.24

<sup>150</sup> Boschki Reinhold, *Einführung in die Religionspädagogik*, p.20

<sup>151</sup> Aligwekwe, P.E, *The Continuity of Traditional values in the African Society - The Igbo Nigeria*, Totan Publishers Limited, Owerri: 1991, p.263

effectiveness of catechists is directly proportional to their training and convictions. Thus, the growth of catechesis in Igbo land as in every part of the world, presupposes training of catechists.

## **1.2 Scientific Study of Poverty in Germany**

There is a scientific definition of poverty in Europe especially in Germany. An Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen laid the fundamental understanding of poverty. According to him, “poverty is lacking in fundamental and realizing opportunities”.<sup>152</sup> In April 2017, the fifth report on the situation of poverty in Germany was published. Unfortunately, there is a mistake in this short version of the fifth reports on poverty and wealth of the Federal republic of Germany on its title. It is not possible to define the real poverty and to recognize where the state of the Federal Republic of Germany is. However, one reality about the report is that there exist different types or levels of poverty.

### **1.2.1 Different types of poverty**

#### **1.2.1.1 Unemployment**

In Germany, there is this system that if one loses his job, he gets unemployed benefits for at most two years. However, this is the money he paid at the time he was working. After these two years, if he does not find a job or present any report that shows that he is sick, he must rely on the social help from the government which is insufficient to take care of his daily problems. This problem concerns more young people than elderly ones.

#### **1.2.1.2 Old age Poverty:**

Here many elderly people are affected. One who did not have a good job at his retirement, will not get a good pension. Therefore, he cannot pay for his house rent, he cannot buy from normal supermarkets, and he cannot also make purchases from charity shops without identity card etc. We have to acknowledge here that “the minimum wage also makes an important contribution to the approximation of the market incomes. This is evident at least from the report of the independent Minimum Wage Commission, which raised the minimum wage as of January

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<sup>152</sup> Branz Cäcilia, Informationen: Kinderarmutsstudie, Diözesanpriesterrat und Diözesanrat der Diözese Rottenburg – Stuttgart, Nr.414 Juli-August 2009, p.13 (Armut ist Mangel an fundamental Verwirklichungschancen)

1, 2017 to 8.84 Euro per hour”.<sup>153</sup> 8.84 Euro by 160 hours in a month is 1,414.4 Euro. After tax and social amenities, it will come down to 1,100 Euro. From this amount, he pays for:

House rent 400 - 600 Euro

Foodstuffs 250 Euros

Car maintenance, fuel, insurance 150

Cell phone 30 Euro

Here are just the basic necessities of life. With this amount, he cannot save for the rainy day. His account will always be in minus. For one in this situation, thinking of normal living like going to cafeteria with friends or age groups is a great burden. In fact, he spends his holidays at home.

### **1.2.1.3 Family System**

#### **I. Single Parent/Mother/ Father**

This refers to whether one is married or not. The financial situation is different. The divorced wife has the possibility of financial support and retirement benefits from his divorced husband. However, the single mother has no financial support and retirement benefits from the father of her child. The child’s father pays only for the child. This amount in most cases is not enough for single mothers, who is hence constrained to look for a job. However, she cannot work fully because of her child and later she cannot get a good retirement benefits. Therefore, she will depend on social welfare from the government which most of the time is also not enough.

#### **II Children of parents who depended on Social Welfare.**

Here the parents lived their whole life on social welfare or benefits from the state. Their children are not also prepared to work. They will also depend on social benefit. In fact, there is the possibility for a family from one generation to another to depend on social welfare, thereby living in a perpetual poverty. The insufficient money they receive usually creates room for criminal tendencies etc.

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<sup>153</sup> Der Fünfte Armuts - und Reichtumsbericht der Bundesregierung, April 2017, p.17 (Damit leistet der Mindestlohn auch einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Angleichung der markteinkommen. Dies geht nicht zuletzt aus dem Bericht der unabhängigen Mindestlohnkommission hervor, auf dessen Empfehlung der Mindestlohn zum 1. Januar 2017 auf 8,84 Euro pro Stunde angehoben wurde.)

### **III Remarried People**

This concerns those who remarried. Sometimes the woman joins the man with two or three children. The man must pay his divorced woman. If the woman was a single mother, the father of the children will only pay for the children. Here there is usually financial problem. In order to get money, the man has to work more and the mother has also to look for work. The end result is that the children born in this family are not taken good care of.

### **IV The lonely People and old people**

This includes especially the widows and widowers. Some even sell their private houses because they cannot maintain them. Some cannot go to care home because it is too expensive for them. Poverty generates loneliness. The children have no time for them because they must work. The poor is constrained to always remain at home because he cannot afford going to restaurants or cafeteria. In fact, he is not only physically poor but also mentally. He must always be thinking of how to pay for hospital bills, utility bills, food stuffs etc. A great number of people fall into this category.

#### **1.3 Catechesis and the Option for the Poor**

Christianity is an inclusive religion. The church seeks to provide and protect the interest of all. The interest of the poor has always remained one of the principal concern of the church. In fact, the Second Vatican Council Fathers in defining the church in the modern world began thus: “The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”<sup>154</sup> Thus, catechesis which is the greatest instrument for transmitting the Christian faith cannot pretend to be robust without giving great attention to the poor.

The Gospel of Luke even presented the poor as if he has the exclusive prerogative to the gains of the Church:

Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath, he went as usual to the Synagogue. He stood up to read the scriptures and was handed the

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<sup>154</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965.

book of the Prophet Isaiah. He enrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.’ Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All the people in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him, as he said to them, ‘this passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read.’<sup>155</sup>

That is to say that according to the Prophet, the coming of the Messiah (Jesus) was to bring liberation to the poor. And Jesus understood himself as fulfilling this prophecy. In fact, when John’s disciples came to Jesus to ask him whether he was the one to come or they had to expect another; he answered them in the affirmative with his ministry of liberation of the poor as proof. “At that very time Jesus cured many people of their sicknesses, diseases, and evil spirits, and gave sight to many blind people. He answered John’s messengers, ‘go back and tell John what you see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf can hear, the dead are raised to life and the Good news is preached to the poor. How happy are those who have no doubts about me.’”<sup>156</sup>

The poor and the sinners have always been in the focal point of Jesus and the Church. Jesus’ miracles of healing the sick, curing the blind, the lame and lepers were often executed on behalf of the poor and marginalized. Glileas reflecting on the Beatitudes said:

For it was the possessed, the blind, and the lepers who were for the most part the pariahs, ‘the outcast’, of this society. Lepers and the possessed were considered subhuman, despised and shunned. The blind, according to both Judaic and Eastern tradition were under suspicion of sin: blindness was not only a physical evil, but also a moral evil; ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?’ Jesus’ disciples had asked him when he was on the point of curing the person who has been born blind (Jn 9:2). In

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<sup>155</sup> Luke 4:18-21

<sup>156</sup> Luke 7:20-23. See also Matthew 11:3-11.

restoring all these persons to health, Jesus liberated them from a bodily misery and a social slavery at the same time.<sup>157</sup>

The Holy Eucharist which is at the centre of the church's life today stimulates a conscious need to care for the poor. In the words of Lussier, The Eucharistic celebration under the sign of a meal has special significance for our times, when millions of people go without sufficient food daily. Christ's love of us was expressed in a meal at the Last Supper; if we are really animated by his love, we must learn to express it in the sharing of what we have, with our brothers. Like the first Christians we must remain faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to sharing with our brothers, to the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, and to prayer (Acts 2:42).<sup>158</sup>

The Church in Igbo land just as in every part of the world is bedevilled by poverty. Worse still, there seem to be no respite in the future. Just in the year 2002, G. Ehusani describing the Nigerian socio-political and economic status-quo rightly said: "There is almost a cause and effect relationship between the declining socioeconomic well-being of Nigerians and the high rate of crime. The Structural Adjustment Programme embarked upon by the Nigerian government in the last nine years has been a principal cause of violence in the land. The programme has only succeeded in making the rich richer, and poor poorer. The programme has reduced the multitude of Nigerian people to a life of near destitution."<sup>159</sup> Fifteen years later, the crisis has deteriorated in geometric progression. Catechesis in this atmosphere cannot pretend to achieve any success without a conscious effort to provide option for the poor.

History shows that the option for the poor and the suffering in Igboland was one of the greatest reasons for the success of the early missionaries. Describing this task as carried out by the early missionaries in Igboland, Obi C.A. et al, wrote:

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<sup>157</sup> Glileas Segundo, *The Beatitudes: To Evangelize as Jesus Did*, New York: Orbis Books, 1984, pp. 17-18.

<sup>158</sup> Lussier Ernest, *The Eucharist: The Bread of Life*, New York: Alba House, 1977, p.46.

<sup>159</sup> George Ehusani, *Nigeria: Years Eaten by the Locust*, Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2002, p. 71.

It is most probably in the area of providing food, medicine, clothing and shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees, as well as the sick and other victims of the civil war, as it lingered on that the Catholic Church here, together with other Christian and voluntary agencies met her greatest challenge and, perhaps, left very deep and lasting impression on the people, especially in Biafra. Indeed, war on hunger and malnutrition could be rightly described as the Church's 'war-front' during the civil war.<sup>160</sup>

Accordingly, effective catechesis in Igboland of Nigeria must presuppose an agenda for the poor. Catechetical structuring must include practical strategies aimed at alleviating the people from the bondage of poverty.

## **1.4 Catechesis in Germany**

### **1.4.1 Relationship with God**

Prior to the Vatican II Council, majority of the books were written in Latin language. The Holy Mass and other celebrations like baptism, confirmations etc. were all in Latin language. People did not really understand the text and yet believed and were very religious. After the Vatican II, people could celebrate masses and other sacraments in their languages. Here in Germany so also in other parts of the world, many people misunderstood Vatican II. For these people, the church has lost its mystery. The nascent practice of priests facing the people during masses, make them to lose concentration. Priest without clerical attire looks worldly. The priest is so to speak, divested of his mystical aura. They now understand the priest and criticise everything he says. In fact, for them the mass without Latin language has lost solemnity. With all these reasons, there was no hand over of the faith to next generation.

The church is entrusted to the bishops and the priests who are the successor of the apostles. They have to defend the church through their teachings and their examples. In Europe the people always talk of the tradition but not the tradition of the church. They do not know the tradition of

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<sup>160</sup> Celestine A. Obi et al, A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 – 1985, Onitsha: Africana Fep Publishers Limited, 1985, p. 366.

the church. In 1983 knew Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger already this problem and spoke about it in France.

Ratzinger's vision is based on the assumption of a priority of the Church before script. In this way, the theologian takes up a conviction of the fathers, for example that of St. Irenaeus of Lyons: "If the apostles had left us no script, we should not obey the order of the tradition which they entrusted to them, to whom they entrusted the churches (Adv. Haer.III, 4, 5). For Ratzinger as for the fathers, the term "ecclesiastical tradition" means that the message of Jesus and its content descends down to us through a living and unique community which has always been the same since the first witnesses, the apostles. This fellowship is held together by an identical faith, which from the very beginning feeds on the same apostolic source. Thus again Irenaeus may say of his teacher Polycarp: "He has learned only what he has learned from the Apostles, which the Church has handed down, and which is true" (Adv. Haer.III, 3, 4).<sup>161</sup>

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger has right. If the priests are to see the church as personal inheritance and take care of it as they take care of their personal inheritance, the church will be like the time of the apostles. We have also to bring the culture of Europe back which is Roman Catholic culture. The world looks unto Europe and if Europe loses her Catholic culture, she has lost her identity which is a role model to the world. Without this Catholic culture or tradition, the future of the next generation is not guaranteed. This catholic heritage preserves the creation of God and the fulfilment of the will of God.

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<sup>161</sup> Ratzinger Joseph Kardinal, Die Krise der Katechese und ihre Überwindung – Rede in Frankreich, Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 1983, p.41 (Die Sicht Ratzingers beruht auf der Annahme einer Priorität der Kirche vor der Heiligen Schrift. Damit greift der Theologe eine Überzeugung der Väter auf, zum Beispiel die des hl. Irenäus von Lyon: "Hätten uns die Apostel selber auch keinerlei Schrift hinterlassen, müßte man dann nicht die Ordnung jener Überlieferung befolgen, die sie denen hinterließen, welchen sie die Kirchen anvertrauten (Adv. Haer.III, 4,5). Für Ratzinger wie für die Väter bedeutet der Ausdruck "kirchliche Tradition", daß die Botschaft Jesu und ihr Inhalt durch eine lebendige und einzige, seit den ersten Zeugen, den Aposteln, immer gleiche Gemeinschaft bis auf uns herabkommt. Diese Gemeinschaft wird durch einen identischen Glauben zusammengehalten, der sich von Anbeginn an aus der gleichen apostolischen Quelle nährt. So kann nochmals Irenäus von seinem Lehrer Polykarp sagen: "Gelehrt hat er nur, was er von den Aposteln gelernt hat, was die Kirche überliefert hat und was einzig wahr ist" (Adv. Haer.III,3,4).

Describing the situation of people's relation with God in Europe today, Lieven Boeve wrote that:

A completely religious-friendly but at the same time strictly secular pluralism, highly social, but also freely chosen degree of individualization, permanent, but also extremely attractive consumption, can do one thing. They look like faith glasses, which seem to become fluid. Particularly the passing on to the next generation has become imponderable, because their identification with faith, church, piety is no longer self-evident; it takes the civilizational upheavals from childhood into itself. These impressions are not mere fallacies but scientific and pastoral experiences. The self-evident spread of the faith is interrupted, and its transmission process may even be interrupted.<sup>162</sup>

Lieven Boeve got it right only that he failed to tell us the history why the passing on of faith to the next generation has become imponderable especially in German speaking countries. What the children hear in the church and in religious classes is different from what they hear at home. Today after the first holy communion, they will not appear in the church until when they are to receive the sacrament of confirmation. There is no more marriage courses in many parishes. What are they handing over to the next generation since nobody gives what he has not? It is only in the catholic schools that weekly masses are still celebrated and every student has to attend it. There are also more religions classes held by Reverend Brothers or Sisters unlike in the state schools. In Europe many people have no feeling of God because they were not brought up in deep faith by their family.

Accordingly, the catechist if he does not receive special training, has already a wrong concept of the relationship with God. But if he does and realizes that this is not the right way, he is able to relate with God in a more constant manner and also catechise the Christians to a better relationship with God.

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<sup>162</sup> Sander Hans- Joachim , in *Christliche Katechese unter den Bedingungen der „flüchtigen Moderne“*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 2017, p. 63 (Eine durchaus religionsfreundliche, aber zugleich strikt säkulare Pluralität, hoher gesellschaftlicher, aber eben auch frei gewählter Individualisierungsgrad, permanente, aber eben auch überaus attraktiv konsumierbare Vernetzung tun ein Übriges. Sie wirken wie Brenngläser auf den Glauben, der darunter flüssig zu werden scheint. Besonders die Weitergabe an die nächste Generation ist unwägbar geworden, weil deren Identifizierung mit Glaube, Kirche, Frömmigkeit nicht mehr selbstverständlich ist; sie nimmt die zivilisatorischen Umbrüche ja von Kindesbeinen an in sich auf. Diese Eindrücke sind keine Trugschlüsse, sondern wissenschaftlich und von pastoralen Erfahrungen glaubwürdig belegt. Die selbstverständliche Weitergabe des Glaubens ist unterbrochen, sein Tradierungsvorgang möglicherweise sogar abgebrochen)

### 1.4.2 Relationship with the World

Majority of people who come to church today are between the ages of 70 - 90 years. These are those who were young at the time of Vatican II Council. They received a good religious education from their parents. They know the catholic teachings but refused to hand it over to their children. They come to church alone without their children. The Jews had a good knowledge on how to bring their children up in their tradition and culture. They understood that for the sustenance of any tradition; the children have to be involved. Reinhold Boschki is right when he writes that:

Children are the future of the family, the clan, the tribe ... Usually esteem and respect are given to them; even if cultural patterns are inevitable (children should subordinate themselves to their parents, etc.) The blessing of God rests on children in a special way. As the bearers of the future, they will have to eradicate the habits, customs and values that are vital to the community.<sup>163</sup>

Today, so many young people have the feeling of God in their heart but cannot explain it. Lieven Boeve reflecting on this point says:

In the following, I will analyse and analyse the phenomenon of "something's" (some things), which for some time seems to be a characteristic feature of today's Western European religious situation. In fact, many contemporaries are increasingly assuming that they believe there is 'something more' without being able or willing to hold the contents of such a belief more positively. Rather, they often move in opposition to Christian vocabulary or Christian interpretations.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Boschki Reinhold, Einführung in die Religionspädagogik, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2017, p.16 (Kinder sind die Zukunft der Familie, der Sippe, des Stammes... Meist wird ihnen Achtung und Respekt gezollt, auch, wenn kulturell bedingte Muster unausweichlich sind. Kinder sollen sich ihren Eltern unterordnen etc. Auf Kindern ruht der Segen Gottes in besonderem Maße. Als Träger der Zukunft müssen sie die für die Gemeinschaft überlebenswichtigen Gewohnheiten, Bräuche und Werte weitertradieren)

<sup>164</sup> Lieven Boeve , in Christliche Katechese unter den Bedingungen der „flüchtigen Moderne“, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 2017, p. 47 (Im Folgenden werde ich das Phänomen der "Etwas -ismen" (somethingism) analysieren und auswerten, das schon seit einiger Zeit ein charakteristisches Merkmal der heutigen westeuropäischen religiösen Situation zu sein scheint. Tatsächlich geben viele Zeitgenossinnen und Zeitgenossen in zunehmendem Ausmaß an, dass sie glauben, dass es, etwas mehr' gibt, ohne fähig oder willens zu sein, in positiverer Weise die

The study made by Lieven Boeve is right. There is no more tradition. The grand children do not know the meaning of Christmas, Easter or Pentecost. There is no more catholic tradition at home like morning or night prayer. Some of the young people wedding in the church today are doing so to satisfy their grandparents or they are having the feeling that it is good but have no explanation for this feeling.

The catechist in Europe has to battle with his status quo. To him is the task of explaining the meaning of this feeling. This means that he has to know the meaning of the feeling him/herself.

#### **1.4.3 Relationship with other people**

The fundamental problem with the people between the ages of 40 - 50 is that they do not have deep relationship with God. Because of this, they are not fulfilled. At this moment of their life one dare to say that 'their soul is empty'. This can lead to restlessness of the soul. This will make them to seek for the solutions. In looking for the solutions, they ask questions. On asking questions, they will be introduced into tarot cards. According to Reinhold Boschki there are different offers like ... "astrological relationships" and "relationship otoscopes". A publisher offers a set of tarot cards for "happiness and fulfilment in relationship".<sup>165</sup> This tarot cards will give answers to their questions. They will now depend on this tarot cards and loose the control of their life. Thus, they go farther away from divinity.

One of the founders and champions of this culture is Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. She was born in Russia but lived in different countries in Europe like England, Germany etc. This made her to spread her teaching on occultism, Hinduism and Buddhism in Europe. Her ideology is

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Inhalte von solch einem Glauben festzuhalten. Vielmehr bewegen sie sich oft im Widerstand gegen christliches Vokabular oder christliche Interpretationen)

<sup>165</sup> Boschki Reinhold, „Beziehung“ als Leitbegriff der Religionspädagogik – Grundlegung einer dialogisch – Kreativen Religionsdidaktik, Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag, 2003, pp.94-94... ("astrologischen Beziehungshelfern" und an "Beziehungshoroskopen". Ein Verlag bietet ein Set an Tarot - Karten für "Glück und Erfüllung in Beziehung" an)

included in the education programme worldwide like educating the children without pressure and making the children to have feelings with the nature.

#### **1.4.4 Relationship with self**

To count our days teach us! Then we win a wise heart! (Ps 90:12). A spiritual life must have already begun in earlier stages of life, so that it may be won in old age. However, here too, grace is always more powerful than what our wise rules dictate.<sup>166</sup> The people between the ages of 40- 60 who are busy with tarot cards cannot understand this psalm. Their life is not oriented or anchored on God. They have no experience of God and cannot fall on God when life becomes difficult for them.

We still have Christians who engage themselves with tarot cards, occult practices etc. This is also reflected in their life. They find it difficult to understand God's mercy and are also merciless to their neighbours. They find it difficult to forgive themselves and others. They cannot differentiate the good from bad. They are always ready to retaliate.

#### **1.4.5 Relationship with time**

Today industries are after making profits. There was a time a person worked in a particular company till his retirement age. Today it is not easy to get a permanent job. People make 6 Months job contracts. In the big cities, young people rent furnished rooms and when their contract is over, they take their property and vacate the room. With this they cannot plan. In fact, with the development of handy and computer, people work even from their houses. Boschki Reihold in affirmation to this writes:

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<sup>166</sup> Kaupp Angela et al, Handbuch der Katechese – Für Studium und Praxis, Freiburg: Herder, 2011, p. 492. (Unsere Tage zu zählen, lehre uns! Dann gewinnen wir ein weises Herz! (Ps 90:12) Ein geistliches Leben muss schon in früheren Lebensphasen begonnen haben, damit es im Alter trägt. Allerdings gilt auch hier, dass die Gnade immer mehr vermag als das, was unsere klugen Regeln festschreiben)

Since the beginnings of modernism, time and space have increasingly disappeared. Through the invention of speed and its acceleration, space and time become independent categories for the first time in human history.<sup>167</sup>

This system of life is not what God planned for mankind. God created day and night, so that after our daily work; we can have time for our families and rest at night. The words of Ecclesiastes 3 which states that there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens fails in our time.

### **1.5 The Catechist and better catechesis in Germany**

Against the backdrop of the foregoing discussion on the difficulties in the relationship with God, the world, other people, self and time, we next delve into discussion on the better catechists and catechesis in Germany, showing that there is the possibility of the Igbo church to improve on their catechetical activity. This is because, as we shall see shortly, the study applies in so many aspects to that of the condition in Igbo land.

The two books of Janusz Korczak: **How to love a child (Wie Man ein Kind lieben soll)** and **The respect of the child's right (Das Recht des Kindes auf Achtung)** will be of much help on the education of the children. He wrote **How to love a child** during the First World War. He was called into the army and he worked as a doctor directly at the front. It was in this terrible environment and suffering that this book was written. As a basis, he placed absolute value on honesty. He does not gloss over the situation of children in society. It is clear to him that children belong to oppressed societies, even though children are able to interpret and correctly assess situations in family structures or in other social environments. They immediately recognize the extent to which adults are honest and loyal to them, and who is merely pretending to them. The child, however, does not have the opportunity to correct the situation correctly. It is compelled to

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<sup>167</sup> Boschki Reinhold, in *Christliche Katechese unter den Bedingungen der „flüchtigen Moderne“*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 2017, p. 20 (Seit den Anfängen der Moderne treten Zeit und Raum mehr und mehr auseinander. Durch die Erfindung der Geschwindigkeit und ihrer atemberaubend zunehmenden Beschleunigung werden zum ersten Mal in der Menschheitsgeschichte Raum und Zeit zu unabhängigen Kategorien)

endure the situation or, if possible, to escape the situation. Since the child has no life experience, it cannot adequately react to many life situations since it is completely overstretched.

In addition, the children will have their own personal struggle with the adult, whether on emotional or physical level. Often in education, children forget the so-called infirmities in various life phases of their own age. This can occur unexpectedly quickly but also disappear again. Since Janusz Korczak was a pediatrician, he could recognize such physical dissonances more quickly and physically assign it to them.

This enabled him to react more quickly to pedagogy, since he did not have to investigate the symptoms first. In his life he had experienced a great deal, which made him a clearly structured man. Janusz Korczak was born in a rich parental home and impoverished by the psychological illness of his father, so he had to grow up very early. In order to be able to finance his studies, he had to open up various sources of money. Among other things, he wrote books and took care of poor workers who lived in the greatest misery. Later he led a successful medical practice, which would have enabled him a brilliant and successful career. During this time, he realized that rich children often could not lead a good and healthy life because education was not appropriate them.

The wars in which he had to serve as a doctor did not allow him to fall into a lethargy but rather opened his eyes to how he could positively place his intelligence and his ability at the disposal of mankind. For him, whose belief in God is deeply rooted, this meant that he had to try to educate children to the best of their knowledge so that they would not sink into these deep human abysses and commit the same mistakes as their parents and grandparents. For Janusz Korczak,

The future is not so much in a different, better social order as in a better person there. Stupidity, greed, lies and thievery overgrow as ever the newly established institutions; the primitives spoil the precision devices, and high ideals that in the immature, evil-minded masses, like ferments, eventually turn into shame. It's about the refinement of the doctor; but this is a long and complicated process that takes place in two stages:

eugenics, which is supposed to be a nobler human material, and education or the actual process of processing.<sup>168</sup>

Janusz Korczak was aware that children should have the same rights as adults. He understood that the child should be respected at his age, and that his needs and affairs should be taken seriously. The child is thus perceived as an individual and accompanied in his process of transformation. He also sought a middle way between coercion and arbitrariness in which he met with children agreements that they could adhere to, that their age and mind were adapted. He did not hold any morals, but tried to reach an atmosphere of well-being, so that children could bring their own personality into their surroundings. In this context, I would like to include one of the most important statements and concerns that Janusz Korczak has made, although he already saw that these children will never come to the adult age to improve the world, but will be killed.

One thing we will give you - the longing for a better life that does not yet exist, but which will come when you have lived a life of truth and righteousness, he used to say to his pupils when they left his "house of the child." Years later, already in the premonition of the approaching downfall, he writes in his diary that he does not know what to say to his children; to the utmost he defends himself against shaping the individual personality of the child according to his own ideas and imposing his own judgments and programs on him.<sup>169</sup> The goal of Janusz Korczak could hardly be reached in human terms. He has raised and cared for Christian faith as well as Jewish children. Surely, children of Christian faith, when

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<sup>168</sup> Korczak, Janusz, *Wie Man ein Kind lieben soll*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972, p.xxi (Ihm stellt sich die Zukunft nicht so sehr in einer anderen, besseren Gesellschaftsordnung als vielmehr in einem besseren Menschen dar. Dummheit, Habgier, Lüge und Dieberei überwuchern wie eh und je die neuerrichteten Institutionen, die Primitiven verderben die Präzisionsgeräte, und hohe Ideale, die in der unreifen, übelgesinnten Masse wie Fermente wirken, schlagen schließlich in Schändlichkeit um. Es geht um die Veredelung der Arzt; aber das ist ein langer und komplizierter Prozess, der sich in zwei Stadien vollzieht: in der Eugenik, die einen edleren menschlichen Grundstoff liefern soll, und in der Erziehung oder dem eigentlichen Bearbeitungsprozeß)

<sup>169</sup> Korczak, Janusz, *Wie Man ein Kind lieben soll*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972, p.xxii ("Eines geben wir euch mit - die Sehnsucht nach einem besseren Leben, das es noch nicht gibt, das aber einmal kommen wird, wenn ihr ein Leben der Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit geführt habt", pflegte er damals zu seinen Zöglingen zu sagen, wenn sie sein „Haus des Kindes“ verließen. Jahre später, schon im Vorgefühl des nahenden Unterganges, schreibt er in sein Tagebuch, er wisse nicht, was er den Kindern eigentlich zum Abschied sagen soll: Bis zum äußersten wehrt er sich dagegen, die Individuelle Persönlichkeit des Kindes nach eigenen Vorstellungen zu formen und ihm die eigenen Urteile und Programme aufzuzwingen)

they have reached adulthood, have grown to mentally mature men, but his beloved Jewish children have been killed with him in concentration camps. Divinely, he has mastered his vocation with bravo. In the sense of the catechesis he led the children to God. He himself could have left the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw. He went to the death with the children in the awareness that he was going to die. It can be seen that he was aware of his Divine vocation and achieved his divine goal. This means educating children in the Divine Mind.

Maria Montessori is also mentioned by Reinhold Boschki in the introduction to religious education. Maria Montessori was the first woman to study medicine in Italy. She was excited by the fact that she taught mentally infrequent children educational skills that no one trusted them, like reading and writing. One of her fundamental ideas was formulated as follows: "The child is completely alien to this human society, and one could characterize his position with the Bible saying, "My riches is not of this world"<sup>170</sup>

If interpreted correctly, the child cannot begin with the adult world at all. This is just the opposite, because adults have learned to live in this world. That is why it takes educators who take care of the child in this world with care and protection. The worst thing that can happen to a child is that it is doomed to idleness. The adult expects the children to adapt to their behaviour and not to disturb them. However, a child must be active and cannot do without his or her activity. According to Maria Montessori:

... Every time such a polarization of attention took place, the child began to change completely, calmer, one could almost say, becoming smarter and more communicative; it showed extraordinary inner qualities reminiscent of the highest phenomena of the soul, such as those of conversions.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Montessori Maria, Grundgedanken der Montessori - Pädagogik, Freiburg: Herder, 1967, p.9 (Das Kind steht dieser menschlichen Gesellschaft völlig fremd gegenüber, und man könnte seine Stellung mit dem Bibelwort kennzeichnen: „Mein reich ist nicht von dieser Welt“)

<sup>171</sup> Montessori Maria, Grundgedanken der Montessori - Pädagogik, Freiburg: Herder, 1967, p.18 (... jedesmal, wenn eine solche Polarisation der Aufmerksamkeit stattfand, fing das Kind an, sich vollständig zu verändern, ruhiger, man könnte fast sagen, intelligenter und mitteilbarer zu werden; es zeigte außerordentliche innere Eigenschaften, die an die höchsten Seelenphänomene wie die der Bekehrungen erinnerten)

Maria Montessori sees polarization as a fundamentally very important and difficult task that a child has to overcome in the process of growing up. She sees a connection between soul and God that everything that is unsteady and disordered in the soul can be ordered independently by continuous behaviour with God in exercises that the child exercises on its own. She observed that children exercised exercises up to 44 times until they let go and were completely relaxed and in harmony with the environment. Their conclusion is that children need suitable toys for their behaviour, places where they can work independently, and educators who support them in their actions so that they can develop a mental and spiritual healthy development. She refuses to let adults prescribe for children when and how to introduce them into learning processes. In her research results, it is clear that the child-like soul, independently accompanied by humans, is always confused about learning new things and at the same time putting them into a divine order. If this is disturbed, if not destroyed, by secular education, the child can neither learn divine order nor fulfil his divine calling.

Mrs. Maria Montessori says that children have spontaneously hidden powers in them and they wish to fit into a harmonious development so that they can fit into the natural laws of the environment. Taking this scientific approach seriously, it becomes clear that children who are educated in the sense of Montessori pedagogy are suspicious of gifts from adults. Since, according to Montessori, they already receive divine gifts, the worldly gifts are profane in their eyes and have no use. Therefore it is clear to the children that the adults have to pursue a goal with this gift and first have to clarify whether it matches their personality structure. If one recognizes that children can stand in this divinity and holds to it, then he will understand the following statement and its contents

The incarnate child is a spiritual embryo who must live at the expense of his environment. Just as the physical embryo needs the special environment of the womb, so does the spiritual embryo need the protection of a living, love-fueled, food-rich environment in which everything is geared to promote its growth and nothing stands in the way. Once the

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adult has grasped this fact, his behaviour towards the child must change fundamentally. The child as mental embryo, who is about to incarnate, must shake us up and put us under new responsibility. This small, delicate, graceful body, admired and left to the physical care that our hands treat as a toy, suddenly becomes something that challenges our reverence. "Multa debetur puero reverentia." This incarnation takes place under secret toil. All around this creative work, an unprecedented drama takes place.<sup>172</sup>

If this statement by Maria Montessori can be understood again, the fundamental thinking of expectant parents will change. They will bring the child a divine thing, as well as God's respect and love. Standing in this love, they will enter into a new connection to their child and can thereby recognize the will of God and educate their children in divine love. As a principle that must be seen positively in catechesis, money really does not matter much. Each parish has parish houses or Parish halls that can be set up in the style of Montessori and Korczak. Bright, colourful detached rooms, furnished with Montessori pedagogy. If the church speaker and educator are educated in the sense of Montessori and Korczak and instructed by priests in the Roman Catholic faith, all age groups can be introduced into the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. Children who grow up in the Healthy Family System can be put into their state together with their parents during game lessons by playing well-matched playing materials, by playing and speaking, expanding their skills and meadows, so that they can at all gain an understanding of God and thereby become attached to be able to enter God. After this step, the priest can teach only in the tradition of the church. Children growing up in poor family conditions

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<sup>172</sup> Montessori Maria, Grundgedanken der Montessori - Pädagogik, Freiburg: Herder, 1967, pp.51-52 (Das fleischgewordene Kind ist ein geistiger Embryo, der auf Kosten seiner Umwelt leben muß. So wie der physische Embryo die besondere Umwelt des Mutterschoßes benötigt, braucht auch der geistig Embryo den Schutz einer lebendigen, von Liebe durchwärmten, an Nahrung reichen Umwelt, in der alles darauf eingerichtet ist, sein Wachstum zu fördern, und nichts hindernd im Wege steht. Hat der Erwachsene diese Tatsache erst einmal begriffen, so muß sich sein Verhalten dem Kinde gegenüber grundlegend ändern. Das Kind als geistiger Embryo, der im Begriff steht, sich zu inkarnieren, muß uns erschüttern und erlegt uns neue Verantwortung auf. Dieser kleine, zart, anmutige Leib, den wir bewundern und ausschließlich der körperlichen Pflege überlassen, den unsere Hände fast so behandeln wie ein Spielzeug, wird nun mit einem Male zu etwas, das unsere Ehrfurcht herausfordert. „Multa debetur puero reverentia.“ Diese Fleischwerdung vollzieht sich unter geheimer Mühsal. Rings um diese schöpferische Arbeit spielt sich ein noch nie geschildertes Drama ab.

first have to be introduced to the clear educational structures of Korczak, so that they can later be instructed in the Montessori structures. The same goes for their parents.

Old people or people with mild infirmities may be involved in this work. This closes the cycle of different generations that can give each other help and everyone can benefit from the knowledge of the other. As a general rule, whoever chooses this program must also attend the daily Mass, which gives the priest the opportunity to teach Roman Catholic traditions so that people can be taught the true message of God. However, if there are severe mental stress, therapy according to Viktor E. Frankl can be used. This should take place in extra rooms. This system involves Western and Eastern European education: as Pope John Paul II so aptly said, “Europe is like a lung, one lung is the east, the other the west and both are needed to breathe”.<sup>173</sup> Jesus himself was a Jew and with Montessori and Korczak we represent the Jewish - Christian world view.

John Paul II already explained the importance of catechesis in October 1979 in his Apostolic Exhortation “Catechesi Tradendae”. John Paul II mentioned Paul VI in “Catechesi Tradendae” there also Paul VI throughout his life occupied himself with the catechesis in the church. It is quite clear that John Paul II is absolutely right that catechesis has a long tradition in the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, one should not lose sight of catechesis. In 1979, however, it was not clear that by 2017 many children will not be baptized. Thus, without baptism, one is not included in the community of the church. Another problem is that many baptized children do not receive First Holy Communion and cannot find the way to Confirmation.

The Evangelical Church of Germany has to cope with baptisms and confirmations even greater problems as the Catholic Church. As a result, the foundations have been deprived of catechesis and therefore cannot reach at the moment. Only when a new evangelization is carried out can catechesis take effect again. The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith says the following:

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<sup>173</sup><http://www.kas.de/italien/de/publications/17675/> (Europa ist wie eine Lunge, der eine Lungenflügel ist der Osten, der andere der Westen und beide braucht man zum Atmen.)

Evangelization and the call to holiness and conversion are intricately bound together, a matter which needs to be proposed to people here and now, if they are to experience the Kingdom of God in Jesus, and, in turn, become the children of God.<sup>174</sup>

Children can be called into holiness to God because they are mentally and financially poor. Through education, they can be brought much faster to the Sermon on the Mount, and thus become again children of God. From then on, the tradition of catechesis can be resumed. The basic idea of catechesis was adapted and correct in its time. People were inspired by the divine faith. They acted on this belief. In this belief miracles could be accomplished. Nowadays, people are far from God, believing that they have a lot of money to settle their problems.

Based on my work, it has become clear to me that people, by their unscrupulous behaviour, destroy themselves and their economic system. This has already happened on an immense scale. In Europe, money is becoming scarcer. Africa can therefore, in a short time no longer fall back on Europe. John XXIII has probably wondered why he gave people the opportunity to understand the principles of faith. He wanted the people to live their lives in divine faith in the future. It must be understood that John XXIII came from peasant conditions and recognized the rapid industrialization of Europe. He saw that the given structures of his time were turned upside down. The people left the villages to work in the towns. As a result, people lost their natural rhythm and the connection in their home town.

For Africa, the basic construction kit applies as it does for Europe. That means the education must be started new in the sense of the catholic tradition. Since there is great potential in Africa for priests and religious, they can be integrated into the fundamental task of proselytizing. In addition, Africa needs to ensure that educated youths get to know the world so that they can gain new insights in order to break up crusted structures in their own countries.

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<sup>174</sup> The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, p.28

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE CATECHESIS IN IGBOLAND

The history of catechesis in Igboland of Nigeria, has never been without challenges. The missionaries who sowed the seed of Catholicism in Igboland passed through unbelievable human experiences and hardships. Those pioneer missionaries who brought us the gospel message experienced natural and man-made hardships. Many of them were sent so early to their graves by the difficulties they encountered. The incessant deaths of the missionaries gave rise to Igboland being nicknamed the “Whiteman’s grave.” That description was appropriately so, given the way they died one after another, in quick succession, young in age. For instance, Msgr. Lutz, the first Prefect Apostolic in Igboland, died at the age of 43. Msgr. Joseph Relling who succeeded him in 1895, died two years later. Msgr. Rene Pawalas came in 1898 only to be carried off by death in 1900 at the age of 34. Fr, Francis Mary Lecuyer died in 1890 at the age of 29; and Frs. John Baptist Engasser and Brokurtz died in the same year, 1899. It was a distressing situation, but they refused to be depressed. When therefore, robust Msgr. Lejeune succeeded Msgr. Pawlas in 1900 it was hoped that his strong physique would be equal to the strain of the hard Onitsha mission, but he too did not survive the high mortality rate, as he gave up the ghost in 1905. It was a roll-call of death...They watered the field of their labour with their sweat, their tears, their blood.<sup>175</sup> They died mainly of malaria and other prevalent diseases at that time. In addition to health and environmental challenges, the Catholic missionaries also suffered severe and bitter opposition from the protestant missionaries who were already in Igboland many years before the arrival of Catholicism. They also experienced vehement antagonism from the natives who were bent on rejecting any new culture or religion outside the traditional African religion they were already accustomed to or any religion that does not concur with the native African institutional norms or simply native customs.<sup>176</sup> The early missionaries did a good job by bringing us Christianity and in fact their efforts could be described as laudable since many gave their life for it. Unfortunately,

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<sup>175</sup> Idigo P.M., Archbishop Henry: An Apostle of Eastern Nigeria, Enugu: CECTA Printing Division, 1987, p. 34

<sup>176</sup> In Igbo society they are called omenala. They are traditional customs for which there is so much strong communal sentiments of venerable attachment from ‘time immemorial’ that their infraction is viewed in the society as horrible acts, *nso*, *alu*, which will result in various forms of strong punishment such as ostracism, exile, fines and rituals of religious purification.

we are faced with a stark reality that the Christian faith did not permeate the culture of our people well enough, such that until today, there is a great clash between the profession of Christianity and the Igbo traditional religion. This can be seen in our life styles and beliefs particularly in times of difficulties in life.

Today, with the vocation boom which has given the indigenous religious and clergy the opportunity of piloting the affairs of evangelization and catechesis in Igboland, together with the advance in medicine, malaria and other hitherto health enigmas no longer constitute a threat to the agents of evangelization in Igboland. However, this does not mean that the challenges to catechesis in Igboland have come to an end. In fact, there are still a lot of challenges militating against catechesis in our own time in Igboland. In our modern age known as the computer age with all its scientific and technological glories, the challenges to catechesis have taken a different but difficult shape. The challenges are now more sophisticated than the time of the foreign missionaries. The reduction of the world into a village through the handwork of globalization imbued with secularization is never without consequences... Where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. Sometimes the Christian faith as well, while maintaining some of the externals of its tradition and rituals, tends to be separated from those moments of human existence which have the most significance...<sup>177</sup>

Today many take a critical look at values and some fundamental aspects of daily life which deeply affect people's faith. There has been a troubling loss of the sense of the sacred, which has even called into question foundations once deemed unshakeable, such as faith in a provident creator God, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, and a common understanding of basic human experiences: i.e., birth, death, life in a family, and reference to a natural moral

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<sup>177</sup> John Paul II. *Christifideles Laici*, Vatican City, 30 December, 1988, no. 35

law.<sup>178</sup> There are still other more challenges like deep cultural beliefs and practices in Igboland, Pentecostalism and private ministries caused by poverty, urbanization etc., which are seriously militating against effective catechesis in Igboland - Nigeria. According to John Paul II, in such cases, the questions and formidable enigmas posed by these situations, if remaining without responses, expose contemporary people to an inconsolable delusion or to the temptation of eliminating the truly humanizing dimension of life implicit in these problems.<sup>179</sup>

Our aim in this chapter is to expose those challenges to effective catechesis in Igboland which when effectively managed, will lead towards the realization of proper and functional catechesis. The realization of such a goal will help us to regain once again both the power and zeal with which the apostles and the missionaries who came to evangelize Igboland used in the proclamation of the gospel message. We still need the same experience which Peter's audience had on the day of Pentecost: "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37) In actual fact, the Church possesses in itself the totality and fullness of the means of salvation ... Sometimes after a successful start it has had cause to mourn a setback, or it may linger in a state of semi-fulfilment and insufficiency. With regards to peoples, classes and men it is only by degrees that it touches and penetrates them and raises them to a Catholic perfection. In each situation and circumstance a proper line of action and effective means should be adopted."<sup>180</sup>

## 2.1 The Situation of Lay Catechists in Igboland

In the Catholic Church, it is not only the clergy that is formally engaged in the work of evangelization. The lay faithful also play vital roles. Among the lay faithful, there is a particular group who is formally involved in the spread of the gospel. This group plays an indispensable role in the transmission of the knowledge of faith. They are not just formally appointed, they also

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<sup>178</sup> Benedict XVI. Apostolic Letter in the form of Motu Proprio *Ubi cumque et Semper*, 21 September 2010, In: Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2012, no. 43

<sup>179</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 35

<sup>180</sup> Vatican II Document, *Ad Gentes*, Vatican City, 7 December, 1990, no. 6

have defined duties and responsibilities. We call them the lay catechists. Where there is a shortage of priests, the catechists are also entrusted with the pastoral guidance of the little community separated from the parish centre. Often, they are called to witness to their faith by harsh trials and painful tests to their constancy even to the giving of life itself.<sup>181</sup> A catechist is a person, selected or chosen from among God's people and trained and commissioned and given a mandate to perform some essential assignments on behalf of the church as approved by the local ordinary with the people of God in jurisdiction of the church particularly in the area of catechesis.<sup>182</sup>

The above description outlines three main elements associated with these lay catechists. These are the prerequisite for every catechist before his or her commissioning. First, it talks about the quality of their lives - they are to be chosen or selected from among God's people; therefore, they are expected to be outstanding in their Christian lifestyle. The second point is their works - they are to help spread the gospel and organize liturgical celebrations and works of charity. Then the third and last issue is their formation - they are to be suitably instructed. These Catechists are the herald of the good news of God. Just like John the Baptist prepared the way for our Lord Jesus Christ they too, in their own little capacity, prepare the way of the Vicar of Christ in parishes, to carry out some liturgical functions. The Holy Mass is an important example. In Igboland, they prepare the people for the reception of the sacraments. They prepare the new converts to receive Jesus into their lives. They speak Christ to the people and minister Christ in word to the people by explaining the readings on Sundays and other holy days of obligations when a priest is not available. In some Catholic stations, they are all in all to the people of God. They are preachers. They are catechetical instructors. They are leaders because they lead the people of God in prayers in religious gathering etc. They are project coordinators. They counsel people especially those preparing for marriage. They assist the priest to mediate in matters that may arise in the parish. They even play the role of gate keepers. They are the first to come to the

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<sup>181</sup> *Guide For Catechists: Document of Vocational, Formative and Promotional Orientation of Catechists in the Territories Dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Limuru: Kolbe Press, 1994, p. 7

<sup>182</sup> Canon 785

church and the last to go. In some parishes, they open and lock the church doors or gates on behalf of the priests. Adigwe captures their identity and numerous responsibilities by saying that a catechist is the bringer of good News to the people, the unassuming teacher of the faith, the companion of those seeking to come to the church for the first time, the friend and companion of the little children as they come to catechism classes, the counselor of many couples, the right hand man of the Priest, and the symbol of the presence of the church everywhere.<sup>183</sup>

If catechists are to do all these works effectively especially preparing candidates for the reception of the Eucharist, then they really need to be properly trained. They should be given an appropriate education and instruction that will help them to carry out this uphill task of their vocation as Lay Catechists. The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity puts it thus: "In our days, when there are so few clerics to evangelize such great multitudes and to carry out the pastoral ministry, the role of catechists is of the highest importance. Therefore, their training must be ... such that, as true co-workers of the priestly order, they will be able to perform their task as well as possible, a task which involves new and greater burdens."<sup>184</sup>

From the above assertions about the lay catechist, it is very correct to say that the catechist, is a teacher of faith, and has an indispensable role to play in the transmission of the knowledge of faith; and therefore, needs to be well trained for this job. This is true because an untrained catechist in the church is just like sending a soldier into war without equipping him with the necessary ammunition. In many parishes in Igboland, most priests entrust the teaching of catechism into the care of the lay catechists. They specifically supervise the preparation of candidates for First Holy Communion, Confirmation and Sacrament of Matrimony. Consequently, if they are not properly trained, rendering substandard and poor services will be

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<sup>183</sup> Ayogu D.O. "Chairman's Address to Nsukka Diocesan Catechists' Association on the Occasion of their Annual Retreat/Seminar", in: Catholic Diocese of Nsukka 2013 Catechist Seminar entitled The catechist and the Teaching of the Faith Today, 6<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2013, pp. 5-6

<sup>184</sup> Vatican II Document, *Ad Gentes*, no.17

both predictable and inevitable. The Manual for Catechists and Teachers paints a good picture of the enormous task involved in carrying out the function of the Lay Catechists when it states:

Teaching catechism is the very work of the Parish Priest in communion with the lay catechist and of all the most important; the future of the mission depends on it.... To teach catechism to adults and especially to ignorant people is not ... an easy task which can be done by anyone who is able to read. To teach catechism means to make people understand what they believe and what they must do; it is not enough to let them repeat the text till they know it by heart.<sup>185</sup>

The importance of the lay catechists from the above cannot be overstressed since they have so much to contribute in evangelization. Little wonder John Paul II during his apostolic voyages, made use of every opportunity to stress the importance and relevance of the work of the lay catechists as a “fundamental evangelical service.”<sup>186</sup> He further states that their task is a demanding but also a necessary and an attractive one,<sup>187</sup> seeing that, from the very beginning of Christianity and wherever there has been missionary activity, catechists have made, and continue to make, “an outstanding and indispensable contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church.”<sup>188</sup> Till date, the relevance of the lay catechists is still appreciated. For instance, not long ago Pope Francis commended the bravery of the missionaries and catechists (lay teachers) that have stood strong in the face of Boko Haram violence in Nigeria and worked to build bridges with the Muslim community. Thus he declares: "How can we fail to remember ... missionaries

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<sup>185</sup> Manual for Catechists and Teachers sections 1&21, pp. 1&28

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Assembly of the CEP, 30 April 1992, or 1 May 1992, in *Guide for Catechists: Document of Vocational, Formative and Promotional Orientation of Catechists in the Territories Dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Limuru: Kolbe Press Ltd, 1994, p. 9

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, in *Guide for Catechists: Document of Vocational, Formative and Promotional Orientation of Catechists in the Territories Dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, p. 9

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Vatican II Document, *Ad Gentes*, in *Guide for Catechists: Document of Vocational, Formative and Vocational Orientation of Catechists in the Territories Dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, p. 9

and catechists (lay teachers) who, despite untold sacrifices, never abandoned their flock, but remained at their service.... I wish here to express my heartfelt thanks to you, because in the midst of so many trials and sufferings the Church in Nigeria does not cease to witness to hospitality, mercy and forgiveness."<sup>189</sup> That indeed is a wonderful tribute to the lay catechists.

According to the *General Catechetical Directory*, "Permanent centres for the training of catechists should be established by local communities. In this way, it will be clear to the Christians that the work of evangelization and the teaching of the message of salvation are the concern of all."<sup>190</sup> In fact the Church should see this task of training their lay catechists as their duty and responsibility. Hence, *Catechesi Tradendae* and *Ad Gentes* also affirm that:

The ecclesial community at all levels has a twofold responsibility with regard to catechesis: it has the responsibility of providing for the training of its members, but it also has the responsibility of welcoming them into an environment where they can live as fully as possible what they have learned.<sup>191</sup> The greatest possible number of brothers and sisters should be well instructed and prepared in the art of catechetical, so that they might be of even greater assistance in the work of the apostolate. It is necessary that those who engage in missionary activity, even for a time, should receive a training suited to their condition.<sup>192</sup>

From the above twofold responsibility, one can say that the training of the lay catechists is not (and cannot be) optional but a *sine qua non*, literally meaning an indispensable condition, element, or factor, something essential. This is because there is no way lay catechists will meet up their expectation if they are not properly trained. They should be educated and trained. Training is indispensable if the apostolate is to attain full efficacy. This is required, not only by

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<sup>189</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/03/pope-hails-bravery-of-nigeria-priests-against-boko-haram/>

<sup>190</sup> Vatican II Document, *General Catechetical Directory*, 11 April 1971, no. 126

<sup>191</sup> John Paul II *Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae*, Vatican City, 16 October 1979, no.24

<sup>192</sup> Vatican II Document, *Ad Gentes*, no. 26

the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the layman himself, but also by the variety of circumstances, persons and duties to which he should adapt his activity.<sup>193</sup> Having gotten an idea of who a lay catechist is and what he does, the question a curious reader may ask at this point is: what are the conditions of lay catechists in Igboland? Are they properly trained?

It is quite unfortunate to note that despite this supposition that the lay catechists ought and should be trained, the reverse has been the case in Igboland from the time of the missionaries to this era of indigenous evangelization. Majority of the lay catechists are either illiterates or barely literate. Among the few of them who have sufficient secular education, greater percentages are not properly trained as catechists as such. Most of these educationally deficient catechists come into the service as a response to immediate or existing need of the local church and so, are generally not formally prepared for the task especially that of didactic duties. The consequence is that their teaching qualities and capabilities are more of their natural talents than effects of formation. Little screening is needed since those who present themselves for the service are usually very few, where it is not just one person. Most times people do not even step forward to take the responsibility once they notice that someone else has volunteered, even if the one that volunteered, from all intents and purposes, is least qualified for the assignment. In fact, the recruitment of a Catholic catechist in Igboland is as casual as the employment of casual workers in a factory; and their condition of service is not different either.

In fact, the circumstance and manner in which the Church presents her request for a catechist in Igboland as well as in Nigeria contribute to the lack of keenness in the catechist's job by the generality of Christians. The insistence is often on its unprofessional character. However, the implications of not training our lay catechists can be so overwhelming since the number of the clergy is insufficient. Besides, even if there were enough, the challenges would still be there since the catechists are the ones who know the people they minister to more personally than the clergy. The catechists seem to understand the people better because they not only live with them, but practice the same culture, attend the same market, and socialize with one another in the same

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<sup>193</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18 November, 1965, no. 28

language. The practice of the Catholic Church is such that priests are posted not considering race or language. It is thus the responsibility of the catechist to put the priest in-the-know when occasion requires and also to make his people understand where necessary. But how can he do all these if he is not properly trained as a catechist?

Let us consider an instance. This writer in the process of interviewing one of the lay catechists in Igboland, was shocked to find out that he does not even know what it entails to be a catechist. He is not aware of the existence of any catechetical school not to talk of seeing the four walls. Would you blame such a catechist? When, for instance, Owerri Ecclesiastical Province in Igboland doesn't even have one functional institute for the training of lay catechists. This is a province comprising of six densely populated dioceses. What then are the fruits expected from catechists of such orientation? Naturally, the answer is not far-fetched. The Latin adage says it all: *nemo dat quod non habet*, literally meaning no one gives what he doesn't have. The problem here is that a catechist who has no knowledge to disseminate may even end up transferring ignorance to his listeners. Such people help to fulfill repeatedly the lamentation of prophet Hosea that "my people perish for lack of knowledge"(Hosea 4:6). Of course what should one expect when there is no intellectual, nay, theological improvement in our catechists? Some of them still rely exclusively on the use of the old method of memorization in teaching catechism. This is a method that lends itself to insufficient or at times almost non-existent assimilation; reducing all knowledge to formulas that are repeated without being properly understood.<sup>194</sup> On the contrary, Catechesis needs to be continually renewed by a certain broadening of its concept, the revision of its method, by the search for suitable language, and by the utilization of new means of transmitting the message.<sup>195</sup> It is always good to seek for new methods or ways in the teaching of catechism such that the traditionally Christian culture or cultures imbued with thousand-year-old religious traditions would not be shattered. It is not only a question of grafting the faith onto the local cultures, but also revitalizing a de-Christianized world whose only Christian references are of a cultural nature. On the threshold of the Third Millennium, the Church throughout the

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<sup>194</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.55

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*17

world is faced with new cultural situations, new fields of evangelization.<sup>196</sup> How will our catechists be up-to-date or systematic in the teaching of the catechism when they are not properly trained? How can they respond to this catechetico-biblical injunction “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1Pt 3:15)

The ineffectiveness of our lay catechists due to the lack of appropriate training is as old as the Church in Igboland. In the Missionary era in Igboland, the Roman Catholic Catechist-Teachers were interpreters for the missionaries and for the uneducated proselytes. This was a major responsibility for them but with considerable significant consequences. Lacking in the full understanding of the unwritten text of the sermon, message, or address, but with no malicious intentions, the interpretations were usually corrupt. The interpreted version was merely the transmission of the local teachers’ paraphrased sense of the message rather than its real text because they were not trained as catechist as such. One scholar understood the difficulties of the Catechist - Teacher apostolate and noted thus: “What he (the catechist) says, may not instruct the people very much - he is not learned divine - but one thing he certainly does is; it leaves them at the parting of ways.<sup>197</sup> The Roman Catholic Catechist - Teachers were educated so to say but not trained as catechists; and a lot of problems arose from their interpretation.

There is therefore need to evaluate the mode of operations of the lay catechists. Indeed, the quest to achieve full proclamation of the Gospel places on the Church the responsibility to give proof today, as she has done at other periods of her history, of evangelical wisdom, courage and fidelity in seeking out and putting into operation a new method and new prospects for catechetical instruction.<sup>198</sup> The conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us therefore to revise methods, to seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man. For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the

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<sup>196</sup> Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1999, no.5

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.187

<sup>198</sup> John Paul II. Apostolic Exhortation Catechesis Tradendae, no. 17

answer to his questions and the energy for his commitment of human solidarity.<sup>199</sup> This dream is not realizable without properly trained agents of evangelization. This position is indirectly supported by Pope John Paul II when he declares that:

The more the Church, whether on the local or the universal level gives catechesis priority over other works and undertakings the results of which would be more spectacular, the more she finds in catechesis a strengthening of her internal life as a community of believers and of her external activity as a missionary Church. ..., the Church is bidden by God and events - each of them a call from Him - to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel.<sup>200</sup>

Therefore, theological training and comprehensive drilling of our lay Catechists will constitute a very useful means to improve the catechetical apostolate of the church in Igboland since it will generate the "qualified personnel" which the Pope talks about; and of which the Church cannot afford to do without.

## **2.2 Some Economic, Social and Environmental Challenges Facing the Church**

The Church in Africa has her peculiar challenges arising from many factors including environmental, social, religious, political, historical, cultural and economic factors etc. The challenges posed by these factors hinder effective transmission of the Christian faith. The Church in Igboland while she faces some problems that are common to mankind, also confront other difficulties which are peculiar to her because of the unique experiences and history of the people. Some scholars had expected that the African Synod would have addressed the specific challenges hindering the effective transmission of the Gospel in Africa. Unfortunately, critics have noted that the Synod fell short of addressing the specific and peculiar challenges to the Church's catechetical apostolate in Africa. According to Protus Kemdirim:

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<sup>199</sup> Paul VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Vatican City, 1975, no. 3

<sup>200</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Catechesis Tradendae*, no.15

... it would appear that one of the disappointments of the Synod was that its post-synodal message made no substantial reference to any specific cultural heritage or social structure not yet fully transformed by the gospel - patterns of marriage, traditional burial rites, oath and title-taking, widowhood practices, divinations and fortune-telling, the caste system etc. considered as undermining integral salvation. ... As a matter of fact, the expectation was that the Synod would address specific local problems in the same way that some issues - pastoral care of the increasing numbers of divorces, premarital sexual intercourse, homosexuality, euthanasia, the changing role of women in married life, etc. - in the European Church are discussed and possibly acted upon.<sup>201</sup>

This expectation as well as complain is not out of place since for the Church evangelizing means, bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... the purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.<sup>202</sup> This explains why in the *Angelus* message of 20<sup>th</sup> March 1994, Pope John Paul II wondered how one could proclaim Christ on the continent of Africa while forgetting that it is one of the world's poorest regions. He wondered how one could fail to take into account the anguished history of a land where many nations are still in grip of famine, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and the violation of human rights.<sup>203</sup> Before then, Paul VI has made it clear that, "for the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judging, determining values,

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<sup>201</sup> Kemdirim P.O., "Towards a Positive Vision for Childless Couples in the African Church: A Post-synodal Issue", in Oguejiofor J.O., and Enweh I., (eds.), *Ecclesia in Africa: The Nigeria Response*, p. 139

<sup>202</sup> Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 18

<sup>203</sup> Onyeocha I.M., "Address of Welcome" in Oguejiofor J.O., and Enweh I. (eds.), *Ecclesia in Africa: The Nigeria Response*, pp. 2-3

points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.<sup>204</sup> Consequently there is an urgent need for the Church in Igboland, if she is to succeed in her mission, to address the societal challenges which hinder the effective transmission of the Christian message. We have identified some of these problems, and a discussion on them follows immediately.

### **2.2.1 Poverty-Induced Private Ministries**

Private ministries, like mushrooms, have become widespread overnight all over Nigeria especially in Igboland. Their *modus operandi* (with exaggerated emphasis on give and it shall be given to you and theology of use your offerings and change your sufferings, and other exploitative languages) clearly indicate poverty-induced ministries. Many of them base their preaching on "prosperity gospel" with bogus claims that they have been given divine mandate to make God's people materially wealthy and that they already possess the anointing to make people rich. In the face of a Nigeria with a depressed economy, and a largely pauperized populace desperate for improved standard of living, it is not surprising that the people flock to these "prosperity churches" seeking for solace and escape from their economic deprivation. With an alarming population already, these churches are said to be the fastest "growing" religious groups in the country. They draw most of their adherents (or should we say customers) from the traditional orthodox Christian churches, especially the Catholic Church.

However, the idea of people going to churches in search of economic relief is not entirely a new phenomenon in Igboland. For instance, during the early days of Christianity in Igboland-Nigeria, the church was at the forefront of social welfare. Missionaries were building schools, hospitals, vocational skills acquisition centres, farms and cottage industries etc. They offered scholarships, gave free books and teaching aids, and gave food, clothing and shelter to those deprived of these necessities. Although by then, the central theme of sermons was on preparing for the life after death, the church tried as much as possible to ensure that members and those who dared to come into God's house had a good life before death. In fact, the satisfaction of the Church was the welfare of members and the success of the church was seen in the number of

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<sup>204</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.19

lives touched. Thus, the Church therefore became a safe haven to people in various distress situations such as those needing food, clothing, accommodation, financial relief, treatment of debilitating illnesses such as leprosy and mental disorders and several others etc.

In those days also, the spiritual gifts of the members were used for the common good and the injunction of the Lord: "Freely you have received, freely give," (Matt 10:8), was respected and obeyed. As the church ministered to the needs of members and their lives got better, they brought the proceeds of the works of their hands in the form of tithes and offerings to God at Sunday services, thanksgiving and harvest ceremonies. With these, more cathedrals, mission schools, orphanages, maternity homes and farms were built. Moreover, scholarships to even higher levels of education were awarded as the house of God indeed became the house of plenty. Pastors saved money for social development projects by living modest lives usually behind the church, riding bicycles and working their own farms in a clear example of storing up treasures in heaven as the Bible recommends.<sup>205</sup>

In our own time presently, the spiritual gifts are converted into personal use. This has led to the proliferation of private ministries in all the nooks and crannies in Igboland - Nigeria. Sometimes, even personal houses, garages and warehouses are converted into churches or house of God. With the proliferation of private ministries all over the places in Nigeria, there is that chance of adjudging Nigeria as the most religious country in the world. However, we note with dismay the fact that so many of these churches are not unconnected with selfish interest. In many small denominations, so many pastors convert everything to personal use. There is also fierce leadership tussle and fight among the pastors as to who controls the most viable parishes. For instance, the Vanguard Newspaper of 28 July 2015 makes this painful and shameful observation concerning selfish leadership tussle in the Assemblies of God Church:

... The once peaceful members of one-fold family had been torn apart following a leadership tussle that is presently bedeviling the church. Crisis of factionalisation of the church had been lingering as two senior Reverend gentlemen, Professor Paul Emeka and

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<sup>205</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/10/rich-churches-poor-members/#sthash.ctoIXXkd.MiCaSAS9.dpuf>

Dr. Chidi Okoroafor have been at loggerheads, each laying claim to be the overall leader of the church, qualified to bear the designation General Superintendent, GS.

... The drama started when Reverend Nathaniel Udeze stormed the Mount Street parish with letters of posting and other court documents empowering him to be installed as the new pastor of the parish that morning. But he was stoutly resisted along with his team of loyalists by the current Resident Pastor of the parish, Reverend Amaechi Agbo who, along with his loyalists, accused Udeze of being an “intruder”. The disagreement led to a free for all fight when Udeze insisted on taking over since he had been officially posted there by the leadership of the church under Rev Paul Emeka....

The fracas attracted the attention of the police who raced to the place and the church was locked up. That was not the first time members of the congregation would engage in such a show of shame. Sometime last year, precisely December 3, 2014, hell was also let loose at the national headquarters of the church located in Enugu when the two warring factions engaged in a bloody clash that left no fewer than five persons seriously injured, while four cars parked at the premises were burnt beyond recognition during the free for all that ensued.<sup>206</sup>

Some pastors have become so materialistic that nowadays members minister to the "needs of the church" by paying through their noses to fund broadcasts on television and chains of businesses including universities, publishing houses, nursery, primary or post primary schools, as well as buy flashy cars and private jets. However the profits and proceeds from these projects are diverted into the private purses of the ministers. In some cases, the ministers use their names to make purchases and register fixed assets of their denominations thereby paving way for their children to inherit those properties. When the people are tired of giving because of excessive demands on them, the pastors are quick to brainwash them by reminding them that givers never lack. Enwerem underscores this point when he asserts that "nowhere is this better epitomized and characterized than in the Christian Pentecostal or “prosperity” Churches. ...the authenticity of one’s religiosity is synonymous with, or measured on the basis of, one’s economic prosperity and

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<sup>206</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/07/brethren-at-war-how-power-tussle-tears-assemblies-of-god-church-apart/>

vice versa." <sup>207</sup> As seen always on Television, these preachers have private jet planes, fancy suites, million dollar houses, luxurious cars, and the like. Just to mention a few of them. A report has it that Bishop David Oyedepo, a Nigerian preacher is considered as one of the richest preachers in the world. David Oyedepo has a reported net worth of \$150 million. He is the presiding Bishop and founder of Faith Church World Wide, also known as Winners' Chapel, having its headquarters in Ogun State - Nigeria. Oyedepo has a private university known as Covenant University. A report says that Oyedepo owns a mansion in London and the U.S., along with four private jets. He owns Dominion Publishing House, which publishes all his books, which are mostly on the subject of prosperity. In fact, his books and preaching are always based on wealth such as understanding financial prosperity, breaking financial hardship, winning the war against poverty etc. What is so worrisome to many people is that majority of Winners Chapel members cannot afford the fees charged by a University owned by their church or senior pastor; yet he owns private jets - Gulfstream G550, Gulfstream G450, Gulfstream V and Learjet with combined value of \$98.3million (N15.9billion).<sup>208</sup> In the year 2014, the private jet owned by Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, the President of Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, was involved in a corruption scandal of \$9.3m money laundering in South Africa. The huge sum of money was found in his jet cash!

J. Lee Grady, an author, award - winning journalist and ordained minister, explicitly illustrates the ways the prosperity gospel is hurting and damaging the continent of Africa which Igboland - Nigeria is inclusive thus:

- It is mixed with occultism. Before Christianity came to Nigeria, people visited witch doctors and sacrificed goats or cows to get prosperity. They poured libations on the ground so the gods would hear their prayers. Today similar practices continue, only the juju priest has been replaced by a pastor who drives a Mercedes-Benz. A pastor buried a live animal under the floor of his church to win God's favor. Another pastor asked his congregants to bring bottles of sand to church so he could anoint them; he then told the people to sprinkle the

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<sup>207</sup> Enwerem I., "*Ecclesia in Africa and the Socio - Political Context of Nigeria*", in: Oguejiofor J.O., and Enweh I., (eds.), *Ecclesia in Africa - The Nigerian Response*, pp. 37-38

<sup>208</sup> [www.davidoyedepoministries.org](http://www.davidoyedepoministries.org)

sand in their houses to bring blessings. The people who follow these charlatans are reminded that their promised windfall won't materialize unless they give large donations.

- It fuels greed. Any person who knows Christ will learn the joy of giving to others. But the prosperity gospel teaches people to focus on getting, not giving. At its core it is a selfish and materialistic faith with a thin Christian veneer. Church members are continually urged to sow financial seeds to reap bigger and bigger rewards. In Africa, entire conferences are dedicated to collecting offerings in order to achieve wealth. Preachers boast about how much they paid for suits, shoes, necklaces and watches. They tell their followers that spirituality is measured by whether they have a big house or a first-class ticket...
- It feeds pride. This greedy atmosphere in prosperity churches has produced a warped style of leadership. Gideon Thuraira, editor of Christian Professional magazine, calls these men "churchpreneurs." They plant churches not because they have a burden to reach lost souls but because they see dollar signs when they fill an auditorium with chairs...
- It works against the formation of Christian character. The prosperity message is a poor imitation of the gospel because it leaves no room for brokenness, suffering, humility or delay. It offers an illegal shortcut. Prosperity preachers promise instant results and overnight success; if you don't get your breakthrough, it's because you didn't give enough money in the offering. Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and follow Him; prosperity preaching calls us to deny Jesus and follow our materialistic lusts. There is a leadership crisis in the African church because many pastors are so set on getting rich; they can't go through the process of discipleship that requires self-denial.<sup>209</sup>

Some of these abuses by prosperity gospel preachers with the view to escaping poverty have also crippled into the mainline Churches including the Catholic Church. We shall discuss some of such influences later in this chapter, when we shall examine the Pentecostal challenge to effective catechesis in Igboland. But suffice it for now to note the observation of Hillary Achunike, a Nigerian Catholic priest from Igboland and also working in Igboland. He categorically asserts that:

People accuse the Pentecostals of establishing healing centres to make money, but this could be seen among the Catholic priest-healers too. In the Catholic Prayer Ministry of

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<sup>209</sup> <http://www.charismamag.com/blogs/fire-in-my-bones/19113-5-ways-the-prosperity-gospel-is-hurting-africa>

the Holy Spirit, Elele and other healing centres, testimonies are usually given with some material gifts and livestock to back them up. Bottled wine and soap, etc., are advertised and hawked about....In the Adoration Ground, Enugu, cassette tapes and video tapes are advertised. In the Upper Room Ministry, the experience is the same...<sup>210</sup>

The bone of contention here is that the gospel is deliberately packaged in such a way that the preachers are financially empowered, while at the same time impoverishing the congregation. The reason behind such schemes is often nothing else but a desperate move to acquire wealth and escape poverty.

### **2.2.2 Urbanization**

The word urbanization is derived from “urbs” which is the Latin word for city. It means a population shift from rural to urban areas, and the ways in which society adapts to the change. In Igboland as well as in most African countries, social amenities like portable water, electricity, industries, job opportunities, entertainment centres, hospitals, good schools, good roads, good houses etc., more often than not, are available only in urban settings. In other words, most rural communities lack the barest minimum of social amenities. This sharp contrast between urban and rural settings means that opportunities are more in urban centres than in rural areas. However this doesn't in anyway mean that life in urban areas is easier than in rural areas. The major towns in Igboland include Enugu, Aba, Onitsha, Umuahia, Owerri, Abakiliki, Orlu and Okigwe.

Many young men and women, and at times the old as well, have migrated to the towns in search of better opportunities. Consequently, the populations of the big cities keep growing rapidly on daily basis whereas the reverse is the case in the villages. The high population density in the cities has led many to live in slums and ghettos. Congestions and other hazards of slums notwithstanding, they prefer making it anywhere instead of going back to their localities replete with social control through organized patterns of social sanctions and traditional religious system.

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<sup>210</sup> Achunike H.C., *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, Lagos: Rex Charles & Patrick Ltd, 2004, pp. 78-79

They appear to be averting the traditional societal norms which do not significantly operate in the towns while aspiring to anonymity which to a higher extent is the way of urbanization.<sup>211</sup>

There are lots of implications of these rapid urbanizations on the spread of the Gospel. Long ago, John Paul II remarks that the rapid and profound transformations which characterize today's world are having a powerful effect on the overall missionary picture. Where before there were stable human and social situations, today everything is in flux. One thinks, for example, of urbanization and the massive growth of cities, especially where demographic pressure is greatest. In not a few countries, over half the population already lives in a few "megalopolises," where human problems are often aggravated by the feeling of anonymity experienced by masses of people.<sup>212</sup> In actual fact, there is a great difference between the moral standard of life in rural areas and that of the urban centres. Rural areas are made up of small territory and small number of people. There is that chances of people knowing one another personally and intimately. The chances of people being closely related by kinship ties: by blood or marriage. There are also a mapped rules and regulations practically guiding every situation in life like childhood, adulthood, and childbirth that keep morality healthy. Unlike in rural areas where the life history of each person is known, the life of anonymity exists in the urban centres. No wonder Aristotle defines a city as a place where strangers meet. He dismissed the idea that either the physical size or populations define a "city".<sup>213</sup> Also Onyeneke agrees with Aristotle by identifying urbanization as a modernizing factor where many people who come from different backgrounds of upbringing live closely together as neighbours. They are not related by any bonds of kinship and they usually arrive at the town from different rural backgrounds. Passing contacts are what frequently occur among them, and they hardly share the same outlook to life. Because of the wide differences in backgrounds, their belief systems are not one but multiple and pluralistic.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Chigere N.H.M.V., *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland*, p. 329

<sup>212</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Vatican City, 1990, no.37

<sup>213</sup> Cox H., *The Secular City*, Mystic: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. XXXVII

<sup>214</sup> Onyeneke A., *African Traditional Institutions And The Christian Church: A Sociological Prologue to Christian Inculturation*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd., 1993, p. 26

This life of anonymity in urban areas has really contributed to the decadence of morality among our youths which manifests itself in carefree, premarital sex and its resultant unwanted pregnancies and abortions, drug and alcohol abuse etc. This great migration is causing an increasing number of people to leave their country of origin to live in urban settings, resulting in a meeting and mixing of cultures and contributing to the erosion of basic reference points to life, values and the very bonds through which people build their identity and come to know the meaning of life. Joined to the spread of secularization, this process causes a situation of extreme cultural liquidity, which increasingly leaves less room for long-standing traditions, including religious ones.<sup>215</sup> The above characterization of urban centres have made some people to see urbanization as the process by which one casts aside one's traditional way of life, and adopts a modern way of life. Some people have come back worse after living in the city centres. Therefore, many people in Igboland view the city with suspicion, and largely consider it as a place where anti-traditional ideas are incubated. Parents are always gripped with fear whenever any of their daughters moves away from them to live alone in the city. Such fears are mostly based on the tragic experiences of other parents whose daughters abused themselves in towns and ended up with either unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. S. Wegh made the following observations among the city dwellers in Nigeria:

Young men and women with employment aspirations spend day after day trying to meet relatives, and people who can help them find jobs. In the hectic search for employment, women do not forget their fashion. One must aim at coming out in the latest designs. Different hair-styles come into vogue and one must change from one hair-style to the next. All these cost money. Young women soon realize that they count on the financial support of the men so as to survive the city life. This leads to their initiation into a system of relationship with the men. This in turn creates a kind of economic opportunity for which the qualifications needed are not university degrees but physical attraction or good looks and the capacity to charm and captivate.

Some relations result in what has come to be known as the keeping of a woman. "Keeping a woman" is the practice whereby a rich man houses a girlfriend in some part of

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<sup>215</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *"The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no.55

the city away from his house. A woman housed in this way is treated almost like a housewife. Her house rent is paid, her house is furnished, and all other financial obligations are catered for. Her keeper, meanwhile, has in principle exclusive rights to her company. If the keeper is a married man, he takes care that his extra-marital affair is not known to his wife/wives.<sup>216</sup>

This is just one of the million cases among the happenings in the urban cities. Some in other to make the ends meet have ended with crimes such as advance fee fraud, armed robbery, kidnapping etc. The frustration that most youths experience in the city because of their inability to find good jobs do often turn into a crisis of faith for some of them.

All these evils associated with urbanization have adverse effects on our catechesis. So, a lot of our Christians after relocating to the city come back home to condemn some of the Christian doctrines they earlier believed as now archaic. No wonder some authors like Augustine Onyeneke associate urbanization with a high measure of secularism. Rules pertaining to institutions are differentiated autonomously and in a specialized way, for specific institutions and they are enforced by special functionaries and processes that hardly have any reference to religion. For, example, the sanction for breaking a traffic light regulation may be a prosecution by a designated police force, a trial in a type of court, a conviction that may attract a fine or an imprisonment. There will be hardly a question of demanding a religious sacrificial rite for the purification of the land.<sup>217</sup> If Aristotle's description of what constitutes a city is true, then the city cannot be either an entirely secular city or a completely sacred city. It must be a place where both the sacred and the profane jostle and interact. It cannot be mono-cultural. It must be where the music, philosophy, culture, art - and religious - also meet. All these features of city life affect and at times conflict with the Christian view of life as a sacred gift from God.

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<sup>216</sup> Wegh S.F., *Between Continuity and Chance: Tiv Concept of Tradition and Modernity*, Lagos: OVC Nigeria Limited, 1998, p. 114

<sup>217</sup> Onyeneke A., *African Traditional Institutions and the Christian Church: A Sociological Prologue to Christian Inculturation*, pp. 26-27

### 2.2.3 Nearness of Parishes in Urban Centres

A Parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (parochus) as its proper pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop.<sup>218</sup> The more the population of people increases; the more new parishes are built or carved out. There are more parishes in the cities than in the rural areas. This is because various pressures, such as poverty and the under-development of rural areas, deprived indispensable goods and services, as we have seen above under urbanization, force millions of people to leave behind their home and culture<sup>219</sup>, in search of greener pastures in the cities thereby causing the great cities to expand excessively. There is no gain saying that the smaller the parish; the easier it is for the priest in terms of managing it effectively and coming into close contact with the people of God under his care. This will help him in knowing his flock and imitating Christ who says I know my sheep and my sheep knows me (Jn. 10: 14). Also when a parish is close to the people, it offers them the opportunity of daily masses and private devotion. Children can easily walk into the parish compound without waiting for their parents to drive them or accompany them for their catechism classes. Some people like the writer have gotten their vocation to the priesthood by living very close to the parish house. Living very close to the parish house really helps one in living out his faith.

However, some of the parishes are so close to one another in urban parishes to the extent that the people of God have problem of choice. Some people have the possibility of attending masses in more than four or five parishes in a month, because these parishes are very close to them. In fact, they belong to many parishes and to no specific parish. They have no special attachment to any particular parish. This is always a problem especially when such people need a reference note from the parish or if death knocks at their door. It has really been a problem especially if the deceased had no contact with his domicile and home parish. Moreover, when parishes are close to one another, some Catholics would leave their supposed parishes and flock to a particular parish where the sacraments like baptism, confirmation or matrimony are very easy

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<sup>218</sup> Can. 515 § 1

<sup>219</sup> *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1999, no.8

to obtain. We are in a generation of fast food and people not only look for fast food but also for fast sacraments. They attend church where the celebration of the Holy Mass on Sunday lasts for shorter duration of time like one hour or 45 minutes. More still, those living near houses of formation like seminary or convent will leave their parish on Sundays and attend Mass in these houses of formation forgetting that there are homilies for different vocations. When such attitude becomes habitual, those involved begin to lack information about the happenings in the diocese or their domicile parish.

At times, parishes when they are very close to each other develop unhealthy competition and imitation among themselves. For example, nowadays people prefer early Sunday Masses like 4:30 am or 5:00am without any cogent reason. Without such early Sunday - Masses a parish will lose many of her members to the nearby parish. We have to understand that before the Vatican II early Sunday - Mass was in vogue for the following reasons: (a) If a person wanted to go to Holy Communion they had to have fasted from midnight. Many attended early Sunday - Mass to avoid the temptation of breaking their fast before the Holy Communion. (b) In the 1950's Pope Pius XII introduced a much more lenient form of fasting before Holy Communion in order to give Catholics opportunity to receive Holy Communion more frequently. (c) Pope Pius XII also allowed the celebration of afternoon and evening Masses every day, when the spiritual good of a considerable number of the faithful requires it. It is the right of the bishop of each diocese to decide when such Masses may be offered in his diocese. (d) Paul VI reduced the fasting requirement after the Second Vatican Council, requiring only a one hour fast from all food and drink (excluding water). This may be reduced to 15 minutes for those who are sick or for other important reasons. This is the practice currently in force.<sup>220</sup> How would one explain this passion for early Sunday Mass? Some people in order to meet up with the time attend it without taking their bath or brushing their teeth. Some have encountered armed robbers on their way to these early Sunday Masses like the father of the writer.

Furthermore, every parish has a Patron Saint just like every Religious Congregation. Normally every parish or congregation ought to imitate the footsteps of their patron saint.

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<sup>220</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/faith/teachings/euchb2a.htm>

However, when parishes are close to each other; they engage themselves in an unhealthy competition trying to imitate each other. This is not totally bad in itself but it is like running well but outside the track. This is usually noticeable when a parish is very close to another parish where the priest's colleague engages in prayer ministry. There is always a tendency for competition and unhealthy imitation since one priest might deem it necessary to pray and do like the other in order to retain his congregation. But we have to know that there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men (1Cor. 12: 4-6).

### 2.3 Challenges from Some conflicting Igbo Cultural Beliefs and Practices

It was Paul VI who pointed out that the split between the Gospel and culture is without doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times.<sup>221</sup> This attitude of deep attachment to culture that is common to many Nigerians, has been one of the major challenges to authentic evangelization in Nigeria today, and has contributed in no little measure to poor understanding and attitude of many to evangelization and Christianity as a whole.<sup>222</sup> The incessant confrontation of Igbo traditional religious elements and Christianity in many parts of Igboland today (Onitsha, Awka, Obosi, Okija, Nsukka, Abakaliki, etc.), as well as in the lives of a good number of the 80% baptized Igbo Christians confirms the above statements. There have been unleashed new tensions and crises on the contemporary Igbo religious scene. Against such a background, any sweeping generalization on the authenticity of religious in Igboland today, could only but passed as a gratuitous assertion. The conflict between the traditional religion and Christianity is far from being over. Open strives erupt now and again in places as a result of the crisis of encounter between the two religions. For example, at Awka the membership of a major Christian group was torn into two warring factions over a traditional ritual practice connected with marriage known as 'Okuko onye uwa'; at Ede-Oballa in the Nsukka area (the home diocese of the writer), it was the

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<sup>221</sup> Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.20

<sup>222</sup> Felix A.O.M., *The Nigeria Army and Evangelization in Nigeria*, McDon Publishers, 2012, p. 57

Omaba masquerade and the practices connected with it which triggered off the acrimony. Like incidents could be multiplied in hundreds from various parts of Igboland.<sup>223</sup> The existence of the Igbo Cultural Beliefs and Practices that militates against effective catechesis and put the Igbo Christianity at a crossroad is a pervasive reality. These Cultural Beliefs and Practices are so deep that they have much influence on the lives of some of the Igbo Christians after they have become Christians. We can say without mincing words that Christian faith has never taken root in the real life and thinking of many of Christians in Igboland. On this issue, Chukwudum Okolo observes with utter dismay that:

Many, if not most, countries in Africa, including Nigeria, even nearer home, Igboland, have triumphantly celebrated at least one hundred years of Christian evangelism on the continent. But what has often equally baffled scholars in African missiology is the constant backsliding of the so-called African converts and long practicing Christians to 'Paganism'<sup>224</sup>, more appropriately tagged 'traditional religious ways and culture'. What this means in practice is lack of conviction of the new faith (Christianity) among African Christians, perhaps other Christians today are simply nominal Christians.<sup>225</sup>

The above problem is not unassociated with culture which signifies a body of shared values and meanings embodied in symbols and thought patterns and inherited by a given people through history. It is a comprehensive reality with different elements through which every people

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<sup>223</sup> Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat, Onitsha*: Tansi Publication, 2004, p. 152

<sup>224</sup> 'Paganism' seems to be the oldest and most common name used to describe the religion of the so-called "Primitive People". This word, too, is of Latin origin, Paganus. It originally meant a village dweller or a country man, a person who lives a way from the city or urbanized community. The fact that evangelization first took off in most places in the cities made it a domestic Christian terminology to describe the non - Christian village as a pagan. It must be observed here that paganism has a specific Christian connotation, because the Christian does not always call a Moslem a pagan to mean a non - Christian. Therefore, paganism, often used to imply than an African traditional religionist had no religion is a misnomer, just as it is to describe his religion. See Onwubiko A.O, *African Thought, Religion & Culture*, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1991, p.64

<sup>225</sup> Okolo C., *African Traditional Religion and Christianity: The Neglected Dimension*, Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1995, p. 2

articulate their identity, express and perpetuate their values from one generation to another.<sup>226</sup> It is quite clear that culture is the way of life of a people. The way they think and behave. There are people that are so attached to their culture to the extent that everywhere they are; they manifest their attachment to their culture. For instance, the Chinese people eat in their restaurants with sticks and are also attached to their language to the extent that speaking any other language is always difficult if not impossible for them. So also many Igbo people are so deeply rooted in their culture and the easiest way to influence them or make them accept certain ideas is to wrap them in the cloak or wrapper of their culture.

Urbanization and Western education more than anything else, have had the most eroding effects on the grip of traditional African beliefs but many aspects of Igbo traditional religion have survived these agents of change. Many worldly aspects of African religions like, pouring libation to the ancestors, beliefs in magic and witchcraft, and some rituals like the naming, marriage, and funeral ceremonies have survived in some areas, even among the urbanized. While there is a resurgence of interest in traditional religions and culture among the elite, some Christians now apply and are admitted to the traditional chieftaincy title-societies. Communities of traditional religion still exist in some areas, and from time to time are joined by backsliders from ... Christianity.<sup>227</sup> Some of the Igbo Cultural Beliefs and Practices will be outlined and analyzed below.

### **2.3.1 Ancestral and spiritual problems**

The ancestors rank among the most benign spiritual beings of the Igbo traditional cosmology. They are the spirits of the good men of any particular lineage who departed this life after a fruitful sojourn, blessed with age, and have been accorded the full traditional funeral rites (final passage rites). Although, their resting place is in the under-world, they are thought to form one community with their physically living members on earth. In their dual role as members of the supersensible domain and the physical world, the ancestors act as active mediators between the two orders in which they share. And the provenance of their interest stretches to anything that

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<sup>226</sup> Omutah E. P., *From Vatican II to African Synod*, Vatican City, 2009, p. 54

<sup>227</sup> Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p. XIV-XVI

is of concern to their living members, particularly to the social harmony, maintenance of the tradition of the land and the moral code.<sup>228</sup> In Igboland, the ancestors are believed to be aware of everything that happens to an individual or to the community of which they once existed from the land of the dead. They are believed to have a duty to look after their families and protect them from evil. In their capacities, the ancestors can reward their family members with abundant rainfall, crops, children and general prosperity. It is also believed that they can intercede for their family members like the saints intercede for us in the Catholic Church.

The observation of T.C. Young regarding the place of ancestors in Africa Indigenous religion is particularly true of the Igbo people. No approach to any appreciation of indigenous ideas regarding God can take any part but that through the thought area occupied by the ancestors. To Africans life -from day to day - has no meaning at all apart from ancestral presence and ancestral power”.<sup>229</sup> They occupy an important position in the lives of the Igbo people. Mbiti described them as “the living dead”.<sup>230</sup> As Eriwo has observed: “Like divinities, they are believed to be serving as ministers of deity, and are approached for various blessings: blessing of wealth, health, children and fertility of the land as well as blessing of longevity.”<sup>231</sup> The ancestors were not adored in the proper sense of the word but special cults were reserved to ask for their aid or to complain of the inadequacy of their protection. To be in enmity with the ancestors is a sign that the individual concerned is already on his way to doom. This is the belief of every traditional religionist in Africa as well as in Igboland Nigeria.

It is therefore not surprising that some Igbo Christians have attributed their successes and failures to the ancestors. These Christians like the Igbo traditional religionist believe that ancestors play pivotal role in the lives of earthly progenies. Ancestors are considered “organic

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<sup>228</sup> Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p.140

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. p. 27

<sup>230</sup> Mbiti J., *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann,1969, p. 9

<sup>231</sup> Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 27

members of the community of the living.”<sup>232</sup> Residing in the realm of the supernatural, it is believed that they protect their progenies on earth against the intrusions and machinations of evil spirits or their agents. As Onwuejeogwu explains, there is this belief that: “Alusi (spirits/spiritual forces) ... always intrudes into the lives of the members of the lineage, but the extent of their success depends on the pleasure of the dead members.”<sup>233</sup> Conversely put, satisfied ancestors endeavor to ensure protection for their earthly families, while the offended ones cease to exercise this function. For such Christians, there is no effect without a cause. Almost every misfortune is believed to be as a result of repercussion in the family line or ancestry. This belief has pulled many Christians back to African traditional religion. There are still other Christians who believe in this ancestral curse but have not given up their faith. This group of Christians, especially the members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, supports this idea and propagates what they call “Healing the Family Root, Healing the Family Tree or Generation Healing.”<sup>234</sup> They make their point of reference to the book of Exodus where it states that: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation." (Ex. 34:6-7). In any case, this is an offshoot of Protestant teachings that has inter-mingled in the Charismatic Movement of the Catholic Church. For the advocates of this group, certain prayers are necessary to "break the generational curses" or bad inheritances such as a private Mass or Masses celebrated for one's intentions, or for the healing of any possible bondages afflicting the body, mind or spirit of any family members,

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<sup>232</sup> Zahan D., “The Religion, Spirituality and Thoughts of Traditional Africa”, in Korieh C. J. and Nwokeji G.U., (eds.), *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu*, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005, p. 17

<sup>233</sup> Onwuejeogwu M.A., “The Igbo Culture Area,” in: Korieh C. J., and Nwokeji G.U., (eds.), *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu*, p. 17

<sup>234</sup> This promotes the belief that there is a necessity to heal the family tree based on the alleged "too many cases" where recurring problems such as divorce, alcoholism, financial problems, accidents, run in families. When a person dies, it is believed that his/her spirits who caused such problems or natural spiritual tendencies or inclinations are passed on to the descendants. In other words, it is believed that children are adversely affected by the sins of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, who were also affected by the sins of their ancestors. Cf. <http://www.catholicdoors.com/isit/isit12.htm>

living or dead (and also for the prevention of disorders in future family members who do not yet even exist), will heal the family tree.

There is nothing in Catholic teachings to support the so-called “Generational Healing” but there is plenty to support that this belief is nothing more than Igbo concept of ancestral worship in relation to retribution and curses. What are the consequences if this belief is accepted? If we are to accept that "Generational Healing" is necessary because the evil spirits of the ancestors are passed on to their descendants, then we must reject the Sacrament of Baptism as administered in the Catholic Church. Perhaps, the insistence on the persistence of ancestral curses in a baptized catholic is an indirect way to pass vote of no confidence on the validity of the Exorcisms that take place during the Sacrament of Baptism. It is either that the baptized believer is freed from all evil spirits, be they "generational" or not, through the administered Exorcisms during the Sacrament of Baptism or he is not! Both beliefs cannot be true and upheld by the same person because they oppose one another, "Generational Healing” opposes the Sacrament of Baptism!

Furthermore, to accept "Generational Healing" as being truthful, is tantamount to claiming that man does not enjoy a free will. If a person is possessed by evil spirits because of the sins of his ancestors, logically, he cannot be held accountable for the actions of his sinful nature. In other words, “the devil made him do it”. Since he can no longer be responsible for his sins because of the alleged generational possessions, then he no longer needs the Sacrament of Confession. In order for one to be guilty of a sin, he must have the free will to do evil. In the case of possession, one does not have control of his actions; therefore, he does not have a free will.<sup>235</sup> There seems to be no better way to describe this “Generational Healing” belief than to classify it as a misinterpretation of Exodus 34: 6-7 which we have pointed out earlier.

### **2.3.2 Male Child in Igboland**

In the creation account, we are made to understand that human being is created "in the image and likeness of God" (cf. Gen 1:26). This expression immediately makes clear what is

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<sup>235</sup> Cf. <http://www.catholicdoors.com/isit/isit12.htm>

distinct about the human being with regard to the rest of creation. It also shows the equality of man and woman before God. Reading further we are then told that, from the very beginning man has been created "male and female" (Gen 1:27). After creating man male and female, God says to both: "Fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). Not only does he give them the power to procreate as a means of perpetuating the human species throughout time, he also gives them the earth, charging them with the responsible use of its resources. Therefore, man and woman alike share equal responsibility from the start. In their fruitful relationship as husband and wife, in their common task of exercising dominion over the earth, woman and man are marked neither by a static and undifferentiated equality nor by an irreconcilable and inexorably conflicting difference. In fact, their most natural relationship, which corresponds to the plan of God, is the "unity of the two", a relational "uni-duality", which enables each to experience their interpersonal and reciprocal relationship as a gift which enriches and which confers responsibility. To this "unity of the two" God has entrusted not only the work of procreation and family life, but the creation of history itself.<sup>236</sup> However, the way women are being segregated against and underrated in Igboland, baffles anyone who has come across these passages of the bible. In the traditional Igbo society, there are many areas that are out of bounds for women, like climbing trees, watching masquerade, eating certain animals etc.

This segregation extends even to the world of the ancestors, the resting place of the traditional Igbos who lived a virtuous life while they were alive. It must be clear that the cult of ancestors outlines appropriate rites for contact with the spirit world. This explains why they are believed to be part of the family and throws light on why Mbiti calls the ancestors, the "Living dead". The cult of ancestors does not represent entirely nor replace religion in Africa. The ancestors, as spirits, are believed to be present in the family in a number of ways, at times, as physically reincarnated members.<sup>237</sup> This exclusion of women explains why taking titles like 'Ozo' and 'Nze', which is a pre-requisite for anyone to be elevated to the rank of ancestor, are exclusively men's affair. The exclusion of women among the ancestors necessitates such

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<sup>236</sup> John Paul II., *Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995, nos.7-8

<sup>237</sup> Onwubiko A.O., *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, p. 61

questions like: where are our dead virtuous women? This issue helps us to understand why, even in this our modern age where gender equality is the talk of the day; it is still “unusual, among Africans (Igbos), to take into account the opinions of women in any given debate. African (Igbo) women traditionally had the function of producing children, looking after the kitchen and doing the farm work. They were not considered capable of producing ideas that would shape the future of the community except as a pressure group but not as an intellectual position as in the case of the Umuada/Umuokpu in Igboland.”<sup>238</sup>

The Igbo disregard for women largely accounts also for the preference of male to female children even among the Igbo Christians. This is because only the male children in Igboland have the right of inheritance. As important as child bearing is, one often hears: “boys are house - pillars and girls are like butter flies”. A male child is considered as the foundation of the family. The male child is needed for the continuation of the family name and history. Girls are butterfly because they get married to men of other lineages. Thus, the questions are: Who will take my name? Who will remember me when I am gone?<sup>239</sup> Male Issues continue to perpetuate the family name while female issues take up their husband’s family name after marriage. Gregory Adibe describes the position of male issue in Igboland as follows: "They (Igbo) regard male issue as the most important factor in marriage union for perpetuating the family name. Without a male issue, husband and wife are looked upon as unfortunate. They get on their daily activities in cold-feet. Thus in quest for a male issue they can resort to anything the culture permits because a man without a male issue will not be accepted in the land of the ancestors when he dies.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Mbefo L.N., *The True African: Impulses for Self-Affirmation*, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 2001, p. 5

<sup>239</sup> 2010 Catechetical Week Programme, “Syncretism: A Challenge to the Christian Faith”, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2010, p. 12

<sup>240</sup> Adibe G.E.M., *The Crisis of Faith and Morality of the Igbo Christians of Nigeria*, Onitsha: Tabansi Press Ltd., 1992, p. 22

A visit to the Eucharistic adoration grounds or some of the herbalist homes or medicine men will show us what many women who are looking for male issue pass through in Igboland. Simon Anyanwu paints a picture of such agonizing couples thus:

The physical pressure and mental agony associated with it (lack of male child) are usually more on the wives but no less real upon husbands who feel threatened by a sunset of their lineage in the absence of children of their own to hand over the family baton. There is often in such circumstances the proximate temptation for women in such predicaments to begin to go up and down to places ranging from orthodox and unorthodox prayer houses to herbalist homes and medicine men, to reach out to whoever comes their way and dangles a perceived remedy; be it genuine or ingenuine, licit or illicit, including toying with the horrible idea of marital infidelity.<sup>241</sup>

Women usually bear the blame especially if the male child comes not immediately as expected. They are blamed as if they have any control in determining the sex of the child. Even in this our generation, there is a clear preference for male children even among the so called enlightened men. In fact, it is an indisputable fact that both in the traditional and contemporary Igbo society, women are more often than not blamed almost exclusively for lack of male issue in their marriages. Every married woman therefore makes very serious effort not only to have a child but a male child; otherwise his husband will most probably marry a second wife. In cases where the couples are blessed only with female children, the wives are frequently compelled to put up with many pregnancies in their quest for a male issue. Some women have died in the process while other have ended up producing ten or more female children. There have been many cases of women whose husbands refused to put up appearances at the maternity to visit his wife and new baby after the delivery of their sixth child that turned out to be another girl. Lack of male issue among the couples has made some men to get entangled with extra marital relations or embrace polygamy just to get a male child. The latest development is that some married men who are desperate to get a male child have started getting involved in a secret polygamy. In such a case, a man can have a second wife without the knowledge of his first wife. The second marriage

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<sup>241</sup> Anyanwu S.O., *Igbo Catholicism on the Move: Pangs of Growth and Signs of Vitality*, Okigwe: Whytem Prints Nigeria, 2006, p. 101

is secretly contracted and the second wife may not appear in public with the man until much later in life. In some cases, she only surfaces when the husband dies. Worthy of mention also, are the many husbands who are so rich without a male child who always experience sleepless night when they are old. They always think of how their relations will struggle over their hard-earned property when they die. Some have developed unwarranted sickness like depression or ulcer which has led to their untimely death. It is pertinent to mention that high level of illiteracy in Nigeria has also aggravated the negative perception of lack of male children in marriages. Lack of knowledge and cultural bias has also hindered many couples who need male child from adopting them since male children are available for adoption for those who care.

### **2.3.3 The Agony of the Childless Couples**

An Igbo adage says that if the living trees were roughly uprooted, imagine what would befall dry ones. In the context of our discussion, this proverb can mean that if the couples with only female children are the mockery of the society, then the humiliation of the childless couples would be unimaginable. In fact “the supreme purpose of marriage for the African people as well as the Igbos is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life and hand down the living torch of human existence. The most fundamental of all these is fecundity. Lack of children endangers the life of the community, its security and its future”.<sup>242</sup> The travail of the childless couples in African culture as well as in Igboland Nigeria is so traumatic. For the Igbos children are so important that they constitute the uniting link in the rhythm of life - guaranteeing the continuation of the family lineage. Therefore to be born in Igboland means that you are expected also to give birth and contribute to the survival of your society. This accounts for the reason why fruitfulness in Marriage is measured almost exclusively in terms of children. In fact, childlessness is considered a curse among the Igbos as it hits at the very root of the traditional primary value which is life, which every person having received, is obliged to transmit and thus ensure its physical continuity.<sup>243</sup> To die childless is totally to be forgotten by the living as well as the dead. John Paul II during one of his homilies in Igboland prayed for childless couples while remarking

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<sup>242</sup> 2010 Catechetical Week Programme, “*Syncretism: A Challenge to the Christian Faith*”, p. 12

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 144

that: “I know that in your country the childless couple bears a heavy cross, one that has to be borne with courage all through life.”<sup>244</sup> His observation is very correct. Childless couples expend a lot of resources in their search for a child. They may have to go through the motions of consulting a spiritualist, an herbalist, an orthodox doctor, etc. and in some cases without the desired result. Oddly enough, they engage in ritual activities to deities and divinities who they feel are responsible for, or could help them out of their plight. In a bid to have a child of their own, couples backslide in the Church and get initiated in occultism.<sup>245</sup> Accordingly, the Daily Post Newspaper narrates the ordeal of a woman desperate to have a child:

I’m middle - aged woman.... I’m a member of one of the new generation churches, and a church worker. After my first son was born over 25 years ago, we stopped having other issues. My husband and I had visited several prayer houses around the country... Different Pastors have prayed for us, and we truthfully exhibited high level of patience, waiting for God’s response. I had met pastors and I had met PASTORS. 40 percent of the pastors we met had made advances at me, even at my age....

After several rough dealings with Pastors and men of God, with little or no results, we tried different health experts and hospitals. Result remained negative. It was getting to frustrating level when a colleague from Cross River volunteered to take me to a man she simply referred to as ‘baba’. Being a strong believer, my husband was against the decision to travel to Ogoja to meet the man; out of desperation, I waved off his objection and we headed to Ogoja on a Monday morning. That was when everything became bitter.

Baba, on presenting everything he asked us to bring, told me that my problem rooted back to my mum, who had sex with my step brother shortly after I was born. The only solution he proffered was that I ‘sleep’ with my only Son to wade off the spirit of my step brother whom he claimed died shortly after mum’s death. According to him, the spirits were still angry that mum committed such an atrocity, hence I must atone their sins. It was believable to me because mum is no more and I had I also lost my step brother at a time.

I returned home and kept this a top secret. I didn’t tell my husband the real problem. It’s difficult to explain how I managed to convince my son to have knowledge of me, but it

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<sup>244</sup> Papal Messages to Nigeria: *A collection of Speeches Delivered* by His Holiness Pope John II on the Occasion of His visit to Nigeria, 12<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1982, p. 12

<sup>245</sup> Kemdirim P.O., “*Towards a Positive Vision for Childless Couples in the African Church: A Post - Synodal Issue*”, p. 142

happened. Truly, I became pregnant after then and I'm about to put to bed. I'm just afraid something bad may happen to me.

As for my son, he hates me at the moment. Even in my present state, my husband and I are always at loggerheads. It tells me that something is wrong. I always have nightmares; most times, two men chasing me with a knife. I can't connect my pregnancy, the dream and my act. Please, Daily Post, I need you to get public responses and advice for me on this?<sup>246</sup>

This is one out of a million traumatic stories of what people pass through just to get a child or children of their own. If a woman who has a 25-year-old son can surrender to such a horrible mess, I leave it to everybody's imagination the extent of immoral acts that childless couples can subject themselves. In fact, the greatest fear of the childless couple is that there is no one to take after their family name or inherit their property when they die. In the African world, anyone who dies without leaving behind a child or close relative to remember him or pour libation for him is a very unfortunate person.<sup>247</sup> Till today making a choice for celibacy in African setting as well as in Igboland is regarded as madness and a costly joke for the traditionalist as well as some of our Christians, from which even Catholics are not exempt.

### **2.3.4 The Agony of a Childless Widow**

When there is a problem of childlessness in the family, as we have already noted, women are always blamed while men are exonerated. The situation is such that: "The women are always the object of discussion, ridicule, and gossip within the vicinity especially among the womenfolk. They deride her, call her names, and wonder aloud why she has not gone back to her place of birth. If the woman ever beats or scolds other women's children, she is told it is because she has not experienced the pains of childbirth".<sup>248</sup> In the course of this research work, the writer visited a hospital where many childless-couples are coming to conduct fertility test. The shocking

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<sup>246</sup> Daily Post Newspaper, May 9, 2015

<sup>247</sup> Mbiti J.S, *Introduction to African Religion*, London: Heinemann, 1975, p. 105.

<sup>248</sup> Kemdirim P.O., "Towards a Positive Vision for Childless Couples in the African Church: A Post - Synodal Issue", pp. 141- 142

discovery was that the medical laboratory results showed that in about 90% of childlessness in the couples examined, men were responsible for the problem. These included cases ranging from low sperm count, to infection of one virus or bacteria. This betrays the level that Igbo people are still operating. African societies are largely populated with people with parochial and poor educational background. Phenomena like low sperm counts or infertility sounds like fairy tale to most of them. The worse is that even when the problems are medically diagnosed, some Africans, for no just cause other than mere superstition and ignorance, would still not believe the doctor's report.

The real plight of the majority of the childless wives begins immediately the husband dies. With the death of their husbands, widows are often faced with suffering, deprivation, discrimination, humiliation, rejection, abuse and injustices of the highest order. Worst still, is the subjugation and inhuman traditional or cultural practices against women during the so called widowhood rites.<sup>249</sup> The first sympathy package from her brothers - and sisters - in- laws is to ask her to surrender the bank documents of her deceased husband. The life of such a widow is always in danger if she refuses to comply. A lot of them have lost their lives in the process of trying to safeguard their husband's property. The place of the childless widow in the conflict is best located within the larger picture of women in Igbo traditional society. In the traditional society, widows are subjected to all kinds of dehumanizing and agonizing conditions. A widow returns to statusless situation at the death of her husband. She is once more a "nobody" especially if she has no child of her own and in some cases, the property of the dead husband is also taken by the brother if the dead man had no son<sup>250</sup> or the children happened to be too small. In fact, violence against widows is both complex and countless. For instance in a newspaper report of Sunday Sun Newspaper of 18th March, 2012 captioned: "The plight of widows in a village in Nsukka Local Government Area" (which is in Enugu State in Igboland-Nigeria), it was reported that "a group of youths raped old widows and that the suspects regained their freedom few hours after

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<sup>249</sup> 2010 Catechetical Week Programme, "Syncretism: A Challenge to the Christian Faith", p. 12

<sup>250</sup> The writer witnessed this at Ede-Oballa Parish where he worked as Assistant Parish Priest. We had to consult a woman Barrister who helped this widow to reclaim her husband's assets.

arrest.”<sup>251</sup> If the widows had grown - up children, the matter would have taken a different shape. This is just one case among numerous cases of documented and undocumented cases of abuse of widows with impunity which is widespread and persistent all over the Igbo society especially in rural settings.

There have been cases of some widows who were returned back to their parents after the death of their husband simply because they were barren. Some of these widows took care of their husbands while bedridden for several years only to be sent home as soon as their husbands gave up the ghost. There are some who are practically punished as if they were responsible for the death of their husband. Some have been forced to drink the unsafe water used in washing their dead husband as way of exonerating themselves from the accusation that they were responsible for the death of their husband. Some shave off all the hair on their head, compelled to wear black and shabby clothes for a whole year, banned from applying cosmetics like make-ups, or must go around carrying blunt cutlass. They are confined for weeks without association and integration with other people. In some areas, they are not free to change their cloths or plait their hair. Apart from stress of seclusion and loneliness, they suffer severely at the hands of Umuada. The Umuada would perform the ritual cleansing on a widow by taking her at midnight to a stream, strip her naked and shave all the parts of her body. Besides, some are forced to continue bearing children for the late husband.<sup>252</sup> Some widows abandoned everything for the sake of their life and that of the children. In fact, “it is already a misfortune to lose a husband, but in most Nigeria cultural settings, it is a double misfortune, such that some women wish to die before their husbands. This is because they are subjected to all kinds of inhuman conditions, all in the name of tradition”.<sup>253</sup> In few cases, the church has actively intervened to rescue some suffering Catholic widows through the help of the Justice and Peace Commission in the various dioceses.

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<sup>251</sup> Eze E.N., “*Women’s Right and Succession to Estate in Nigeria*”, in Ochada P.C., (ed.), *Anniversary Journal Rev. Fr. Hyginus Eke: Selected Contemporary Issues And Challenges in Theology, Medicine, Law, Sociology and Education*, p. 119

<sup>252</sup> Udoye E.A, *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation*, Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2011, pp. 203-204

<sup>253</sup> Odoeme P., *Human Rights and the Mission of the Church in Nigeria*, Berlin: Lit Verlag Dr. W. Hopf, 2013, P.86

But such interventions are quite rare. The Church needs to help the world to realize the vision of John Paul II that: "We must understand that in creating the human race 'male and female'; God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person".<sup>254</sup> The Synod deplored those African customs and practices "which deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them" and asked the Church in the continent to make every effort to foster the safeguarding of these rights.<sup>255</sup> The safeguarding of the rights of the widows is yet to be practically realized in Igboland-Nigeria.

### **2.3.5 Burial and Funeral Ceremonies among the Igbos**

The problems associated with burial and funeral ceremonies in Igboland have been a perennial one. The occasion of burial and funeral ceremonies is a moment of decision for every Christian in Igboland to prove his Christianity. Many people are treated like lepers simply because they maintained the Church's way of burial and funeral ceremonies. Some gave up their Christian faith in order not to sever the cordial social relationship with their clans. Some have even lost their lives in an attempt to defend their faith. There have been cases of conflicts or violence between Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religion some of which ended up with the loss of lives. We wish to cite here, among many cases, the conflict that arose in connection with the pre-Christian custom of Nanka people which forbids its widows from assisting at the ceremonies preceding the burial of their husbands.

At Nanka, an otherwise insignificant village known for its endemic erosion and acclaimed healing springs, a Christian (Mr. Reuben Ikeanibe of Agbiligba village, Nanka) left instructions that at his death his wife (Marcellina Ikeanibe) should not be bound by the pre-Christian taboos connected with the widow. Supported by a group of equally committed Christians, the wife was present at every moment of the burial rites. Another group of Christians equally committed to the directives emanating from Omenala (i.e. tradition), the tradition of the land, implemented the sanctions attached to its contravention. This later group dug up the corpse and reburied it in ajo ofia, the "bad Bush" reserved for such an abomination. A violent conflict ensued in which a man (Augustine Eze from Ohom Oba,

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<sup>254</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio*, 22 November 1981, no.22

<sup>255</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14 September 1995, no. 82

Nsukka from Enugu State) and a woman (Scholastica Ebele Nnolim from Oko in Anambra state) were shot (on 23rd February 1993) [and both of them died] and a great number of others were seriously wounded (during a solidarity faith procession to the controversial burial).<sup>256</sup>

This is just one case among thousands of cases. The controversy lingered for many years and divided the community into bitter camps of which many Christians belonged to opposing and conflicting parties.

In the Igbo traditional Society, there are ways burials and funeral ceremonies are conducted. It is done according to the age and status of the person who died and the way he died. For one to merit a good burial, one must have died naturally through recognized and accepted death-causing agents. Unnatural death is one that occurs through small pox, thunder, leprosy, child bearing, or by suicide. These do not merit the grave or funeral, but the corpses of such people are thrown into the “evil” forest to rot away.<sup>257</sup> That people still cling to such belief and tradition now, despite the scientific age is an issue awaiting clarification. Yet, many of our Christians associate themselves with such belief and tradition. The writer had an encounter with some of them who tried to show him that they know the bible more than biblical scholars by telling him that one should, “Give to Caesar, what belongs to Caesar, and to God, what belongs to God” (Matt 22:21). But one may ask, who is Caesar? Is he a synonym for the devil? What actually belongs to Caesar? Those people could not answer any of those questions. All they know is that Caesar must be given all that belongs to him as and when due. But Psalm 24:1 makes it clear that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Caesar should not be a justification for sin, immorality or syncretism. However, for these Christians, the devil (symbolized by Caesar in this case), as it were, should be given the worship that is "due" to him. Any wonder that many weak Christians have tended to justify their lapses and backsliding with

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<sup>256</sup> Mbefo L., “The Nanka Martyrs: the Shadow Side of Inculturation”, *Beyond Frontiers*, Enugu, Vol.6 No.1, 1993, p.15f

<sup>257</sup> Adibe G.E.M., *The Crisis of Faith and Morality of the Igbo Christians of Nigeria*, p. 24

this expression? This clearly is a gross misrepresentation of the gospel. Surely Jesus couldn't have sanctioned idolatry in any shape or form.

In some parts of Africa as well as in Igboland, the Children of the deceased are expected to hold dignified, respectful and sometimes costly burial celebrations. Burial in Igboland is a costly adventure, especially for someone believed to have lived good (where goodness means financially buoyant) life . If there is not enough resource to foot the bill, the burial is delayed indefinitely until such cost could be executed. There have been instances of corpses which stayed up to one year in the mortuary simply because the relations of the deceased were looking for money to execute burial show off! This is the so-called “second burial” deriving from possible missionary misunderstanding of the intrigues in a typical traditional African burial. Oliver Onwubiko gives an insightful clarification on the so-called Second Burial:

It is important to note that what is called Second Burial; we prefer to call the “final funeral ceremonies and festivities”. And therefore the final funeral ceremonies and festivities are not accorded to everyone. The following conditions, among others must be fulfilled: the deceased must have achieved his purpose in life, and this according to Igbo standards, is that he must have married a wife or wives and must have had children responsible enough to continue his family lineage. He must have lead a good and exemplary life, lived to some good old age and taken some traditional titles, and must have performed the final funeral ceremonies for his own dead father; securing the continuity of his family and its stability. His death must be accepted as Onwu Chi, [that is, natural death] and above all he must not be an Osu nor an Ohu.<sup>258</sup>

For the adherents of the African Traditional Religion, the dead is being accompanied by music and dance, and transported to the ancestors with canon shots and drum beats to the netherworld. By the noise of merry-making, his predecessors are alerted of his coming. It is for them to receive him into the assembly of the ancestors. Where this ceremony is not held, the dead

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<sup>258</sup> Onwubiko O.A., *Facing the Osu Issue in the African Synod: A Personal Response*, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1993, pp. 67-68

man goes half-way and would have to come back in visions as ghosts to disturb the living until such a time as they complete the send-off ceremony.<sup>259</sup> The living relatives of the deceased show their faith in the traditional religion by fulfilling all the religious demands for the dead. However, some of these traditional funeral rites are not in accordance with our Christian doctrine.

Refusal to comply with these burial traditions have led to some Christians (including the Mother of the writer) being ostracized from their society, until full compliance has been enforced. It is really incredible that many of our Christians fully endorse the traditional ways of burial and funeral ceremonies of the Igbo traditionalist, and even go the extra miles of borrowing money to meet up with the demands of such funeral ceremonies. Some, who are not courageous enough, try to get a relation who will stand in for them and perform the rituals on their behalf. Many of our Christians who have not given such elaborate funeral ceremonies to their dead parents are always gripped with fear of the unknown. They always live in fear and associate any misfortune that comes their way to their dead parents that have not received befitting burial.

### **2.3.6 The Caste System of Pawn, Ohu and Osu in Igboland**

This is a system of class discrimination which incorporates the belief that a class of people is to be disinherited and excluded from all association with others either because they are victims of ritual offering or are descended from such people. This system has its origin in the unholy religious culture of the Igbo people which used human beings for ritual sacrifice. The problem here is that even after the idols to which the people were dedicated to have been displaced by Christianity (to which about 85% of the people now belong), the caste system still resists all efforts made so far to stamp it out. The mere mention of the word Osu/Ohu in Igboland instills fear into both the freeborn and the Osu/Ohu themselves. The name causes a stir and discomfort and truly creates an atmosphere of suspicion or despair, pride or jealousy. The word “Osu/Ohu” is surrounded with an aura of the unholy and is usually mentioned in a whisper. Among those discussing or arguing, one may not know who is Osu or Ohu and who is not, since they are not physically different from the rest of their brothers and sisters in the environment in which they

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<sup>259</sup> Mbefo L.N., *The true African: Impulses for Self-Affirmation*, p. 39

live. Consequently, people are usually cautious to be careful when discussing an issue involving the use of the word.

In the course of this research, the writer found it very difficult to interview people. Those who opened up did so under confidentiality and anonymity. We discovered that the issue of Osu/Ohu caste system, though no more active as before, is not yet totally wiped out. Christianity has really brought enlightenment among the Igbo people but there are still people including our so-called Christians who do not accept that we are all created equal in the image and likeness of God. It is clearly observable in the issue of marriage where parents will not allow their sons or daughters to marry an Osu/Ohu. For such people Osu/Ohu are seen as second class citizens and they are treated as such most often. A. O. Gbuji reacting to the implication of such divisions among Christians (of which Osu/Ohu Priests are not spared) says:

A serious impediment to God's mission of reconciliation in our time is not only the reality of destructive divisions and conflicts around the world, but also quite often the Church being caught up in these conflicts... It is scandalous that after many years of evangelization in our diocese that there are still places where the blood of ethnicity, tribalism, racialism, gender, caste, social class or mere friendship flow stronger than the waters of baptism and our confession of Christ... We experience today, divisions on the basis of origin and the persistence of son of the soil syndrome. Ethnicity, tribalism and clannish mentality and unhealthy competitiveness therefore threaten our beloved Christians. These forces can so pervade our diocese and people that they are passed on from generation to generation perpetuating distrust, fear, bitterness, exclusion, retribution, and the politics of hatred.<sup>260</sup>

His reaction is not out of place in anyway. For instance, in the course of this research someone narrated to the writer her experience that she received a gift from Osu family who is a Christian, of which on getting home, she informed her father about the gift and the source. The

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<sup>260</sup> Gbuji O.A., Homily at the Cathedraticum Mass at Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu”, in: Amuh, C.U., (ed.), *Here I Am Lord, Send Me (Isaiah 6:8)*, Enugu: Black Belt Konzult Ltd, 2013, pp. 32-33

father forbade her from using it although her father is a Christian.<sup>261</sup> Thus, even among the Christians, some still fear the oracle or juju to which the Osu/Ohu must have been pledged, although with the advent of Christianity many of the Igbo traditional gods fell from their thrones and in their places the supreme and the one God of the Christians has been accepted and adored. The Osu/Ohu caste system in actual fact seems to challenge the Igbo concept of egalitarianism and freedom of association, even when the entire human race and governments of various political systems have come to acknowledge, at least in principle, the equality of all men before the supreme creator of all things or their equality before the law. The persistence of the practice and discrimination in Igboland is a cultural aberration which contradicts the basic cultural ethics of the Igbo achievement-oriented society. In Igbo worldview, people are generally believed to achieve their fame, rather than inherit it. But the defective socio - religious status of Osu/Ohu is believed to be inherited. Ndiokwere criticizing the hypocrisy of the practice of Osu said thus; “the Osu/Ohu begets an Osu/Ohu respectively. But the contradiction becomes more apparent in that the same contact of an Osu/Ohu with a 'diala' (that is a free-born), converts the latter into an Osu/Ohu and never vice - versa. Many Christian’s dialas have clandestine sexual contacts with them. But they do not have the courage to get into marriage with them.<sup>262</sup> The Osu/Ohu caste system has become a real scourge and the most challenging problem confronting all Igbos - Christians and non - Christians in Nigeria as well as in Africa. It seemed however that Christianity failed to face the challenges or rather did not address itself sufficiently to the problems raised since the structure of the Igbo society gave no rights to the Osu or slave. According to Mbefo, “Ohuabunwa”, the slave is not a child means the slave can never have an inheritance nor enter the council of the owners of the land. This statement given as a name announces to the world the lack of status accorded to the slaves in Igbo society. Slaves were separated from the “diala” (free - born)... They could not marry nor be married by the “diala.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> An Oral Interview

<sup>262</sup> Ndiokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, (Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers Ltd, 1995), p. 151; Cf. also in Okafor, J.N., *The Challenge of Osu Caste System to the Igbo Christians*, Onitsha: Veritas Printing & Publishing Company Ltd., 1990, p. VII

<sup>263</sup> Mbefo L., "The Church Bishop Shanahan Left Behind", in: *The Nigeria Journal of Theology*, Vol. 8, No 1, June 1994, p. 34

But if the Igbos of the present generation would abhor and condemn in strong terms such primitive and wicked practice of killing twins, why have they failed to join in the crusade for the abolition of slavery and apartheid system embodied in the Osu/Ohu caste system? Why are the so-called "Diala" or freeborn not eager to see this worst form of discrimination and injustice perpetrated against their brothers and fellow citizens referred to as Osu/Ohu abolished? Why is inter-marriage with them still conceived as "nso" - an abomination among a people known for their flexibility, tolerance and out-going character? No wonder then that Uchendu would see Osu/Ohu caste system of slavery as constituting the greatest contradiction in the Igbo egalitarian theology.<sup>264</sup> At this juncture, it will be appropriate to showcase the differences existing among the Pawn, Ohu and Osu. The writer in the course of interviewing and interacting with people based on this research, discovered that majority of the people who disassociate themselves from the so-called Pawn, Ohu and Osu, do not even know the differences that exist among them.

**(i)The Pawn:** A pawn is a human being who has been used as collateral to borrow money from another person. This existed when trade by barter which is a system of exchange by which goods or services are directly exchanged for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange, such as money was in vogue. Those who are very poor and had no material goods to be exchanged with normally used one of their children especially the female ones for economic exchange of goods and services or collateral for huge loans. Using female children as collateral was prevalent in Igboland during the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War. Persons who pawn themselves acquire the status of an Ohu (slave) until they are redeemed, and the children of unredeemed persons are also regarded as Ohu. They can only return to the home of their parents or be freed only when the debt has been paid. However, in the course of this research, we discovered some women who never returned back to their home at the time their parents got the material goods to pay back because their parents were made to swear to idol or shrine at the time of their despondency that their daughter will not go back. Although the parents or any of the relations may have the goods to pay back but the parents were afraid because of the oath they have taken at the time they borrowed the material. Such women were given in marriage to the children of the

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<sup>264</sup> Cf. Onwubiko, O.A., "Facing the Osu Caste System", in: Ndiokwere N.I, *Search for Security*, p. 153.

lender who wish to marry her. The woman cannot make a choice rather the choice is left in the hand of the lender who sees the woman as one of her properties. It is really agonizing since the transaction took place when the woman was at her tender age. This turned out to be a form of forced marriage.

**2.3.6.1 Ohu (Slaves):** This is a person who is alienated from his real home either as war captives or through kidnapping by people or children who had some abnormalities at birth or the never - do - wells. In fact, there were more than six sources of slaves, namely, intertribal war captives, lazy children, victims of political machination, unprotected or unguided strangers and people who missed their ways and could not trace it back. There were other causes such as poverty, victimization, frustration and religious obligation. They (slaves) were regarded also as subordinate to the Diala (that is the freeborn) in the society, but they could marry the freeborn children. This was a kind of slavery already established in Africa. It was forced service within the African tribal or state system. Men captured in war were forced into what may be called domestic slavery, that is, they became the servants of those who captured them. So did certain kinds of law - breakers. It was a kind of slavery that had long existed on the other continents. In Africa, on the other hand, a man who owned domestic slaves had to look after them. They could marry the master's daughter and inherit his property. They could even become rich merchants. His only disability is that he is owned, he is not a free man. He cannot go when he wants unless he is redeemed. Hence, Aligwekwe succinctly remarks that:

Whatever the level of life that the ohu arrived at in his master's home, he could never have the right of diala as long as he/she remained ohu and for that reason, the ohu had always remained a social category set apart. To become diala it is absolutely necessary to liberate oneself totally from the state of ohu, thus becoming a 'completely' freed man. A thing which was not in reality, very easy, as it was through his master that he could affirm his identity in a community and a lineage which were not originally his.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Aligwekwe P.E., *The Continuity of Traditional Values in the African Society - The Igbo of Nigeria*, Owerri: Totan Publishers Limited, 1991, p. 139

The liberation of the slaves then was paid with goods since money was not an accepted medium of exchange. When he is liberated, he enjoys the company of the people and is no more stratified or discriminated against in the society, except in participation in certain religious matters like being the priest of a deity. The Ohu lives in the same house with his master. He works with and for him and in due course earns some money to redeem himself if he is hardworking enough. He could be absorbed into the family of his master through marriage. A marriage between the master and his Ohu or between the Ohu and a child of the master was the most efficacious and the most rapid means for the liberation of Ohu, otherwise, an Ohu, even if born and brought up in the master's community, could arrive there only after a long difficult process.<sup>266</sup>

**2.3.6.2 Osu:** Many scholars have defined the Osu as a cult slave, a living sacrifice, untouchable, an owner's cult, a slave of the deity, a sacred and holy being. This was the exact word used by Saint Paul where he urged the brothers and sisters in view of God's mercy to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice ... (Rom 12:1). Even though they are alive but they have been sacrificed. An Osu in Igboland as well as in Africa is a person sacrificed or consecrated alive together with his or her descendants to the service of a pagan god. Osu could also be a murderer or any other type of criminal, a thief, a dissident, who had escaped death or the punishment of his community by offering himself voluntarily to a god or by taking a refuge in its temple as a means of protection. The Osu included also persons who, forced by hunger ate the sacrificial meal set before a god. From that very fact, they became automatically Osu, separated from the rest of the community as men and women more or less cursed for life. The Diala could not buy yams from an Osu, share the same hair cutter or drinking cup and so on, with the Osu. The Osu had not the right of burial in a tomb or grave. The only social communication between the Osu, the Ohu and Diala was at the level of rituals and religious sacrifice. The Osu participated at the sacrifice and had specific roles to play; he was supposed to clean out the temple of god, maintain its cleanliness and participate in the actual sacrifice. Also contrary to the Ohu; material wealth could not in any case give place to the liberation of the Osu. The Osu was Osu for life, and it was hereditary. They are at the lowest level of the Igbo traditional social classes.

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid. p. 139

The renowned Igbo novelist Chinua Achebe makes this clear description of Osu in his book *Things Fall Apart*:

A person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart - a taboo forever and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by the freeborn. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was a taboo to him. An Osu could not attend an assembly of the freeborn, and they in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the evil forest.<sup>267</sup>

This description reoccurs again in Achebe's book entitled *No Longer At Ease*. Thus we read of a dialogue between Obi Okonkwo, and his father Nwoye Okonkwo on the issue of his proposed marriage to Clara, an Osu. Obi fails to convince his father, despite his elaborate arguments that Osu does not matter anymore because “we are Christians” and that “the Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free”, and that “our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man osu ... But have we not seen the light of the Gospel.”<sup>268</sup> His father was unmoved by what he perceived as a useless sophistry; and so, he informed Obi that:

Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg you, my son not to bring the mark of shame and leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory. It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that. We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Onwubiko O.A., *Facing the Osu Issue in the African Synod*, p. 32; Cf. also Achebe C., *Things Fall Apart*, New York: Doubleday 1959, p.156

<sup>268</sup> Achebe C., "*No Longer at Ease*" in: Onwubiko O.A., *Facing the Osu Issue in the African Synod*, *Ibid.*, p. 71

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

It is therefore clear that the Osu is discriminated against even by the Igbo Christians. Imagine that even Obi's father who was so committed to his Christian faith to the extent that his own father placed a curse upon him for following the missionaries, yet, after embracing Christianity he was discouraging his son from marrying Clara just because she was an Osu. This is typical of what we are experiencing regularly in Igboland as well as in many parts of Africa.

This obnoxious social dehumanization was one of the problems that the missionaries faced and tried to solve in Igboland but to no avail. The Osu group was accepted and absorbed in the Christian Community at the beginning of the missionary work in Igboland but with fierce opposition which often tore the Christian Community apart. Chinua Achebe wrote the difficulty of breaking this age-old social tragedy in the era of the missionaries. He paints a vivid picture of what happened when the Osu first came to church. Let us listen to the pathetic narrative:

These outcasts or osu seeing that the new religion welcomed twins and such abominations thought that it was possible that they would also be received. Therefore, one Sunday two of them went into the church. There was an immediate stir and prompt commotion, but so great was the work of the new religion done among the converts that they did not immediately leave the church when the outcasts came in. Those who found themselves nearest to them merely moved to another seat. It was a miracle. Nevertheless, it lasted until the end of the service. The whole church raised protest and was poised to drive the OSU out.<sup>270</sup>

Such was the fate of the Osu at the beginning of Christianity in Igboland that even in the church in that early stage they were discriminated against by their fellow Christians even in the presence of the missionaries. Today the socio-cultural dehumanization associated with the Osu caste system has drastically reduced but not ended. Hence, intermarriage between an Osu and freeborn is still difficult to come by as some Christians tacitly oppose it or are not disposed to tolerate marrying an Osu.

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<sup>270</sup> Achebe C., *Things Fall Apart*, p. 111

By and large, the persistence of the Osu discrimination together with the stigma associated with it, is a sign that evangelization is yet to be really assimilated into our culture. If we Christians really believe that God created each and every one of us in His image and likeness (Gen. 1.26-27) and more ineffably recreated us in the image and likeness of His Son Jesus (Eph1:3-14), there should be no segregation among the Christians. In him and through him, every believer has the dignity traditionally attributed in the Old Testament to the “first born son” (Heb12:23). One wonders what happens to the Biblical declaration that there is therefore no condemnation to anybody who is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1). There ought not to be any distinctions made among members of the Nigerian Church, the Family of God in Nigeria, based on ethnic or social considerations. There should no longer be Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Idoma, Efik, Ibibio, Epira, Tiv, Kataf, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Bini, Esan, there should no longer be Osu, slave or free, there should no longer be male or female. It may indeed be true that “blood is thicker than water.” But there is a new blood flowing in our veins now by virtue of our common baptism; and it is the blood of Christ.”<sup>271</sup> That is the kind of education that is needed to create an awareness of being the Family of God among the generality of members of the Church in Nigeria. Consequently, for evangelization to be really assimilated into our culture it should include the preaching of hope in the promises made by God in the new Covenant in Jesus Christ; the preaching of God’s love for us and our love for God; the preaching of brotherly love for all men... the capacity of giving and forgiving, of self-denial, of helping ones’ brother and sister ... which, springing from the love of God, is the kernel of the Gospel; the preaching of the mystery of evil and of the active search for good.<sup>272</sup>

Nevertheless, all hopes are not lost towards the eradication of Osu in Igboland as well as in Africa. A good number of clergy from different denominations have made several efforts

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<sup>271</sup> *Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa, in: The Church in Nigeria Family of God on Mission, A pastoral Exhortation of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN). To the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful on the First National Pastoral Congress, Enugu: CIDJAP Printing Press, 2004, pp.32-33*

<sup>272</sup> Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 28

through their homilies, seminars or conferences. There has been a practical move to abolish the Osu caste system in Igboland. For example Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe led the State House of Assembly in 1956 to make a law abolishing Osu Caste system. Governor Emeka Omeruah also set up a panel to investigate an incident in Anambra State, and Col. Robert Akonobi as military administrator sent Bulldozers to clear out Efuru Shrine in Ukeghe - Nsukka, Enugu state which was causing trouble. Also Anambra and Imo State governments once called the conference of traditional rulers and compelled them to perform traditional rites in their domains to abolish the last vestiges of the Osu and Ohu systems where they exist.

All these efforts have produced fruits in one way or the other. For instance, in Idemili Local Government Area of Anambara State (and in Nnobi Town in particular), the Osu system was abolished ritually on December 30, 1971. In Ogidi, in 1972, the Osu system was also abolished. One of those 'redeemed' took a title, and became "The head of Ozo society and Ndichie in Ogidi. His son took to marriage the daughter of a prominent Ogidi family. Following the example of the aforementioned communities, in October 1972, the Umuoji and Awka- Etiti, both also in Idemili Local Government Area, abolished the Osu system in their areas. Thus one can say that the Osu system is becoming or, will soon become a thing of the past. No new Osu is being dedicated. The descendants of the Osu are Christians. So, now that both Christian and traditional religious forces have joined to fight the system, that it will soon be forgotten is obvious. Though, how soon this 'soon' will be is the question.<sup>273</sup> The need to realize this dream in the shortest possible time requires, among others, that the Church should properly train her lay catechists so that they can help to explain to the people the futility of such discriminations. For according to Ottmar Fuchs, "the Church, that is to say, is only the Church when it helps those who need help, and helps the helpers to help, and when it liberates the oppressed and helps the liberators in their task of liberation ..."<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Okafor J. N., *The Challenge of Osu Caste System to the Igbo Christians*, p. 24, Cf. also Onwubiko O.A, *Facing the Osu Issue in the African Synod*, p. 42; Cf. also Ikemefuna C, "The Osu Caste System", art. in the Renaissance, Enugu: Tuesday, April 22, 1975, p. 10

<sup>274</sup> Fuchs O., *God's People: Instruments of Healing*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1993, 9.19

### **2.3.6.3 Magic, Mammy Water, Water Spirits and Witches**

The Africans have a general conviction that the world is populated with an innumerable host of invincible spirits or forces which accounts for magic, charms, sorcery, witchcraft, mammy water etc. These spirits are believed to possess mysterious powers with which they (spirits) can disrupt peaceful and the normal running of events and life of an individual in particular and society in general. These mysterious beings and powers which are real to Africans have got to be controlled if man is to enjoy peace, prosperity, sound health and longevity. Specifically, the Beliefs in clandestine powers and histories associated with magic, mammy water, water spirits and witches have great adverse effects on the catechetical apostolate of the Church in Igboland since there is constant resort to divination to ascertain what life has in store for man. The Prince of darkness, the father of lies, source of human suffering and death, the Devil called 'Ekwensu', evil spirits known as 'Ajuo mmuo' and other malignant spirits, constitute the greatest source of insecurity to the traditional Africans irrespective of religious creed. Though Christianity teaches that the devil was cast out of heaven into everlasting torment, the chief perpetrator of evil and his legions of lesser demons are still free to roam the earth, tempting, harassing and even possessing human beings. These evils spirits are said to dwell in bushes, market places, river sides, odd corners and dark places where they wander about aimlessly. Human habitation, including homes, places of work, offices, workshops, market stalls and shops are often not regarded safe unless they are cleared of evil forces. Evil spirit might hover about even in some familiar places and there may be need to exorcise a whole area.

The issue that should be of grave concern to us is the fact that the worldview of most Igbo professing Christians remains that which is inherited from the traditional religion. Certain traditional beliefs as reincarnation, Ogbanje, sorcery and the dynamic, often negative, activities of spirit and cosmic forces, still persist in the minds of many professing Christians today. These show up in any serious life crises in the lives of such Christians. They waste no time in seeking the traditional aids to solve such problems. Diviners and protective charm-makers still number

among their clients a good percentage of Igbo baptized Christians.<sup>275</sup> Many other writers made the same observation long ago. Hence we read of such views as:

An Igbo attends communion at the same time as he believes in the potency of traditional magic<sup>276</sup>; he ties up in the same handkerchief the rosary and the traditional talisman and plants side by side in the garden round his new cement and pan-roofed house the hibiscus of civilization and the ogirisi tree of pagan family rites.<sup>277</sup> Some charms are worn as necklace, bangle or ring, swallowed, buried in a desired area, hung on a desired place, robbed or buried in the body. Some people might carry it in the pocket, bag, handkerchief, walking stick or hand fan.<sup>278</sup>

Even though some of these claims seem to have been exaggerated, there are elements of truth in the various observations. For some Igbo Christians, charms are believed to bring to realization, the power of the spirits and ancestors. Yet it is believed that through the use of charms, obnoxious and implacable spirits and ancestors are controlled, driven away, or blindfolded, such that their evil machinations and punishments of the living are minimized or averted.<sup>279</sup> The observation of Donald Ugbong in Obudu town<sup>280</sup> looks funny but is a reality and applies equally to the people of Igboland. According to him:

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid. p. 153

<sup>276</sup> Magic and medicine are based on the belief that there are vital forces or supernatural powers in the universe that can be tapped and controlled by man. Magic can be defined as an attempt by man to tap and control these supernatural powers or resources of the universe for his own benefit. Cf. Metuh E.I, *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 229; Cf. J.O. Awolalu & P.A. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan: Onibonoje Press, p. 240

<sup>277</sup> Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 153; Cf. Leith- Ross S., *African Woman*, p.293

<sup>278</sup> Udoye E. A., *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation*, p. 148

<sup>279</sup> Onwubiko A.O, *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, Vol. 1, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1991, p. 62

<sup>280</sup> Obudu is a tourist town in Nigeria, and has become largely associated with the Obudu Cattle Ranch known presently as the Obudu Mountain Resort. It is found on the Obudu Plateau close to the Cameroon Border in the North-eastern part of Cross River State of Nigeria, approximately 110 kilometres east of the town of Ogoja and 65 kilometres from the town of Obudu in Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River State. It is about 30 minutes'

The Diviners<sup>281</sup> when called upon by people they can play on their charms to inquire of the gods what their problem was. Sometimes they give the people amulets and other protective charms to wear either around the neck or the waist.

I was baptized in 1936... I do not forget my duty as a Christian... I am a diviner and a native doctor. I still practice my trade with the power of God... it has no clash with my Christian faith.<sup>282</sup>

This is a typical case of hypocrisy. However it is not a rare phenomenon. No matter how one may look at it, the bitter truth remains that the unique positions which divination and magic occupy in the life of many Nigerians in general and Igbo in particular, make diviners to command enormous respect from the society. The belief in them is so strong and rampant among Nigerians that in spite of the change brought about in the attitude of the people towards many things by almost a century of Christianity and education, belief in magic is still pervasive. Those who do not think of having recourse to its aid still take it for granted and act implicitly on the assumption not only that magic exists, but that it has an objective reality.<sup>283</sup> Belief in the potency and force of charms and amulets is one of the practical aspects of African traditional religion. Their effects are believed to be of daily occurrence in the African community life. European education and the Christian religion have not effectively eliminated trust in the potency of charms among the things many African elites believe in. Even in the universities and in the very departments of science and technology, among doctors - medical and academic, among

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drive from Obudu town and is about a 332 kilometres (206 mi) drive from Calabar, the Cross River State capital. Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obudu\\_-\\_Cattle\\_-\\_Ranch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obudu_-_Cattle_-_Ranch)

<sup>281</sup> Divination is the practice of attempting to foretell the future, reveal the unknown, or find out the wish of a divinity or spirit. Diviners are consulted when something is lost, when there is an inexplicable disease, when one has a strange dream, during the crises of life, when a child is born, at betrothal to find the appropriate husband, at death to find the cause of the death, and during an undertaking. (Cf. Metuh. E.I, *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 228; Awolalu J.O., & Dopamu P.A., *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan: Onibonoje Press, p. 147

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 166

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Metuh E.I., *The Gods in Retreat*, p. 229; Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan: University Press, 1970, p. 292

students and professors, the beliefs in the use and efficacy of charms often are noticed.<sup>284</sup> This trusting attitude towards diviners cuts across the members of the various Christian denominations.

#### **2.3.6.3.1 Witches**

Witchcraft and sorcery are actions employing objects which are believed invariably to achieve a desired objective not by virtue of the powers known to be intrinsic to the media objects or actions but by the inevitable intervention of occult and supernatural forces. The desired objective may be to protect a client from a threatening danger or to effect harm on an opponent or both. The occult intervention of the supernatural is obtained once the prescribed ritual of actions or objects have taken place.<sup>285</sup> They (witches) are another dreaded ritual that has two opposing values: illicit and licit. The illicit practice is used as in sorcery. The practitioners have psychic power, knowledge of issues in advance, knowing the minds of people, seeing people at a distance, hearing voices and getting messages from the spirit world at will. They can operate in a dream and in reality. Their intention materializes just by willing it, under psychic influence.<sup>286</sup>

Witches are believed to be wicked and their stories are equally frightening as some misfortunes in traditional African society are attributed to their devilish activities. The popular belief is that only those who have not fallen into the snare of witches deny their existence. Those who have the boldness to deny them publicly are warned to beware of the witches' attacks as a proof of the type of evil that these devilish beings can perpetrate. Witches are said to choose progressive people as their main victims. They exert therefore an enormous influence on the lives of Africans, Christians alike. Witches are regarded as perpetual enemies of social and moral order, an object of scorn and hate which should be 'smelled out' and destroyed. Diviners,

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<sup>284</sup> Onwubiko A.O., *African Thought, Religion and Culture*, p. 62

<sup>285</sup> Onyeneke A.O., *The Dead Among The Living: Masquerades in Igbo Society*, Enugu: Chuka Printing Co. Ltd, 1987, p. 90

<sup>286</sup> Adibe E.A., *Igbo Issues: Values, Chi, Akalaka, Ikenga, Magic, Agwu and Manipulation of Divinities*, Onitsha: Mid-Field Publishers Ltd, 2009, p. 163

magicians, pagan priests and witch doctors are generally respected for their ability to encounter witches. For instance, there is this story of a magician in one part of Igboland, precisely at Abakpa town, the man is reputed as possessing some sort of power, which he rubs upon his forehead, the palms of his hands and soles of his feet. By the power of this, he can go out at night and watch the goings of all witches and wizards who are aboard. He can know them, but they cannot see him because the magic power keeps him invisible.<sup>287</sup> People usually believe such stories without the least suspicion about their validity. Nobody cares to investigate their acclaimed power. Of course, fear will not let anybody to experiment with publicly doubting a magician.

All over Africa and Nigeria in particular, belief in witchcraft is strong. Many people believe that witchcrafts are capable of evil actions towards those who have wronged them and the innocent alike. They could use their powers to make one very sick to an extent that he/she cannot be diagnosed of the medical illness. When situation gets that bad, people are often advised even by medical practitioners to seek native, medical attention... They may even be given the power of witchcraft as well so as to confront the witch or wizard who tries to attack them.<sup>288</sup> Some categories of people are usually accused of witchcraft when some misfortune occurs. They include women generally, close relatives, mother and daughter - in - law, co - wives, old women and queer ugly people.<sup>289</sup> Okey Ndibe describes the agony of the witches. I'm writing this piece in that spirit; it is a story, I believe, that must be told. It must be told despite its ugliness, or, in fact, because of it. He writes his experiences thus:

A few days ago I had the horrific experience of looking at what must be one of the most grotesque videos on youtube. It's titled "Flying bird turns to old woman in Oshodi Lagos". The gory video shows a naked woman sitting on the bare earth, most of her upper

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<sup>287</sup> Amaury P.T., *Life in Nigeria (Magic Beliefs and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe)*, London: Frank Cass, 1969, p. 58, Cf. also Dine G.G.U., *Traditional Leadership (As Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation)*, p. 63

<sup>288</sup> 2010 Catechetical Week Programme, "Syncretism: A Challenge to the Christian Faith", p. 12

<sup>289</sup> Ndiokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, pp. 54-55

skin peeled, as if somebody had poured boiling water on her. You'd expect somebody in her condition to be writhing in pain, but the woman sits in what seems like dumb repose. It was clear to me, looking at the video, that the woman's pain quotient was at that inhuman level that mutes wailing, leaving the victim in a state of morose resignation. One sees that kind of dumbfounded silence in victims of unspeakable trauma, usually in war-torn areas where horror is a staple, where people are daily subjected to acts of callousness that mock humanity and animalize them. Such was the situation of this woman, her singed, peeled flesh a testimony to an act of brutality.

The disfigured woman was a forbidding sight, a portrait of pure horror. But there was something even more disquieting. It was to see that a crowd had gathered around the woman, men, women and the young, all riveted by the repulsive scene. Not one person among the spectators appeared moved by the spectacle of a woman who was clearly seared by anguish. Not one person seemed to remember that a human being in that shape and place needed, above all, to be taken to a hospital. A few uniformed security agents are at the scene, but they show no concern about getting help for the hapless woman. They limit themselves to pushing back the crowd a bit, widening the circle around the sight of a woman in hideous condition.

Everybody seemed spellbound, seemed content to ogle the woman. Their frenzy was palpable. They were there, these spectators, as voyeurs, pure and simple. Many of them held out their cameras, snapping pictures, taking videos. As far as they were concerned, this was not a woman before their very eyes; this was not a human being. They believed - everybody there, it seemed - the fantastic tale that the grisly figure before them was a witch, a huge bird that had been flying, hit an electric wire, and thudded onto the ground as "an old woman." I am told that the woman later died. One is deeply disturbed that Nigeria has become a country where such superstitions, such ludicrous medieval tales find many believers. And it doesn't matter how "educated" some Nigerians are: they are willing to believe the tallest and weirdest of tales.<sup>290</sup>

This is a true life story and not a mere film show. Okey Ndibe at the end of the story raised many questions looking for an answer. What has happened or is happening to the minds of some Nigerians as well as Igbos? Why do some of us rush to believe any balderdash? What one finds

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<sup>290</sup> <http://saharareporters.com/2014/12/09/witch-airways-and-other-sad-tales-okey-ndibe#.VIjv693NXBs.facebook>

frightening is that many Nigerians who graduated from universities and other institutions of “higher learning” are among believers in all manner of poppycock. Even the law enforcement agents uphold the sanctity of these fairy tales. For instance, a few years ago, a police commissioner in Ilorin, Kwara State of Nigeria told reporters that his men had arrested a robbery suspect who turned himself into a goat as he was about to be caught. And he showed off the goat to reporters! Of course the Nigerian public believed him.<sup>291</sup> Also in Jos - a 60 - old man, identified as Yakubu Vong, has allegedly set ablaze an eight - year - old girl ... The suspect, ... allegedly set the girl ablaze while urging her to confess her involvement in witchcraft for which she was accused. The suspect was said to have lured the girl to his house where he allegedly forced the girl to confess to being a witch. It was learned that the girl’s refusal infuriated him and prompted him to bathe her with fuel and set her ablaze, claiming she was a witch. However, one James Bamu, who is an uncle to the deceased girl, said the girl was innocent, wondering if the suspect had any proof that the girl was a witch. He described the act as barbaric and demanded that the law deal decisively with the suspect to serve as deterrence to others practicing such an evil act. The girl, who was rushed to the hospital after the incident, died as the result of the burns she suffered. State Police Public Relations Officer, Emmanuel Abuh, who confirmed the incident, described the situation as sad...<sup>292</sup>

Witches are believed to be the authors of accidents, tornadoes, and some bites from animals. They are said to cause misfortunes which are said to include insecurity, broken marriages, impotency and barrenness. Other evils attributed to witches are bad habits like excessive drinking, smoking and reckless spending of money. Witches cause bad or poor crop yields, dry up streams. They cause sterility in women by turning their wombs upside- down. They cause impotency in men by removing their testicles. Witches are said to have the power of killing their victims even from a distance and without any traces of violence. Many atrocities and horrible crimes are believed to be committed by witches. They are said to practice spiritual cannibalism by sucking blood or feeding on human meat. It is believed that they have their own

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<sup>291</sup> Ndiokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, pp. 56-57

<sup>292</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/06/witchcraft-allegation-8-yr-old-girl-set-ablaze>

festivals and organize nocturnal meetings during which they eat the spiritual bodies of their victims. It is also widely believed that witches turn into small insects which enter houses at nights and bite men. They can also turn into night birds, owls and lizards. In fact, there is a litany of diabolical activities attributed to witches. For most people of the South Eastern Nigeria, it is mere foolery to doubt any of the above activities of the witches. Whether one decides to dismiss witchcraft as naive, primitive and superstitious belief, many Africans irrespective of their social standing and religion, agree that there are many witches that operate and perpetuate evil in communities and everywhere. Any power or personality that is ready to confront and destroy witches is naturally revered. Witch doctors and diviners therefore have the function of helping bewitched people.<sup>293</sup>

#### **2.3.6.3.2 Mammy Water and Water Spirits**

Mammy Water is the name given to the water goddess. She is believed to exercise dominion over oceans in particular and big rivers in general. It is also assumed that she is very beautiful, lives in water and is half human and half fish in structure. It is equally believed that she can possess people, mostly beautiful ladies. There are varying and even conflicting opinions about her. Some people regarded Mammy Water as good spirit of fertility and prosperity, majority of people regarded her as a wicked spirit because of perpetuation of misfortunes believed to be masterminded and executed by her and her numerous human and mystical agents.<sup>294</sup> Activities attributed to this fable marine creature, typically represented by a woman's body and fish tails are many. She is believed to have other minor water spirits which work under her for the same purpose. According to popular beliefs, these water spirits harass fishermen and those who live near rivers and seas. No adequate reasons are offered for the attacks of Mammy Water et al. Certain maladies which include hallucinations, bad dreams, inability to sleep, marital problems and even rashes on the bodies are attributed to mammy water.

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<sup>293</sup> See Ndiokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, pp. 56-57

<sup>294</sup> Ray B.C., *African Religions: Symbols, Rituals and Community 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, in Udoye, E.A., *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation*, p. 106

Mammy Water spirit is always represented with a beautiful picture of a woman one can ever think of or imagine. Little wonder many of the beautiful ladies are said to be possessed by the water spirits. In Igboland as well as in Africa, anything beautiful beyond human imagination is often attributed to the handiwork of Mammy Water. Among the Igbos and their neighbours, signs of Mammy Water possession include continuous dreams about rivers or drowning in a river. Fishing and catching of fishes in dreams may provoke anxieties and in such cases it is believed that Mammy Water would want some gifts.<sup>295</sup> Most of those haunted by Mammy Water are women and young ladies. A young lady who discovers white rashes on some parts of her body believes that she is haunted by Mammy Water. It has become a common notion that certain diseases and evils which attack women are caused by Mammy Water. Mammy Water should therefore be seen as one of those evil spirits that attack and make life miserable for people. Sailors and those who travel by sea regularly are expected to perform sacrifices to appease these water spirits.<sup>296</sup> People who were drown into the rivers without anybody seeing them or without water entering their mouth but found dead were cases against her malicious operation in coastal area.<sup>297</sup>

Majority of the victims of Mammy Water prefer either consultation with Mammy Water healing homes, white-garment churches or a juju priest. Mammy Water healing homes can easily be identified in a village, since they are normally isolated from residential area. In most cases, a woman is in charge of the shrine. She must be someone believed to be possessed by Mammy Water, and who had entered covenant with the water goddess to serve her. Such women rarely marry. They are often single mothers and one of the daughters is expected to be chosen by the spirit to take after her mum. The walls of the shrine building are usually painted white, and a female portrait of the water spirit has a large python coiling round her body.

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid. pp. 43-44

<sup>296</sup> Ndiokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, pp. 52-53

<sup>297</sup> Udoye E.A, *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation*, p. 106

This is seen as a challenge since for the Igbos as well as all the countries in African, life is considered to be the most important value man can have here on earth. Prioritization of life echoes in the elaborate rituals of passage which consecrate important points in the journey of life. Through conception, birth and naming ceremony rites, a baby is welcomed, protected, purified and incorporated into the human family. Puberty rites socially and spiritually prepare the young adult to face unfolding challenges of each new day. Rites of marriage introduce the individual to the householder stage, which imposes the responsibilities of contributing to the society as parent, provider, organizer, and leader. Death rituals create the opportunity for the individual to join the ancestors and subsequently to reincarnate and repopulate the earthly family, thus extending life beyond the present, beyond time and space.<sup>298</sup> If the present life is seen to be threatened by different forces, so that there is a danger of this life becoming extinct, protective measures are taken by consulting specialists, who can do something against evil forces threatening this life. The rescue and protection of life are, for the Igbo and African, very necessary and important. The affirmation, preservation and reinforcement of life dominate the thinking, social structures and healing practices of traditional Africa. All could be spent to save life because it is for us most sacred.<sup>299</sup> So if the fear of being poisoned, the harassment of witches and evil spirits drag a good number of our Christians to the so-called "spiritual Churches" in search of security, there is urgent need of catechesis. This is because considering how desperate Africans can be in facing life's challenges, there is no length a troubled African will not go in search of comfort or security.<sup>300</sup> This explains why false prophets and self "anointed ministers" easily take advantage of the ignorance of the people and exploit desperate ones with pressing spiritual problems. This willingness to cleave to any superstition and the evil forces and other mischievous beings or powers - whatever they are, is absurd.<sup>301</sup> Sometime ago, in Akwa Ibom State - Nigeria, children

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<sup>298</sup> Agunwa J.C, "Christianity and Nigeria Indigenous Culture, in: Korieh C. J and Nwokeji G.U (ed.), *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria (Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu)*, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005, p. 18

<sup>299</sup> Ndukaihe V.E., *Achievement as Value in the Igbo/African Identity the Ethics*, Berlin: Lit. Verlag, 2006, p. 250

<sup>300</sup> Ndokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, pp. 43-44

<sup>301</sup> <http://saharareporters.com/2014/12/09/witch-airways-and-other-sad-tales-okey-ndibe#.VIjv693NXBs.facebook>

were labelled as witches under the prodding of many evangelist preachers, and killed by their guardians and parents.<sup>302</sup> These instances have so much helped in the proliferation and growth of healing homes and spiritual Churches in Igboland as well as in Nigeria and the whole of Africa. The numbers of Catholics who have gone to the Pentecostals because of the presumed attacks of witches and Mammy Water or other water spirits and never returned to the Catholic Church are uncountable. This has been a major concern for many pastors in the Catholic Church.

### **2.3.7 Oath Taking (*Igba Ndu*<sup>303</sup>)**

Taking an oath known as *Igba ndu* in Igbo language, is an integral part of traditional Igbo social and political system, a ritual alliance between two persons or groups of individuals. Regarded as the strongest and most meaningful bond that can exist, it was used on the group level to validate community contracts and on a personal level to create the ritual bond necessary for social and trade intercourse or to effect a genuine reconciliation between people for whom regular intercourse was imperative because of kin relationship or common residence in a neighbourhood. It was also a means of establishing the confidence necessary for intercourse between strangers who desired to establish relationship that could not be ignored or broken. *Igba ndu* was thus the most serious of the many non-violent coercive mechanisms for ensuring the stability of an *Igbo* group. Its sociological importance is examined against the features of the Igbo traditional judicial system.<sup>304</sup> The role *Igba ndu* plays in Igbo society can be best appreciated from the axiom of social control. It is important as it tries to eliminate deep seated hatred and calm frayed nerves especially on issues concerning land disputes, and other communal or individual squabbles. The process of *Igba ndu* ensures that the parties to a dispute settle such disputes amicably without physical or spiritual attacks on each other. The Igbos are predominantly associated with the *Igba ndu*. But other groups or tribes outside their borders also have their own concept for covenant or oath taking.

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<sup>302</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/observer/gallery/2007/dec/09/witches>

<sup>303</sup> The concept *Igba ndu* literally means to bond life, *Igba* stands for bond or tie while *ndu* means life in Igbo language.

<sup>304</sup> <http://ohuzo.blogspot.de/2009/03/igba-ndu-in-igboland.html>

The Code of Canon Law defines oath taking or swearing as taking God as witness to what one affirms. It is to invoke the divine truthfulness as a pledge of one's own truthfulness. An oath engages the Lord's name. "You fear the Lord your God, you shall serve him, and swear by his name."<sup>305</sup> In the book of Joshua, Rahab made the two men Joshua sent to spy Jericho to swear with the name of the Lord (Josh 2: 12-13). However, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus even seems to forbid the taking of an oath as He warned His disciples: "Do not swear at all ... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (Mt 5:32.37; also Jas 5:12). In fact, for Christ, the disciple's word should be so reliable that no oath is needed to confirm it. However, man's nature is influenced by his desires for survival, dominance and control over his environment, this leads to issues of conflict among them. Such conflicts could attain the dangerous dimension of taking of lives, physical and spiritual injuries or material destruction. This can be at individual or group levels or even to communal proportion. The need therefore for conflict resolution of these prevalent issues, to avoid destructions and mistrust among peoples, and which can be of a permanent basis, to ensure peace and security of lives and properties, gave rise to the concept of *Igba ndu* in Igboland. Peschke in his book *Christian Ethics* is also of the view that since man and society is often in need of the truth, and since the truth is all frequently endangered by lies, men seek for means to assure the truth. This assurance is especially sought in oaths. An oath calls God to witness to the truth of an assertion or the sincerity of a promise.<sup>306</sup>

Among the Christians of Igboland, the different modes of oath taking are as follows:

- **Invocatory Oath:** This is simply calling on God as a witness to truth. It is an oath that is used in the profession of faith as indicated in words, "God is my witness" or "I speak before God".

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<sup>305</sup> CCC no.2150

<sup>306</sup> Peschke K.H., *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India: 1992, p. 372

- **Imprecatory Oath:** This comes in when God is invoked not only as a witness to truth but also as avenger of falsehood. Here one invokes God's punishment if what is sworn is to be false.

- **Promissory:** This is when God is invoked as a witness to one's present intention that he will do or omit something. For example, one swears in the name of God he will give 1000 naira to another person in the coming year, or one swears that he will return the money he borrowed.

- **Solemn Oath:** When an Oath is taken before the crucifix, touching the Gospels, etc.

- **Simple Oath:** When an Oath is taken privately without solemnities.<sup>307</sup>

Among the Igbo traditional religionist, the concept of *Igba ndu* is more complicated and laborious. It is tied to the knowledge of the existence of a supreme being or to prominent deities such as *Igwe ka ala*, *Amadioha*, *Ibinokpabi*, *Ahiajioku* etc. They are called upon to witness to such covenants and dispense justice to defaulters<sup>308</sup> of the covenant entered. The parties to the covenant while swearing will pronounce punishments which the gods are to excise on the defaulters. There are different types of *Igba Ndu* just as we have different types of agreements among peoples. For Instance, there is *Igba ndu* that can exist between two individuals, within a family or between two different neighboring communities. *Igba ndu* can also exist between an

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<sup>307</sup> Pazhayampallil T., *Pastoral Guide vol.I Fundamental Moral Theology and Virtues*, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, pp. 775-776

<sup>308</sup> A defaulter is known when mysterious occurrence begins to affect his life, such as death, infertility, sickness etc. the penalties for a defaulter is an outcome of the covenant entered into as well as the reaction of the deity in which the covenant is administered. In addition to this is the curse, which is also placed on the defaulter. The penalties also defer in terms of the type of *Igba ndu* entered into. For instance, in the case of two lovers, the penalty for defaulter, where one breaks the covenant and abandons the relationship could be either madness, barrenness, inability to hold down any relationship or even death. *Igba ndu* where a deity like the *Amadioha* is involved has a very disastrous penalty for the defaulter. This can either be stricken down by thunder, mysterious illness that defies medical solution etc. the process of appeasement by the defaulter is tedious, this is so as people will not want to associate with such a person for fear of reprisal attack on them from the gods. It is only when a clearance is gotten from the gods through divination on how to appease the deity and also on how to re-integrate the person into the society before he or she is allowed access to people. The gods will determine the items for appeasement, which most times are enormous. It is the chief priest of the deity and the *dibias* that handle such appeasement rites. Also the person will do rites that will allow him access to people (*oriko*). In some societies, items of appeasement include cockerel, palm wine, local bull, ram, tortoise, cowry, yam, palm oil etc.

individual and a deity. *Igba ndu* issues range from love, disputes between individuals or communities, trading or business concerns to agreements with the gods for protection or favour by individuals or groups etc. In undertaking *Igba ndu* certain people are involved; apart from the people concerned, the gods or deities are invoked, the departed ancestors are also involved, elders especially titled men, native doctors or *Oha dibias*<sup>309</sup>, as well as chief priest<sup>310</sup> of the community etc.

Apart from the individuals mentioned, some items are required for *Igba ndu*. These items are dependent on the type of *Igba ndu*. Such items as kola nut, palm wine, hot drink, *ofo* staff, blood, plantain stalk, cockrel, kaolin (*nzu*), fresh palm frond, snail, yam etc. Others are none material objects and the incantation made by the priest or *dibias*, which cannot be interpreted, it is privy to the *dibias* only. The items to be used are dependent on the type of oath or *Igba ndu* that is involved. For instance, in the case of two lovers who want to undertake the *Igba ndu*, both partners can use a kolanut and dip it into their blood and then make a declaration as to their intention as well as what will befall anyone of them that breaks the covenant, they can call on a deity they believed in as witness, including their ancestors and *Ala* (the goddess of the earth). After which they eat the kolanut. In the event of a land dispute between either individuals or community the *Igba ndu* is more elaborate as the group concerned will invite witnesses, elders, the chief priest and *dibias*. In most cases, the covenant is administered in the shrine after the necessary items have been prepared and incantation made to invoke the ancestors and gods to witness it. In this type, the people concerned are to swear not to harm each other in any way either physically or spiritually anyone who goes against the covenant the gods and ancestors will dispense justice. In other instance, a hole is dug and plantain stalk used to cross the hole, the

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<sup>309</sup> The *dibias* are to prepare the relevant concoction as well as make the necessary pronouncements or incantations that make the covenant potent.

<sup>310</sup> The chief priests invoke the gods and ancestors as well as participate in the preparation of necessary materials for the covenant ceremony. Also in some cases, the parties concerned are to come with their witness. These witnesses will attest to the facts of the covenant if anything should happen afterwards.

people concerned will be made to cross the makeshift bridge, with a declaration that whosoever breaks the covenant will fall into the pit which signifies endless problems.<sup>311</sup>

In Igboland, the idea of oath taking was already in vogue before the birth of Christianity in their land. The type of works and business Igbos engaged gave birth to oath taking or *Igba ndu*. They are basically skilled in merchandising, and indulge in agriculture and other economic activities. By the nature of their activities and interactions, there is a high level of socio-economic interaction among them and even beyond their borders, hence such interactions can and most times give room for mutual and peaceful co-existence as well as mistrust and conflict. Hence the need to institute an idea which can help sustain peaceful co-existence of a lasting time led to *Igba ndu*. This practice emanated not only out of fear of the unknown, especially with the knowledge that man is inherently wicked, hence to check on the will of men, covenants or *Igba ndu* is entered into to help safeguard the life and confidence of the parties that have entered into the agreement. Another reason for the *Igba ndu* is as a result of man's desire to maintain peace, orderliness and harmonious living among themselves, hence where such is existing there is the need to consolidate such harmony among peoples. It (*Igba ndu*) was regarded as a very sacred event as well as the last resort in dispute resolution. People usually swore by the gods, in a shrine, before the Chief Priest and the public; and it was believed that anybody who swore falsely before the gods will certainly die within a year. Since experience have proved that many who committed perjury before the gods died within one year, surviving more than a year after oath taking was deemed a proof of one's innocence. Hence the people held oath taking in high regard as they considered it a reliable means to finding the truth of the matter at any point in time. In addition to proving the veracity of a claim, oaths are also taken by business partners who want to ensure that they do not cheat each other. Only marriages backed by an oath are both inseparable and indissoluble. Hence, even with the growth of Christianity, the people still revere oath taking before the gods as a tested and trusted means to prove the fact and guide against fraud.

As the Igbo traditional society developed, numerous cases of betrayal, treachery, outright wickedness, mutual suspicion, theft, armed robbery murder, homicide, incest etc. led the people

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<sup>311</sup> <http://ohuzo.blogspot.de/2009/03/igba-ndu-in-igboland.html>

to rely heavily on oath taking as a reliable way to restore, once again, the mutual trust that once existed among one another. Over time, the Igbos developed a series of oaths system which cemented the new relationships and built a new basis for trust. By the oaths the Igbo implored the supernatural beings in whose names the oaths were sworn to be the monitors and the enforcers of the bonds that they were creating.<sup>312</sup>

The taking of oaths for building trust in one another was so important since man's nature is often selfishly influenced by his desires for survival, dominance and control over his environment which time without number has led to conflicts with one another. Such conflicts could attain the dangerous dimension of taking of lives, physical and spiritual injuries or material destruction. This has time without number given room to suspicion. Unfortunately, among the Igbos as well as many parts of African, for every mishap such as accident, illness, death<sup>313</sup>, business failure, visa denial etc., there is always somebody who is alleged to be responsible for it.

The practice is still common in Igboland despite the widespread of Christianity. But in some communities, the process has been modified to accommodate religious differences. In such places, the Holy Bible is provided for Christians while the traditional religionists prefer a local juju symbol for their oath taking. Some issues may require all the adults in a village to take an oath one after another. When such is the case, absenteeism during swearing ceremonies is a very serious offence. Any absentee automatically becomes a suspect. It could be indirectly interpreted as a plea bargain. During the actual swearing, close attention is paid to some "suspects" especially those with questionable character. Often they are made to repeat the words or

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<sup>312</sup> Okwu A.S.O., *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions 1857 - 1957*, p. 51

<sup>313</sup> I was really shocked during one of the burials I presided over on how our people can express their anger when they suspect that one of their relations was killed by somebody. Before the procession to the grave side, the eldest son of the deceased announced that sympathizers should keep away from the grave side. Only certain members of the family were allowed to throw sand into the grave. As officiating priest I was stunned at this attitude of the children of the deceased. The allegation was that most of the sympathizers knew the person who poisoned and caused the death of their father. In fact they came to the funeral not to sympathize but to rejoice at the death of their father. Later I was moved to go the hospital where the deceased was bedridden for almost a year and discovered that he died of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS.

sentences much more distinctly than others. It is strongly believed that if one swears falsely, the truth must be certainly exposed someday, especially within the space of one year. If such a person dies or suffers a big misfortune, the conclusion is that God has punished him. Otherwise the fickle - minded and untrustworthy villagers keep off from evil practice, at least out of fear of God's wrath.<sup>314</sup>

The issue of oath taking in Igboland therefore poses a serious challenge to the catechetical apostolate of the Church in Igboland. For instance, in spite of the provisions of the Bible for Christians and a local juju symbol for the traditional religionists for swearing in some societies, the Igbos in general including Christians, still see a local juju object as being more efficacious than the Bible. They reason that one can escape God's punishment if one swears falsely with the Bible and secretly goes to a church and ask our merciful God for forgiveness. On the contrary, it is believed that such secret negotiation is not possible with the gods. Hence, often fellow Christians insist that other Christians should rather swear (either secretly or publicly) with a local juju symbol even after they had sworn publicly with a Holy Bible or Crucifix. It can even happen that a lay catechist is summoned to appear before a shrine for an oath taking; and he might even be shivering that he might die if he refuses to appear before the shrine and comply accordingly. These issues raised thus far are clear indications that our mission of evangelizing Igboland is not yet accomplished.

#### **2.4 Development in Science and Technology and the Emerging Global Culture**

It was Peter Hodgson who made the incontrovertible assertion that we are in a scientific age.<sup>315</sup> In every part of the world, enough evidence abounds to justify the claim that we are in an age of science and technology. Almost every aspect of contemporary life ranging from our food, clothing, shelter, transportation, to even warfare indicates higher ability to apply scientific knowledge. Indeed, science has to a large extent alleviated (and even eliminated) certain forms of

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<sup>314</sup> Ndiokwere N.I., *Search for Security*, p. 153

<sup>315</sup> Uwaezuoke O.P., "Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance", in: *WAJOPS, West African Journal of Philosophical Studies: Volume 8, December, 2005*, Enugu: Vict. Printing Press, 2005, p.35

human suffering which were serious challenges many years or centuries ago. One good example is the fact that traveling across immense oceans today can be a pleasurable and swift experience in the air. Some sicknesses which were hitherto regarded as mysteries have been stripped bare through medical research. Thus Uwaezuoke was quite correct to maintain that:

Science through its contribution to understanding has liberated people from many forms of ignorance and superstition. Technology liberates them from many physical constraints and insecurities. Medical technology has gone a long way in removing the terror of many diseases and epidemics... Agricultural technologies increase the production of food... Such is the dynamism that science and technology has introduced into the contemporary world, in most cases, altering human history and experience irreversibly.<sup>316</sup>

In fact, through science, we are able to have a better understanding of the nature in which we live. Through its application, our technological know-how has been advanced and by-products used in making life more comfortable and easier. William J. Bausch in affirming the importance of science said: “Life today has changed at all levels. At one time doctors used leeches to draw “bad” blood; now they can replace hearts. At one time we inherited our looks and family resemblances; now cosmetic surgeons can erase any trace of them... In a word, the past is no longer a guide and ancient wisdom is no longer in demand. The older generation, befuddled by the world around it, is asking the younger generation for guidance.”<sup>317</sup> Things thought unimaginable twenty years ago are now possible.

Unfortunately, given that science has made much pragmatic progress, a lot of people tend to view life narrowly and exclusively from the viewpoint of scientific pragmatism. Adherents of such views not only look down on religion, but also insist that religion and science are diametrically opposed. They think there is no meeting point between religion and science. Interestingly, some reputable scientists like Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton have disagreed with such antagonistic perception of religion and science. They think that religion and science are (and should remain) mutually complementary rather than irreconcilably opposed. Hence Einstein

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<sup>316</sup> Uwaezuoke O.P., “Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance”, p.35

<sup>317</sup> Bausch W.J., *Brave New Church: From Turmoil to Trust, Mystic: Twenty - Third Publications: 2001*, p. 1

declares: "... I cannot conceive of a genuine scientist without that profound faith. Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."<sup>318</sup> Uwaezuoke in buttressing this point said: "Science gives us the knowledge of our physical world, thereby helping us to subdue the earth, thus fulfilling the injunction given to us by God (Gen. 1: 28). Religion on the other hand gives us the knowledge of the ultimate origin of things and the ultimate purpose of life and existence, thus helping us to find and add meaning to our life."<sup>319</sup>

It is really quite unfortunate that as a result of the progress science has made today in our world together with its high advancement, many tend to relegate religion to the background. Religion for such people is seen as the source of so much evil in the world such as intolerance, fanaticism, bigotry, discrimination, and hostility, mutual condemnation, 'holy war', persecution and many more. Uwaezuoke in confirming this said: "Is it not contradictory then to talk about the values of religion? Religion seems to have no good name - it is the opium of the masses, it is the 'canopy' for the unintelligent, the unsound mind, the foolish, it is prejudistic, it is unobjective, and it causes division. In fact, every act of terrorism is traceable to religion. In the face of these negativities, is it still reasonable to front religion as a positive contributor to human existence?"<sup>320</sup> Similarly, the Second Vatican Council's "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" and the XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization succinctly write: "In our own days not a few, putting an immoderate trust in the conquests of science and technology, turn off into a kind of idolatry of the temporal; they become the slaves of it rather than the masters."<sup>321</sup> In a digitalized and globalized world, science can easily become "our new religion". New forms of gnosis are arising which make technology a form of wisdom where an almost magical approach to life leads to concepts of "knowing" and "meaning", as witnessed in the rise of new

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<sup>318</sup> Uwaezuoke O.P., "Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance", pp. 47 – 48

<sup>319</sup> Uwaezuoke O.P., "Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance", p. 48

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>321</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18 November, 1965, no. 7

cults, which exploit the religious practices of healing, readily followed by people, and are structured as religions promising prosperity and instant gratification.”<sup>322</sup>

Consequently, some people accuse science as practiced today of being deceptive, and destroying their faith. For them, science in some of its practice is ungodly. For instance, the case of evolution and cloning<sup>323</sup> by scientists like American physicist Robert Seed seems to be a case of man attempting to play God. This has been condemned by many observers who are alarmed at man’s incapacity to deal commandingly with nature or by his alleged attempt to play God. To some religious apologists, human creation is exclusively God’s prerogative and “this comes down to God’s created order that we marry and produce children through His ordained means of procreation. Human cloning goes against this and risks the manipulation and murder of another human life. Therefore, the cloning of full human beings would be wrong since it rebels against God’s created order of having a mother and a father, of using the God-ordained procreative means, and usurps God’s sovereign right to be the author of the life in the womb”<sup>324</sup>. Therefore, any attempt by man to infringe upon this right is termed ungodly. Omoregbe reacting against the cloning of the human beings said: "To clone man means like starting poultry for the manufacturing of human beings. It means we are now treating human beings like animals and we are degrading mankind if such is allowed. It is an encroachment on God’s right over creation; Chances are that we might also create monsters in the process of trying to create man.”<sup>325</sup>

In fact, on so many issues, we can safely conclude that “the results of science and the beliefs of religion had come into a position of frank disagreement from which there can be no

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<sup>322</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”, no. 58

<sup>323</sup> Cloning is the process of taking genetic information (DNA) from the cells of an organism and placing the DNA into another cell, thereby hopefully causing that cell to form into a copy of the original organism. This can be done naturally (i.e., twins) or using technology with plants and animals.

<sup>324</sup> <https://carm.org/cloning>

<sup>325</sup> Omoregbe J., “*Cloning, God and Evolution*”, In: Fadahunsi A (ed.), *Philosophy, Science and Technology*, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2003, pp. 77-78

escape, except by abandoning either the clear teaching of science or the clear teaching of religion”.<sup>326</sup> This is because Science has been accused of being ungodly in its manufacturing of products that aid, encourage and promote abortion, euthanasia, war equipment etc. Till date, the church does not find it easy with science. She is battling with the intrusion of modern civilization which has tended to demolish what goodness is left in the traditional religion and Christianity. Rose Njoku confirms this when she remarks that: “Every dogma is now placed on the table of research. What cannot be scientifically proved is left at the mercy of ruthless criticism. The “Bible” continues to receive various and varying controversial interpretations. The joy of parenthood and love of children, which are the mainstay of our traditional society and blessed by Christianity are presently subjected to controversial intellectual debates. Traditional sanctions are discredited. Moral teaching of the Church is thrown over - board. Social environment influence has its grip on both young and old”.<sup>327</sup> All these matters arising from scientific development have serious consequences for our contemporary society, and pose serious challenges to both evangelization and catechesis. It would be foolhardy for the Church to think that we can wish away these problems. There is now need more than ever to match these developments with training of the agents of evangelization, especially lay catechist, who as at now have little or no weapon to engage in the confrontation which the new face of science and technology demands.

#### **2.4.1 Globalization of culture**

It was John Paul II who described Globalization as a many-faceted reality in which the various parts of the world are increasingly drawn into a tighter configuration through the increasing volume and rapidity of the flows of money, goods, people, information, technology, and images, to form just one global village.<sup>328</sup> Many thanks to globalization for all the good it

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<sup>326</sup> Uwaezuoke O.P., "Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance", in WAJOPS West African Journal of Philosophical Studies, p. 36

<sup>327</sup> Njoku R.A., *The Advent of the Catholic Church in Nigeria: Its Growth in Owerri Diocese*, Owerri: Assumpta Press, 1980, pp. 307 – 308

<sup>328</sup> John Paul II. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America *Ecclesia in America*, 22 January 1999, arts, 20, 55

has brought to our society: the quantum leap in communication and transportation, the impressive global markets, availability of global financial institution for borrowing etc. The means of communication are more rapid, distance between men has been more or less conquered, people in every part of the globe have become as members of a single family.<sup>329</sup> John Paul II admits that globalization offers the advantage of bringing peoples and cultures closer together; it does make available an infinite number of messages. His message for the celebration of World Day of Peace, given on 1 January 2000 is worth mentioning: "Globalization ... offers exceptional and promising opportunities, precisely with a view to enabling humanity to become a single family, built on the values of justice, equity and solidarity."<sup>330</sup> Similarly, John Paul II does not overlook the Internet, which is rightly described as the prime engine of technological globalization. Hence, he admonishes that just like other communications media, "The Internet can offer magnificent opportunities for evangelization if used with competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses. Above all, by providing information and stirring interest it makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian message, especially among the young who increasingly turn to the world of cyberspace as a window on the world."<sup>331</sup> Indeed, Globalization has really integrated the world such that interactions become quicker and easier, and what happens in a local neighbourhood becomes easily influenced by factors operating at an indefinite distance away from the neighbourhood itself. Nowadays, communication is really not a problem. Within a twinkling of an eye; through such means like Skype, What's up, Viber, Facebook etc., what happened in the USA or Australia can get across to the remotest part of Africa and vice versa.

John Paul II while acknowledging the positive values of globalization does not, however, lose sight of its side effects. Hence, he criticizes the current global economy by insisting that:

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<sup>329</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 8

<sup>330</sup> <http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/mbila.htm>

<sup>331</sup> <http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/mbila.htm>

It does not in itself guarantee a fair distribution of goods among the citizens of different countries. What happens is that the wealth produced is often concentrated in the hands of a small group of persons that bring about a further weakening of the sovereignty of national states.

... The decisions concerning the future of the whole planet are taken solely by a small group of nations. Other nations either succeed to concord those decisions with the interests of their citizens, or, as it happen with the weakest countries, they try painfully to cope with the situation.

... Economic globalization has also worked to the detriment of the poor, tending to push poorer countries to the margin of international economic and political relations. In reality, the wealth produced often leads up to a global system governed by a few centres in the hands of private individuals. And many nations from the Southern Hemisphere are not strong enough to hold their own in a global market economy.

... The current globalization does not favour a process of discernment and mature synthesis, but fosters a relativist attitude which makes it more difficult to accept Christ as the way, the truth and the life for everyone. There is, in fact, a great danger for globalization to be just another name for absolute relativization of values and the homogenization of lifestyles and cultures. The internet as an illustration, being a forum in which practically everything is acceptable and almost nothing is lasting, favours a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes feeds the flight from personal responsibility and commitment.<sup>332</sup>

The negative influence of globalization in Igboland - Nigeria as well as in Africa cannot be overemphasized. It has led our society, through its evil of mono - culture, into a misunderstanding of civilization as technological and infrastructural progress devoid of human integrity, values and sound morality. The family and marriage institutions seem to be the worst hit by the negative influences of globalization, with humanistic manifestoes that emphasize negative freedom: absolute autonomy and relativism. Thus, family where life, love, peace and harmony should reign supreme has unfortunately become a home of acrimony, hatred and

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<sup>332</sup> <http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/mbila.htm>

greatest threat to life.<sup>333</sup> Hence, the XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the "New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" has this to say:

The coalescing of social and cultural factors - conventionally designated by the term "globalization" - has initiated a process which is weakening traditions and institutions and thereby rapidly eroding both social and cultural ties as well as their ability to communicate values and provide answers to perennial questions regarding life's meaning and the truth. The result is a significant fragmentation of cultural unity and a culture's inability to hold fast to the faith and live the values inspired by it. The effects of such a negative environment on experiencing the faith and on the various forms of ecclesial life are generally described in the same manner in all the responses, namely, a weakening of faith in Christian communities, a diminished regard for the authority of the magisterium, an individualistic approach to belonging to the Church, a decline in religious practice and a disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations. These effects, found in almost every bishops' conference response, indicate that the whole Church cannot overlook this cultural climate.<sup>334</sup>

The African family is currently in a deep crisis. The inter-play of cultures and civilization had obfuscated and upturned African cultures as a whole and family life in particular. The old habit of care for the aged, the poor and the helpless has been eroded and replaced with the Western - type attitude of selfishness and self-centeredness. African communalism has given way to individualism. In the traditional African Society, the extended family institution was highly cherished. The care of children was the responsibility of the whole community i.e. the Ujamaa Spirit.<sup>335</sup> The problem of unwed mothers, the phenomenon of foster homes and the presence of

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<sup>333</sup> Obi M.C., "In Defense and Preservation of our Sole Foundation", in: *Focus Magazine*, Volume 16; December 2014 -December 2015, p. 4

<sup>334</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, pp. 14-15; Cf. also Vatican II Documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 1&4; *Lumen Gentium*, no.2

<sup>335</sup> In trying to bring back this traditional African "work - spirit", Julius Nyerere has proposed the philosophy of Ujamaa. Ujamaa, in the literal sense means "togetherness" "Familyhood". Family here does not depend on consanguinity. It depicts a "community spirit" of togetherness which considers all people as "brothers". In Africa, brotherhood is real and concretely based on family - hood, that is, it is situated in the family where the welfare of

street children which are all too common in Africa of today, would have been considered a sacrilege in the pre-European African World.

The practice of parents having to first seek the consent of their children before paying them a visit was alien to African life. Care for the aged and the infirm was the norm. In turn, the training and nurturing of children was the responsibility of all. It was uncommon to find children abandoned in or on the roadside. Where such ever happened the culprits were fished out and appropriate sanctions applied to stem such social misconducts. Kinship and family life were strong bonds that welded the people into one strong chord that was not easily broken. This explains the opinions of people like Uwaezuoke that the incidence of the desecration of the extended family system is what has led to the crises we are now experiencing in many homes in modern Africa. Many African communities are witnessing a tremendous increase in the incidence of divorce and re-marriages; there is the neglect of children issuing from such marriages; there is also the problem of school drop-outs, child-prostitution, drug addiction, violent crimes, etc. These are all resultant effects of a befuddled family life. The violence, chaos and social disorder in ... Nigeria, the religious riots and destruction of lives in ... Nigeria, the phenomena of tribal militias ...in Nigeria, etc., are offshoots of collapsed or collapsing family institution.<sup>336</sup> All these problems saw the light of the day through the birth of globalization and they are really a serious challenge to effective catechesis in Igboland.

#### **2.4.2 Secularism and Secularization and their Impacts on the Church in Igboland**

Secularism prior to 1648 had been used to denote one side of Christian distinctions between sacred and mundane. In the Catholic Church secular priests were those serving society at large rather than a religious order. But in our modern understanding, secularism is the principle of the separation of government institutions and persons mandated to represent the State from religious

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each individual becomes the direct concern of the members of the “clan vital”. Cf. Potholm C.P., *The History and Practice of African Politics*, New Jersey, Prince - Hall, Inc., 1976, p. 76. See also Onwubiko O.A., *African Thought, Religion and Culture* (Vol. 1), Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 1991, p. 17

<sup>336</sup> Uwaezuoke O.P., *Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance*, in: WAJOBS West African Journal of Philosophical Studies, pp. 119 – 120

institutions and religious dignitaries. Secularism can also be described as asserting the right to be free from religious rules and teachings or, in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people; or, as a view that public activities and decisions, especially political ones, should be uninfluenced by religious beliefs and/or practices.

The purposes and arguments in support of secularism vary widely. In European laicism,<sup>337</sup> it has been argued that secularism is a movement toward modernization, and away from traditional religious values (also known as secularization). This type of secularism, on a social or philosophical level, has often occurred while maintaining an official State Church or other State support of religion. In the United States of America, some argue that State secularism has served to a greater extent to protect religion and the religious from governmental interference, while secularism on a social level is less prevalent. Within countries as well, differing political movements support secularism for varying reasons.<sup>338</sup> Secularism has also been accepted as a normative model and integral part of the modern constitutional State. The concepts are, however, very heterogeneous with regard to the degree of separation between State and religion. In Europe for example, Germany has a system of concord which provides among other things that the State's fiscal authorities levy a tax on behalf of the Church and that Christian holidays enjoy legal protection. Religious education is a statutory school subject, and crucifixes can be found on the walls of schools and courtrooms in many of the traditionally Catholic regions in Germany. Moreover, in contrast to Turkey, political parties are permitted to base their programs on religious ideas (as in the case, for example, of the Christian democratic parties, CDU/CSU). Also

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<sup>337</sup> The term "laicism" refers to an anticlerical worldview and ideology that are based on secular processes. It provides for a strict institutional separation of political and religious authority. Accordingly, unlike under secularism, the laicist state keeps completely out of all religious matters. The French understanding of laicism is especially rigid: no crucifixes may be displayed in public buildings, e.g., courts, hospitals, and schools, as this would discriminate against non-Christians. Due to this obligation of neutrality, headscarves may no longer be worn in schools. Laicism is further distinguished from secularism by the fact that no state support is provided to religious groups. cf. Karakas C. Turkey: Islam and Laicism Between the Interests of State, Politics, and Society, Frankfurt: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2007, P. 7

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Secularism in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/secularization>

interesting is the idea of secularism in Great Britain, where the Anglican State Church emerged in the 16th century. The head of the Anglican Church is not the Pope but rather the British Head of State, i.e., currently, Queen Elizabeth II. The State church enjoys certain privileges - for example, the bishops of the Anglican Church are members of the upper house of the British Parliament. At the same time, canon law is part of the temporal legal system, and bishops are appointed jointly by the Prime Minister and the Head of State. These examples demonstrate that an apodictic separation of state and religion is not a prerequisite for a functioning democracy. While all these countries possess a secular system of law, none of them is laicist.<sup>339</sup>

Secularization also before 1648 had referred to the dispensation of priests from their vows. After the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia<sup>340</sup> ended the European wars of religion, secularization was used to describe the transfer of territories held by the church to the control of political authorities. By the end of nineteenth century, however, it had come to refer to the shifting place of religion in society which many scholars associated with modernization.<sup>341</sup> The precise date of when the secularization started is always so problematic. For example, neither the Reformation nor the European settlement of 1648 alone ushered in clear - cut of secularization. Its proponents would acknowledge that they rarely supply precise dates, although this is no great problem. Watershed events such as the American and French revolutions clearly do mark advances in secularization in those societies. Also after the Reformation, Christianity could no longer integrate Europe as evidenced by the religious hatred produced by Martin Luther and his numerous enemies, unity of the nation became the watchword of those who sought security in unity and certainty in uniformity. Thus, the extremes of nationalism became the substitute for religious loyalty in most

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<sup>339</sup> Karakas C., *Turkey: Islam and Laicism Between the Interests of State, Politics, and Society*, P. 7

<sup>340</sup> Westphalia or Westphalia (German: Westfalen pronounced (vest'fa:lən), Westphalian: Wäästfaln) is a region in Germany, centred on the cities of Arnsberg, Bielefeld, Osnabrück, Dortmund, Minden, and Münster.

<sup>341</sup> Modernization in sociology is the transformation from a traditional, rural, agrarian society to a secular, urban, industrial society. Modernization theory maintains that traditional societies will develop as they adopt more modern practices. Supposedly, instead of being dominated by tradition, societies undergoing the process of modernization typically arrive at forms of governance dictated by abstract principles. Traditional religious beliefs and cultural traits, according to the theory, usually become less important as modernization takes hold. Cf. <http://www.britannica.com/topic/modernization>

European countries and in particular in Germany, the leader in science, art and literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western world.<sup>342</sup> Now secularized society is the characteristic of which is the gradual decline of the sacred and the systematic elimination of religious values.<sup>343</sup> It is a process of removing the influence or power that religion has over something. Benedict XVI in his Encyclical Letter *Verbum Domini* got it right when he succinctly states that: "In a number of cases, nations once rich in faith and vocations are losing their identity under the influence of a secularized culture."<sup>344</sup>

The observation of Benedict XVI is incontrovertible. For instance, in Paris, Sainte - Chappelle, a sanctuary built by a Catholic monarch to house Christ's crown of thorns, stands empty, its aesthetic appeal substituting for its old religious function. Across the Netherlands church buildings no longer needed to serve shrinking congregations have been razed or converted into community centres. In England majestic cathedrals that manifest in stone and glass the splendor of an old faith now often attract more tourists than believers. Where once a sense of the sacred marked the landscape itself, where social order used to be visibly embedded in sacred order, architectural relics attest to a profound change: the vanishing of the supernatural from the affairs of the world, the waning power of religion to shape society at large.<sup>345</sup> In Europe today, some of the Churches instead of being a place for prayer have been turned into museums where majority of the tourists come not to pray but to take pictures. C.A. Van Peursen the Dutch theologian was therefore correct to describe secularization as the deliverance of man: "first from religious and then from metaphysical control over his reason and his language".<sup>346</sup> This can be described as the loosing of the world from religious and quasi - religious understandings of itself,

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<sup>342</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/secularization>

<sup>343</sup> John Paul II, Homily at Ordination of Priests in Rio de Janeiro, 14 July 1980, p.18

<sup>344</sup> Benedict XIV, *Verbum Domini*, No. 96

<sup>345</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/secularization>

<sup>346</sup> Cox H., *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, London: SCM Press: 1965, pp.1-3

the dispelling of all closed world - views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols. It also represents what another observer has called the “defatalization of history,” the discovery by man that he has been left with the world on his hands, that he can no longer blame fortune or the furies for what he does with it”.<sup>347</sup> In fact, Pluralism and tolerance are the children of secularization. They represent a society’s unwillingness to enforce any particular world-view on its citizens. Movements within the Roman Catholic Church culminating in the Second Vatican Council indicate its growing readiness to be open to truth from all sides. Pluralism is breaking out where once a closed system stood. The age of the secular city, the epoch whose ethos is quickly spreading into every corner of the globe, is an age of “no religion at all”. It no longer looks to religious rules and rituals for its morality or its meanings.<sup>348</sup> Secularization, an equally epochal movement, marks a change in the way men grasp and understand their life together, and it occurred only when the cosmopolitan confrontations of city living exposed the relativity of the myths and traditions men once thought were unquestionable.

The effects of secularism and secularization on the Church in Igboland have been quite enormous. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor distinguishes three levels of secularization: the first level is the institutional separation of religion (“the church”) from the state, the second is a palpable decline in the practice of religious rites, such as church attendance and the third is a change in the conditions of belief, the cultural atmosphere, what Taylor terms “the social imaginary.”<sup>349</sup> The observation of Charles Taylor really summarizes secularization and the evidence is clearly seen in our society in Igboland - Nigeria as well as the whole world. From here onward secularization and secularism will be used interchangeably as we handle their effects on the Church in Igboland and Nigeria in general. George Holyoake (1817 - 1906) who first coined the word secularism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century made no distinction between secularization and secularism.

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid

<sup>348</sup> Ibid

<sup>349</sup> Cox H., *The Secular City, United States of America: Princeton University Press*, 2013,P. XVI

The Missions till 1920 were the main factors in the dynamics of the expansion of education in Southern Nigeria in the fields of primary, secondary and teachers' training. The role of the Government from 1903 (in the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria) had been to encourage the Missions by offering guidelines and regulations (Education Codes) for the proper organization and administration of the schools and by grants - in - aid subsidies. So long as those regulations did not negate the principal motive for which the missionaries founded the schools, there was no conflict with the Government especially in Eastern Nigeria.<sup>350</sup> However, from around 1920, the Nigerian Government started making serious moves for a more direct control of Mission Schools. Some reasons have been advanced for this change of policy. One such reason was that the colonial administration was by this time recognizing its obligations to the education of its subjects. It was therefore felt that its indirect role should now yield place to a more direct control if those obligations were to be effectively discharged.<sup>351</sup> Another reason is that the Government believed that secularization of control of schools was the only way to restoring communal harmony and reducing the spiraling cost of education.<sup>352</sup> Now the exaggerated nationalistic ideology, which followed the wake of Nigeria Independence in 1960, demanded a monopolization of education by the state. The ultra-nationalists therefore, "... think that the continued mission control of education represents a perpetration of foreign interests ... Such people believe that the minds and mentalities of the young generation of Nigerians should no longer be subject to formation by the church, which for them represents foreign interests. The mentality germinated into intrigues and plots to expropriate the schools from the church".<sup>353</sup> We can observe from the above that nationalization of education and state monopolistic control of it

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<sup>350</sup> Onwubiko K.B.C., "*The Catholic Church and The Development of Education in Eastern Nigeria (1885 - 1984)*", in: Obi, C.A, *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 - 1985*, Onitsha: Africana - FEP Publishers Limited, 1985, p.254

<sup>351</sup> Ibid

<sup>352</sup> Onwubiko K.B.C., "*The Catholic Church and The Development of Education in Eastern Nigeria (1885 - 1984)*", in: Obi C.A. (ed.) *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 - 1985*, Onitsha: p. 265

<sup>353</sup> Okpaloka P.O., "*The Role of the Church in Nigeria Education in the Light of Vatican Council II and the 1983 Code of Canon Law*", in: Udoye E.A, *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011, p.257

had a secularistic interest. Since school and evangelization were run simultaneously, the secularists advocated educational policy that would insulate the role of the church. Secularism with its pursuit of pragmatic and utilitarian ideologies regarded only the materialistic aspect of education, forgetting that a true education should be human. Above all, education must vitally respond to the material, spiritual and religious needs of man. But it is an indisputable fact that man being created in the image and likeness of God is a composite of material as well as psycho-spiritual; therefore that the material and the spiritual aspect of man ought to be taken care of; cannot be overemphasized. This the Federal Government could not realize as they monopolized schools shortly after the Nigeria /Biafra civil war.<sup>354</sup> They did not know that religion “has enabled many people to see some meaning and purpose in their lives. By providing man with a worldview and describing man’s place within the scheme of things, religion enables many people (who believe in it) to see human life as meaningful and purposeful, thus providing them with a sense of direction in life. Many frustrated people have found meaning and consolation when they turn to religion. There would have been many more cases of suicide if religion were not there to provide consolation, meaning and courage to frustrated people who have come to see their lives as meaningless and not worth living. ...Besides providing many people with meaning and sense of purpose in life, religion fulfills another important function in society, namely, that of teaching and encouraging morality.”<sup>355</sup> They also fail to realize that “without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. In the face of the enormous problems surrounding the development of peoples, which almost make us yield to discouragement, we find solace in the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches us: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).<sup>356</sup>

Nevertheless, the Federal Government of Nigeria promulgated her edict which eventually tied all private agencies’ hands from school management and this culminated in the arbitrary

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<sup>354</sup> Nigeria Civil war lasted from July 6, 1967 till January 12, 1970.

<sup>355</sup> Omoregbe J., *A Philosophical Look at Religion*, Ikeja, Joja Press Limited, 1993, Pp.301-302

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Vatican City, 29 June, 2009, no.78

taking over of all schools by the Military Government of Nigeria. It became therefore a real welcome opportunity that the ex - patriate missionaries were all expelled from the land... For the Catholics in particular, the conversion of their chapels into classroom in Awgu, Eastern Nigeria for instance was most annoying and the height of disrespect for sacred matters. This gross indiscipline caused a stir among Catholics all over Nigeria. The Military was bent on seizing the schools but insisted on technological development and reawakening of culture through the new programme of education, no matter how it was achieved. In the time of the missionaries, schools were the major arms of conversion and evangelization but this time around, the government wanted to strike the balance and the end justified the means whatsoever.<sup>357</sup>

It is really contradictory for some people to try to elbow God and religion out of schools... and then turn round and say that we want good citizens. We cannot get good citizens without religion being seriously taught and practiced.<sup>358</sup> Religion answers the question as to whether or not human life is worth living. It also teaches and encourages the practice of morality by providing people with the incentives to do so. The importance of morality in our society cannot be over emphasized. Without it life may become brutal, short and nasty. Religion creates in man an aversion for moral evil and a sense of humility. And we know humility is the basis and hallmark of good leadership. There cannot be selfless leadership without the spirit of humility and selflessness in the leader. Therefore, humility and leadership go hand in glove. Religion has also produced saints in every part of the world, and has also helped to inculcate in people the spirit of self-discipline and dedicated service to one's fellow men.<sup>359</sup>

Donald Cardinal Wuerl describing the importance of religion narrates thus:

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<sup>357</sup> Chigere N.H.M.V., *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland*, Owerri: Living Flame Resources, 2013, pp.318 – 320

<sup>358</sup> Catholic Bishops, Pastoral Letter, in: Obi C.A. (ed.) *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 - 1985*, p. 270

<sup>359</sup> Uwaezuoke O. P., "Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance", in: *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, December, 2005, Vol.8, p.46

A number of years ago I was invited to speak at the Catholic Center at Harvard University. The designated theme was “The Role of Faith in a Pluralistic Society. As the conclusion of my presentation, a skeptical professor who self - identified as an atheist and who taught in the law school was the first to present a question. He asked, “What do you people think you bring to our society?” The reference to “you people” was to the front row of the audience that was made up of representatives of a variety of religious traditions, all of whom were in their appropriate identifiable robes. Since he was a lawyer, I asked if he would mind if I answered his question with a question of my own. When he nodded in agreement, I asked: “What do you think the world would be like if it were not for the voices of all of those religious traditions represented in the hall? What would it be like if we did not hear voices in the midst of the community saying, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness? What would our culture be like had we not heard religious imperatives such as love your neighbor as yourself, do unto others as you would have them do to you? How much more harsh would our land be if we did not grow up hearing, blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the peacemakers? What would the world be like had we never been reminded that someday we will have to answer to God for our actions?” To his credit, the man who asked the question smiled broadly and said, “It would be a mess!”<sup>360</sup>

In fact, the Nigeria Government did not realize the importance of religion till after the expulsion of the foreign missionaries. The Government official takeover of schools brought everything to halt and registered a serious setback in our country Nigeria. In fact the Nigerian education system has degenerated into a mess as a consequence of that ill-advised seizure and secularization of mission schools. The quote of William Butler Yeats (1865 - 1939) in his Poem, “The Second Coming”, aptly describes the influence of secularization and secularism in our country Nigeria. Without fear of contradiction, since the Government takeover of schools, “things have really fallen apart and the centre cannot again hold”<sup>361</sup> in our Nigerian educational system.

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<sup>360</sup>Donald Cardinal Wuerl, “The Challenges and Joys of the New Evangelization”; in <http://saltandlighttv.org/blog/twitter/the-challenges-and-joys-of-the-new-evangelization>

<sup>361</sup> Yeats W.B., “The Second Coming”, in: Achebe, C., *Things Fall Apart*, New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1994, P.i

The effects are glaringly seen in our schools and among our youths. The institutional separation of religion (“the church”) from the State in Nigeria did not take long before we started witnessing the repercussions both in secular and religious sectors of life. It has been observed that since the State take-over of schools in 1970, certain new and unwelcome characteristics hitherto foreign to the school environment before the 1970 have emerged in the behavioural patterns of the products of the State school system and teachers generally. As a result, many parents and guardians are openly questioning the rationale of the State take-over of schools. Some have even gone to the extent of saying that the take-over has done more harm than good to the society and education. This is so when one compares the school of today with the system before the State take-over of schools. For according to Rose Njoku, “Prior to the State take-over of schools, the daily activities did not end with the end of school hours. Besides, the three Rs, emphasis was laid in religious instruction. The girls learnt from this hour stage to develop the love of morning Masses which was the direct influence of the Sisters who looked after them as Mothers. Emphasis was also laid on character training and girls were grouped either as members of junior Presidium of the Legion of Mary or members of the Children of Mary. Appropriate devotions were observed and there is great evidence that these early Convent girls who received this early regulated life are not yet surpassed as model house wives and ideal Christian mothers in our society today.”<sup>362</sup>

Today on the part of primary school pupils and students of secondary schools, one notices such unfortunate developments as falling standards of education, examination malpractices, revolting and immoral habits, indiscipline, dishonesty, drug abuse and above all, a growing sense of irreligion arising from little or no knowledge of the Christian religion or even the good norms of traditional religion. Some children pass through the primary and secondary schools without developing moral and religious conscience which are necessary ingredient in the character of a good citizen. It is believed that the negligence of the proper teaching of religion in the state schools accounts for the moral delinquency, armed robbery and a host of other vices which are on

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<sup>362</sup> Njoku R.A, *The Advent of the Catholic Church in Nigeria: Its Growth in Owerri Diocese*, Owerri - Nigeria: Assumpta Press, 1980, pp. 109 – 110

the rise among our present - day youth.<sup>363</sup> Also lamenting on the religious indifference on the part of younger generation because of the influence of secularism, Aloysius Orakwe points out some of the nonchalant attitudes identifiable in the youth. Their aversion to religion and God is noticeable on Sundays as many are seen playing football, jogging, washing their cloths and doing all manner of things save attending Sunday masses. Social activities take their time on Sundays. The university undergraduates consider it funny going to Church on Sunday while their mates are in the field “enjoying” themselves.<sup>364</sup> It is this kind of religious distancing that secularism and secularization has ushered into our society. It is destroying human values, religious values and corporate human society.

It is also believed that the Federal Government’s takeover of schools accounts for the lapses in behavior and character among the state school teachers. There is a general consensus that the pupils and students mirror the behavioural patterns of many of their teachers especially the post - civil war products of our teachers’ training colleges, many of whom are known to be patently undisciplined, incorrigibly insubordinate to authority, live immoral lives, lack devotion to duty, engage in dishonest practices with students in examinations, have little or no regard for religion and therefore cannot and do not teach it, much less live it.<sup>365</sup> In fact, the Federal Government’s takeover of schools is also responsible for anti - clerical manifestation in forms of violent attacks against the clergy, vandalism of Church’s property and seizure of the Church’s property which have been witnessed in recent years against the clergy and the Church in Igboland and other parts of Nigeria. Vanguard Newspaper reports it thus:

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<sup>363</sup> Onwubiko K.B.C., “*The Catholic Church and The Development of Education in Eastern Nigeria (1885 - 1984)*”, in: Obi, C.A. (ed.) *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 - 1985*, p. 270

<sup>364</sup> Cf. Orakwe A., “*Youth and Evangelization in the Church Today*”, in: Udoye E.A, *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011. P. 258

<sup>365</sup> Onwubiko K.B.C., “*The Catholic Church and The Development of Education in Eastern Nigeria (1885 - 1984)*”, in: Obi C.A. (ed.) *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885 - 1985*, p. 270

No fewer than six persons, including four Anglican priests, were on Friday allegedly beaten to stupor by some members of task - force working with the Enugu State Housing Corporation.... The development, which is building up tension in Enugu, the State capital is coming one week to the end of Governor Sullivan Chime's administration... that trouble started when members of the task force, accompanied by armed policemen, invaded a parcel of land belonging to the Christ Church, Uwani, Anglican Communion, sparking off anger from both clergymen and members of the Church. The Clerics were said to have tried to stop the task force from carrying out the demolition exercise but were over powered by the government agents, who allegedly unleashed terror on the Church leaders.<sup>366</sup>

Still on prevalent cases of secularism in Nigeria in general and Igboland in particular, B.A.C Obiefuna narrates some horrible experiences as follows:

It is not hidden, however, that church compounds, especially the Church buildings, presbyteries, and chapels are sacred places. These sacred places have not in the main been treated as such as some churches and chapels have been looted and barricaded in broad daylight...; presbyteries have been placed under lock making it impossible for the priests to either go in or come out. Sometimes... priests are forced out of the presbytery by throwing out the priests' property. One can immediately think of what happened at different times in Oraeri, Ugwuoba, Ebenebe, and Nibo, all in the Catholic diocese of Awka. Other dioceses have one case like that or the other. The use of the masquerades (a purely sacred institution for entertainment and social control in Africa) to invade and vandalize Church sacred places is becoming not only frequent but also disturbing, as they are often very destructive of Church property. It is equally disturbing because it is members of the Church that prod the masquerade to attack the Church. That was the case in Ekwulobia (St Joseph), Agulu (Madonna), and, in Amakwa Ozubulu (Children of God Covenant Ministry, a Pentecostal Church).<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Igata F., Vanguard Newspaper May 23, 2015

<sup>367</sup> Obiefuna B.A.C., „*The Catholic Youth in the Collaborative Ministry of the Church in Nigeria*”, in: Obinwa I.M.C, *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd, 2006, p.196

There are many cases of armed robbery in the Church or rectory where thieves broke in, beat up and tied up priests and carted away money and properties. Nowadays most priests do not sleep in the Father's houses after their annual bazaar sales or any fund raising. The same thing applies to most parish priests in big urban parishes. Churches and Adoration ground for some people are no more places of worship but places of stealing. The days are gone when women could leave behind their handbags on the benches or seats during the offertory. Cases of snatching of cars from priests, even when they were driving wearing their cassock are no longer news. Every now and then, Catholic priests and pastors from the Protestant denominations have been reportedly kidnapped by rogues demanding fabulous amount of money for their ransom.

These scenarios are the reverse of the former times where priests are taken as "lords" and their words, command and opinion, final. Today priests are opposed and challenged publicly, and sometimes charged to court. The privileges and respectability accruing from institutionalized priesthood are fading away continuously. Things are no longer as it was, as secularist's infiltration of ideas permeates the society. The church oriented religion has become therefore a marginal phenomenon in modern society as it plays a decreasing role in offering meaning to individual's life pattern.<sup>368</sup>

Also unlike in the days of old, the rate at which married couples divorce nowadays has become glaringly disheartening. Many reasons have been posited to explain why this is so, while the Church (the Catholic Church in particular) has fought and continues to fight against this issue of divorce. Many legal systems, social and religious organizations of our increasingly secularized world have endorsed it even at the slightest provocation. One can boldly say that the respect the Christian religion had in the past has drastically reduced. Uwaeuoke observers that: "In our higher institutions, there is increasingly a drop in the number of people who offer religion as a major course. As for the few number who offer it as a major course, the greater percentage of them are those who are pushed there as the only alternative since they could not get their "dream" courses. Even when it is placed as an 'elective' for other departments, few people if any choose it. From the primary schools to the higher institutions, there are different kinds of incentives and

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<sup>368</sup> Luckmann T., *The Invisible Religion*, New York, 1967, pp. 15 - 38

scholarship foundations both from individuals and governments for science inclined students. I am yet to see any incentive whatsoever for students of religion. Even at graduation, no employer of labor regards them, because they cannot contribute meaningfully to their economies or organizations, so they erroneously believe. This speaks much of the level of regard placed on religion in our country, continent and indeed our global world”.<sup>369</sup> This is the environment many of our catechists are carrying out their daily task without being properly trained, if they are trained at all.

## **2.5 The Baptized but unconverted Christians**

It is a thing of joy and celebration that the Catholic Church in Nigeria especially in Igboland has witnessed an exodus of members from the Traditional Religion to Christianity. Every now and then in Igboland, we are witnessing new parishes being created and more parishes are still in demand. Parish Churches are being rebuilt to accommodate the Christians coming to worship. More than one mass is celebrated on Sundays in other to accommodate Parish-worshippers. A visit to adoration grounds will convince anyone that Christianity has come to stay in Igboland. However, the Christian faith of these teeming crowds is easily exposed as either weak or little in the face of very little challenges of life. Hence, Chukwudum Okolo rightly observes that:

As a matter of fact, in many nations of Black Africa, for instance, in nearly all Christian denominations, there are no problems about the numbers who go to Church on Sunday and externally (for many of them, sincerely and seriously) profess the Christian faith but in reality their practical beliefs, lives, loyalties, fears, joys, sorrows, etc. are securely anchored in the ethic of their traditional religion. We find many African Christians who have apparently turned their backs on traditional religion, relapsing into it particularly at crisis periods, leading in practice lives of superstition, magic, charms, talisman, etc. prohibited by their new faith. It is simply a life of religious ambiguity for many African Christians, half Christians, and half traditional religionists.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Uwaezuoke O. P., “Science, Religion and the Conflict in the Quest for Relevance”, in: *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, December, 2005, Vol.8, p.35

<sup>370</sup> Okolo B., *African Traditional Religion and Christianity: The Neglected Dimension*, pp. 15-16

Okolo's observation applies both to the first generation of Igbo converts, as well as the present generation. The first generation of Igbo converts to Christianity faced the very arduous challenge of completely abandoning elements of their culture which missionaries considered incompatible with the Christian faith. Elizabeth Isichei, one of the foremost historians to write on the history of Igboland, was right to maintain that the “first generation Igbo Christians were characterized by the great fervor with which they practiced their new religion and by a marked tendency to syncretism, that is, to practice elements of the old and the new simultaneously, with no apparent sense of inconsistency.”<sup>371</sup> On this issue, V. Lanternari identifies the three motives of the tendency to syncretism among African converts to Christianity as (i) the need for self - reaffirmation, (ii) self-renewal and, (iii) the appropriation of the European spiritual forces. Correspondingly, there are advantages for the converts, which are (i) cultural continuation, (ii) expansion, and, (iii) empowerment.<sup>372</sup>

It is pathetic that after the Church in Igboland has celebrated her centenary anniversary, that syncretism still exists even among her active members. Indeed, after a hundred years, the planted seeds have begun to yield fruits. It is undeniable that in any part of Igboland there stand out in eloquent testimony, obvious monumental contributions of the missionaries in the field of Education, Hospitals, Maternity homes, Church Buildings, Orphanages, and other services.<sup>373</sup> However one question left unanswered is: Can the Church in Igboland boast of solid faith of the adherents and good morals among the Christians within her evangelical life activities? In an answer to questions like this, Godfrey Onah writes:

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<sup>371</sup>Isichei E., “*Seven Varieties of Ambiguity: Some patterns of Igbo Response to Christian Missions,*” in Korieh C. J and Nwokeji G.U., eds., *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria (Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu)*, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005, p. 21

<sup>372</sup> Lanternari V., “*Les Mouvements Religieux des Peuples Oppressi,*” , in: Korieh C. J and Nwokeji G.U., ed., *Religion, History, And Politics in Nigeria (Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu)*, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005, p. 21

<sup>373</sup> Onuh C.O., *Christianity and the Igbo Rites of Passage: The Prospects of Inculturation*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991, p. 2

Nearly all our church buildings have become too small for the teeming population of Christians surging to them for worship and devotion day in, day out. Yet these same Christians are in the offices embezzling; in the markets cheating and swindling; on the highways robbing and killing; in the homes and brothels fornicating and desecrating the matrimonial beds; in the clinics aborting; in the law courts lying; at the boarders smuggling; at the 'juju' shrines apostatizing; in the secret societies syncretizing.<sup>374</sup>

The claims of Onah are further corroborated by an embarrassing encounter between a Catholic Priest and a native doctor as narrated by Rose Njoku:

A Priest told her [Rose Njoku] ... that one early morning, on his way to say Mass in his home station, he met a familiar "dibia" (juju Priest) with his usual miniature hand woven boat like basket, containing various items for traditional sacrifice and live chick as victim. Being an elder whom he knew very well, he greeted him familiarly and asked him where he was going. The dibia wittingly answered, "Nwam ejem ime ihie ahu ije imenu. Ndi nke gi ahu mechakwa ha abia na nkem." (My son, I am going to do that same thing you are also going to do; when some of your followers (Christians) finish with you, they also come to mine).<sup>375</sup>

The claims of these writers are the explanation for the many, in Igboland, who are baptized Christians but not yet actually converted. We cannot deny the fact that Igbo people have really and truly embraced Christianity and in impressive numbers. But one crucial question remains: how faithful are the Christians especially in the time of crisis? The truth of the matter is that for so many Igbo Christians, it is risky to go out into the world "spiritually unprotected." Many of them lack both the knowledge and faith that what we do in Christianity is enough to guarantee us adequate protection, not only in this world, but even in the world to come. It is

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<sup>374</sup> Onah Godfrey, "Baptised but not converted", An Address delivered at the Centenary Lectures in Enugu Diocese; in Onuh C.O, Christianity and the Igbo Rites of Passage, p. 2

<sup>375</sup> Njoku R.A., *The Advent of the Catholic Church in Nigeria: Its Growth in Owerri Diocese*, Owerri: Assumpta, 1980, p. 296

therefore not really very surprising that amulets of various sizes and shapes, holy water, holy oil are simultaneously combined to serve as spiritual bullet proofs, as man struggles to withstand the onslaught of both seen and unseen enemies. Even where the Western diagnosis may help to identify the cause of a particular illness or misfortune, it does not explain the why or who. Causes of sickness or misfortune are not regarded as purely natural. It is not enough for example, to explain that a man was attacked by a swarm of bees because he passed close to the hive. It is not a simple matter. The question is asked, why must the bees decide to attack that particular man when others have been passing by that place without encountering trouble? It was such attitude and way of reasoning among so many of our Igbo Christians that made Albert Obiefuna, the late Archbishop Emeritus of Onitsha, after many years of fighting such mentality without much success, to echo in desperation: "We have not started living the new life; we are still thinking and acting as we were before Christianity came.... Indeed, as was quoted in the Brochure of his Priestly Silver Jubilee Celebration, a few years ago, 'he believes he is not pessimistic but realistic when he says that the faith of the people is very shallow despite the huge numbers in our churches.' He is quite certain of 'idolatry in a century-old faith.'"<sup>376</sup>

Our point here is that in Igboland and other parts of the world too, Christianity is in shamble. We have no problems with regards to the numbers of people looking for baptism, those who turn up for communion on Sundays, for their Christian duties, for ceremonies and the likes. Our problem according to Chukwudum Okolo is that: "What we seriously lack are Christians in deed and conviction, those whose lives are solely guided by, and anchored in, the ethic of Christ. Certainly, the most common phenomenon in Nigeria (Igboland) as in other countries of Africa is Christians whose faith is a mere outward garb, a religion of convenience, of social event but which has very little to do with the real transformation of the inner self."<sup>377</sup> Okolo further bemoans the situation:

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<sup>376</sup> Obiefuna A.K., *Idolatry in a Century-Old Faith*, in: Okolo B., *African Traditional Religion and Christianity: The Neglected Dimension*, pp. 16-17

<sup>377</sup> Okolo B., *African Traditional Religion and Christianity: The Neglected Dimension*, p. 17

He (the African Christian) plays a dual role. Christianity is outwardly practiced, and paganism in secret and more precautious, too. He puts on the mask of Christianity on top of paganism. The new Christian inwardly believes in ‘Osu’, ‘Ogwu’, ‘Ogbanje’, ‘Witchcraft’, ‘Charms’; and so forth. They do not prevent him at the same time from believing in the blessed Trinity, the Bible and the Dogmas of the Church ... But his actual faith comes to light when real temptation comes. Imagine he does not get a male child or is completely childless. What does he do?<sup>378</sup>

In fact, one can describe some of our Christians as "Christian-Attama"<sup>379</sup> (i.e. Christian-Pagan). They are in the Church on Sundays and on weekdays with the native doctors looking for solution to their problems. They are in actual fact double-standard Christians. B.K. Nwazojie summarizes it all when he said: “A dual personality characterizes the African (Igbo) Christian: there is one foot in Christianity and one in traditional culture. This comes out more clearly in the major happenings of the African (Igbo) life, periods of joy, peace, illness, anxiety, distress, trial, bareness, etc.”<sup>380</sup> There is a crisis of faith among some of our Christians. This crisis testifies the relevance of the question Francis Cardinal Arinze put across during the Special Synod on Africa: “Is the church really at home in Africa [Igboland]? Or: are Africans at home in the Church?”<sup>381</sup> The sad fact is that many of our brothers and sisters are "baptized, but insufficiently evangelized... The need for a new evangelization ..., must be valiantly reaffirmed, in the certainty that God’s word is effective.”<sup>382</sup> Thus today there are very large numbers of baptized people who

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid p. 18

<sup>379</sup> “Attama” is a priest of a “god” mainly in Nsukka area-North of Igboland where the write comes from. However "Christian -Attama is used to cajole or make a mockery of Christians whose hypocrisy has become known to the public. In fact, it is a derogatory mark on a Christian who practices syncretism which is a combination of other religions e.g. African Traditional Religion with Christianity.

<sup>380</sup> B.K Nwazojie., “*Inculturation*” , in *Awka Diocesan Inculturation Seminar, Reports*, in Okolo B., *African Traditional Religion and Christianity: The Neglected Dimension*, p. 19

<sup>381</sup> Gerald O’Connell, *An Agenda for Africa*, in Onwubiko O.O., *Echoes from the African Synod*, Enugu: Snaap Press:1994, pp. 48 – 49

<sup>382</sup> Benedict XIV, *Verbum Domini*, 30 September, 2010, no. 96

for the most part have not formally renounced their Baptism but who are entirely indifferent to it and not living in accordance with it.<sup>383</sup>

These situations place a very big catechetical challenge especially to the lay catechists in Igboland since they are responsible for preparing people for the reception of the various sacraments. It is pertinent to remind us that in the Church in Igboland, the lay catechists are directly or indirectly in charge of teaching catechism and preparing catechumens for the reception of baptism, confirmation and penance. They also teach marriage course especially, in the rural parishes. Hence, to talk about the baptized but not converted Catholics, is indirectly to accept the dismal failure of some lay catechists in the discharge their duties.

## **2.6 The Lapsed Catholics**

In the wake of the second Vatican Council, Paul VI perceptively observed that the duty of evangelization needed to be proposed again with greater force and urgency, because of the de-Christianization of many ordinary people who, despite being baptized, live a life not in keeping with their Christian faith or express some kind of faith but have an imperfect knowledge of its basic tenets. An increasing number of people are sensing a need to know Jesus Christ in a different way from what they were taught as children.<sup>384</sup> The observation of Paul VI is not out of place especially in Igboland where we have many Catholics who were baptized, confirmed and married in the church but are no more practicing Christians. As I earlier mentioned, in Igboland - Nigeria, we have no problem of those to be baptized but those living the faith after the Baptism, Confirmation or Church Marriage. I was surprised in 2011 when I visited Nigeria on the course of my research for this work. I tried to help my Parish Priest out in infant baptism. The number of children who turned out was a source of encouragement for any priests who have worked in the Western World. There were one hundred and ninety-three (193) infants waiting to be baptized, in one village parish! In 2012 there was also a confirmation of more than eight hundred (800)

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<sup>383</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No.56

<sup>384</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no. 12

candidates just in one parish. Also in 2013 when my home Parish Priest in Nigeria had a Mass Wedding to help those who are financially incapacitated, the number was more than three hundred (300) also in a single parish. The point we wish to make here is: where are these mammoth crowd after the Baptism, Confirmation or Church Marriage? John Onaiyekan observes: “It is important to count and rejoice in the number of converts. But it is even more important to assess what impact the Christian message is making on the daily lives of our people and to what extent Gospel values of peace, justice, and love are being promoted.”<sup>385</sup> It is really difficult to understand it but it is a fact that in the Church in Igboland today, there are many on the pews every Sunday but the rate at which lives and property are being destroyed in Nigeria testifies to the abysmal loss of the sense of the sacred, of divinity and human life. The Church is not cordoned off from the onslaught of this loss of the sense of the sacred. Whatever ungodly experiences in the Church today are not signs of external elements at work. Many of the attacks on the Church (both physical and doctrinal) come from within.

There are even cases of formerly active Catholics who have so degenerated in their faith to the extent of engaging in criminal activities against the Church. It beats my imagination that in one diocese in Igboland, that one of the armed robbers who shattered the leg of a Catholic bishop, claimed he was revenging his being sent out of the seminary by the bishop when he (the bishop) was his rector. In one parish in Igboland (precisely at St John the Evangelist Catholic Parish Agulu, Catholic Diocese of Awka), the visiting armed robbers were infuriated that they did not meet the parish priest whom they said they saw at benediction that evening. What then can one say about a group of Catholic youths who attended a benediction in the evening, and goes back that same night to the same church to rob the priest whom God had used to bless them at the benediction? Do such youths still believe in God's blessing? Are they still in the faith? Your guess is as good as mine. In another parish (St Patrick's, still in the Catholic Diocese of Awka), the armed robbers boasted that they would receive Holy Communion in the Church the following day. Does the Holy Communion still have any meaning and significance to such people, or have their understanding of it degenerated to mere breakfast? Besides criminal activities, there have

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<sup>385</sup> Onaiyekan J., *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology-The African Synod: Initial Results and Reflections*, Vol. 6/2:1994, p. 7

also been cases of parishioners having to mobilize the parish youths to beat up their parish priests. The story of a priest who was marched stark naked along the street in one town (Amokwe) will continue to remain fresh in the minds of the people. It is not enough to arrest and prosecute those who carry out such abuses. Of course none of them were prosecuted. The greater issue to worry about remains: what has happened to the faith of such Catholics? In burial ceremonies the youth join the non-Christians, non-Catholics, fallen Catholics and nominal Catholics (neo-pagans) to spiritedly defend obvious obnoxious traditional practices instead of joining the Church to fight against such practices. This may explain why these practices refuse to die.<sup>386</sup> We cannot afford to lose hope on the possible revival of these lapsed Catholics. While we have to pray for them, we also need to look into the cause of their backsliding. It is most likely that such people were either not properly catechized or they have forgotten what they were taught. In either case, they need to be comprehensively re-catechized and followed up. The lay catechists, being the closest Church representatives who come in contact with these people, need to be properly trained so as to be able, first and foremost, to correctly assess such situation and also take appropriate catechetical actions.

### **2.7 Challenges from Pentecostal Churches or New Religious Movements**

Pentecostalism, which has become a conspicuous phenomenon of our age, has its roots and precedent in the out pouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostolic community on Pentecost day (Acts 2). Pentecostals emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit to enthuse life, the immediacy of Jesus Christ as a living presence, the authority of the Bible as written, relying on the immanence of the supernatural and on the traditional in understandings of the inspiration of the bible, expiring (perhaps exorcising) both the evils in the human heart as well as in society.<sup>387</sup> Pentecostalism generally does not owe its origin to any outstanding personality or religious leader, but was a spontaneous revival appearing almost simultaneously in various parts of the

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<sup>386</sup> Obiefuna B.A.C., *The Catholic Youth in the Collaborative Ministry of the Church in Nigeria*, in: Obinwa I.M.C, *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd, 2006, p.197

<sup>387</sup> Cf. Ogbu U.Kalu., *The Third Response: Pentecostalism and the Reconstruction of Christian Experience in Africa*, in: Achunike H.C, *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, pp. 13-14.

world. We instinctively connect the Reformation with Luther, the Quakers with George Fox, Methodism with Wesley, the Plymouth Brethren with Darby and Groves, the Salvation Army with William Booth, and so on. But the outstanding leaders of the Pentecostal Movement are themselves the products of the Movement. They did not make it; it made them.<sup>388</sup> Pentecostalism swept through the Christian churches and beyond during the course of the twentieth century. It was not a known feature in the Nigerian religious landscape before 1970. Today the movements are multiplying by leaps and bounds. They are in every nooks and cranny in Nigeria with their influences on the Mainline Churches. This has been succinctly noted by Hilary Achunike as follows: "Pentecostals in all probability are making true their promise of taking over the management of Christianity in Nigeria. That Pentecostals are making waves and winning converts by the day is to state the obvious. The rank and file of the mainline churches is disturbed. The Catholic hierarchy in Nigeria and elsewhere is disquieted.... Pentecostalism has influenced not only the laity, but also the priests..."<sup>389</sup>

The rapid spread of sects of both Christian and non-Christian origin presents a pastoral challenge for the Church throughout the world today. They are a serious obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and the orderly growth of the young Churches, because they damage the integrity of faith and communion. Certain regions and persons are more vulnerable and more exposed to the influence of these sects. What the sects offer seems to work in their favour, as they present apparently simple and immediate answers to the felt needs of the people, and the means they use are adapted to local sensibilities and cultures.<sup>390</sup> Such is the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The New churches, Movements and Ministries are so numerous in Nigeria today that their presence is almost felt in every home, both Christian and non - Christian and they are still spreading fast. ... As for figures or numbers of adherents of the New Religious Movements on the continental level, those offered or suggested about ten years ago are no more reliable. The rate of

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<sup>388</sup> Donald Gee, *The Pentecostal Movement*, in: Kay W. K., *Pentecostalism*, p. 43

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 6-7

<sup>390</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, Nairobi: Kolbe Press, 1994, no.16

their expansion in Africa can be likened to the rate of islamisation of Africa and the world at large. Africa is said to be only 13.11% Catholics. The Traditional Protestant Church is projected to have about 8% membership, while the African Traditional Religion (ATR) has only 6% adherents. And if the Islamic religion takes the largest chunk 45%, it follows the New Religious Movements will have 32% fellowship. It is no exaggerations.<sup>391</sup> New Religious Movements spring up almost on daily basis - anywhere or any time. Most of the warehouses in Nigeria have been converted into places of worship. In big cities like Lagos, Onitsha etc., almost every street without exaggeration has one or two Pentecostal churches. The accurate statistics of these churches in Nigeria cannot with certainty be established as registered and unregistered churches spring up from all nooks and crannies of cities and remote villages. Pentecostalism has entered and thoroughly influenced and is still influencing the Catholic Church.... It has equally influenced other mainline churches while assuming different names. In the Catholic Church, it is called Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria.<sup>392</sup> It operates as Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC). In the Methodist Church, it is called Methodist Evangelical Movement (MEM). And in the Presbyterian Church - it is called Presbyterian Young People's Association of Nigeria (PYPAN).<sup>393</sup>

Although many of the doubting Thomases in Catholics and Mainline Churches do not feel the impact or pretend not to feel the impact of the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in our midst; one thing clear is that by the wide spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and World - wide that many Catholics and a vast number of Christians from other mainline churches have been influenced in their style of preaching, healing, and lively, joyous and expressive ways of worship. The New Religious Movements or Pentecostalism is really a big challenge to the mainline

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<sup>391</sup> Ifeanyi V., The Reasons for the New Religious Movements in Nigeria, in: Nnamani A.G., *The New Religious Movements: Pentecostalism in Perspective*, Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007, pp. 252 – 253

<sup>392</sup> The Catholic Charismatic Renewal is a group in the Catholic Church that claims to have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Its basis, like Pentecostalism, is the primordial Pentecost experience of Acts of the Apostles Chapter two. It prides itself as the only organization or society in the Church that is not founded by any human person than the Holy Spirit.

<sup>393</sup> Achunike H.C; *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, pp. 11-12

Churches, particularly the Catholic Church. It is harder to believe on the side of some of the Parish Priests. For instance in Urban areas like Onitsha where in a given large Parish nine to ten masses are celebrated every Sunday with Churches and halls filled to the brim, it is almost impossible to think Catholics are defecting to Pentecostalism. But the hard fact, following ... researches, is that a good number of Catholics constitute a big percentage in any Pentecostal Church.<sup>394</sup> Pentecostalism has indeed come to pose a threat to the corporate existence and survival of the mainline Churches, and to such an extent that the Church has to embark on a self-examination and a re-evaluation of her pastoral, theological and ecumenical principles.<sup>395</sup> Through the massive aggressive use of the media (Radio, TV, Print), internet, home videos, stickers, bill boards, handbills, music and campaigns, the Pentecostal associations have successfully brought their own beliefs, teaching, music and practices into everybody's home, office, and even car. They have been largely successful in convincing many Christians including Catholics that all Churches are the same, and that no church will take one to heaven. After all, God is the same everywhere, and we are all worshippers of the same God. They have amazingly sold their terminologies, code of behavior, mode of prayer, music, instrumentation and style of worship as the modern and most acceptable way of practicing the Christian religion.<sup>396</sup>

The internal threats to the Church can be traced largely to two factors. First, there is the growing number of Catholics joining the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement - a new Catholic brand of the Pentecostal churches. The movement can be described as mainly a mild criticism of the Catholic liturgical practices and, as such, its followers could easily be perceived to be 'soft Catholics'. Second, there is also a growing number of Africans who still love the Church but wish there would be a serious sensitivity and attention, on the part of the Church,

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>395</sup> Nnamani A. G., "Rising to the Challenges of the New religious Movements", in: Nnamani A. G, (ed.), *The New Religious Movements: Pentecostalism in Perspective - Proceedings of the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria*, held at the Seminary of All Saints, Uhiele, Ekpoma, Edo State- Nigeria. From April 18 to April 21, 2006. Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007, p. viii

<sup>396</sup> Umoren A.I., "Pentecostal Challenges to Catholics: A Lesson in Collaborative Ministry", in: Obinwa I.M.C, ed., *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, Onitsha: African First Publishers Ltd., 2006, p. 265

towards inculturation of the faith in Africa. A good number of these people could also be described as “soft Catholics”; if the push came to the shove, they would easily reject a Catholic Church dressed more in foreign (European) than in African cultural colours.<sup>397</sup> Today the influence of Pentecostalism is seen everywhere as many members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal have imbibed much of Pentecostal practices like withdrawing from age grades; dissociating from others who did not belong to the Renewal (better-than-thou attitude) and seeing them as inferior Christians (including the priests); seeing traditional practices like wine carrying, title taking, masquerade, cultural dance, naming and burial ceremonies as totally against Christian teaching; believing that traditional deities were blocking their way to success in life; refusing to sweep the village or market square. They also claim that they could teach themselves Christian values instead of the teaching authority of the Church. They reject and even attack the sacramental character of the Church. Some of them condemned praying the Rosary and also object vehemently against the use of sacramentals. All these aberrations pose serious pastoral and catechetical challenges to the Church in Igboland - Nigeria as well as in Africa.

## **2.8 Challenges from Boko Haram**

Boko Haram is a colloquial combination of one Hausa word "Boko" which refers to Western type of education, and Arabic word "Haram" which translates as sin. Therefore, the concept of Boko Haram simply means, Western education is sin. It can also be reasonably translated as: Western Education is forbidden. The later sense is more appropriate to the sense in which Islamic extremists use the term in Nigeria and other places. This is because the Islamic concept of the word "Haram" refers more to something that is forbidden. Using this Islamic concept of the word helps us to have an insight into why an Islam motivated terrorist group has been on a rampage, destroying schools and churches in Northern Nigeria. The group sees itself as the “people committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad.”<sup>398</sup> In his report to BBC 2009, the former leader Mohammed Yusuf clearly maintained that: “Western - style

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<sup>397</sup> Enwerem I, “Ecclesia in Africa and the Socio - Political Context of Nigeria”, in: Oguejiofor J.O. & Enweh I, eds., *Ecclesia in Africa - The Nigerian Response*, Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company, 1997, p. 44

<sup>398</sup> [simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_State%27s\\_West\\_Africa\\_Province](http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_State%27s_West_Africa_Province)

education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our basic beliefs in Islam.”<sup>399</sup> He therefore called on "committed" Muslims to reject, oppose and obstruct every attempt to spread Western Education within the Northern Nigeria.

The activities of Boko Haram have never been positive. The members have unleashed horror and fear on millions of Nigeria. Among the heinous activities of the Boko Haram are, the series of attacks in the nation in which lives and property was destroyed and wasted. For instances: In the middle of the year 2011 they carried out multiple suicide car bombings in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja, including the United Nations office, and the Police Headquarters. The UN attack according to them was due to the UN’s support for the Federal Government of Nigeria in "persecuting" Muslims across the country. The UN for them is “the forum of all the global evil”. On the Eve of 2011 Christmas Day, also at Abuja, Christians were attacked in a church. In that attack 40 people were dead while 72 were injured. In Jos there were series of bomb explosion targeting Christmas shoppers. In various Northern States of Nigeria Christian Churches were attacked. In all about 550 people were killed. The beginning of 2012 saw the deadliest attack from the Boko Haram. In January alone, 187 to 260 people lost their lives as a result of the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram. The target is always on the members of other religions which for them are infidels, and moderate Muslims.

Today, over 1.5 million Nigerians are refugees in their own country. And 200,000 of these refugees are children. The following were attacked: Universities, market places, government institutions like police stations, media centers, and so on. Even to this moment there has not been a positive reaction from the government toward the actions of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The government seems slow in devising means towards checkmating them. On the night of 14-15 April 2014, 276 female students were kidnapped from the Government Secondary School in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria. Responsibility for the kidnappings was claimed by Boko Haram, an Islamic Jihadist and terrorist organization based in northeast Nigeria.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8172270.stm>

<sup>400</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chibok\\_schoolgirls\\_kidnapping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chibok_schoolgirls_kidnapping)

This has been a major challenge and concern to the Church in Igboland. Most of the Igbo people fleeing from many North-Eastern States of Nigeria where the Boko haram terrorists ousted them are Christians; and they come back to Igboland empty handed. Some of these victims have lost all their means of livelihood. Their children are also abandoned to their fates since Nigeria granted no meaningful assistance to them. Some families while undergoing this extreme suffering may begin to doubt the veracity of both divine protection and divine providence. Convincing them about the continued omnipotence of God may not be an easy task. These challenges and other precarious situations already treated above are some of the challenges to the effective catechesis in Igboland. Thus, there is need for the adequate training of our lay catechists to meet up with the implications of these challenges to their apostolate. In fact, today more than ever, there is need for new form of evangelization and new form of pastoral approach to meet up with the signs of the time.

## **A REVIEW OF THE DOCUMENT: CATECHESI TRADENDAE**

### **3.1 Historical Overview of Catechesis before Catechesi Tradendae**

The birth of catechesis was on the day of Ascension. Before Christ ascended to His Father, after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command - to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded (Mt 28:19-20). He thus entrusted them with the mission and power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands concerning the Word of Life. (1 Jn1:1) He also entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what He had taught them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments. And He gave them the Spirit to fulfill this mission.<sup>401</sup> The mission given to the Apostles to “go and teach” (Mt 28:19) marks, according to John Paul II, the beginning of catechesis.<sup>402</sup> The Church carries out a catechetical activity only because she continues this mission and makes herself, in turn, a teacher.<sup>403</sup> Hence, “the values of this Good News include hope, joy, peace, love, unity and harmony... It is the proclamation of the Word made flesh; that means, the Good News should also take flesh, transforming the human society through the message and the living witness of all the members of the one family of God”.<sup>404</sup> After the Lord Jesus had finally commissioned his disciples, he was taken up into heaven (Mk 16:19).

Thus, if we are to go by the church’s liturgical celebration, catechesis is 10 days older than the church, since there's a gap of 10 days between the ascension of Christ and the Pentecost. After the resurrection of Christ, he had appeared to his disciples and instructed them for forty days, after which he ascended to heaven. While with them, he said: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5). That

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<sup>401</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, Vatican City, 16 October, 1979, no.1

<sup>402</sup>John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, nos.10-11

<sup>403</sup>John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, nos. 12-17

<sup>404</sup>*The Church in Nigeria Family of God on Mission*, no.89

baptism of the Spirit would be called the birthday of the church which was on the day of the Pentecost (Acts.2:4). Jesus' words were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) and the apostle Peter preached his first sermon (this is already catechesis), urging the crowds to repent, to believe in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 38). That very day, some 3,000 people were baptized as the people of God (verse 41). The church had begun.

Etymologically, catechesis is from the Greek word “*Katechein*”. The literal translation of this Greek word is "a sounding down, a resounding, and re - echoing."<sup>405</sup> What is resounded or echoed is the word, the word of the scriptures and the Word made flesh. An echo is not a new word. It is the original word heard in different times and in different places.<sup>406</sup> One may ask: What and who is the object of this resounding? Jesus Christ is the “who”, and the Good News of salvation offered by his life, death, and resurrection is the “what.”<sup>407</sup> John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, states that at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, "the only Son from the Father... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever."<sup>408</sup> In catechesis what is to be transmitted or communicated is no other thing than the teachings of Jesus Christ. The work of the catechist is thus seen not to be his or her own teaching, but an endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Christ.<sup>409</sup> This recalls a key paragraph of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI where he said: “To preach not their own selves nor their personal ideas, but a Gospel of which neither she nor they are the absolute masters and owners ... but a Gospel of

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<sup>405</sup> Birmingham M., *Word & Worship Workshop for Year B: For Ministry in Initiation, Preaching, Religious Education and Formation*, New York: Paulist Press, 2000, p.4

<sup>406</sup> Mongoven A.M., *Signs of Catechesis: An Overview of the National Catechetical Directory*, New York: Paul's Press, 1979, pp.11-12

<sup>407</sup> Birmingham M., *Word & Worship Workshop for Year B: For Ministry in Initiation, Preaching, Religious Education and Formation*, p.4

<sup>408</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.5

<sup>409</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.6

which they are the ministers, in order to pass it on with complete fidelity.”<sup>410</sup> A true catechesis therefore cannot permit itself to walk away other than that of placing the catechized in communion with the person of Christ, with His Mystery, through the explanation of the actions, words and signs worked by Christ. According to Birmingham, when people catechize, they reveal God’s plan of salvation realized in the person of Jesus. Catechesis explores the meaning of Jesus’s life, his words, and the marvelous works (signs) he accomplished. Catechesis is about relationship. It concerns a radical, personal, communal relationship with the living God encountered in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Catechesis helps us interpret the story of our lives in dialogue with the story of the scripture and the story of the church throughout the ages.<sup>411</sup> Also the *National Catechetical Directory* (NCD) asserts that, “catechesis is God’s word revealed through Jesus and operative in the lives of people exercising their faith. Catechesis supports the mission of the church to proclaim and teach God’s message, to celebrate the sacred mysteries and to serve God’s people.”<sup>412</sup> Catechesis is concerned with the process of growth in faith. In fact, catechesis “is the systematic, organic presentation of the faith to the whole Christian community. It aims to fructify and blossom the faith, to nourish the daily Christian life of all, young and old without exception. It develops understanding of the mystery of Christ so that God is all to the believer and that the Gospel message is deeply lived. It is the Church’s way of implementing Christ’s command to make followers of all and to teach them Him and His message”.<sup>413</sup> Therefore, catechesis has the goal of initiating the hearers (including children, young people and adults) into the fullness of Christian life.

The Gospel according to St. Luke as well as the book of the Acts of the Apostles uses the expression instruction in the way of the Lord. In St. Paul *Katechein* refers to oral instruction, a

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<sup>410</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8 December, 1975, no.15

<sup>411</sup> Birmingham M., *Word & Worship Workshop for Year B: For Ministry in Initiation, Preaching, Religious Education and Formation*, p.4

<sup>412</sup> *National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States* (NCD), in: Birmingham M., *Word & Worship Workshop for Year B: For Ministry in Initiation, Preaching, Religious Education and Formation*, p.4

<sup>413</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, nos. 20 & 21

handing on of all that has been received in and through Christ.<sup>414</sup> This is an indication that even St. Paul also catechized and that it is the duty and responsibility of the church to educate her members in faith. The church from the beginning of her history has always taken catechesis very seriously and considered it one of her primary tasks. Popes like Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II to mention just a few antecedents to *Catechesi Tradendae*, have considered catechesis as one of their major pre-occupations in the discharge of their pastoral duties through their gestures and preaching etc. In the words of John Paul II said:

It is in the same climate of faith and hope that I am today addressing this apostolic exhortation to you, venerable brothers and dear sons and daughters. The theme is extremely vast and the exhortation will keep to only a few of the most topical and decisive aspects of it, as an affirmation of the happy results of the synod. In essence, the exhortation takes up again the reflections that were prepared by Pope Paul VI, making abundant use of the documents left by the synod. Pope John Paul I, whose zeal and gifts as a catechist amazed us all, had taken them in hand and was preparing to publish them when he was suddenly called to God...I am therefore taking up the inheritance of these two Popes... I am also doing so in order to fulfill one of the chief duties of my apostolic charge. Catechesis has always been a central care in my ministry as a priest and as a Bishop.<sup>415</sup>

In the earliest days of the Church, Catechesis was carried out as an elementary form of oral instruction. However, by the end of the first century, there appeared a document which sets out in a rather systematic way the beliefs, practices, and moral imperatives of the early Christians. This extraordinarily ancient type of catechetical document with sixteen chapters and compiled before 300AD was called *Didache*. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes it thus:

The *Didache* is also called the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." It was possibly written around A.D. 65-80 and is supposed to be what the twelve apostles taught to the Gentiles concerning life and death,

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<sup>414</sup> Komonchak J.A., Collins M, and Lane D.A.(eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Bangalore: Theological Publications, 1999, p.161

<sup>415</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.4

church order, fasting, baptism, prayer, etc. There is debate as to its authenticity. The work is cited by Eusebius who lived from 260-341 and Athanasius 293-373. It seems to be referenced by Origen who lived from 185-254. In the *Didache*, 16:2-3 is quoted in the Epistle of Barnabas in 4:9, or vice versa. The Epistle of Barnabas was written in A.D. 130-131. The *Didache* is not inspired but is valuable as an early church document.<sup>416</sup>

The full title of *Didache* is *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. *Didache* contained instructions for Christian groups, and its statement of belief may be the first written catechism. It has four parts: the first is the “Two Ways, the Way of Life and the Way of Death”; the second explains how to perform rituals such as baptism, fasting, and Communion; the third covers ministry and how to deal with traveling teachers; the fourth part is a reminder that Jesus is coming again, with quotations from several New Testament passages which exhort Christians to live godly lives and prepare for “that day.”<sup>417</sup> From the above document (*Didache*) we can observe that the earliest Fathers of the Church in the first centuries of the Church frequently set out a series of catechetical instructions to be used mainly in pre-baptismal preparation. Most people who became Christians were already adults, and, as a result, they had to undergo a catechumenate or a preparation for Baptism which included instruction in belief, practice, in prayer and in Christian life, before they were accepted into the Church. It was also generally presumed that the children of such converts, who were themselves baptized in infancy, would be instructed by the families who had received a thorough catechetical preparation for Baptism. Also worthy of mention is that at this period, books were extremely rare and extremely expensive too. The consequence was that “many people received their catechetical instruction not so much from books, but the living word passed on in families, and also, passed on in the liturgy.”<sup>418</sup> Within a few centuries, the Church built some great Cathedrals which stood out in themselves as symbols of Catechesis. These include magnificent and gigantic edifices like Cathedrals of Cologne, Milan, Brussels, and Bruges etc. They were in themselves a living catechism! Their various sanctuary and the magnificent stained glass windows were like books of the Bible as well as books of

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<sup>416</sup>*The Catholic Encyclopedia.*, 1908, The *Didache*

<sup>417</sup> [www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/didache/](http://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/didache/)

<sup>418</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/NCOFCC.HTM>

catechism for the people who regularly attended Mass in those beautiful and splendid buildings. Here one could find an entire compendium of the Catholic Faith and of the story of salvation history centered on Jesus Christ.

In the second and third centuries when the catechumenate structure developed, “the vocabulary used in describing the work of teaching the Good news became more exact and acquired a technical meaning in the precise sense of teaching given to someone preparing for baptism.”<sup>419</sup> This period saw the development of two types of catechesis, namely: the baptismal catechesis and mystagogical catechesis.<sup>420</sup> We shall examine them respectively.

**3.1.1 Baptismal Catechesis:** This is identified as the preparation of the adult candidate for baptism and Eucharist. Hence, one can say that: “Its use indicates a type of oral witness about faith in Jesus of Nazareth and his gospel. In the very first communities of Jesus’ followers, catechesis was used to prepare adults for initiation into the community of believers through baptism and the Eucharist. The adults made up the original “Catechumenate” of Christianity.”<sup>421</sup> The Catechumenate consisted of several stages that allowed for the nature of conversion as a process and for the understanding of faith as a way of living in the world. At each stage of initiation, catechesis took place in a liturgical framework. From the beginning, the motivating force of the candidate’s conversion was the Word proclaimed, reflected upon and lived out in the community. The conversion process was supported by the life, prayer and witness of the Christian community.<sup>422</sup>

**3.1.2 Mystagogical Catechesis:** It is quite likely that catechesis continued once “catechumens” had become full church members. This post - baptismal catechetical activity or

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<sup>419</sup> Cf. Alberich E., “Catechesi”, in: Gevaert J(ed.), *Dizionario di Catechesi*, Elle Di Ci, Torino, 1986, pp.104-108

<sup>420</sup> Cf. Gruppo G., “Catecumenato Antico”, in: Gevaert J(ed.), *Dizionario di Catechesi*, pp.133-134

<sup>421</sup> Ekstrom R.R., *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, Bangalore: St Paul Press Training School, 2005, p.60

<sup>422</sup> Komonchak J.A., Collins M, and Lane D.A.(eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p.161

instruction of the neophyte in the mysteries of the faith was called *mystagogia*. Some of the greatest catechetical homilies and treatises, such as those of Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, are illustrations of *mystagogical* reflection on the sacramental experience. For instance, St. Augustine wrote a classic work called *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, or *How to Catechize the Ignorant*, linking salvation history to faith, to hope, and ultimately to charity. It was presumed in St. Augustine's work that ignorant people who were instructed in the Faith would themselves provide home instruction to their children, and that this instruction would be supplemented by liturgical homilies in church. St. Gregory the Great wrote a series of "Books of Dialogue" which expressed to pastors, parent, and teachers the proper way of handing down the Faith, as well as giving to these people the content of the Faith. He also wrote a book of pastoral regulations for Bishops and for priests and a long series of pastoral homilies which contain catechetical material of great significance.<sup>423</sup>

Catechesis for the first five centuries of Christianity was primarily a pre-baptismal instruction given to adults. With the decline of the catechumenate in the fourth and fifth centuries, "the catechetical situation shifted from adult initiation to the baptism of infants, from pre-baptismal to post-baptismal instruction, and from a catechesis out of a biblical and liturgical context to a formation derived primarily from a Christian environment."<sup>424</sup> The spread of infant baptism at this period in time saw the disappearance of catechumenate and the term catechesis in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* used such terms like *Catechismus*, *Catechizare*, *Catechizatus* meaning the elementary instruction given by parents or sponsors to their baptized child. For the faithful the homilies on Sundays and holy days centered on moral exhortation. Some memorization of prayers and doctrinal formulas was required but the devotions, processions, mime, songs, sacred verse and art assimilated from the milieu were the most influential forms of instruction.

Until the end of fifteenth century, catechesis remained oral and experiential. The invention of the printing press by John Gutenberg in approximately 1450, affected the history of catechesis

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<sup>423</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/NCOFCC.HTM>

<sup>424</sup> Komonchak J.A., Collins M, and Lane D.A.(eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p.162

in a radical way. The focal point of religious education became the printed page and the recitation of doctrinal questions and answers. As printing came into vogue and paper was more widely and readily available, books of catechetical material became widely diffused throughout the Church. Great missionary saints, such as St. Bede, St. Boniface etc., were extraordinary catechists. Even great geniuses who worked in the theological sciences, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, also popularized the content of our faith and were known for writing and diffusing catechetical instructions. The Mendicant Orders, that is, the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and similar groups that arose in the high middle Ages, were particularly effective in spreading the Faith, and in assisting those who already believed, to have a better grasp of their faith through catechetical knowledge. Nevertheless, “the term catechesis was not revived, and the institution, which emerged instead, was called “Catechism”, the name being applied not only to the body of instruction but to the book, which was principal source of that form of teaching. The catechism began to appear in two forms: large “Catechisms” that serve as theological resources for pastors, preachers, and teachers, and “Small Catechisms” that served as manuals of instruction in the hands of clergy, schoolmasters, and parents. Children were expected to commit them to memory.”<sup>425</sup> The catechism reduced catechesis to instruction, to memorization, for use mainly by children.

Outside the printing press, with the Council of Trent (which was summoned to confront the crises that the protestant revolt brought about in Christianity by Martin Luther), catechesis once again drew some fresh energy. It gave catechesis priority in its constitutions and decrees. It published the *Roman Catechism* or *Catechism of Council of Trent* under Pius V in 1566 and later revised and issued again in 1583 by Gregory XIII. This is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching and a source book for the use of parish priests. The Catechism of the Council of Trent particularly, “because of its completeness and its doctrinal orthodoxy and integrity, was strongly recommended by Pope Leo XIII, Pope St. Pius X and Pope Pius XI. Many catechisms, especially those issued by great saints such as St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Baptist de

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<sup>425</sup> Marthaler B.L., *The Catechism Yesterday and Today: The Evolution of a Genre*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995, p.21

la Salle, and St. Robert Bellarmine, were based on the *Roman Catechism*, as were the various national catechisms issued through the centuries.<sup>426</sup> The *Roman Catechism* remains of great value and gave rise to remarkable organization of catechesis in the Church and also aroused the clergy to their duty of giving catechetical instructions. The *Roman Catechism* has a great deal in common with the new catechism of the Catholic Church.

Moreover, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, religious orders of women and men dedicated to education increased in number and the school steadily established itself as the primary setting for catechesis. This was also a time of the proliferation of catechisms. It was not uncommon for a diocese to have its own catechism, often written by or attributed to the bishop. The same situation of pluriform catechisms in the U.S. led the American bishops at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore<sup>427</sup> in 1829 to authorize a uniform catechism for the dioceses of the United States. Most people in pre-Vatican days were familiar with *Baltimore Catechism*. For seventy-five years, the Baltimore catechism was both memorized verbatim and used as a syllabus for Catholic textbooks and religious programs. *The Baltimore Catechism* contained 421 questions-answers and followed the sequence of creed, sacraments, and commandments. Nevertheless, “its focus and emphasis was not necessarily that which contemporary pedagogues would appreciate, or for that matter, some theologians, liturgists, Scripture scholars and others, although it did have the great advantage of being a more or less complete skeletal outline of the Catholic Faith.”<sup>428</sup> The Baltimore Catechism was revised by a committee of American Bishops in 1941 and was set out in a formula that geared it to various educational levels. It also was, at that time, permitted to be a basis for other catechetical presentations in the United States, and, consequently, enjoyed a more vigorous revival in the decades immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council.

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<sup>426</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/NCOFCC.HTM>

<sup>427</sup> *The Baltimore Catechism* was agreed upon by the Bishops of the United States in Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, which took place in 1884. It was put together and finally issued in 1885 by Cardinal Gibbons who, at the time, was the head of the American hierarchy. It took the American Bishops from 1829 to 1885 to put together the *Baltimore Catechism*, which in turn, derived from what was called the *Roman Catechism* or the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*.

<sup>428</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/NCOFCC.HTM>

However, the call for a universal catechism was the topic of lengthy debate at the *First Vatican Council* (1869-70); although, in the end the proposal for a uniform catechism was accepted by majority of the council fathers but never implemented. The quest for universal catechism and a catechetical renewal movement in the Church never ended with *Vatican I Council*. By the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of church leaders had begun to consider newer and better techniques for catechizing others. In fact, the urge for this universal catechism and a catechetical renewal gained more momentum and reached a climax in the late 1950's and late 1960's especially in the preparatory stages of Vatican II. The aim of the movement is to improve not only the method but also the content of catechesis. In any case, after Vatican II Council (1962-1965), there was a common directory for the universal church and also the word catechesis once again became a familiar term for Catholics but then the content of catechesis never improved.

Consequently, the renewal the *Second Vatican Council* made on the church especially on the areas of liturgy, scripture and catechesis left many in a state of confusion. This changeover, along with the cultural shock that came from the vernacular in the liturgy and other "innovations," unleashed many people from their moorings, and caused them to question even essential doctrines, beliefs, and practices of the Faith. Many began to say "I do not know what I am to believe anymore."<sup>429</sup> The first years after the Vatican Council were years of unparalleled change, creativity and enthusiasm that quickly became laced with discontent and criticism. The problem of inculturation also came to bear on catechetics. The Second Vatican Council was sensitive to the variety of cultures in the world. It recognized the fact that although human nature is the same, the culture in which this human nature is lived is quite different from one part of the world to another. What is acceptable in one society may be regarded as a taboo in another society with different culture and mentality. There was really confusion on how to reconcile the beliefs of different continents and the teaching of catechesis. This confusion the Church found herself after the Second Vatican Council resulted in the issuance by the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome, which is the department of the Holy See in charge of catechesis, of a *General Catechetical*

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<sup>429</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/NCOFCC.HTM>

*Directory*<sup>430</sup> on March 18, 1971, and then each country was invited to issue a national catechetical directory, adapting the *General Catechetical Directory* to the culture of the country. These “catechetical directories were designed principally for the people involved in catechesis; catechetical content was also contained in the directories. The immediate purpose of the Directory was to provide assistance in the production of catechetical directories and catechisms. Indeed, it is for this reason, that is, to help in the preparation of these tools, that the following have been done. Some basic features of present-day conditions have been set forth, so as to stimulate studies in the various parts of the Church, studies which should be carried out with careful and diligent effort, with regard to local conditions and local pastoral needs. Some general principles of methodology and catechesis for different age groups have been noted, so as to highlight how necessary it is to learn the art and wisdom of education. Special pains have been taken in the composition of Part Three, where the criteria which should govern the presentation of the truths to be taught through catechesis are set forth and where a summary of essential elements of the Christian faith is also given, so as to make fully clear the goal which catechesis must of necessity have, namely, the presentation of the Christian faith in its entirety.”<sup>431</sup>

The *General Catechetical Directory* was an important step in providing direction for catechesis. Although it “remains the Church’s standard of reference”<sup>432</sup> and “still the basic document for encouraging and guiding catechetical renewal throughout the Church”<sup>433</sup>, however, “catechesis encounters obstacles in some areas because the doctrinal renewal which Vatican II desired was not correctly understood. This misunderstanding extends both to the content and to

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<sup>430</sup>The *General Catechetical Directory* is the most document regarding catechetics issued during the pontificate of Paul VI. It is proposed to speak a clear and precise word about the nature, the contents and the goals of catechesis. For the first time in the history of the universal Church, the theme of catechesis was treated in an organic and systematic way.

<sup>431</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, Nairobi: Pauline’s Publication, 1997, no. 1

<sup>432</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.50

<sup>433</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.2

the method of catechesis.”<sup>434</sup> Many people also used the occasion of the renewal by the Second Vatican Council to spread abroad a whole series of ideas, some of which were far removed from the Council and far removed from the Catholic Faith itself. In fact, “changes were not accompanied by opportunities for all concerned to understand, internalize, and participate in renewal.”<sup>435</sup> Consequently, “alarmed by these developments, John Paul II summoned the Bishops of the world through the International Synod of Bishops, to gather in Rome and consider the entire matter of catechesis. This 1977 Synod of Bishops on “Catechesis in our Times,” described catechesis as word, memory and witness. The bishops stated that the model of all catechesis is the baptismal catechumenate and is the responsibility of all in the church. The Synod affirmed the direction taken by the modern catechetical movement, stating that it has produced excellent results for the renewal of the entire community of the church.”<sup>436</sup> Following that session of the International Synod of Bishops, the Pope issued a document called *Catechesi Tradendae*<sup>437</sup>, which summarized, synthesized and presented very dearly what the bishops and the Holy Father agreed upon, as necessary structures in regard to catechetics.”<sup>438</sup> Thus, both the “message” of the bishops at the 1977 Synod, and the “propositions” on catechesis they handed on to the Pope, significantly influenced the final version of *Catechesi Tradendae*; yet the document still bears the unique stamp of John Paul II.<sup>439</sup> This document is addressed, to the bishops, the clergy and the faithful of the Catholic Church on the subject of catechesis, or religious education today. In addition to incorporating the reflections of the late Pope Paul VI and John Paul I on the rich documentation and list of thirty-four propositions presented at the end of the Synod of Bishops on Catechesis held during October 1977, this Apostolic Exhortation strikingly demonstrates the

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<sup>434</sup> *Pope John Paul II: Catechist*, p.43

<sup>435</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.17

<sup>436</sup> Komonchak J.A., Collins M, and Lane D.A.(eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p.165

<sup>437</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae*, The title of which, freely translated, means “means handing on the teaching.

<sup>438</sup> <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/NCOFCC.HTM>

<sup>439</sup> *Pope John Paul II: Catechist*, p.44

Holy Father's deep personal interest in and concern for the catechetical enterprise.<sup>440</sup> John Paul II indicates this when he states:

Catechesis has always been a central care in my ministry as a priest and as a bishop. I ardently desire that this apostolic exhortation to the whole Church should strengthen the solidity of the faith and of Christian living, should give fresh vigor to the initiatives in hand, should stimulate creativity - with the required vigilance - and should help to spread among the communities the joy of bringing the mystery of Christ to the world.<sup>441</sup>

In fact, the *New Catechism of the Catholic Church* should be read and understood in light of its history, especially *Catechesi Tradendae* and *General Catechetical Directory*. This is so because "time and time again it becomes quite evident that although he inherited the initial draft of this document from his predecessors, he, nevertheless, felt it necessary to present his own practical and pastoral reflections. There is so much of himself in the document. That it bears so much of his pastoral concern and style is due in part, no doubt, to the fact that he served as a member of the Council of the General Secretariat for the Synod of 1977."<sup>442</sup> John Paul II's effort to stress everywhere the importance and necessity of Catholic Doctrine cannot be overstressed. Indeed, it is correct to say that: "The pastoral visitations of John Paul II can all be described as catechetical missions in which clear guidelines for witnessing to and handing on the Catholic tradition to people of every race and nation are consistently set forth."<sup>443</sup> This is clearly evident in *New Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Hence in issuing the *New Catechism of the Catholic Church*, John Paul II stated:

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<sup>440</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.12

<sup>441</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.4

<sup>442</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, nos.12-13

<sup>443</sup> Nancy Frazier, "Pope in France was Schoolmaster Walking Alongside Us," N.C News Service, Washington, D.C., June 3, 1980, p.23

A catechism must present faithfully and organically the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition of the Church, and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers and saints of the Church, in order to allow the Christian mystery to be known and to revive the faith of God's people. It must take into account the presentations of doctrine which the Holy Spirit has entrusted to the Church over the centuries. It must also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which have not been posed in the past. The Catechism, therefore, contains both the new and the old, for the Faith is always the same and the source of ever new lights.<sup>444</sup>

Today the Catechism stresses the presentation of doctrine. It is a “sure and authentic source book for the teaching of Catholic doctrine, especially for the composition of local catechisms. It is also offered to the faithful who want to understand better the inexhaustible riches of salvation. It seeks to give support to ecumenical efforts, motivated by the desire for the unity of all Christians, by demonstrating with precision the content and harmonious coherence of the Catholic Faith. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, finally, is offered to everyone who asks the reason for the hope that is in us and who would like to know what the Catholic Church believes.”<sup>445</sup> There is no doubt that the Church intends the Catechism of the Catholic Church to be the criterion against which local catechisms must be judged and understood.

### **3.2 Catechesis according to *Catechesi Tradendae***

The *Catechesi Tradendae* is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation of John Paul II, published October 16, 1979, on the topic of catechesis in the contemporary period. It is one of the fruits of the deliberation of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops who met in Rome in the autumn from September 30 - October 29 1977, to discuss the theme, “Catechesis in our time, with special reference to the catechesis of children and young people.”<sup>446</sup> This synod

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<sup>444</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nairobi: Pauline Publication, 1994, no.2

<sup>445</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.3

<sup>446</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.2

was a follow-up of the synod on evangelization that had taken place three years earlier with its ensuing document on evangelization, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which was to spark new zeal in the spread of the Christian message. These two synods of the Third and Fourth General Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops of 1974 and 1977 were convened by Paul VI and are to be seen as twins in the ministry of the Word. Thanks to the work of the synods, the terms evangelization and catechesis, were clearly defined. Evangelization is the beginning stage, the first encounter and decision to embrace the faith, whereas, catechesis is the deepening of the instruction in the doctrine once the fruit-decision has been made.

Although Paul VI died before the document *Catechesi Tradendae* could be completed, nevertheless, the document was almost ready for publication. His immediate successors (John Paul I and John Paul II<sup>447</sup>) continued from where he stopped. Affirming this John Paul II said:

In essence, the exhortation takes up again the reflections that were prepared by Pope Paul VI, making abundant use of the documents left by the synod. Pope John Paul I, whose zeal and gifts as a catechist amazed us all, had taken them in hand and was preparing to publish them when he was suddenly called to God. ...I am therefore taking up the inheritance of these two Popes in response to the request which was expressly formulated by the Bishops at the end of the fourth general assembly of the synod and which was welcomed by Pope Paul VI in his closing speech.<sup>448</sup>

It was therefore, on the basis of the discussions and conclusions of this fourth Synod which Paul VI and John I had already begun to work on, that John Paul II issued *Catechesi Tradendae*. The Bishops at the 1977 Synod had declared their purpose in a concluding message to the people of God that: “It was necessary that we examine, in the light of God’s word, those signs of the times which call for the renewal of catechesis and which highlight its importance in a pastoral context.”<sup>449</sup> The synodal Fathers went on to state: “We have presented our work to the Holy

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<sup>447</sup> John Paul I and John Paul I were active participant as cardinal in the Fourth Synod of the Bishops of 1977.

<sup>448</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.4

<sup>449</sup> Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, p.5

Father in the Form of special recommendations. We have asked him to address a document to the universal Church, in his own time, as was done after the Synod of 1974 in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.<sup>450</sup> Therefore, the work of 1974 and its resulting apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* became the study material in preparation for the catechesis synod. The fact that *Catechesi Tradendae* reflects the discussions and recommendations of the Synod Fathers clearly reveal the concerns and observations of John Paul II regarding the catechetical mission of the Church. *Catechesi Tradendae* “constitutes a charter for teaching the faith today, particularly because it relates catechesis so closely to evangelization, the Church’s new, necessary post-Vatican II “strategy” of reaching out to the millions who do not yet share the joys and graces of the faith of Jesus Christ in its fullness, it should nevertheless be noted ... that the document supplements and amplifies - it does not replace - the Church’s official standing instructions on the teaching of the faith.”<sup>451</sup>

The publication of the long-awaited document *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II on catechesis is an important landmark in the history of the post - war catechetical movement, and, indeed, in the history of the Catholic Church. The document holds a unique place in that it is the only one advocated exclusively to the question of catechesis. There have been important documents in this century on Christian education (1929; 1965) and the Catholic School (1977), but nothing hitherto addressed solely and entirely on the topic of catechesis.<sup>452</sup> *Catechesi Tradendae* holds a unique place which unites a number of important currents in the contemporary Church. It is a document which has its origins in the consultations which preceded the Synod, was continued by the formal prepared interventions of the early part of the Synod, subjected to the argument and process of the interventions from the floor, crystallised in the language groups (*Circuli minores*) which came up with the famous 34 propositions to be considered by the Pope. It unites the currents of consultation and collegiality in its preparation and at the same time

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<sup>450</sup> *Pope John Paul II: Catechist*, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978, p.5

<sup>451</sup> *Pope John Paul II: Catechist*, p.6

<sup>452</sup> <http://203.10.46.30/mre/cdrom/Some%20Reflections%20on%20Catechesi%20Tradendae.htm>

respects the role of the Pope in the Catholic tradition in calling on him to teach his brethren. Two documents prepared by the bishops resulted from the catechesis synod: One, *Message to the people of God*<sup>453</sup>, and the Second document<sup>454</sup>, consisting of thirty-four propositions and one thousand amendments. For all of these reasons, *Catechesi Tradendae* represents an important landmark in today's Church. It is a contemporary appraisal of a vital part of the mission of the whole Church, but, more than simply an appraisal, it gives clear directions as to matters of principle which are to be respected in the carrying out of the catechetical ministry. For all of these reasons, it stands as a document marked by the authority of the Pope and the Church.<sup>455</sup> This we shall showcase as we go through the nine chapters of this document called "*Catechesi Tradendae*" and make short summaries on each of the chapters.

### **The Introduction**

The introduction reminds us of the importance of catechesis in the life of the Church, and of Pope Paul's particular solicitude for it. Vatican II was "considered by him the great catechism of modern times"; he approved "The General Catechetical Directory"; still, John Paul II says, "the basic document for encouraging and guiding catechetical renewal throughout the Church"<sup>456</sup>, and he called the 1977 Synod to deal with the topic. This Synod - in which John Paul II himself participated - "worked in an exceptional atmosphere of thanksgiving and hope. It saw in catechetical renewal precious gift from the Holy Spirit to the Church today."<sup>457</sup> The great wealth

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<sup>453</sup>*Message to the people of God* was publicly presented at the end of the sessions on October 29, 1977. The *Message to the people of God* first established the distinguishing elements between evangelization and catechesis. The starting point, evangelization, is ideally followed by, as the message states "continued growth and maturation in faith." cf. Bernardin J.L., "Introduction, "Synod of Bishops 1977: Message to the People of God and Interventions of the U.S. Delegates, Washington, DC: USCC, 1978, p.2

<sup>454</sup>This was sent privately to Pope Paul VI. As had been the case at the 1974 evangelization synod, the bishops requested that a magisterial document be written in summary of the deliberations.

<sup>455</sup> <http://203.10.46.30/mre/cdrom/Some%20Reflections%20on%20Catechesi%20Tradendae.htm>

<sup>456</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.2

<sup>457</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.3

of material that came from it cannot be presented in full, and the exhortation will keep to only a few of the most topical and decisive aspects of it.

**Chapter One:** It deals with the Christocentricity of all catechesis. This chapter deals with two aspects namely: The Person of Christ and the transmitting of the teaching of Christ. The first is the Person of Christ. Christian living consists in the following of Christ and “the primary and essential object of catechesis...the Mystery of Christ.”<sup>458</sup> The Gospel showcases the whole life of Christ. From the Gospel narrative, we can draw a sketch of significant events of Jesus’ life: Baptism by John the Baptism, His work in Galilee, the miracles, the events in Jerusalem, His passion, death and resurrection, His apparitions, the commissioning of the Apostles, and His ascension into heaven. This is also the life expected of every Christian.

The second is transmitting the teaching of Christ. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life (Jn.14:6). He is the Good News who is the gift of God to us. The centre of the Gospel has to be Christ since through Him, with Him and in Him God invites man to Himself. John Paul II reminds us that every catechetical effort should and ought to be focused “on Christ, on His Person.”<sup>459</sup> In the time of the Apostles, the events that hold a prominent place in their teaching, that is, in the kerygma are: the death and resurrection of Christ. The work of the catechist is thus seen not to be his or her own teaching, but an endeavour “to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Christ.”<sup>460</sup> The life of a catechist has to be a life of witness. St. Paul got it right when he urged Christians thus: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ (1Cor.11:1)”. To live a life of witness does not mean that catechist will live a strange life or disassociate himself from the community life, but confronting the society with a life that actually represents or stands for what he actually preaches.

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<sup>458</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.44

<sup>459</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.5

<sup>460</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.6

In fact, Christ is not only the model of every Catechist, but also the object of catechesis itself, an object-person, hence always alive and up-to-date. Catechesis teaches Christ and leads to a vital encounter with Him. This is a reaffirmation of Paul VI's assertion that: "There is no authentic evangelization so long as one does not announce the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom, the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God."<sup>461</sup>

**Chapter Two:** The second chapter is rather historical and recalls a few salient points of catechesis in the history of the Church. With these historical lines firmly sketched, this chapter can be summarized into four points: First, the Church has the duty to catechise and the right to catechized.<sup>462</sup> Secondly, "the more the Church gives catechesis priority over other works ... the more she finds in catechesis a strengthening of her internal life as a community of believers and of her external activity as a missionary Church."<sup>463</sup> Thirdly, "catechesis always has been and always will be work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible."<sup>464</sup> This was a constant theme of Paul VI and of 1977 Synod, which stressed that catechesis is not the work of a few specialists but is a task for everybody, although at different levels, in accordance with the varying gifts of the spirit. Finally, the chapter ends with a call for continual balance renewal: "catechesis needs to be continually renewed by a certain broadening of its concept, by the revision of its method, by the search for suitable language, and by the utilization of new means of transmitting the message."<sup>465</sup>

**Chapter Three:** The third chapter is one of the most important chapters of the exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* in the sense that it tries to examine the specifics of catechesis in connection with other components of evangelization. On the nature of those specifics it states: "The specific

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<sup>461</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.22

<sup>462</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.14

<sup>463</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.15

<sup>464</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.16

<sup>465</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.17

character of catechesis ... has twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>466</sup> This means that catechesis finds a germinal faith in the hearts of men, and then it treats of developing this faith through an education (teaching) and initiation (life) to the faith. In fact, it is here that the theme of the relationship between catechesis and other sacraments finds its root.

**Chapter Four:** The fourth chapter concentrates on “The whole of the Good News drawn from its source”<sup>467</sup> and emphasizes the importance of “reflection and systematic study” and its implications for “Christian living in society and the world.”<sup>468</sup> Stress is also laid on the sources of the Christian and its formulation in traditional formulae such as creed. In paragraph 29 of chapter four, entitled “Factors that must not be neglected”, John Paul II again follows the footsteps of Paul VI. Thus he quotes his predecessor’s warning that catechesis involves an “essential content, the living substance, which cannot be modified without seriously diluting the nature of evangelization.”<sup>469</sup> Integrity of content, the use of suitable pedagogical methods, and ecumenical dimensions of catechesis, are among the issues that received emphasis in remarks which have particular application to situations where Christians together decide to continue or found explicitly Christian schools.

**Chapter Five:** This very fifth chapter studies the receivers of catechesis. Its firm position is that “everybody needs to be catechized”.<sup>470</sup> This is the suggestive title of Chapter V of the *Catechesi Tradendae*, and it can be said very well that even a person who as a child or adolescent received a good catechesis for that age, needs, as an adult, to deepen his catechetical instruction

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<sup>466</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.19

<sup>467</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, p.25

<sup>468</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.26

<sup>469</sup> Paul VI., *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.25

<sup>470</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesi Tradendae*, p.33

in correspondence to his human maturity. *Catechesi Tradendae* says with reason that it would be absurd if the catechetical formation "were to stop precisely on the thresholds of the mature age,"<sup>471</sup> since it is precisely for adults that it is necessary, even though style, method and contents are to be suitably adjusted.

**Chapter Six:** The sixth chapter sets out "Some ways and means of catechesis"<sup>472</sup> and gives attention to communications media, utilization of various places and gatherings the use of the homily, catechetical literature and catechisms. It is clear that John Paul II desires to see catechism well made, faithful to the contents of revelation, which answers the requirement of Vatican II and the necessities of the world of today.

**Chapter Seven:** The seventh chapter deals on "How to impart Catechesis."<sup>473</sup> It recognizes the importance of diversity of methods but stresses that they are aimed at "The service of Revelation and conversion"<sup>474</sup>, and not at the promotion of a particular ideology, culture and particular devotions. A few dangers of deviations and changes are set forth. Within this context enters the topic of "memorization."<sup>475</sup> It is presented as an *anamnesis* or remembrance actualizing the facts of the history of salvation.

**Chapter Eight:** The eighth chapter talks of the difficulties of catechesis in the world of today; difficulties which demand a more attentive use of pedagogical resources, of the adaptation of language, etc. Faith must be presented as a certainty, and this theme leads to the study of the relationships between catechesis and theology.

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<sup>471</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.43cd

<sup>472</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.40

<sup>473</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.44

<sup>474</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.44

<sup>475</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.55

**Chapter Nine:** This final chapter which is the ninth chapter reminds us that “The task concerns us all.”<sup>476</sup> It calls all the members of the people of God to play a significant and responsible role in the work of catechesis. It is to be noted how the parish is the privileged place of catechesis. This is the chapter written with more enthusiasm and hope. It addresses specific encouragement to all involved in this vast pastoral work.

After this chapter comes the concluding section in which we are reminded of the role of the Holy Spirit as interior Teacher, and the *Madonna* as Mother and model of the Disciple.

### 3.3 Sources of Catechesis

In catechizing, we get our materials from the Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium. According to the Code of the Canon Law:

All that is contained in the written word of God or in tradition, that is, in the one deposit of faith entrusted to the Church and also proposed as divinely revealed either by the solemn magisterium of the Church or by its ordinary and universal magisterium, must be believed with divine and catholic faith; it manifested by the common adherence of the Christian faithful under the leadership of the sacred magisterium; therefore, all are bound to avoid any doctrines whatever which are contrary to these truths.<sup>477</sup>

The *Catechesi Tradendae* points out (and rightly too), that the obvious source of catechesis is the word of God transmitted in Tradition and Sacred Scripture. Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.<sup>478</sup> By adhering to it, the entire people of God, united with its pastors, remained faithful to

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<sup>476</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.53

<sup>477</sup> Canon 750

<sup>478</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.27

the teaching of the apostles whether in its written form or in the form of oral tradition.<sup>479</sup> Those matters to be believed with “divine and catholic faith” are contained in the word of God, whether written - i.e. Scripture, or handed down -i.e. Tradition. This divine word of God, written (Scripture) or handed down (Tradition) is to be proposed as divinely revealed by the teaching authority of the Church, either by solemn judgement or by the ordinary and universal magisterium. Each of these sources will be analyzed below.

### 3.3.1 Scripture and Tradition

As the sources of catechesis, the Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; while Sacred Tradition is the authority that transmits the word of God as entrusted to the apostles and their successors by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit.<sup>480</sup> In this regard, John Paul II in his address to the theology professors of Germany on 18 November 1980, said:

The Catholic theologian cannot build a bridge between the Scripture and the problems of the present without the mediation of tradition. That Tradition is not a substitute for the Word of God in the Bible; rather it testifies to it through the ages and new interpretations. Maintain your dialogue with the living Tradition of the Church. Learn from its treasures, many of which are still undiscovered. Show the people of the Church that in this process you do not rely on the relics of the past, but that our great legacy from the Apostles down to the present day is a huge reservoir from which to draw the answers to some of the questions as to the meaning of life today. We shall be better able to pass on the Word of God if we heed the Holy Scripture and its response in the living Tradition of the Church. We shall also become more critical of and sensitive to our own present. It is neither the sole nor the ultimate measure of theological perception.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Vatican II Document, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, no.10, St. Paul’s Publication Edition, Bandra, 1965, p. 667

<sup>480</sup>Vatican II Document, *Dei Verbum* , no.9

<sup>481</sup> Pazhayampallil T, *Pastoral Guide - Fundamental Moral Theology and Virtues*, Vol.1, Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1995, p.45

Therefore, "Scripture without Tradition sinks into archeology and history, while Tradition without Scripture can lead to the rigid composition of one particular theological system."<sup>482</sup> Both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition make up a single deposit of the word of God which is entrusted to the Church<sup>483</sup> and are good for teaching. For "all scripture is inspired by God and can profitably be used for instruction and for teaching men to be holy (2Tim 3:16-17; Prov. 28:7). The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful ... to learn 'surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ', by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures."<sup>484</sup> A time-honored way to study and savour the word of God is *lectio divina* which constitutes a real and veritable *spiritual journey* marked out in stages. After the *lectio*, which consists of reading and re-reading a passage from Sacred Scripture and taking in the main elements, we proceed to *meditatio*. This is a moment of interior reflection in which the soul turns to God and tries to understand what his word is saying to us today. Then comes *oratio* in which we linger to talk with God directly. Finally we come to *contemplatio*. This helps us to keep our hearts attentive to the presence of Christ whose word is "a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 *Pet* 1:19). Reading, studying and meditation of the Word should then flow into a life of consistent fidelity to Christ and his teachings.<sup>485</sup>

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). It is necessary to take seriously the injunction to consider the word of God to be an indispensable "weapon" in the spiritual struggle. This will be effective and show results if we learn to *listen* to it and then to *obey* it. According to Baldwin of Canterbury:

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<sup>482</sup> Pazhayampallil T, *Pastoral Guide - Fundamental Moral Theology and Virtues*, Vol.1, p.45

<sup>483</sup> *Vatican II Document, Dei Verbum*, no.10

<sup>484</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no.133

<sup>485</sup> Benedict XVI, Message of the Holy Father to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of the 21<sup>st</sup> World Youth day, 9 April, 2006

When this word is preached, by the proclamation it gives to its own voice which is heard outwardly a voice of power interiorly sensed, by which the dead live again, and from the stones are raised up sons to Abraham. This word, then, is living in the heart of the Father, living in the mouth of the preacher, living in the heart of the believer and lover. Since the word is living in such a manner, without doubt it is also active.

It is active in the creation of things, active in the control of the world, active in the redemption of the world.... It is active in its working, active when preached....

It is active and more piercing than any two-edge sword, when it is believed and loved. What is impossible to the believer or difficult to the lover? When this word speaks, its words pierce the heart, like the sharp arrows of a man of might, like nails driven in deep, and they go so far as to penetrate the inmost being....<sup>486</sup>

The Scripture is so central to our knowledge and understanding of God that it is quite reasonable to agree with St. Jerome that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.<sup>487</sup> Benedict XVI reminds all Christians that our personal and communal relationship with God depends on our growing familiarity with the word of God.<sup>488</sup> He goes further to say that: “we must never forget that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on the word of God proclaimed, accepted, celebrated and meditated upon in the Church. This deepening relationship with the divine word will take place with even greater enthusiasm if we are conscious that, in Scripture and the Church’s living Tradition, we stand before God’s definitive word on the cosmos and on history.”<sup>489</sup> Therefore, following the example of the great Apostle of the Nations, who changed the course of his life after hearing the voice of the Lord (cf. Acts 9:1-30), let us too hear God’s word as it speaks to us, ever personally, here and now.<sup>490</sup> However, it is not enough to only

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<sup>486</sup> Baldwin of Canterbury, *The Divine Office - The Liturgy of the Hours According to the Roman Rite III, Weeks of the Year 6 - 34*, pp.704-705

<sup>487</sup> St. Jerome, *Commentarioum in Isaiam Libri xviii prol.*: PL 24, 17b

<sup>488</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no.124

<sup>489</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no.121

<sup>490</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no.122

hear the word of God. Over and above hearing, Saint James tells us: "Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act - they will be blessed in their doing" (James 1:22-25). Those who listen to the word of God and refer to it always, are constructing their existence on solid foundations. In line with this position, our Lord Jesus admonishes us that "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them, will be like a wise man who built his house on rock" (Mt 7:24). It will not collapse when bad weather comes.<sup>491</sup>

Consequently, in order that the Word of God may be known, loved, pondered and preserved in the hearts of the faithful following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary (cf. *Lk* 2:19, 51), greater efforts must be made to provide access to the Sacred Scriptures, especially through full or partial translations of the Bible, prepared as far as possible in cooperation with other Churches and Ecclesial Communities and accompanied by study guides for use in prayer and for study in the family and community. Also to be encouraged is the scriptural formation of clergy, religious, catechists and the laity in general; careful preparation of celebrations of the Word; promotion of the biblical apostolate with the help of the Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar and the encouragement of other similar structures at all levels. In brief, efforts must be made to try to put the Sacred Scriptures into the hands of all the faithful right from their earliest years.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>491</sup>Benedict XVI, Message of the Holy Father to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of the 21<sup>st</sup> World Youth day, 9 April, 2006

<sup>492</sup>*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 58

### 3.3.2 Magisterium.

The *Magisterium* means “Teaching Authority.” *Magister* is the Latin word for “Teacher”. When used with regard to the Church, the *Magisterium* means the power which the Church has to teaching authoritatively the truths connected with the salvation of souls. In our modern Catholic usage, “*Magisterium* has come to be associated almost exclusively with the teaching role and authority of the hierarchy. It is now often used to refer not to the teaching office as such, but to the body of men who exercise this office in the church: namely, the pope and bishops.”<sup>493</sup> The *General Directory for Catechesis* recognizes the *Magisterium* as the second source of catechesis. From this treasure of the teaching authority of the church, every member of God’s family is nourished in whatever language and form. The word of God which is the divine presentation of God himself is guided by the teaching authority of the church - the *Magisterium* celebrated in sacred liturgy in which the word is proclaimed, heard, explained, internalized and lived out by the faithful.<sup>494</sup> According to the *General Directory for Catechesis*: “The content of catechesis is found in God’s word, written or handed down; it is more deeply understood and developed by the people exercising their faith under the guidance of the *Magisterium*, which alone teaches authentically.”<sup>495</sup>

The term “authentic or authentically” as used here does not mean “genuine or genuinely” but rather “authoritative or authoritatively,” and indeed, “endowed with pastoral authority, ultimately derived from Christ. The task of giving an authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted exclusively to the living *Magisterium*, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.”<sup>496</sup> Scripture is authentically interpreted by the *Magisterium* of the Church. Without the Church the Word of God

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<sup>493</sup> Komonchak J.A., Collins M, Lane D.A.(eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, P.617

<sup>494</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, In: Barga T, *Catechetical Mission of the Church in Nigeria*, s- A Collaborative Ministry, Jos: Fab Anieh Ltd, 2006, p. 12

<sup>495</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, Nairobi: Pauline’s Publication,1997, no. 45

<sup>496</sup> Vatican II Document, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, no.10

would not have been passed down and preserved over the generations. One cannot want to have the Word of God without the Church.<sup>497</sup> The Church is a hierarchical community of believers, with full power given to her by her founder himself to “bind and loose” (Mt. 16:19).

From the above, “the bishops in communion with the head and members of the college, whether as individuals or gathered in conferences of bishops or in particular councils, are authentic teachers and instructors of the faith for the faithful entrusted to their care; the faithful must adhere to the authentic teaching of their own bishops with a religious assent of soul;<sup>498</sup> because of their special share in Christ’s prophetic office and their duty to witness to His truth, bishops deserve the respect due to witnesses of the faith. However, “we must recognize that the Church’s teaching authority does not carry the same force when it deals with technical solutions involving particular means as it does when it speaks of principles or ends. People may agree in abhorring an injustice, for instance, yet sincerely disagree at to what practical approach will achieve justice.”<sup>499</sup>

In summary, the Church’s spirituality will come forth enriched and nourished by the faithful reading of Sacred Scripture, and of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church and by all that brings about in the Church such an awareness. Here we mean systematic and accurate instruction, participation in that incomparable school of words, signs and divine inspirations which constitute the Sacred Liturgy and by silent and fervent meditation on divine truths and finally by wholehearted dedication to contemplative prayer.<sup>500</sup> However, it should be noted that the Sacred Scripture is free from error (this is theologically called the inerrancy of the Bible). On

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<sup>497</sup> John Paul II, Message to the laity of Fulda, 18 November 1980, in: “L’Osservatore Romano”, ed. English, 15 December, 1980.p.8.

<sup>498</sup> Canon 753

<sup>499</sup> U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, *Challenge of Peace*, in: Pazhayampallil T, Pastoral Guide - Fundamental Moral Theology and Virtues, Vol.1, p.46

<sup>500</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* (Paths of the Church), 6 August 1964, no. 38

the other hand, "The proper authority for it is the *Magisterium*. This *Magisterium* is however not superior to the word of God."<sup>501</sup> Thus, the Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and *Magisterium* go hand in hand. The Holy Spirit is its chief interpreter properly done through the *Magisterium*.

### 3.4 Types of Catechesis according to *Catechesi Tradendae*

Many people until now, have the misconception that catechesis is only for children preparing for their first Holy Communion or confirmation. On the contrary, Saint Gregory the Great has rightly pointed out that it is a lifetime process from childhood to old age.<sup>502</sup> Quite emphatically, John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae*, made it clear that "everybody needs to be catechized."<sup>503</sup> This notion is in correspondence with the aim of catechesis which is "to develop an initial faith, daily to nourish the Christian life, it hopes to have the Christian eventually understand the mystery of Christ so well and intimately that his entire being is filled with the light of God's word. He hopes with the Church finally to think like Christ, to judge and act as Christ, and to hope as Christ urges us."<sup>504</sup> We know that this cannot take place overnight; usually it lasts a lifetime. At each stage in life in general and the Christian life in particular, there is a level of catechesis appropriate to one's level of understanding and maturity. In fact, St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians is applicable here: "I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it" (1 Cor.3:2). Similarly, one can call to mind the words of Christ to his disciples: "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (Jn. 16:12). Their inability to "bear them now", refers to their immaturity as at then, and also points simultaneously to the fact that his teaching to them is an ongoing process. It is therefore not surprising that John Paul II in Chapter five of *Catechesi Tradendae* discusses the several stages of Catechesis as they apply

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<sup>501</sup> Vatican II Document, *Dei Verbum*, no.10

<sup>502</sup>Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 45, cf. also. St Gregory the Great, Homily in Evang. I, XIX,2: PL.76,1155

<sup>503</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.33

<sup>504</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.20

to the various age levels. We shall examine those stages as well as types of Catechesis right away.

### **3.4.1 Catechesis for Infants and Young Children**

The age group under this section is divided into early infancy or pre-school age and childhood. Infant or pre-school age is typically applied to young children between the ages of 1 month and 12 months; however, definitions may vary between birth and 1 year of age, or even between birth and 2 years of age. A newborn is an infant who is only hours, days, or up to a few weeks old.<sup>505</sup> Looking at the age of the infant, a lot of families consider it as a sign of irresponsibility to pray when the little child is still awake. For such people, the best time to carry out any catechetical activities is when that child is asleep. They forget that at the pre-school age, the child receives the first elements of catechesis from its parents and the family surroundings. In fact, it is a period in which through the help of the parents, the child faculties are integrated into a living relationship with God.<sup>506</sup> Many people do not know that “the very first months and years of life are not too early for laying down roots for Christian growth, for conditioning the infant for belief.”<sup>507</sup> This is because “children too have an apostolate of their own. In their own measure they are true living witnesses of Christ among their companions.”<sup>508</sup> The very baptism of the infant should set in motion those parental responses, first in the mother and later in the father, which makes it possible for baptismal grace to be productive.<sup>509</sup> John Paul II insists on the right the infant has to the presentation of faith along with others.<sup>510</sup> This is also the opinion of Christ when He said: "Let the little children come to me ... for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these"(Mt19:14). John Paul II “describes the toddler learning his prayers by lisping to the

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<sup>505</sup> [www.google.de/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1TEUA\\_enDE493DE493&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=infants](http://www.google.de/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C1TEUA_enDE493DE493&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=infants)

<sup>506</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, nos,137

<sup>507</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*,no.78

<sup>508</sup> *Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem* no.12

<sup>509</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*,no.78

<sup>510</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, nos,14, 36, 41,61,64,

heavenly Father for protection and love, to Jesus as brother who leads to the father, to the Holy Spirit in-dwelling in his infant heart, and to Mary the Mother of Jesus who is also the child's own dear mother. Parents should be helped in every way to enable them to be catechists to their own children in their own homes so that the work of maturing in Christ may begin as early as possible."<sup>511</sup>

The catechesis here consists of short prayers before and after eating. Such short prayers are also recommended especially when going to the bed etc. They have to know that at this stage of life, the child learns more from what he/she sees and not from what he/she hears and what one learns at this stage carries him/her throughout out his/her life time. Those helping in marriage instruction have a great role to play here. They have to make the young parents understand their work and what they have to do at this stage of early infancy or pre-school age.

The period of school age is the first time the child will be in contact with people outside his/her immediate family. He/she "is now ready for direct introduction into the life of the Church, as mediated by the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist."<sup>512</sup> It is to be borne in mind that nothing is more efficacious in winning for missionaries the confidence of fathers and mothers than devoted care bestowed upon their children. If the minds of the young are molded to Christian truth and their characters fashioned according to Christian virtue, they will enrich and bring distinction to not only to their families but also their communities...<sup>513</sup> At this age, memory and sentiment are fertile and John Paul II describes the catechesis given at this stage as "initial but not fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child's moral and religious life."<sup>514</sup> More still,

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<sup>511</sup>Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, p.137

<sup>512</sup>Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, p.137

<sup>513</sup>Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, (on promotion of Catholic Missions to our Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and Other Local Ordinaries Enjoying Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See), 2 June 1951,no: 39

<sup>514</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no,37

from the pastoral point of view, children coming to school can be considered to have four different origins:

1) children coming from seriously Christian families, and hence, with a first announcement of Jesus, from an environment that breathes faith; 2) children coming from nominally Christian families, with little religious practice and some rudimentary and confused catechetical notions; 3) children coming from non-believing, indifferent or hostile families, with very little or no serious education to the faith; 4) children without a family due to the death or unworthiness of their parents, who have been gathered into institutions in order to promote their human qualities and develop their religious dimension.<sup>515</sup>

In catechizing these children, a huge success will be registered when the catechist or religious educator and parents see their work as a collaborative responsibility. In fact, “one can and should help the other in methods, programs and any difficulties which may arise. No professional can boast of a competency sufficiently complete to exclude the need of guidance from those divinely appointed as their children’s first teacher.”<sup>516</sup> Therefore, the need for catechist or religious educator and parents to see themselves as a team cannot be overemphasized. This is because “the power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways.”<sup>517</sup> Hence, parents are advised to cooperate with Pastors, educators and Catechists in order to fulfil their mission well and build up the Church.

### **3.4.2 Catechesis for Young People**

In his letter of 31st March 1985 to young men and women in the world, John Paul II wrote:

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<sup>515</sup> *Going, Teach ... Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of John Paul II*, Boston :Daughters of St. Paul, 1980, p.350

<sup>516</sup> *Pope John Paul II: Catechist*, p.137

<sup>517</sup> Paul VI., *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no,77

The Church looks to the youth, indeed the Church in a special way looks at herself in the youth, in all of you and in each of you. It has been so from the beginning, from apostolic times. The words of St. John in his First Letter can serve as special testimony: 'I am writing to you, young people, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father... I write to you, young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you' (1 Jn. 2:13 ff.)... In our generation, at the end of the Second Millennium after Christ, the Church also sees herself in the youth.<sup>518</sup>

Generally, "youth should be a process of "growth" bringing with it the gradual accumulation of all that is true, good and beautiful..."<sup>519</sup> But, unfortunately in our world today, "the first victims of the spiritual and cultural crisis gripping the world are the young."<sup>520</sup> However, the Church must seek to rekindle the very special love displayed by Christ towards the young man in the Gospel: "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him" (*Mk* 10:21). For this reason the Church does not tire of proclaiming Jesus Christ, of proclaiming his Gospel as the unique and satisfying response to the most deep-seated aspirations of young people, as illustrated in Christ's forceful and exalted personal call to discipleship ("Come and follow me." *Mk* 10:21), that brings about a sharing in the filial love of Jesus for his Father and the participation in his mission for the salvation of humanity.<sup>521</sup>

The Synod paid particular attention to the proclamation of God's word to the younger generation. Young people are already active members of the Church and they represent its future. Often we encounter in them a spontaneous openness to hearing the word of God and a sincere desire to know Jesus. Youth is a time when genuine and irrepressible questions arise about the meaning of life and the direction our own lives should take. Only God can give the true answer to these questions. Concern for young people calls for courage and clarity in the message we

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<sup>518</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter for the "International Year of Youth"*, 1985, no.15

<sup>519</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter for the "International Year of Youth"*, no.14

<sup>520</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.181

<sup>521</sup> John Paul II, *Post Synodal Exhortation Apostolic Christifideles Laici*, December 30, 1988, no.46

proclaim; we need to help young people to gain confidence and familiarity with sacred Scripture so it can become a compass pointing out the path to follow.<sup>522</sup> Young people need witnesses and teachers who can walk with them, teaching them to love the Gospel and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers. God's word needs to be presented in a way that brings out its implications for each person's vocation and assists young people in choosing the direction they will give to their lives, including that of total consecration to God.<sup>523</sup>

On the Catechesis of the young people, *The General Catechetical Directory* of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (1971) advises: "National directories should distinguish between pre-adolescence, adolescence and early adulthood."<sup>524</sup> The age of pre-adolescence, leading up to adolescence proper, is peculiarly marked by concern for one's own self. This is the time of trial and error, of awkwardness, of mistakes, of confusion as youngster attempts to grip with what is happening to him or her. In fact, "childhood faith is subjected to a partially critical revision, often severe and crude. It is the age of choices. What he had previously accepted, or less maturely and knowingly, is now subjected to an examination, in order that he may make it his own, accept it and personalize it - or reject it."<sup>525</sup> Here the *General Catechetical Directory* advises against the simple and objective type of instruction appropriate for young children.<sup>526</sup> Catechesis here ought to center on the pre-adolescent's needs and concerns. Catholic doctrine on revelation, the Church, the sacraments, and the morality can and should be taught in depth but always with special application to the student in human throes of becoming a mature Catholic.<sup>527</sup> Catechists should make effort to offer and propose to him or her Christ who knows man, who is fully aware of the

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<sup>522</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, "Message for the Twenty-first World Youth Day," 22 February 2006

<sup>523</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Vatican City, 2010, no.104

<sup>524</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.83

<sup>525</sup> *Going, Teach ... Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of John Paul II*, p.350

<sup>526</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.139

<sup>527</sup> Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, p.139

burning human problems, who loves man and gives Himself to man. The existential and human reality of Jesus serves as a basis for his or her perception of the divine reality of Jesus.

Adolescence according to World Health Organization's definition begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty, and ends when an adult identity and behaviour are accepted. This period of development corresponds roughly to the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years.<sup>528</sup> Adolescence is a transitional period between two stable ages: childhood and adulthood. At this stage “adolescents are not sure where they are in society; childhood religious life is inadequate while adult maturity of faith is still ahead; adolescents are frequently mired in a crisis of faith. ...Some adolescent seek independence and autonomy, finding fault with adult society whenever it fails their expectations. Because of new strength and powers and freshness and youth, the spirit of independence inclines some adolescents to a naturalism wherein they seek to save themselves by their own unaided efforts”.<sup>529</sup> Here catechesis must direct these new energies and drives to Christ, the Lord, who said: “Without me, you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5); and yet: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me” (Phil.4:13). The principal task of catechesis will be to further genuinely Christian understanding of life. It must shed the light of Christian message on realities, which have greater impact on the adolescent, such as the meaning of bodily existence, love and the family, the standards to be followed in life, work and leisure, justice and peace, etc.<sup>530</sup> Catechesis should as a matter of fact educate the adolescents to assume the responsibilities of faith and gradually make them capable of upholding their Christian profession before all men.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>528</sup>[https://www.google.de/webhp?sourceid=chromeinstant&rlz=1C1TEUA\\_enDE493DE493&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=adolescent%20age](https://www.google.de/webhp?sourceid=chromeinstant&rlz=1C1TEUA_enDE493DE493&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=adolescent%20age)

<sup>529</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p.140-141

<sup>530</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.84

<sup>531</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.89

Young adulthood is a period of life, which precedes the taking up of responsibilities proper to adults. Present - day youth are so very complex that their catechesis is more difficult than ever before. John Paul II pointed out some of these challenges when he said that:

Among the great stumbling-blocks of our day are the difficulties families and teachers face as they strive to pass on to younger generations the human, moral and spiritual values that will enable them to be men and women who will want an active role in society and to live a life worthy of their dignity as persons. In the same vein, handing on the Christian message and its values, which help people to be coherent in the decisions they make and in the way they live, is a challenge that all ecclesial communities are called to take up, especially in the field of catechesis and in the formation of catechumens.<sup>532</sup>

There is therefore no doubt that we need a comprehensive and unified catechetical package for the youth in the Church if they are to bear witness to Christ, be dedicated laity zealously pursuing the mission to communicate Christ, build bridges of dialogue and communication with other bodies of the Church, prayerfully influencing their generation as individual Christians who share in the mission of Christ in a unique and personal way.<sup>533</sup>

The *General Directory for Catechesis* states some characteristics of the youth of today to include, but not limited to: the time of the first decisions, personal responsibilities and fundamental choices of accepting or of rejecting. The Document does not limit itself to these descriptive data, but calls for a catechesis that denounces egoism and asks for: generosity, the awareness of the value of work, of the common good, of justice, of the promotion of man as man, of peace and justice, of liberation from impediments which retard maturation, and especially the

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<sup>532</sup> John Paul II, "Handing on Faith at the Heart of Cultures", The Holy Father's addresses to the Members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 16 March 2002, no.3

<sup>533</sup> Obiefuna, B.A.C., "The Catholic Youth in the Collaborative Ministry of the Church in Nigeria", in: Obinwa I.M.C (ed.), Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation, Onitsha -Nigeria, African First Publishers Ltd, 2006, 199. Also cf. Ezeonyia, V.V, "Be Outstanding in discipline", in: Amobi, G. O (ed.) Youth: The Trustees of Prosteriy, Aba: Youth Orientation and Counselling Centre, 1996, pg. 1-7

sense of human dignity. Catechesis thus becomes the moment in which the Gospel can be presented, understood and accepted as capable of giving a meaning to life.<sup>534</sup> In this period of adulthood, catechesis should be proposed in new ways, which are open to the sensibilities and problems of this group. They should be of theological, ethical, historical and social nature. In particular, due emphasis should be given to education in truth and liberty as understood by the Gospel, to the formation of conscience.<sup>535</sup>

Young people are the future of the Church and of the world. They “exert a very important influence in modern society. The circumstances of their life, their habits of thought, their relations with their families, have been completely transformed. Often they enter too rapidly a new social and economic environment. While their social and even political importance is on the increase day by day, they seem unequal to the weight of these new responsibilities.”<sup>536</sup> Therefore, pastoral commitment on their behalf should be seen as a necessity. John Paul II speaking of the future said: “we cannot forget the young, who in many countries comprise more than half the population. How do we bring the message of Christ to non-Christian young people who represent the future of entire continents? Clearly, the ordinary means of pastoral work are not sufficient: what are needed are associations, institutions, special centers and groups, and cultural and social initiatives for young people. This is a field where modern ecclesial movements have ample room for involvement.”<sup>537</sup> Here John Paul II suggests things like:

- places where young people will want to meet and form good quality social relationships and which constitute a supportive environment for the faith
- Talks and reflection groups, suited to different levels, based on issues of common concern affecting Christian life.

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<sup>534</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.39

<sup>535</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.185

<sup>536</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 12

<sup>537</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.37

- Cultural associations or social clubs offering a variety of open leisure and culturally formative activities, such as music, theatre, cine-clubs, etc.
- Cultural collections - of books or videotapes - for Christian cultural information and formation and for exchanges with other young people or adults.
- Good role-models, given that the ultimate aim is to form young adults who can live their faith in their own milieu, whether they are students, researchers, workers or artists.
- Pilgrimage itineraries to allow small meditative groups as well as large festive gatherings to quench their thirst for culture through spiritual life in a climate of radiant and communicative fervour.<sup>538</sup>

These suggestions of John Paul II should be implemented otherwise the criticisms and “negative reactions and comments from our Youths that the Church is paying more attention to the Catholic Women’s Organization (C.W.O), the Catholic men Organization (C.M.O), the Knights and such other Organizations that are already stable because their members are not only settled in family life but can, as Organizations, give enough money to the upkeep of the Church”<sup>539</sup>, may seem to be true.

However, besides all these, young people should become the first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them, exercising the apostolate by themselves among themselves, taking account of their social environment.<sup>540</sup> Adults should be anxious to enter into friendly dialogue with the young, where, despite the difference in age, they could get to know one another and share with one another their own personal riches. It is by example first of all and, on occasion, by sound advice and practical help that adults should persuade the young to undertake the apostolate.

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<sup>538</sup>John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture, 18 January 1983, Vatican.

<sup>539</sup> Obiefuna, B.A.C; “The Catholic Youth in the Collaborative Ministry of the Church in Nigeria”, in: Obinwa I.M.C (ed.), *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, Onitsha, African First Publishers Ltd, 2006, 199. Also cf. Ezeonyia, V.V, “Be Outstanding in discipline”, in: Amobi, G. O (ed.) *Youth: The Trustees of Prosteriy*, Aba: Youth Orientation and Counselling Centre, 1996, pg. 1-7

<sup>540</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 12

The young, on their side, will treat their elders with respect and confidence, and though by nature inclined to favour what is new, they will have due esteem for praiseworthy traditions.<sup>541</sup>

### 3.4.3 Catechesis for Adult and Catechesis for Quasi- Catechumens

Adults are the catechists; the parents, the first educators of their children to the faith; the pastors of souls; the professors and teachers; those who, in various ways, have an extensive experience of life and do not lack responsibilities toward others.<sup>542</sup> They have both the right and the obligation to be catechized. Where such catechesis does not take place, the individual is prevented from fulfilling his/her duties toward others as required by the vocation given to each at baptism. Catechesis is seen not merely as the imparting of knowledge but as a process of formation that informs, inspires and equips one to live out one's vocation in private and public life.<sup>543</sup> Little wonder John Paul II considers adult catechesis as the principal form of catechesis because it touches those who have the greatest responsibilities and the "capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form."<sup>544</sup> Adult catechesis is as such as important as the earlier catechesis of childhood and adolescence. In fact it is even referred to as the target and the culmination of all catechetical efforts."<sup>545</sup> Emphasizing on the importance of adult catechesis, John Paul II insists that: "The Christian community cannot carry out a permanent catechesis without the direct and skilled participation of adults, whether as receivers or as promoters of catechetical activity. [His reason is that:] The world, in which the young are called to live and to

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<sup>541</sup>Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 12

<sup>542</sup>*Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.358

<sup>543</sup> Margret N.R., *Overview of Adult catechesis in Christian Community*, in Omeayo A.S, *Catechesis in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects - Towards a Catechetical Updating of Priests, Consecrated Persons and the Laity in the Church in Nigeria*, Enugu: Geli Enterprises Nig., 2011, p.109

<sup>544</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 43

<sup>545</sup> Omeayo A.S, *Catechesis in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects - Towards a Catechetical Updating of Priests, Consecrated Persons and the Laity in the Church in Nigeria*, p.108

give witness to the faith which catechesis seeks to deepen and strengthen, is governed by adults.<sup>546</sup>

The centrality of adult catechesis, however, does not find its justification only in the de-Christianized social-cultural situation and environment or in a situation not yet Christianized, but rather in a program of the Church. A Church without adults condemns itself to clericalism, because inevitably the priests become the only persons responsible for pastoral action; it deprives itself of the missionary possibility, because it lacks those persons who witness to the faith amid temporal realities, such as the family, the world of work, culture, etc., which are relative to the experience of the laity.<sup>547</sup> The faith of the adults, therefore, must be continually enlightened, developed and protected, so that it may acquire that of Christian wisdom which gives sense, unity, and hope to the many experiences of personal and spiritual life.<sup>548</sup> One of the facts to be stressed about the adult is that the:

Adult of today is generally an authentic adult, made such by the mountain of easy information, by the rapidity of international and continental encounters and contacts, by commercial pressures and industrial interchanges, by a certain expansion and diffusion of the missionary action of ancient religions and of the various Christian confessions. Except for a small proportion of human beings, the adult man of today has become aware of himself, of his human rights, of his dignity; of his need for liberty, for free choice, for justice, for peace, for material sufficiency and for participation in the world of culture.<sup>549</sup>

Thus, in adult catechesis, we should guard against the temptation of being jumbled together in a chaotic discord. This is a situation whereby so many things are said to different people at the same time without considering the peculiarities and expectations of each person's

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<sup>546</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 43

<sup>547</sup> *Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.362

<sup>548</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 43

<sup>549</sup> *Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.357

age condition. Adult catechesis should, therefore, pay attention to each of the age categories of the adult life in order to make the best impact.<sup>550</sup> So in carrying out the adult catechesis, the following stages of the adult have to be taken into consideration namely:

**3.4.3.1 Early adulthood:** Some of the psychologists are of the opinion that this period begins between the ages of 17 and 22. Accordingly, "during this transition, the person starts a new period of individuation by modifying his life style. During this transition, the person starts a new period of individuation by modifying his or her relationships with family and society so as to take a place in the adult world."<sup>551</sup> The individual in question here has no intention of ending the family relationship but to reject this occasion of parent-child relationship which hinders him from the development of a life structure of his own. The early adults form and test a preliminary adult identity or life structure. They make initial choices related to marriage, career, housing and lifestyle.<sup>552</sup> Here special emphasis on preparation for family life should be made at this level, or even earlier if, in the judgment of the local pastors, communications media have already implanted ideas which in time could prove harmful.<sup>553</sup> Catechesis here surely requires the guidance of experienced counselors such as pastors, lay catechists and successful married partners like medical doctors and nurses etc.

**3.4.3.2 Middle adulthood:** These groups of people are between the early adulthood and the later adulthood. Their age is between late 30 to late 40 years. This is the age

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<sup>550</sup> Wilson F., "Adult Development" in *Nurture that is Christian*, in Omeayo A.S, *Catechesis in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects - Towards a Catechetical Updating of Priests, Consecrated Persons and the Laity in the Church in Nigeria*, p.109

<sup>551</sup> Wilson F., "Adult Development" in *Nurture that is Christian*, in Omeayo A.S, *Catechesis in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects - Towards a Catechetical Updating of Priests, Consecrated Persons and the Laity in the Church in Nigeria*, p. 175

<sup>552</sup> Wilson F., "Adult Development" in *Nurture that is Christian*, in Omeayo A.S, *Catechesis in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects - Towards a Catechetical Updating of Priests, Consecrated Persons and the Laity in the Church in Nigeria*, p.178

<sup>553</sup> Achütegui P.S.D & Roche J.I (eds.), *Word, Memory, Witness: The 1977 Bishop's Synod of Catechesis*, Manila: Loyola Papers, 1978, P.122

one is supposed to have settled down in life. However, most of the times what one planned may not materialize as expected. Likewise the *National Catechetical Directory* lists some of these disappointments in attaining life's goals: disillusionment in marriage, divorce, loss of job, financial problems, severe illness, death of a loved one, problems with children, and fear of failure.<sup>554</sup> The *National Catechetical Directory* goes further to depict the problems often occurring in the middle years of adulthood. Often a person becomes lonely and bored, discouraged in facing life and already fatigued with it. Hope is muted by a sense of failure, the feeling of physical and spiritual weakness, the first evidence of aging. Human limitations are no longer avoidable but inescapable.<sup>555</sup> Catechesis here should make them understand that:

Escape, change, rebellion, resentment, hostility - none of these responses to adult crises satisfy. Only moving on to a new stage, a new era of maturity, of positive acceptance of one's dependence, poverty, failure, loss of control of one's life will be the basis for spiritual growth in Christ. This can be one of life's most fulfilling moments: in truly personal freedom to surrender to the Father, freely to place oneself wholly at the disposal of God, to accept the loving but painful embrace of God without expecting anything in return. Catechesis is meant to bring all Catholics to this stage of holiness.<sup>556</sup>

**3.4.3.3 Later adulthood:** This is the last stage of the adult catechesis. It begins from where the middle adulthood catechesis stopped till the end of one's life. Catechesis here pays particular attention to certain aspects of the condition of the aged people. In other words, "their catechesis requires the caring presence of the catechist, of fulfillment and hope. If the present person's faith is already solid and rich, catechesis serves to bring to fulfillment a journey of faith with thankfulness and hope; but in case of a weakened poor faith, catechesis becomes a

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<sup>554</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.184 & pgs.109 -110

<sup>555</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.184 & pgs.109 -110

<sup>556</sup> Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, pp.144-145

moment of new light and religious experience. While in a situation of hurts, catechesis leads to an attitude of prayer, forgiveness and inner peace.”<sup>557</sup>

In fact, “one is in serious error to think that every person grows in depth and maturity in faith as one ages. This simply is not true; all the aged need confirmation in supernatural hopes as they approach death and their passage to God. Death is a wondrous and final challenge to the catechist to discuss with the aged and their families the Christian meaning of death and suffering, their relation to the Paschal Mystery, the chance consciously and deliberately to share in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.”<sup>558</sup> The aged need special attention because their physical and psychological weakness calls for greater charity and concern. It is advisable for catechists to visit them frequently, offering them the comfort of God's word and, when commissioned to do so, the Eucharist. In fact, “this area of catechesis to the elderly, relatively unexplored, is one in which the Church should initiate movement to develop new programs and to disseminate whatever already exists. The elderly themselves if properly encouraged and guided are very well able to direct, plan, and evaluate their own catechesis.”<sup>559</sup> John Paul II once addressed and encouraged the old people in Italy thus:

Despite the complex nature of the problems you face: a strength that progressively diminishes, the insufficiencies of social organizations, official legislation that comes late, or the lack of understanding by a self-centered society, you are not to feel yourselves as persons underestimated in the life of the Church or as passive objects in a fast-paced world, but as participants at a time of life which is humanly and spiritually fruitful. You still have a mission to fulfill, a contribution to make. According to the divine plan, each individual human being lives a life of continual growth, from the beginning of existence to the moment at which the last breath is taken.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, *National Directory for Catechesis*, Ibadan: Fad prints, 2006, no.50

<sup>558</sup> Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, pp.145-146

<sup>559</sup> Pope John Paul II: *Catechist*, p.146

<sup>560</sup> John Paul II, Discourse to a Gathering of Older People from the Diocese of Italy, in John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 48

It is really unfortunate that the pastoral ministry has been too overwhelmed with other obligations to pay much attention to the needs of the elderly. Pope John Paul II recognizes this fact that adult catechesis is expedient when he calls adults "witnesses of the tradition of faith" (cf. Ps 44:1; Ex 12:26-27), "teachers of wisdom" (cf. Sir 6:34; 8:11-12), "workers of charity." Families should be encouraged to keep their elderly members with them, to bear witness to the past and instill wisdom in the young. The aged should feel the support of the whole community and should be helped to bear in faith their inevitable limitations and, in certain cases, their solitude. Catechists will prepare them for their meeting with the Lord and help them experience the joy that comes from our hope in eternal life.<sup>561</sup>

Finally, the responsible and active presence of adults in the catechetical itinerary is the presupposition of a missionary church. A church of children cannot be missionary. She needs adult laity who will witness in their daily life to the vitality of the Word in which they believe and with which they continually confront themselves through listening and deepening. This does not mean that the child cannot be missionary -minded, but is a potentiality that cannot express itself in all its fullness if it cannot have reference to a living and witnessing community of adults.<sup>562</sup> The transition period of adult catechesis has "three major roles to play: to reevaluate the existing life structure, to explore potential areas of change in the self and how to deal with the World; and to commit to making significant choices that assist in the formation of a new or transformed life structure in the new era".<sup>563</sup> Therefore, attaining to the aims of adult catechesis which are: to teach a correct evaluation of modern cultural changes in the of faith; to explain contemporary questions in religious and moral matters; to elaborate the relations working between the Church

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<sup>561</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no. 11

<sup>562</sup>*Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.363

<sup>563</sup> Wilson F., "Adult Development" in *Nurture that is Christian*, in Omeayo A.S, *Catechesis in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects - Towards a Catechetical Updating of Priests, Consecrated Persons and the Laity in the Church in Nigeria*, Enugu: Geli Enterprises Nig., 2011, p.109

and the “City of Man,” to show the transcendent and temporal dimensions of giving a cup of cool water; and to develop the rational foundations of the faith, to guard against fideism.<sup>564</sup>

#### **3.4.4 Catechesis for the Disabled and Handicapped**

People are created for joy and happiness, yet in reality they experience many forms of suffering and pain. Some find their own suffering to be so severe that they are physically disadvantaged because of their misfortune. Such persons are generally classified as disabled, handicapped, or in more courteous language, physically challenged. The Synod Fathers in addressing men and women affected by these various forms of suffering and pain used the following words in their final message:

You who are the abandoned and pushed to the edges of our consumer society; you who are sick, people with disabilities, the poor and hungry, migrants and prisoners, refugees, unemployed, abandoned children and old people who feel alone; you who are victims of war and all kinds of violence: the Church reminds you that she shares your suffering. She takes it to the Lord, who in turn associates you with his redeeming Passion. You are brought to life in the light of his resurrection. We need you to teach the whole world what love is. We will do everything we can so that you may find your rightful place in the Church and in society.<sup>565</sup>

The Lord addresses his call to each and every one. Even the sick are sent forth as labourers into the Lord's vineyard: the weight that wearies the body's members and dissipates the soul's serenity is far from dispensing a person from working in the vineyard. Instead the sick are called to live their human and Christian vocation and to participate in the growth of the Kingdom of God in a new and even more valuable manner.<sup>566</sup> So we have to understand that the kingdom of God is meant for all humankind, and all people are called to become members of it. To

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<sup>564</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.97, pp.109-110

<sup>565</sup> The Seventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 53

<sup>566</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 53

emphasize this fact, Jesus drew especially near to those on the margins of society, and showed them special favor in announcing the Good News. At the beginning of his ministry he proclaimed that he was "anointed...to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). To all who are victims of rejection and contempt Jesus declares: "Blessed are you poor" (Lk 6:20). What is more? He enables such individuals to experience liberation even now, by being close to them, and going to eat in their homes (cf. Lk 5:30; 15:2), treating them as equals and friends (cf. Lk 7:34), and making them feel loved by God, thus revealing his tender care for the needy (cf. Lk 15:1-32).<sup>567</sup> The Synod Fathers frequently spoke of the importance of enabling these, our brothers and sisters, to hear the Gospel message and to experience the closeness of their pastors and communities. Indeed, "the poor are the first ones entitled to hear the proclamation of the Gospel; they need not only bread, but also words of life."<sup>568</sup> The important question at this point is: do the poor get adequate attention in and from the Church and society? Pope Francis may have answered this question when he observed that: "the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care."<sup>569</sup>

During the work of the Synod, the Fathers also considered the need to proclaim God's word to all those who are suffering, whether physically, psychologically or spiritually. It is in times of pain that the ultimate questions about the meaning of one's life make themselves acutely felt.<sup>570</sup> Little wonder then that "from the very beginning the Holy See received favorably the United Nations' initiative of proclaiming 1981 the International Year of Disabled persons. These persons deserve the practical concern of the world community, both by reason of their numbers (it is

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<sup>567</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Vatican City, 1990, no.14

<sup>568</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, Vatican City, 2010, no.107

<sup>569</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no.200

<sup>570</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, no.106

calculated that they exceed 400 million) and especially for their particular human condition. Therefore, in this noble enterprise, the church could not fail to show her caring and watchful solicitude, for by her very nature, vocation and mission she has particularly at heart the lives of the weakest and most sorely tried brothers and sisters.<sup>571</sup> In fact, when earthly existence draws to a close, it is again charity which finds the most appropriate means for enabling the elderly, especially those who can no longer look after themselves and the terminally ill to enjoy genuinely humane assistance and to receive an adequate response to their needs, in particular their anxiety and their loneliness. In particular, the role of hospitals, clinics and convalescent homes needs to be reconsidered. These should not merely be institutions where care is provided for the sick or the dying. Above all they should be places where suffering, pain and death are acknowledged and understood in their human and specifically Christian meaning. This must be especially evident and effective in institutes staffed by Religious or in any way connected with the Church.<sup>572</sup> The Bishops of the third millennium are to do what was done by so many saintly Bishops throughout history, up to our own time. Like Saint Basil, for example, who even built at the gates of Caesarea a large hospice for those in need, a true citadel of charity, which was called after him the *Basiliad*. This clearly demonstrates that "the charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words."<sup>573</sup>

In fact, catechesis to the handicapped ought to be taken very seriously and should be in the forefront of the Church's evangelical ministry if we are to benefit from them. It must be clearly affirmed that a disabled person is one of us, a partaker in the same humanity. By recognizing and promoting that person's dignity and rights we are recognizing and promoting our own dignity and our rights.<sup>574</sup> Ottmar Fuchs in affirming this succinctly writes:

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<sup>571</sup> The International Year of Disabled Persons, The Holy See, 4 March, 1981

<sup>572</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March, 1995, no.88

<sup>573</sup> John Paul II, *Post - Synodal Exhortation Pastores Gregis*, Vatican City, 2003, no.73

<sup>574</sup> The International Year of Disabled Persons, The Holy See, 4 March, 1981, no. 3

Because there is so little social contact with the handicapped, the distressed, and those suffering from discrimination, we lose the particular “competences” which these people have to offer and can claim... The sufferings do not merely have a claim to help; they always have something important to say as well. That is surely why Jesus does not merely put a child in the midst, as the object of helpful service (because “not yet being grown up” counts as a deficiency); he makes children the actual yardstick for “grown up” in their dealings with the kingdom of God (cf. Mt.19, 13-14).<sup>575</sup>

There are many of our disabled brothers and sisters that if we have given them the opportunity or trained them after the accidents of life which deformed them, they would have been beneficial to the society. Many of them have nothing wrong with their hands, while some of them were not disabled from birth. They may have only one problem, for example, the inability to walk. In the developed world, a lot of people in wheel chairs are very beneficial and useful to both themselves and the society, for instance, Wolfgang Schäuble is the Federal Minister of Finance for Germany but in wheel chair. In fact, the community of believers in Igboland - Nigeria as well as the whole Africa has a great role to play towards the handicapped. For example, they can establish a skill centre where those disabled brothers and sisters of ours will be trained in handiwork in order to be useful to the society and also to themselves. The emphasis in assisting the disabled should not be limited only to economic survival and spiritual revival. They also need attention in other areas of life. For instance, their emotional problems need to be attended to. That is to say that “the affective life of the disabled have to receive particular attention. Above all when their handicaps prevent them from contracting marriage, it is important not only that they be adequately protected from promiscuity and exploitation, but that they also be able to find a community full of human warmth in which their need for friendship and love may be respected and satisfied in conformity with their inalienable moral dignity.”<sup>576</sup> Perhaps, Mother Teresa of Calcutta's observation of the serious challenge posed by the emotional needs of the aged would prove quite useful to our discourse on the human need of a community full of human warmth. She painfully narrates:

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<sup>575</sup> Fuchs O., *God's People: Instruments of Healing*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1993, p.133

<sup>576</sup> The International Year of Disabled Persons, The Holy See, 4 March, 1981, no.8

I never forget an opportunity I had in visiting a home where they had all these old parents of sons and daughters who had just put them in an institution and forgotten maybe. And I went there, and I saw in that home they had everything, beautiful things, but everybody was looking towards the door. And I did not see a single one with their smile on their face. And I turned to the Sister and I asked: How is that? How is it that the people they have everything here, why are they all looking towards the door, why are they not smiling? I am so used to see the smile on our people, even the dying ones smile. And she said: This is nearly every day, they are expecting, they are hoping that a son or daughter will come to visit them. They are hurt because they are forgotten....<sup>577</sup>

This is an indication that what the people in care homes need most is our care, visit, handshake, laughter etc. In the course of this research, the writer visited a motherless babies home. He tried to carry each of the children there and none of them liked to come down. The writer was also privileged to reside just 300 meters away from a care home, and also had series of contacts with them as he carried out his pastoral duty in Germany. From his personal experiences, he observed a man who was always angry despite the fact that he had everything in his room. When the man was finally prompted to talk, he spoke to the writer in the following words: "what I need is love not all these provisions. My children do not visit me. They send me all these packets through the courier service. My son, thank you for the visit! I really appreciate your visit. God bless you." Little wonder the old priests in Onitsha Archdiocese have refused to park into the beautiful old-people's home built for them at Blessed Iwene Tansi Major Seminary, Onitsha. This should serve as a big lesson for those planning to put up a care home or to take their aged parents to care home. Reasonable efforts should be made to identify and effectively attend to their emotional needs.

It is therefore expected that the Church should both devise and revise suitable methods of catechesis both to the aged and the disabled, They should pay attention to their insertion into cultural and religious activities so as to ensure that they will be full members of their Christian

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<sup>577</sup> Mother Teresa, The Nobel Prize Lecture, 11 December 1979

community, in accordance with their clear right to appropriate spiritual and moral education.<sup>578</sup> In fact, the Synod, "exhorts all to continue to care for the infirm and to bring them the life-giving presence of the Lord Jesus in the word and in the Eucharist. Those who suffer should be helped to read the Scriptures and to realize that their condition itself enables them to share in a special way in Christ's redemptive suffering for the salvation of the world."<sup>579</sup> In a special way, "pastors are called to listen to them, to learn from them, to guide them in their faith and to encourage them to take responsibility for lives."<sup>580</sup> They should make extra effort to bring them the Holy Eucharist so that they will have that sense belong to the one family of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget that any of us could have been in their condition or has the potentiality of having a future misfortune in one way or the other. Consequently, "on the Church's part-as it reads in the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*: "Born in the mystery of Redemption in the Cross of Christ, the Church has to try to meet man in a special way on the path of suffering. In this meeting man 'becomes the way for the Church', and this is one of the most important ways."<sup>581</sup> At this moment the suffering individual is the way of the Church because that person is, first of all, the way of Christ Himself, who is the Good Samaritan who "does not pass by", but "has compassion on him, went to him ... bound up his wounds ... took care of him" (*Lk* 10:32-34). Therefore, "any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk"<sup>582</sup>.

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<sup>578</sup> The International Year of Disabled Persons, The Holy See, 4 March, 1981, no.16

<sup>579</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, no.106

<sup>580</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post - Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, no.107

<sup>581</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Salvifici Doloris*, February 11, 1984, no.3

<sup>582</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no.207

### 3.5 The Concept of Catechist in *Catechesi Tradendae*

One of the major problems of traditional notion of Catechesis is that the lay Christians tend to think that catechesis is the sole responsibility of the ordained minister (pope, bishop, priests and deacons). In Igboland, they call the Catholic Church “*uka Fada*” which laterally means the Church of the priest or the priest's Church. Such a notion places so much responsibility on the priest and other ordained ministers. Unknown to so many among the lay faithful, all the members of the People of God - clergy, men and women religious, the lay faithful-are labourers in the Lord's vineyard. At one and the same time they all are the goal and subjects of Church communion as well as of participation in the mission of salvation. Every one of us possessing charisms and ministries, diverse yet complementary works in one and the same vineyard of the Lord.”<sup>583</sup> Catechesis is therefore a collective responsibility. Hence John Paul II is correct to say concerning Catechesis: “The task concerns us all.”<sup>584</sup> He supports the view that our gifts and talents are given to us by God and we are called to use them to witness for him in our different areas of our work. Christ illustrated this in His Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard thus:

Now the kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner going out at daybreak to hire workers for his vineyard. He made an agreement with the workers for one denarius a day and sent them to his vineyard. Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place and said to them, "You go to my vineyard too and I will give you a fair wage." So they went. At about the sixth hour and again at about the ninth hour, he went out and did the same. Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing around, and he said to them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us," they answered. He said to them, "You too go into my vineyard." In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first (Matt 20: 1-7).

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<sup>583</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, Vatican City, 1988, no.55

<sup>584</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, p. 53

The call to labour in the Lord's vineyard is addressed to everyone. Christ's command above, ("You too go into my vineyard"), is a universal call across various vocations. Hence, lay people are equally called directly by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. Saint Gregory the Great recalls this fact in one of his comments on the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. He admonishes us thus: "Keep watch over your manner of life, dear people, and make sure that you are indeed the Lord's labourers. Each person should take into account what he does and consider if he is labouring in the vineyard of the Lord".<sup>585</sup> This view synchronises with the appeal of John Paul II that: "catechesis has been and always will be a work for which the whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible."<sup>586</sup> But, to say that the whole Church is missionary does not preclude the existence of a specific mission *ad gentes*, just as saying that all Catholics must be missionaries not only does not exclude, but actually requires that there be persons who have a specific vocation to be "life-long missionaries *ad gentes*."<sup>587</sup> Hence, "to the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by power. But the laity is made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They have therefore, in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole people of God."<sup>588</sup> Consequently, every Christian is called directly or indirectly to be a Catechist.

### 3.5.1 The Pope and Bishops

The Successor of Peter is, by the will of Christ, entrusted with the preeminent ministry of teaching the revealed truth. The New Testament often shows Peter "filled with the Holy Spirit" speaking in the name of all (Acts 4:8). It is precisely for this reason that St. Leo the Great describes him as he who has merited the primacy of the apostolate. The Second Vatican Council wished to reaffirm this when it declared that "Christ's mandate to preach the Gospel to every

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<sup>585</sup> St Gregory the Great, Homily, In Evang. 1, XIX,2:PL 76.1155

<sup>586</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 16

<sup>587</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, Vatican City, 1990, no.32

<sup>588</sup> Vat. II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18 November, 1965, no.2

creature (cf. Mk. 16:15) primarily and immediately concerns the bishops with Peter and under Peter."<sup>589</sup> But in union with the Successor of Peter, the bishops, who are successors of the apostles, receive through the power of their episcopal ordination the authority to teach the revealed truth in the Church. They are teachers of the faith.<sup>590</sup>

For the Bishops, the responsibility for catechesis is absolute and primordial. In a certain sense it is equal to that of the Pope himself, for it was all the apostles that our Lord gave the great commission to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded (Mt. 28:19).<sup>591</sup> The task of proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world has thus been solemnly entrusted to the Church, the community of the disciples of the crucified and risen Lord. It is a task which will continue until the end of time. From the beginning, this mission of evangelization has been an integral part of the Church's identity. The Apostle Paul was well aware of this when he wrote: "If I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel! (*1 Cor.* 9:16). If the duty of proclaiming the Gospel is incumbent upon the whole Church and each of her children, it is particularly so upon Bishops, who on the day of their sacred ordination, which places them in apostolic succession, assume as one of their principal responsibilities the proclamation of the Gospel. It is expected of them that "with the courage imparted by the Spirit, they are to call people to faith and strengthen them in living faith."<sup>592</sup> Therefore, among the principal duties of bishops, the preaching of the gospel holds the preeminent place. For bishops are the heralds of the faith who lead new disciples to Christ and authentic teachers who, with the authority of Christ, preach to the people entrusted to them the faith they are to believe and put into practice. By the light of the Holy Spirit they make that faith clear ... and cause it to bear fruit...<sup>593</sup> Therefore, John Paul II addressed the Bishops thus:

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<sup>589</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.67

<sup>590</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.68

<sup>591</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 1

<sup>592</sup> John Paul II, *Post - Synodal Exhortation Pastores Gregis*, no.26

<sup>593</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 Nov. 1964, no. 25

You have a special mission within your Churches; you are before all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis. It is therefore the duty of every Bishop to give real priority in his particular Church to active and effective catechesis. He must demonstrate his personal concern through direct interventions aimed at promoting and preserving an authentic passion for catechesis. Conscious, then, of his responsibility in the area of transmitting and teaching the faith, every Bishop must ensure that a corresponding concern is shown by all those who by their vocation and mission are called to hand down the faith. This means priests and deacons, the faithful who have embraced the consecrated life, fathers and mothers of families, pastoral workers and in a special way catechists, as well as teachers of theology and teachers of the ecclesiastical sciences and religious education. The Bishop will thus take care to provide them with both initial and ongoing training. In carrying out this duty Bishops will derive particular benefit from open dialogue and cooperation with theologians, whose task it is to employ an appropriate methodology in the quest for deeper knowledge of the unfathomable richness of the mystery of Christ. Bishops will not fail to encourage and support them and the schools or academic institutions where they work, so that they can carry out their service to the People of God in fidelity to Tradition and with attentiveness to changing historical circumstances. Whenever appropriate, Bishops must firmly defend the unity and integrity of the faith, judging with authority what is or is not in conformity with the word of God.<sup>594</sup>

From the above, the bishop is beyond all others the one primarily responsible for catechesis; he is the catechist par excellence. The bishops themselves determined this when they met in council- in Vatican II. The Holy Father made it explicitly clear when he said: “Bishops should be especially concerned about catechetical instruction.”<sup>595</sup> The bishop has to take catechesis and ministry of the word very serious so that the Gospel might reach all men. Therefore, the bishop should be, above all, a preacher of the faith who brings new disciples to Christ. To fulfil this noble task as he ought, he must be fully acquainted with conditions among his flock also with those notions about God which are current among his countrymen. He must take special account of those changes which have been brought about through urbanization,

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<sup>594</sup>John Paul II, *Post - Synodal Exhortation Pastores Gregis*, no.29

<sup>595</sup> Paul VI, *Christus Dominus*, October 28, 1965, no.14

migration and religious indifferentism.<sup>596</sup> In fact, the bishop receives the fullness of power to preside over the Church of God, to watch over the celebration of the Eucharist, to teach and to console, to heal through the sacrament of Reconciliation, to build up the Church as a community of love, where the Good News is proclaimed.<sup>597</sup> We should not forget that all the responsibilities of the Bishops equally apply to the Pope who is equally a Bishop - the Bishop of Rome.

### 3.5.2 Priests and Religious

The priests are the immediate assistants of the bishop. A priest is a member of the Christian faithful who has been permanently configured by Christ through Holy Orders to serve the Church, in collaboration with the local bishop, as representative and agent of Christ, the head of the Church, and therefore as representative and agent of the Church community before God and the world.<sup>598</sup> Associated with the bishops in the ministry of evangelization and responsible by a special title are those who through priestly ordination "act in the person of Christ."<sup>599</sup> They are instructors in the faith.<sup>600</sup> Paul VI reminding the priests their duties which includes the proclamation of the Word of God remarks:

We pastors are therefore invited to take note of this duty, more than any other members of the Church. What identifies our priestly service, gives a profound unity to the thousand and one tasks which claim our attention day by day and throughout our lives, and confers a distinct character on our activities, is this aim, ever present in all our action: to proclaim the Gospel of God (1 Thess. 2:9). A mark of our identity which no doubts ought to encroach upon and no objection eclipse is this: as pastors, we have been chosen by the mercy of the Supreme Pastor, (1Pt.5:4) in spite of our inadequacy, to proclaim with authority the Word of God, to assemble the scattered People of God, to feed this People

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<sup>596</sup> Vatican II Document, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, no. 20

<sup>597</sup> Pazhayampallil. T., *Pastoral Guide Vol. II Sacraments and Bioethics*, India, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1997, P. 441

<sup>598</sup> Pazhayampallil. T., *Pastoral Guide Vol. II Sacraments and Bioethics*, P. 442

<sup>599</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no 37

<sup>600</sup> Paul VI, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, December 7, 1965, no. 6

with the signs of the action of Christ which are the sacraments, to set this People on the road to salvation, to maintain it in that unity of which we are, at different levels, active and living instruments, and unceasingly to keep this community gathered around Christ faithful to its deepest vocation. And when we do all these things, within our human limits and by the grace of God, it is a work of evangelization that we are carrying out. This includes ourselves as Pastor of the universal Church, our brother bishops at the head of the individual Churches, priests and deacons united with their bishops and whose assistants they are....<sup>601</sup>

Looking at the above, one can say that the work or the functions of the priest can be summarized as follows:

1. To give God glory as Christ did and does
2. To preach the word of God
3. To gather God's people
4. To teach the faith
5. To celebrate the Eucharist
6. To sanctify the community
7. To shepherd and lead as the Good Shepherd did
8. To speak prophetically in God's name
9. To be visible principle and guarantor of Church unity
10. To be a spiritual father to the flock<sup>602</sup>
- 11.

Over and above all these functions, the priests are clearly the instructors; in this role directly or indirectly their entire vocation is lived. The Pope passes over the differences posed by the varied assignments given priests: parish work, chaplaincies, organized work of whatever kind. These differences are minimal when compared with the common task: instruction in the faith. To receive this instruction, the Pope insists - for the seventh time in this exhortation *Catechesi*

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<sup>601</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.68

<sup>602</sup> Pazhayampallil, T; *Pastoral Guide Vol. II Sacraments and Bioethics*, P. 465

*Tradendae!* - That the faithful have a strict right.<sup>603</sup> They are reminded on how to discharge these functions devotedly:

[The] Priest is the first contact of the child with hierarchy and is watched closely. The way and manner he conducts his private, official and religious life, is often imitated by children in the parish. He is a model of faith and paradigm to many people especially the children in the parish. His kindness, generosity and commitment to his religious functions especially his personal spirituality and prayer life attract many young people to the faith and to the sacred ministry. He therefore has the greater responsibility in the shared or collective apostolate of forming aspirants to the sacred orders or religious life. In the Church and on behalf of the Church, Priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, particularly in Baptism, Penance and Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ, the Head and Shepherd.<sup>604</sup>

From the above enumeration of the priest's responsibilities, one can see that the priest is a very important Catechist with regards to Catechesis and evangelization. So much is expected from the priest if the Church is to succeed in her mission and mandate. The lay people therefore expect a lot from their priests and look up to them as Christian models.

### **3.5.3 The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful**

The term "Laity" is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the people of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the

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<sup>603</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 14, 30,36,41,45,61&64

<sup>604</sup> Pazhayampallil T; Pastoral Guide Vol. II Sacraments and Bioethics, (India, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1997), P. 465 - 466

mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World. Their secular character is proper and peculiar to the laity. They live in the World, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit of the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity, they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the creator and Redeemer.<sup>605</sup>

The present time with its peculiar circumstance, demands from lay people an even greater degree of involvement. The areas of their responsibility have become more complex as a result of demographic explosion, urbanization, progress in science and technology, revival of traditional religious practices, and religious pluralism.<sup>606</sup> The lay faithful, precisely because they are members of the Church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel: they are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In fact, “The Lord also desires that His kingdom be spread by the lay faithful: the kingdom of truth and life, the kingdom of holiness and grace, the kingdom of justice, love and peace.”<sup>607</sup> From a very clear and significant passage from the Second Vatican Council we read:

As sharers in the mission of Christ, priest, prophet and king, the lay faithful have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church... Strengthened by their active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share in apostolic works of that community. They lead to the Church people who are perhaps far removed from it; they earnestly cooperate in presenting the Word of God, especially by

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<sup>605</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 31

<sup>606</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 1

<sup>607</sup> From the Preface of the Feast of Christ the King

means of catechetical instruction; and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporal goods of the Church more efficient.<sup>608</sup>

This means that they are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Besides this apostolate which certainly pertains to all Christians, the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy. This was the way certain men and women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord (phil.4:3 or Rom.16:3ff).<sup>609</sup> They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, and the peace makers - whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed. In a word, "Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body."<sup>610</sup> Therefore, catechesis is a task for all the members of the church. In other words, all Christ's faithful by virtue of baptism and confirmation are called to transmit the Gospel and to be concerned about the faith of their brothers and sisters especially the children and the young people.

The laity has special responsibility for evangelizing culture, making the power of the Gospel part of the life of the family, the workplace, the mass media, sports and leisure, and for promoting Christian values in society and public life, both national and international. By the fact that they are in the world, the lay faithful are in a position to exercise great influence on their environment and to offer great numbers of men and women broader horizons of hope. On the other hand, committed as they are by their vocation to living amid temporal realities, the lay faithful are called, in accordance with their specific secular character, to give an account of their hope (cf. *I Pet* 3:15) wherever they work and to cultivate in their hearts "the expectation of a new earth."<sup>611</sup> From the laity side; we will look at some of the agents of catechesis who play key roles in catechetical apostolate:

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<sup>608</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no.10

<sup>609</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no.33

<sup>610</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 38

<sup>611</sup> John Paul II, *Post - Synodal Exhortation Pastores Gregis*, no. 51

### 3.5.3.1 Parents

Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children.<sup>612</sup> That parents are the primary educators of their Children even in religious tenets is not a new idea in the Church. The rite of infant baptism is very clear on this. In it parents actually promise before God and the Church to undertake this responsibility. These rights and duties that they have are "original and primary with respect to the educational role of others."<sup>613</sup> They have an obligation and owe it as a duty to bring up their children in the love and fear of God. This they fulfil through ensuring the proper religious education and formation of their children and wards and affording them the opportunity of having recourse to the sacramental life of the church.<sup>614</sup> This participation of parents in Catechetical activities is in a sense irreplaceable. This has been stressed forcefully by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council with regard to the responsibility of parents in the education of their Children in the faith. Thus, it says: "Christian Married Couples and Parents... should train their Children (lovingly received from God) in Christian doctrine and Evangelical virtues."<sup>615</sup> In fact, "with this training into religious life through their parents, their encounter with God will not just be a personal venture, but family and communal heritage. They will later be able to refer to God not only as my God, but also as the God of my father. In this way the Catholic religion will take root in the lives of Africans. Christianity then will be way of life; it will be in the blood not just in the head or on the lips."<sup>616</sup> This we all know and can testify to it that the witness of Christian life given by Parents in the Family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect, children perceive and joyously live the closeness of God and of

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<sup>612</sup>Vatican II Council: *Decl. Gravissimum educationis*, n. 3.

<sup>613</sup>John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio*, November 22, 1981, no. 36, P. 126

<sup>614</sup> Henry C., „Pastoral Letters and Lenten Regulation“, in Ogudo D.E.O., *The Catholic Missionaries and the Liturgical Movement in Nigeria An Historical Overview* Vol.1- The Holy Ghost Fathers and Catholic Worship among the Igbo People of Eastern Nigeria, Paderborn: Verlag Bonifatius - Druckerei, 1987, p.180

<sup>615</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 41

<sup>616</sup> Ojo A.A, "Towards Effective Evangelization of Contemporary Nigerian Society", in *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, p.76

Jesus made manifest by their parents in such a way that this first Christian experience frequently leaves decisive traces which last throughout one's life. This childhood religious education which takes place in the family is irreplaceable, for the Christian Family is ordinarily the first experience of the Christian Community and primary environment for growth in faith because it is the Church of the home. It will be something wonderful if every Christian family can create or rediscover - old Christian cultures or sacred rituals for the home that will nurture the Christian identity of its members. Without family prayer - morning, night, grace - rituals and sacred symbols, the home is unlikely to nurture its members in faith.

### **3.5.3.2 The Lay Catechist and the Lay Catholic Educator**

An "educator" is one who helps to form human persons. His or her task goes well beyond transmission of knowledge.<sup>617</sup> Educators, especially religious instructors, and Catholic teachers are not only the agents of catechesis and evangelization but have produced many agents. Hence, "the vocation of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development: to form men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel."<sup>618</sup> Little wonder the Second Vatican Council describes the Lay Catholic educator and his/her catechetical role thus:

A person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school: with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community. To this lay person, as a member of this community, the family and the Church entrust the school's educational

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<sup>617</sup> The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education - Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to faith, October 15, 1982, no.16

<sup>618</sup>Vatican II Council: *Decl. Gravissimum educationis*, n. 19

endeavour. Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church; they cannot regard themselves as cut off from the ecclesial complex.<sup>619</sup>

The lay Catholic educator is really an important instrument as far as catechesis is concerned. Though “every person who contributes to integral human formation is an educator; but teachers have made integral human formation their very profession.”<sup>620</sup> Their works are quite enormous. They are instruments “for fostering vocations to the sacred ministry.”<sup>621</sup> It is in the elementary school during religious instruction and in the parish during catechism classes that children pick up the basic tenets of the faith. The way and manner the tenets of faith are presented at this tender age makes a deep impression on children and remains indelible in their minds. Even at the tender ages, they begin to nurture the idea of living good lives and wishing to become priests.<sup>622</sup> Lay Catholics, both men and women, who devote their lives to teaching in primary and secondary schools, have become more and more vitally important in recent years.<sup>623</sup> Their work is really enormous especially now that: “Today's world has tremendous problems: hunger, illiteracy and human exploitation; sharp contrasts in the standard of living of individuals and of countries; aggression and violence, a growing drug problem, legalization of abortion, along with many other examples of the degradation of human life. All of this demands that Catholic educators develop in themselves, and cultivate in their students, a keen social awareness and a profound sense of civic and political responsibility.”<sup>624</sup> They must be adequately prepared for their work with special care, having appropriate qualifications and adequate learning both religious and secular. They should be skilled in the art of education in accordance with the techniques of

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<sup>619</sup>Vatican II Council: *Decl. Gravissimum educationis*, n. 24

<sup>620</sup> The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education - Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to faith, no.15

<sup>621</sup>Can 233

<sup>622</sup> Can 234

<sup>623</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no.31

<sup>624</sup>Paul VI, *Discourse on Christmas Night*, December 25, 1976, p. 145.

modern times. Possessed by charity towards their pupils, and inspired by an apostolic spirit, they should bear testimony by their lives and their teaching to the cooperation with the parents.<sup>625</sup>

### **3.5.3.3 Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Scientists etc.**

Apart from lay educators, which we have seen above, lay Catholic professionals also have roles to play in Catechesis in particular and evangelization in general. This active participation of the laity is witnessed, among other ways, in the new manner of active collaboration among priests, religious and the lay faithful; the active participation in the Liturgy, in the proclamation of the Word of God and catechesis; the multiplicity of services and tasks entrusted to the lay faithful and fulfilled by them; the flourishing of groups, associations and spiritual movements as well as a lay commitment in the life of the Church; and in the fuller and meaningful participation of women in the development of society.<sup>626</sup>

Therefore, besides the institutionally recognized figures like priests, religious and the uniformed catechists, mention must also be made of other ways of serving the Church and her mission; namely, medical doctors, engineers, lawyers, scientists, adults of goodwill, bus drivers, influential figures, societal figures for the youths, music idols, model stars etc. or other Church personnel like: “leaders of prayer, song and liturgy; leaders of basic ecclesial communities and Bible study groups; those in charge of charitable works; administrators of Church resources; leaders in the various forms of the apostolate....”<sup>627</sup> Lay people who possess the required qualities can be admitted permanently to the ministries of lector and acolyte. When the necessity of the Church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors and acolytes, can also supply for certain offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer Baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of law.<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Can 234

<sup>626</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.2

<sup>627</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.74

<sup>628</sup> Canons 903 & 230

History shows that from the Church's earliest days laymen have taken part in the activity which the priest carries out in the service of the Church, and today more than ever they must cooperate with greater and greater fervor "for building up the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12) in all forms of the apostolate, especially by making the Christian spirit penetrate all family, social, economic, and political life.<sup>629</sup> For these laity to bear the expected fruits, "the local Church should therefore train lay people for their specific mission in suitable centres and schools of biblical and pastoral formation. She prepares carefully lay Christians who occupy positions of responsibility in political, social or economic affairs by means of a solid formation in the Church's social teachings, that they become faithful witnesses of Christ in their places of work."<sup>630</sup>

Today there is an increase in the presence of lay women and men in Catholic hospital and healthcare institutions. At times the lay faithful's presence in these institutions is total and exclusive. It is to just such people - doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers, volunteers - that the call becomes the living sign of Jesus Christ and his Church in showing love towards the sick and suffering.<sup>631</sup> The challenges facing Christians ... to bear clear and united witness, the leadership by example of the millions of Catholics and need for deep renewal of our life make it important for us to begin the review of our life with the narration of our common Christian history. In a pluralistic society and in a world becoming more and more a village, Christians are not only called upon to witness to outsiders, they are challenged everyday to give an account to their very selves of the hope given in their faith (1 Peter 3:15).<sup>632</sup> Therefore, lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks like doctors, engineers, lawyers, scientists etc., must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization. Television personnel-executives and managers, producers and directors, writers and researchers, journalists, on-camera performers and technical workers -

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<sup>629</sup>Address of His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate October 5, 1957.

<sup>630</sup>*The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, Enugu: CIDJAP Printing Press, 2004, no.143

<sup>631</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 53

<sup>632</sup>*The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, no. 13

all have serious moral responsibilities to the families that make up such a large part of their audience. In their professional and personal lives, those who work in television should be committed to the family as society's basic community of life, love and solidarity. Recognizing the influence of the medium in which they work, they should promote sound moral and spiritual values, and avoid "anything that could harm the family in its existence, its stability, its balance and its happiness," including "eroticism or violence, the defense of divorce or of antisocial attitudes among young people."<sup>633</sup>

We really have to appreciate our lay apostles knowing that: "not all Christians are called to engage in the lay apostolate in its strict sense."<sup>634</sup> However, the lay apostles have to understand that: "their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community - this is the specific role of the pastors- but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world."<sup>635</sup> It is clear that the ordinary layman can resolve and it is highly desirable that he should so resolve-to cooperate in a more organized way with ecclesiastical authorities and to help them more effectively in their apostolic labor. He will thereby make himself more dependent on the Hierarchy, which is alone responsible before God for the government of the Church. The layman's acceptance of a particular mission, of a mandate of the Hierarchy, may associate him more closely with the spiritual conquest of the world being conducted by the Church under the direction of her pastors, but this does not make him a member of the hierarchy or give him the powers of Holy Orders or of jurisdiction that remain strictly bound to reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders in its various degrees.<sup>636</sup>

We also have to emphasize the importance of collaboration. Bishops, parish priests and other priests of the secular and regular clergy will remember that the right and duty of exercising

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<sup>633</sup> John Paul II, Television and the family- Message for World Communications Day, May 15 199

<sup>634</sup>Address of His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate October 5, 1957.

<sup>635</sup>Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.70

<sup>636</sup>Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.70

the apostolate are common to all the faithful, whether clerics or lay; and that in the building up of the Church the laity too have parts of their own to play. For this reason they will work as brothers with the laity in the Church and for the Church, and will have a special concern for the laity in the apostolic activities of the latter.<sup>637</sup> The clergy have to see the laity as co-workers in the Lord's vineyard and also understand that collaboration with the lay persons in the work of evangelization started with Jesus Christ himself as he selected his apostles to work with him even before their ordination at the last supper. The early Church did not waste time in selecting deacons to assist in ministering to the believers (Acts. 6). "Various types of ministry are necessary for the implanting and growth of the Christian community, and once these forms of service have been called forth from the body of the faithful, by the divine call, they are to be carefully fostered and nurtured by all. Among these functions are those of priests, deacons and catechists, and also that of Catholic action. Brothers and nuns, likewise, play an indispensable role in planting and strengthening the kingdom of Christ in souls, and in the work of further extending it, both by prayers and active work."<sup>638</sup> Therefore, they all have to see themselves as co-workers in the Lord's vineyard. Hence Paul VI cautions:

The power of evangelization will find itself considerably diminished if those who proclaim the Gospel are divided among themselves in all sorts of ways. ... The Lord's spiritual testament tells us that unity among His followers is not only the proof that we are His but also the proof that He is sent by the Father. It is the test of the credibility of Christians and of Christ Himself. As evangelizers, we must offer Christ's faithful not the image of people divided and separated by unedifying quarrels, but the image of people who are mature in faith and capable of finding a meeting-point beyond the real tensions, thanks to a shared, sincere and disinterested search for truth. Yes, the destiny of evangelization is certainly bound up with witness of unity given by the Church. This is a source of responsibility and also of comfort.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Vat. II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 25

<sup>638</sup> Vat. II Document, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 7 Dec. 1965, no. 15

<sup>639</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.77

### 3.6 Some Ways and Means of Catechesis

The church from the beginning of the catechesis down to our own time has always looked for the best and suitable means and ways to bring the good news to every man. According to John Paul II: "From the oral teaching by the apostles and the letters circulating among the churches down to the most modern means, catechesis has not ceased to look for the most suitable ways and means for its mission, with the active participation of the communities and at the urging of the pastors. This effort must continue."<sup>640</sup> The importance of the ways and means of catechesis cannot be overstressed. According to Paul VI:

The question of "how to evangelize" is permanently relevant, because the methods of evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaption. On us particularly, the pastors of the Church, rests the responsibility for reshaping with boldness and wisdom, but in complete fidelity to the content of evangelization, the means that are most suitable and effective for communicating the Gospel message to the men and women of our times.<sup>641</sup>

We will enumerate and examine these ways and means of catechesis and try to see their influence on catechesis. They are as follows:

#### 3.6.1 Witness of Life

What we do says who we are and attracts others to join us in our life and work. Little wonder, "catechesis demands the witness of faith, both from the catechists and from the ecclesial community, a witness that is joined to an authentic example of Christian life and to a readiness for sacrifice".<sup>642</sup> In a world that is full of corruption, suspicion, envy, hatred, ambiguities and tensions etc., the church has no other option than to be a sign of witness to the world. Hence, "the

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<sup>640</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 46

<sup>641</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.40

<sup>642</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 35

world calls for and expects from us a simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man. It risks being vain and sterile.”<sup>643</sup> Indeed the world, especially in this present sophisticated and highly empirical era, needs believable witnesses. By witness we mean "one's personal life testimony that reveals one's commitment to the Risen Lord, to the Christian way of life, and to a personal desire to seek first the reign of God through one's daily lifestyle and choices.”<sup>644</sup> Man encounters Christ not only through the sacred ministry but also through the individual members of the faithful, and these accordingly have a duty to give witness. If such witness is lacking, there arises in the listeners an obstacle to the acceptance of God's word.<sup>645</sup> This life of witness by the baptized can take many forms including: "the good example of living a gospel-inspired life, works of charity and mercy, morally appropriate actions and attitudes, genuine Christian hopefulness, a lifestyle characterized by prayerfulness, celebration of the sacraments and other acts of worship, genuine Christian humility, participation in the Christian community's ministries, active participation in the social justice projects and causes...."<sup>646</sup>

The above-mentioned qualities are what Jesus means when He said: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mtt.5:16). This is a life that was always showcased in the life of the early Christians, Saints and Martyrs. There are also Christians who have become outstanding witnesses in the contemporary era. One distinguished example was the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Consequently, someone wrote this about her:

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<sup>643</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.76

<sup>644</sup> Ekstrom R.R., *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, Bandra: St. Paul's Press, 2002, P.270

<sup>645</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.35

<sup>646</sup> Ekstrom R.R., *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, P.271

Mother Teresa was Christian in the true sense of the world ... for her being Christian meant taking care of everyone.... She was Christian at each moment of her life, especially in her work, and her love for Jesus made her love other people and man's destiny. When Mother Teresa saw a dying man, a marginalized person, a leper, she did not hesitate from reaching out to them; it did not matter that he might be Hindu, Muslims or of another faith. Her heart felt love and compassion for them right away and she responded spontaneously to the circumstance. She served the poor with a burning passion for Christ' and she never concealed the fact that she was a Christian and a Catholic because she loved Jesus.<sup>647</sup>

Mother Teresa did not deliver any major speech on theology like Saints Thomas Aquinas, Augustine or Albert the Great etc. She spoke in a simple language that was a source of inspiration for young people. Thousands came to see her and listen to her talk; many were just happy to be in her presence. Therefore, "proclaiming Christ means above all giving witness to him with one's life. It is the simplest form of preaching the Gospel and, at the same time, the most effective way.... It consists in showing the visible presence of Christ in one's own life by a daily commitment and by making every concrete decision in conformity with the Gospel."<sup>648</sup>

In fact, catechesis must be supported by the witness of the ecclesial community<sup>649</sup>, more especially among our hierarchical and lay catechists in Igboland as well as in Africa, where a good number of people feel disappointed because of the flamboyant and often excessively materialistic lifestyle of some of our clergy and pastors which cuts across various Christian denominations -recall that in the chapter two of this work, we mentioned some of the Pentecostal Pastors who have private jets. Hitherto, people are not so much out to listen to the catechist but to look at his or her lifestyle, an exemplary life that is Christ-like. John Paul II noted that witness is first and foremost, the basic form of Christian evangelization. Paraphrasing earlier statements

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<sup>647</sup><http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mother-Teresa,-a-witness-of-God%E2%80%99s-love-for-new-generations-19132.html>

<sup>648</sup><http://oldarchive.godspy.com/meditations/Come-after-me-and-I-will-make-you-fishers-of-men-meditation-by-Pope-John-Paul-II.cfm.html>

<sup>649</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.35

by Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, John Paul II said that: "Modern men and women tend to put more trust in Christian witnesses than in preachers and teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in words and the theories, and if modern people trust teachers at all it is because they are Christian witnesses". He goes on to say that the first form of witness "is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living."<sup>650</sup>

The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission. Paul VI categorically affirms this position thus: "witness of authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal is the first means of evangelization."<sup>651</sup> St. Peter has earlier supported this idea of evangelical witnessing when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word (1Pt.3:1). It is therefore primarily by her conduct and her life that the Church will evangelize the world; in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus - the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.<sup>652</sup> Therefore, for the evangelizer or missionary, witness of life is not an option but a necessity and an obligatory quality which the catechists must exhibit if they have to be true and credible.

### 3.6.2 Preaching/Homily

This is the verbal proclamation of a message. Preaching or homily is indeed indispensable in catechesis. As St. Paul would say: "And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? ... Faith comes from what is heard

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<sup>650</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.42

<sup>651</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.41

<sup>652</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.41

and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom 10:14, 17).<sup>653</sup> The ministers of the Word of God are not only to value and highly esteem the duty of preaching, but they also have to consider it their primary responsibility. Therefore, “preparation for preaching is so important a task that a prolonged time of study, prayer, reflection and pastoral creativity should be devoted to it.”<sup>654</sup> The two parts which in a sense go to make up the Holy Mass, namely the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy, are so closely connected that they form but one single act of worship.<sup>655</sup> Sacred Scripture is of the highest importance in the celebration of Mass. During the Eucharist, the Eucharistic minister which is the priest or when a deacon is delegated should make effort to feed the people of God with the Word of God. The purpose of this to explain to the faithful the word of God proclaimed in the readings, and to apply its message to the present.<sup>656</sup> In fact, “we need to be sure that we understand the meaning of the words we read... if a text was written to console, it should not be used to correct errors; if it was written as an exhortation, it should not be employed to teach doctrine; if it was written to teach something about God, it should not be used to expound various theological opinions; if it was written as a summons to praise or missionary outreach, let us not use it to talk about the latest news.”<sup>657</sup> Like all Christians, the laity have the right to receive in abundance the help of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially that of the word of God and the sacraments from the pastors.<sup>658</sup> It is also both the direct mandate of the Lord (Mk 16:15), and the generative and unifying force which builds up the people of God. The proclamation of the gospel is what makes the Church; nothing can be placed ahead of it among the priorities of its ministers. The Code of the Canon Law was direct on this point when it states: "Since the people of God are first brought together by the word of the living God, which it is altogether proper to require from the mouth of priests, sacred ministers are

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<sup>653</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.42

<sup>654</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November, 2013, no. 145

<sup>655</sup> Vatican II Document, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 56

<sup>656</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, *Instruction Liturgicae Instaurationes*, 2, a

<sup>657</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 147

<sup>658</sup> Code of Canon Law, can. 682

to value greatly the task of preaching since among their principal duties is the proclaiming of the gospel of God to all."<sup>659</sup>

This implies that the principal instrument in this work of implanting the Church is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was to announce this Gospel that the Lord sent his disciples into the whole world, that men, having been reborn by the word of God (cf. 1 Pet. 1: 23), might through baptism, be joined to the Church which, as the Body of the Word Incarnate, lives and is nourished by the word of God and the Eucharist (cf. Acts 4: 23).<sup>660</sup> Little wonder John Paul II reminded the Philippino and Asian Bishops in Manila that: "the greatest good we can give them (the humanity) is the Word of God. This does not mean that we do not assist them in their physical needs, but it does mean that they need something more, and that we have something more to give: the Gospel of Jesus Christ."<sup>661</sup> With great pastoral insight and evangelical love, John Paul I also expressed this thought succinctly on that day he died: "from the days of the Gospel, and in imitation of the Lord, who 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38) the Church is irrevocably committed to contributing to the relief of physical misery and need. But her pastoral charity would be incomplete if she did not point out even higher need,"<sup>662</sup> which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As regards preaching, the Sunday homilies, above all, as well as the many extraordinary forms of preaching (parish missions, novenas and homilies at funerals, baptisms, weddings and festivals), are excellent occasions for initial proclamation. For this reason, the previous Ordinary General Assembly asked that homilies be carefully prepared and due attention be given to the core elements of the message to be transmitted, their essential Christological character and the

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<sup>659</sup> Canon 762

<sup>660</sup> Ukpong J.S, "Presidential address", in: Oguejiofor J.O and Enweh .I.(ed.), *Ecclesia in Africa: The Nigeria Response*, Pp. 7-8

<sup>661</sup> Pazhayampallil T; *Pastoral Guide Vol. II Sacraments and Bioethics*, (India, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1997), P. 644

<sup>662</sup> Pazhayampallil T; *Pastoral Guide Vol. II Sacraments and Bioethics*, India, Kristu Jyoti Publications, 1997, P. 644

use of a language which will inspire listeners and stir the assembly to conversion.<sup>663</sup> Pope Francis has equally highlighted on the essential characteristics of a good homily. According to him:

[The] feature of a good homily is that it is positive. It is not so much concerned with pointing out what shouldn't be done, but with suggesting what we can do better. In any case, if it does draw attention to something negative, it will also attempt to point to a positive and attractive value, lest it remain mired in complaints, laments, criticisms and reproaches. Positive preaching always offers hope, points to the future, and does not leave us trapped in negativity. How good it is when priests, deacons and the laity gather periodically to discover resources which can make preaching more attractive!<sup>664</sup>

To make good homilies therefore, require that we study and meditate on the Scriptures. The Synodal Assembly asked that the following questions be kept in mind while preparing and delivering homilies: What are the Scriptures being proclaimed saying? What do they say to me personally? What should I say to the community in the light of its concrete situation? The preacher should be the first to hear the word of God which he proclaims, since, as Saint Augustine says: He is undoubtedly barren who preaches outwardly the word of God without hearing it inwardly. The homily for Sundays and solemnities should be prepared carefully, without neglecting, whenever possible, to offer at weekday Masses *cum populo* brief and timely reflections which can help the faithful to welcome the word which was proclaimed and to let it bear fruit in their lives.<sup>665</sup> The homily should be formative, theologically rich, and relevant to peoples' lives.

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<sup>663</sup> Benedict XVI, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 30 September 2010, no.59

<sup>664</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 159

<sup>665</sup> Benedict XVI, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, no.59

### 3.6.3 Catechetical Instruction and Catechetical Literature

Catechetical instruction is a means of evangelization that must not be neglected. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history.<sup>666</sup> To achieve a systematic religious instruction which is a desired goal in catechesis to the children and the young, there is need for a suitable text books, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops. Though a lot of people have written books on catechesis and these have really been a great treasure in discharging the work of catechesis, however, “it must be humbly and honestly recognized that this rich flowering has brought with it articles and publications which are ambiguous and harmful to young people and to the life of the Church.”<sup>667</sup> In fact, multiplication of the catechetical texts is useless when the aim is defeated. For the catechetical works to achieve their aims, the following conditions are essential:

- a) They must be linked with the real life of the generation to which they are addressed, showing close acquaintance with its anxieties, questionings, struggles and hopes;
- b) They must try to speak a language comprehensible to the generation in question;
- c) They must make a point of giving the whole message of Christ and His Church, without neglecting or distorting anything, and in expounding it they will follow a line and structure that highlights what is essential;
- d) They must really aim to give to those who use them a better knowledge of the mysteries of Christ, aimed at true conversion and a life more in conformity with God's will.<sup>668</sup>
- e) It is necessary above all to prepare good instructors - parochial catechists, teachers and parents - who are desirous of perfecting themselves in this superior art, which is indispensable and requires instruction.<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.44

<sup>667</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 49

<sup>668</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 49

To achieve the above mentioned conditions, John Paul II goes further to recommend that: “episcopal conferences of the whole world in agreement with the Apostolic See have to take the task of preparing a genuine catechism which will be faithful to the essential content of revelation and up to date in method, and which will be capable of educating the Christian generations of the future to a sturdy faith.”<sup>670</sup>

### 3.6.4 Communications Media

Whereas, the collective proclamation of the Gospel, the person-to-person one remains valid and important,<sup>671</sup> however, the role of media in communication today cannot be over stressed. The different arms/organs of communication are highly developed and are so effective in our day that through them the world is already being turned into a global village. Their effect is such that they change culture and give birth to mega culture. Whoever wants to communicate today cannot effectively do so without any or all these means of communication. John Paul II remarks that, “the means of social communication have become as important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large... The very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media....”<sup>672</sup> Far back in 1957, Pius XII identified the mass media as “wonderful inventions of which our age is proud.”<sup>673</sup> He is correct in his assertion. Without the knowledge of this social means of communication, one is actually at lost with all the happenings in the society. Just imagine how news and messages get across the globe within a twinkle of an eye through e-mail, Television, Radio, Telephones, Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, Imo etc.

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<sup>669</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.44

<sup>670</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 50

<sup>671</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.46

<sup>672</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.37

<sup>673</sup> Pius XII, *Miranda Prorsus*, September 8, 1957

On the achievement of media, John Paul II said: "I think immediately of the great possibilities and the means of group communication: television, radio, the press, records, and tape recordings - the whole series of audio - visual means. The achievements in these spheres are such as to encourage the greatest hope....<sup>674</sup> When the mass media are put at the service of the Gospel, they can increase almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people.<sup>675</sup> The Church sees these media as "gifts of God" which, in accordance with His providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with His plan for their salvation. A deeper and more penetrating understanding of social communication and of the contribution which the media can make to modern society can be derived from a number of documents issued by the Second Vatican Council. These are, notably the Constitution on "The Church in the World Today"; the Decree on "Ecumenism"; the Declaration on "Religious Freedom"; the Decree on "The Missionary Activity of the Church"; and the Decree on "The Pastoral Duties of Bishops". There is a Decree that is wholly devoted to a discussion of "The Media of Social Communication."<sup>676</sup>

Therefore, "the influence of the media which has no frontiers, especially as regards advertising,<sup>677</sup> calls upon Christians to be creative and innovative, so as to reach hundreds of thousands of people who spend a significant amount of time every day watching television or listening to radio programmes. Television and radio can be a means of cultural formation and development, and also of evangelization, a way of reaching out to those who have no point of contact with the Gospel or the Church in secularized societies.<sup>678</sup> Pentecostalism has no other secret for its expansion outside that: "it is happily utilizing the latest communications

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<sup>674</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 46

<sup>675</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.45

<sup>676</sup> Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio" on the Means of Social Communication written by order of the Second Vatican Council, no.2

<sup>677</sup> Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, Vatican City, 22 February 1997

<sup>678</sup> John Paul II, Message for the 31st World Communications Day, 11 May 1997

technologies and organizational techniques; it moves people out of traditional religious patterns and into - not secularism - but a spiritual movement they see as up-to-date and liberating. Pentecostalism provides people with a soft landing in modernity. At Present, the Pentecostals are a little more than half a billion people in number worldwide. Expert statisticians project that by the year 2025, the Pentecostals will be 811 million the world over, coming very close to the billion - strong Catholic Church.<sup>679</sup> The Christian Pentecostalism religious groups, with particular reference to Nigeria, easily constitute enough data to demonstrate some of the external threats to the Catholic Church. These are beside the recent massive invasion of the homes of many Nigeria television viewers by the American-based television industry with its attendant secularist values. That most of the Nigerians who can afford television sets belong to the elite class whose traditional influence on the masses at the grass roots is well known sends chilling shivers to the Catholic Church.<sup>680</sup>

Looking at the positive influence of media, “the Synod Fathers called for a proper knowledge of these media; they noted their rapid development and different levels of interaction, and asked for greater efforts to be made in gaining expertise in the various sectors involved, particularly in the new media, such as the internet”.<sup>681</sup> Discovering new methods of transmitting the Gospel message is part of the continuing evangelizing outreach of those who believe. Communications today take place through a worldwide network, and thus give new meaning to Christ’s words: “What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops” (Mt 10:27). God’s word should resound not only in the print

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<sup>679</sup>Cox, H; *The Secular City*, United States of America, Princeton University Press: 2013, P.XXVIII, cf. also Achunike, H.C., *The Influence of Pentecostalism on Catholic priests and Seminarians in Nigeria*, P.7

<sup>680</sup> Enwerem I, “Ecclesia in Africa and the Socio - Political Context of Nigeria”, in: Oguejiofor J.O. & Enweh I, eds., *Ecclesia in Africa - The Nigerian Response*, p.44

<sup>681</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication *Inter Mirifica*; pontifical council for social communications, Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*, no. 63; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *The Rapid Development*, 97; pontifical council for social communications, Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis novae*, no. 84; *The Church and Internet* nos. 66-95; *Ethics in Internet*, nos. 96-127.

media, but in other forms of communication as well.<sup>682</sup> Training in the use of the mass media is therefore a necessity not only for the preacher of the Gospel, who must master, among other things, the media style of communication but also for the reader, the listener and the viewer. Trained to understand this kind of communication, they must be able to make use of its contributions with discernment and a critical mind.<sup>683</sup> Also, “daily papers and periodicals, and other Catholic publications, have an influence not only in the life of the local Church, but also in the wider society, because they are the sign of a lively faith, and of the special contribution Christians make to cultural life. This remarkable potential sphere of influence calls for journalists, authors and publishers with a broad cultural perspective and strong Christian convictions. Where local languages are used alongside official ones, some dioceses publish a journal or at least some articles in the local language, which gives unparalleled access to so many families.”<sup>684</sup>

The Catholic Church in Igboland is still not up-to-date with the mass media. It is sad to note that some of the Catholic Dioceses in Igboland do not even have as much as a functional diocesan website. Our attitude towards modern means of social communication is to say the least embarrassing. Perhaps this personal experience of the writer might drive home the public opinion about the Catholic attitude to mass media in Igboland. It happened that the writer one day went to a market in Nigeria to purchase a microphone. The dealer quickly recognized him as a pastor because he wore a Roman Collar. When he placed his order, the response he got was both shocking and embarrassing. The dealer had actually replied him: is it Catholic or Pentecostal microphone? He asked the difference between the two microphones and he was made to understand that the Catholics use the inferior microphones while the Pentecostals use the best quality microphones to enhance effective communication. What the Catholic Church in Nigeria has failed to understand is that: “communication of the word, like any other communication,

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<sup>682</sup> Benedict XVI, Message for the 2009 World Day of Social Communications, 24 January 2009

<sup>683</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, 71

<sup>684</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, nos.33

involves the speaker and the receiver. For this to be effective, the medium or channel of communication must be as flawless as possible. Cheap products generally offer cheap services. Setting for the second best for the service of the Lord is no more an acceptable norm. The new generation Churches have a strong lesson for our Church in this direction. They are ever ready to invest heavily on their channel of communication updating and upgrading it frequently to ensure that their message gets to as large as congregation as possible.”<sup>685</sup> Also a director of a communist party once wrote to a few Catholic priests with whom he had come in contact thus:

According to us communist, you Catholic priests ... are at least two hundred years behind the times. You ignore all the modern means of diffusing ideas. With money you build institutions; we print books and newspapers. You open schools and teach children how to read and write, but then you give them nothing to read. We give everything, from wall posters to newspapers, from books to pamphlets, suitable for every age and situation. You print much pious material, but very few ideas. You have typographies, but you make them function for profit above all; we, for propaganda... You should spend a hundred times more on press, on motion pictures, on radio and TV, to print books, posters, pamphlets, newspapers, discussion outlines, periodicals of all types whatsoever.<sup>686</sup>

The observation of this communist is a reality especially in many dioceses and among the presbyteries in Igboland. Books are lacking in our diocesan libraries (where libraries exist at all). Our various diocesan newspapers and periodicals are so local and unattractive that the faithful hardly buy them. Those who buy them out of patriotism rarely enjoy reading them because of their poor content. Catholic programmes are scanty on televisions and radio stations, initiatives for radio and audio - visuals do not exist. Some Dioceses cannot even do as little as sponsoring the *Angelus* on Radio. It seems as if the Catholic Church in Nigeria is paying lip service to this fact of communication media. One fact we fail to understand in Igboland is that the passion for reading is very strong among many of our people as well as in Africa in general. We need to

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<sup>685</sup> Adaba T, “Evangelization and the Urgency of Investment in Social Communications”, in *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, p.179

<sup>686</sup> Letter printed by the periodical for the clergy in India, in: *Going, Teach ... Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of John Paul II*, P.389

ponder and ask ourselves: what reading material do we give to these young men and women whom we have baptized and catechized in the churches and the Catholic schools? We give them nothing to nurture their faith. Why do we complain if, in reading other printed matter, they end up estranging themselves from the Church?

What we are yet fully to understand is that it “is the Church’s birthright to use and own any of these media which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for pastoral activity. Pastors of souls have the task of instructing and directing the faithful on how to use these media in a way that will ensure their own salvation and perfection and that of all mankind.”<sup>687</sup> Likewise, decent radio and television programmes should be effectively supported, especially those suited to the family. Ample encouragement should be given to Catholic transmissions which invite listeners and viewers to share in the life of the Church and which convey religious truths. Catholic stations should be established where it is opportune. Their transmissions, however, should excel by technical perfection and by effectiveness.<sup>688</sup> Priests, religious and laity should be trained at once to meet the needs described above. They should acquire the competence needed to use these media for the apostolate.<sup>689</sup> First, lay people must be given the necessary technical, doctrinal and moral formation. To this end, schools, institutes or faculties must be provided in sufficient number, where journalists, writers for films, radio and television, and anyone else concerned, may receive a complete formation, imbued with the Christian spirit and especially with the Church’s social teaching. Actors should also be instructed and helped so that their gifts too can benefit society. Lastly, literary critics and critics of films, radio, television and the rest should be carefully prepared so that they will be fully competent in their respective spheres and will be trained and encouraged to give due consideration to morality in their critiques.<sup>690</sup> To make the Church’s multiple apostolates in the field of social communication more

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<sup>687</sup> Vatican II Document, *Inter Mirifica*, nos.3

<sup>688</sup> Vatican II Document, *Mirifica*, nos.14

<sup>689</sup> Vatican II Document, *Inter Mirifica*, nos.15

<sup>690</sup> Vatican II Document, *Inter Mirifica*, nos.15

effective, a day should be set aside each year in every diocese, at the bishop's discretion, on which the faithful will be reminded of their duties in this domain.<sup>691</sup>

We have to understand that a great deal is at stake. How can we not be present and use information networks, whose screens are at the heart of people's homes, to implant the values of the Gospel there?<sup>692</sup> Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means. When they are at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims from the housetops the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes.<sup>693</sup> Little wonder John Paul II told the Bishops of Venezuela that pastoral priority is to concentrate all efforts in a systematic catechetical action, exercised in depth; and he added that in this task, and to give it the breadth not permitted by the scarcity of qualified agents of pastoral, make the most possible use of the instruments of social communication, capable of multiplying your voices as evangelizers.<sup>694</sup>

Today the Church has at her disposal a variety of means of social communication, traditional as well as modern. It is her duty to make the best possible use of them in order to spread the message of salvation. In the Church in Africa many obstacles impede easy access to these means, not the least of which is their high cost.<sup>695</sup> However, the traditional forms of social

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<sup>691</sup> Vatican II *Document, Inter Mirifica*, nos.18

<sup>692</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, p.19 – 20

<sup>693</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.45

<sup>694</sup> Address of John Paul II To the Bishops of Venezuela on their "Ad Limina", November 15, 1979, no.4

<sup>695</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.125

communication must never be underestimated. In many places in Africa they are still very useful and effective. Moreover, they are less costly and more accessible. These forms include songs and music, mimes and the theatre, proverbs and fables. As vehicles of the wisdom and soul of the people, they are a precious source of material and of inspiration for the modern media.<sup>696</sup> In Africa, where oral transmission is one of the characteristics of culture, such training is of capital importance. This same kind of communication must remind pastors, especially Bishops and priests that the Church is sent to speak, to preach the Gospel in words and deeds. Thus she cannot remain silent, at the risk of failing in her mission, except in cases where silence itself would be a way of speaking and bearing witness. We must therefore always preach in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:2), in order to build up, in charity and truth.<sup>697</sup>

### **3.7.0 Other Places for Formation**

There are certain places and areas that are fertile ground for catechesis. They must not be neglected. Every opportunity should always be used, and every advantage taken good care of, in order to get a desired result. They are:

#### **3.7.1 The Parish**

The parish plays a very vital role for the local Christian Community as far as catechesis is concerned. Parish is a place where the sacramental life and worship of the people take place. It serves as “the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis,”<sup>698</sup> or “a privileged place for the catechesis of Children and Parents.”<sup>699</sup> A lot is always expected of the parish. For example,

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<sup>696</sup>Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones, on promotion of Catholic Missions to our Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and Other Local Ordinaries Enjoying Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See*, 2 June 1951, no.113

<sup>697</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.71

<sup>698</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 67

<sup>699</sup> CCC, no.2226

every parish must be a community that cares for human welfare - spiritual and physical, personal and social. Over and above, it should offer people the inspiration and organization, the support and persuasion that prompts them to carry on this aspect of God's saving work in the world. In fact, it is in the Parish that personal and immediate formation of the lay faithful take place. Hence, the Parish "represents the point of union between the family and the school."<sup>700</sup> For this reason, parish is expected to be an effective catechetical educator. However, it should be noted that the parish, "... can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self - renewal and constant adaptability, it continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a centre of constant missionary outreach".<sup>701</sup> It is something commendable that every Parish struggle to realize and effect what it preaches. Members also must always ask: Does the life of this Parish - its worship, shared prayer, and spiritual nurture, its community ethos, modes of participation, and structures, its human services, outreach, and social values, its preaching, catechesis, and sharing faith programs - does everything about us bear credible witness to the way of Jesus? To the extent that a parish can say "yes," it is an effective catechetical educator.

The many activities that occupy the clergy in the parish today are unified by one aim of proclaiming the Gospel. They are not alone in their responsibility for the Christian life of the

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<sup>700</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 67

<sup>701</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 28

parish; assistance can come from many people. Little wonder, John Paul II is of the opinion that: "every big parish or every group of parishes with small numbers has the serious duty to train people completely dedicated to providing catechetical leadership (priests, men and women religious, and lay people), to provide the equipment needed for catechesis under all aspects, to increase and adapt the places for catechesis to the extent that it is possible and useful to do so, and to be watchful about the quality of the religious formation of the various groups and their integration into the ecclesial community."<sup>702</sup> John Paul II is correct, since the call to the Church by Vatican II that we recentre the Word of God at the core of our faith, and give all our people "easy access to sacred Scripture" is a long way from being realized. The community should be ever teaching and learning together, from cradle to grave, around God's Word that comes through Scripture and tradition.

From the above, the parish owes it as a duty "to instruct its members in hearing God's Word, in liturgical and personal dialogue with God, in the life of fraternal charity, and in allowing a more direct and concrete perception of the sense of ecclesial communion and responsibility in the Church's mission."<sup>703</sup> This means that the parish should offer the parishioners the privilege of learning and growing in the knowledge of Christian doctrine, morals and spirituality through spiritual retreats (for instance two times in a year during advent and Lenten season), seminars, workshops etc.

How do they achieve this since the parish priest cannot do the work alone? Part of the solution to the challenge is that the parish has to rise up to its responsibility and train some of her parishioners in catechetical schools. This training should be taken as a matter of urgency. Such quick response would be of a great help to the parish especially now that many States Governments in Igboland have returned back some of the mission schools to the Church. However, it is not all the parishes that were privileged to have had schools during the time of the missionaries. Thus it is good that such parishes build kindergarten, primary and secondary

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<sup>702</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 67

<sup>703</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 61

schools. If they have money, they should not hesitate to do so because it will be a good fertile ground for catechetical instructions. The parish priest and teachers, especially those with catechetical training, can be of great help in these schools. Hence these schools can serve as forum for instruction in Christian doctrine and morals for the young students that will enroll there.

### **3.7.2 The Small Church Communities or Zones**

This is also a very fertile ground for development of the faith. Internal to the parish, especially if vast and territorially extensive, small Church communities, where present, can be a notable help in the formation of Christians, by providing a consciousness and an experience of ecclesial communion and mission which are more extensive and incisive.<sup>704</sup> The small church communities or zones “are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed.”<sup>705</sup> The Church as Family cannot reach her full potential as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships. The Small Christian Community has the capacity to enhance grassroots evangelization by providing a forum for individuals to meet with their needs. It makes the discovery of talents easier and gives a sense of belonging to members. People may be grouped according to residential location, or according to their professions. Therefore the “lay apostle who works in a specific neighborhood and is entrusted with a group of houses belonging to the parish must try to acquire accurate information about the religious status of the inhabitants. Are the housing conditions bad or inadequate? Who needs the assistance of charitable organizations? Are there marriages to be regularized? Are there children to be baptized? What is the condition of the newsstands, bookshops, and lending libraries in the neighborhood? What do the young folk and adults read? The complexity and often delicate character of the problems to be solved in this type of apostolate make it necessary to call upon the services of only chosen elite

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<sup>704</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 61

<sup>705</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 29

who are gifted with tact and true charity.”<sup>706</sup> This ought to be done if the aim of the Small Christian Communities is to be achieved. Hence, small Christian communities “should be communities, which pray and listen to God’s Word, encourage the members themselves to take on responsibility, learn to live an ecclesial life, and reflect on different human problems in the light of the Gospel...these communities are to be committed to living Christ’s love for everybody, a love that transcends the limits of the natural solidarity of clans, tribes and other interest groups.”<sup>707</sup>

### 3.7.3 The Family

The family as we all know, “is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children.”<sup>708</sup> Most of our spiritual lives are being learnt in the family since children always learn by example. The family therefore has a big role to play in the catechetical formation of its members especially the children. Consequently some consider the family's catechetical responsibility as not only *vita* but “in a sense irreplaceable”.<sup>709</sup> According to John Paul II, “the family catechesis is the fundamental field which, with other fields of catechesis should give evidence of the universal sharing by the whole people of God in the prophetic role of Christ Himself.”<sup>710</sup> Therefore, Christian family “ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates.”<sup>711</sup> There may be no place more significant for Catechesis than the family. Family Catechesis precedes, accompany and enrich all forms of catechesis; and this applies to any structure or stage of family life. Catechetical opportunities situated in family settings foster both adult and family faith growth. Such opportunities include:

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<sup>706</sup>Address of His Holiness Pius XII to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, October 5, 1957

<sup>707</sup> The Church in Nigeria: *Family of God on Mission*, no. 163

<sup>708</sup>Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 66

<sup>709</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 68

<sup>710</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 4 March 1979, no.19

<sup>711</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.92

“Each simple family activity - meals, prayer, work, recreation or rest, holidays and Sunday outings, the home atmosphere, receiving friends and relatives, being present as a family in church and every daily gesture and attitude from showing affection to playing, sitting around a common table, tensions and pardons, expressions and thanks, blessings and the goodbye embrace, shared worries, joys and projects, and at times inevitable tensions and conflicts - all this woof of shared living can become the back ground of vital existential signs and an introduction to the catechetical dialogue between parents and children.”<sup>712</sup> In fact, “the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family. Not only is the Christian family the first cell of the living ecclesial community, it is also the fundamental cell of society. In Africa in particular, the family is the foundation on which the social edifice is built.”<sup>713</sup> The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family can and should be called a domestic Church.<sup>714</sup> The mystery of the domestic Church begins to come alive in the mutual fidelity, love, unity and fruitfulness of the married couple. The children, feeling themselves sons of the same parents, will show their mutual love in that Christian fraternity that goes beyond the limitations of blood.<sup>715</sup>

The family is a very fertile ground for growth in the faith. It is the first community and the most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us, and acts in the world. However, it is unfortunate that “growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray. There is also a certain exodus towards other faith communities. The causes of this breakdown include: a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families, the influence of the communications media, a relativistic subjectivism, unbridled consumerism which feeds the market, lack of pastoral care among the poor, the failure of our institutions to be welcoming, and

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<sup>712</sup>*Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.339,

<sup>713</sup> The Church in Nigeria: *Family of God on Mission*, no. 147

<sup>714</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, November 22, 1981, no. 21, Also Vat. II, *Lumen Gentium*, no.11

<sup>715</sup>*Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.340

our difficulty in restoring a mystical adherence to the faith in a pluralistic religious landscape.”<sup>716</sup> Although in Igboland, great number of parents still bring their children for baptism, it is not clear that they understand the significance of what they do, and if they do, they do not take seriously the implication in the formation of their baptized children.

The faith formation of the children in the family primarily rests with the parents. Here it becomes apparent that family prayer - silent or in dialogue with the Lord -, biblical reading, the rosary, examination of conscience, all become true catechetical reality of the greatest importance, because from them the children discover how their parents pray and discern daily events before God. From this, personal prayer and introduction to the liturgy of the Church will arise.<sup>717</sup> The book of Proverbs says: "train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Prov. 22:6). Our family is the book from which we all learn the basic attitudes in life. If we live in a family where there is love, we learn to love others; if we live in a family where there is sharing, we learn to be generous; if we live in a family where there is honesty and fairness, we learn to love truth and justice; if we live in a family where there is security, we learn to have faith in others and ourselves; if we live in a family where there is serenity, we learn to live in peace and harmony.<sup>718</sup> Therefore, “it is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. ... Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.”<sup>719</sup> They have to recognize such moments of more intense communitarian experience, in which God’s interventions are felt with particular strength. This according to *Catechesi Tradendae* becomes “more incisive when, in the course of family events ... care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these

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<sup>716</sup>Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 70

<sup>717</sup>*Going, Teach ...* Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* of John Paul II, P.341

<sup>718</sup> Gbuji, A.O; *A Journey of Faith in the Liturgical Cycle Year A*, Enugu: Black Belt Konzult Ltd, 2013, p.51

<sup>719</sup> Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*, no.3

events.”<sup>720</sup> Therefore every Christian family has to take seriously the assertion of John Paul II, to the effect that “in the future, evangelization depends to a great extent on the domestic Church.”<sup>721</sup>

### 3.7.4 Schools and Catholic Universities

Schools (especially Catholic schools) have vital roles to play in evangelization and catechesis. Pope Francis underscores this point when he asserts that: “Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture, even in those countries and cities where hostile situations challenge us to greater creativity in our search for suitable methods.”<sup>722</sup> Many people have been wondering why the Catholic Church takes very great interest in education. Christ himself mandated His Apostles to teach all nations. That is a mandate to educate! The successors of the Apostles continued the work of teaching and educating the nations of the world. Missionaries all over the world, therefore, see education and evangelization as part and parcel of their vocation. This motive inspired the early missionaries to Eastern Nigeria to employ education as means of evangelization.<sup>723</sup>

The history of Catholicism in Igboland shows that education was a key strategy for the success of the Missionaries. Father Leon Lejeune was a great example in using school for evangelization in Igboland, while Bishop Joseph Shanahan carried this to its ultimate conclusions leading to massive conversions among the Igbo to the catholic faith. It is on record that when Shanahan took over from Lejeune as prefect in 1905, he capitalized on the Igbo love for education to evangelize.<sup>724</sup> Shanahan because of his experience with a chief who preferred to be

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<sup>720</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 68

<sup>721</sup> John Paul II, Opening, Address at the Puebla Conference, 24 January, 1979

<sup>722</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 134

<sup>723</sup> Onwubiko K. B. C “The Catholic Church and the Development of Education in Eastern Nigeria, (1885-1984)”, in Obi C. A (ed.), *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, p.225

<sup>724</sup> *The Church in Nigeria Family of God on Mission*, nos. 25-26

where his fellow chiefs are (in the afterlife) instead of heaven as we narrated in Chapter one said: “if we go from town to town talking about God we know from experience that much of our efforts bring no result. But no one is opposed to schools.”<sup>725</sup> Therefore, Shanahan did try the children, and indeed succeeded with them through the medium of catholic schools, and once these children were converted, they in turn will themselves convert their own.<sup>726</sup> This had its obvious influence of bringing the evangelizing and catechetical ideals to practically every Igboland. For, it was not unusual to see pagan parents recite Christian prayers with their children and even sing church hymns in their homes, in work-places, without previously being to the Church, even for one day. Building of schools also helped Catholic missionaries in Igboland to successfully rise to the challenge of fierce protestant opposition. As such, Catholic missionaries sought to open schools in places where they did not even have members. Children in such schools were baptized and they formed the bedrock of Christian communities. From these initiatives other schools and training colleges were started - the various religious congregations, male and female, made their contribution.<sup>727</sup>

Presently the Church has not stopped using schools to evangelize the world. In many countries, the Church carries out her mission as an educator and teacher by running nurseries or kindergartens, schools, colleges, high schools, universities and research centres. As we all know, “the educated youth of today will form the governments of tomorrow and the masses will follow their leadership and guidance.... Schools and colleges are moreover especially helpful in refuting the errors which now especially are daily infecting more and more non - Catholic ... activities and which are being openly and overtly instilled into the minds especially of youth.”<sup>728</sup> But some questions we must not fail to ask ourselves are: is the motive or the intentions for having these schools still the same with that of our early missionaries who evangelized us? Are the schools

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<sup>725</sup> Shanahan cited by P.B. Clarke, “The Methods and Ideology of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Eastern Nigeria”, *Ibid* no. 26

<sup>726</sup> Jordan J.P., *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria*, p. 31

<sup>727</sup> *The Church in Nigeria Family of God on Mission*, no.30

<sup>728</sup> Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, (on promotion of Catholic Missions to our Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, and Other Local Ordinaries Enjoying Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See), 2 June 1951, nos. 39 - 43

used today as a vehicle for catechesis and evangelization or solely as money making venture? Are there possibilities of the poor ones gaining admission into such schools or are they schools only for the rich ones in the society? What is the moral standard of those passing through such schools? It is sad to note that many Catholic schools in Igboland have drifted from the Catholic ideals whether morally, academically or otherwise. Some Catholic schools now organise exam malpractice for their students to give the public the wrong impression that they do well in external examinations. Many Catholic schools including the Junior Seminaries are becoming quite exorbitant. Catholic Universities in Nigeria are among the most expensive whereas the rank very low in national university ranking. It is in consideration of the type of issues that we have raised, that John Paul II succinctly said:

Looking first at the Catholic school, he confirms the suspicions of many observers that “Catholic” attached to the name of a school nowadays isn’t necessarily the guarantee of anything. A mere nominal Catholicism which justifies a school’s existence by appealing to its “high level of teaching in nonreligious matters” misrepresents the true Catholic ideal of education. Even religious instruction that is only implicit or indirect is to be reproached. No, a school must be radically, openly and consistently committed to the authentic faith and its teaching, if it is to deserve the name “catholic”.<sup>729</sup>

We have to remind the managements of the various Catholic schools that “they have a grave duty to offer a religious training suited to the often widely religious situations of the pupils.”<sup>730</sup> We should not forget that parents who sent their children to Catholic schools do so because they presume that they will offer them the best services morally and academically.

### **3.8 Utilization of Other Ways and Places**

Apart from parish, family and school, we still have various other ways and places that we can carry out the catechetical works. John Paul II underscores this point when he said that: “apart

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<sup>729</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 69

<sup>730</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 69

from the school, many other elements of life help in influencing the mentality of the young, for instance, recreation, social ground and work surroundings.”<sup>731</sup> These many other elements of life apart from the ones mentioned above that we will like to examine here are as follows:

### **3.8.1 Individual Apostolate**

This is apostolate that can be carried out by one person. It does not need a group of individuals before one can begin it. It flows abundantly from a truly Christian life. In fact, this apostolate is everywhere but has a special field in regions where Catholics are few and scattered or where only a few grown-ups have interest in witnessing for the Lord with their life. It is an apostolate which many are unconsciously doing without knowing it. For instance, in the villages or towns, there are people that are known as “brother” or “sister.” Even when people try to call them by their names, they never mention their names without first putting “brother” or “sister”. Such persons have earned such titles through their catechetical activities like teaching catechisms or picking up the children from house to house during the time for Block Rosary prayers. According to Vatican II:

The individual apostolate is everywhere and always in place, in certain circumstances it is the only one appropriate, the only one possible. Every lay person, whatever his condition is called to it, is obliged to it, even if he has not the opportunity or possibility of collaborating in associations. A special form of the individual apostolate is the witness of a whole lay life issuing from faith, hope and charity; it is a sign very much in keeping with our times, and a manifestation of Christ living in his faithful. Then, by the apostolate of the word, which in certain circumstances is absolutely necessary, the laity proclaim Christ, explain and spread his teachings, each one according to his condition and competence, and profess those teachings with fidelity.<sup>732</sup>

We can deduce from the above that individual apostolate is both vital and recognized by the Church. Although many dioceses are now into grass root evangelization; yet we know that we

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<sup>731</sup>John Paul II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 69

<sup>732</sup> Vat. II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 16

still have problem of bad roads or even if the roads are good, the priest cannot reach everybody or know the problems of everybody. Under such tough circumstance, the Church insists that “there is an imperative need for the individual apostolate in those areas where the Church is seriously hampered. In such difficult circumstances the laity take over as far as possible the work of priests, jeopardizing their own freedom and sometimes their lives; they teach Christian doctrine to those around them, train them in a religious way of life and in Catholic attitudes, and encourage them to receive the sacraments frequently and to cultivate piety, especially Eucharistic piety.”<sup>733</sup>

### **3.8.2 Groups, Associations and Movements**

Within the last decade, another gift of Divine Providence to the Church is the flowering of groups and movements, oftentimes in a spontaneous, spirit-filled manner, dedicated primarily to proclaiming the Gospel.<sup>734</sup> These groups and movements “have remained an enviable forum for fanning and keeping aflame that burning light of the spirituality of the Catholic faithful. This becomes more ad rem given the circumstances of our time which should not be compared with the early Christian experience when Christians lived together and shared everything in common.”<sup>735</sup> In fact they “have their place in the formation of the lay faithful... each with its own method, of offering a formation through a deeply shared experience in the apostolic life, as well as having the opportunity to integrate, to make concrete and specific the formation that their members receive from other persons and communities.”<sup>736</sup> Vatican II commenting on these groups and movements said:

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<sup>733</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 17

<sup>734</sup>The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no. 115

<sup>735</sup> Obi C.A., “An Appraisal”, in Ojene I.C, *A Professional Handbook on Religious Societies in the Catholic Church*, Onitsha: Mid-Field Publishers Ltd, 1994, p.4

<sup>736</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 62

Worthy of special respect and praise in the Church are the laity, single and married, who, in a definitive way or for a period, put their person and their professional competence at the service of institutions and their activities. It is a great joy to the Church to see growing day by day the number of people who are offering their personal service to associations and works of the apostolate, whether within the confines of their own country, or in the international field, or, above all, in the Catholic communities of the missions and of the young Churches.<sup>737</sup>

Looking at the above, one agrees that: “great variety is to be found in apostolic associations. Some look to the general apostolic end of the Church; others aim specifically at evangelization and sanctification; others work for the permeation of the temporal order by the Christian spirit; and others engage in works of mercy and of charity as their special way of bearing witness to Christ.”<sup>738</sup> Also the committee on the new evangelization discussing on the challenges we are facing today because of secularization recognized the efforts of the group apostolate thus:

Not all indications, however, are negative. Indeed, efforts taking place in many Churches towards renewal are a sign of hope and a gift of the Holy Spirit. These Christian communities, most often religious groups and ecclesial movements, and in some cases, theological and cultural institutions, demonstrate by their activities, the real possibility of living the Christian faith through the proclamation of the Gospel, even within this cultural setting. Among these experiences, the particular Churches note, with gratitude and concern, the many young people who contribute a certain newness and enthusiasm to these groups. In acknowledging their many gifts, these same Churches are working to ensure that these gifts are extended throughout the Christian population, and attentively are following their duty of nurturing this experience, from a relatively early age, and, at the same time, highlighting both its strong points and its limitations.<sup>739</sup>

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<sup>737</sup>Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 21

<sup>738</sup>Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 19

<sup>739</sup>The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no. 49

In fact, many of those in these groups and movements exhibit the life expected of the new evangelizers, namely: “the ability to live out and give reasons for their choice of life and the values they espouse; a desire to profess their faith in a public manner, without fear or false modesty; actively seeking moments of lived communion through prayer and fraternal sharing; an instinctive preference for the poor and the downtrodden; and a zeal in the work of forming succeeding generations.”<sup>740</sup>

Nevertheless, as we commend and praise these groups and movements we know that some people left the Catholic Church through them. It is on this note that Celestine Obi warns that: “care must be taken of extremities and excesses which unfortunately tend to occupy the proper place of the sacraments such that the individual becomes satisfied with merely fulfilling the precepts and demands of the society to which he belongs and values the sacrament less. This is an aberration that must be guarded against.”<sup>741</sup> These aberration is caused mostly by ignorant brothers and sisters who form the greater majority of these groups and movements. The pastoral onus lies on the Bishop of the various Dioceses to control and regulate these groups within their Dioceses.

### **3.8.3 Occasions (Religious feasts, processions, traditions etc.) and Gatherings (Markets, work places etc.)**

It is a well-known fact that from the history of the apostles and the early missionaries that: "the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them towards the faith, or to the faithful to instruct them, strengthen them, incite them to a more fervent life...."<sup>742</sup> A typical example is in the Acts of the Apostles where we are told that: “On that day a great persecution broke out against the Church at Jerusalem, and all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria ...Now those who had been

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<sup>740</sup>The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no. 115

<sup>741</sup> Obi C.A., “An Appraisal”, in Ojene I.C, *A Professional Handbook on Religious Societies in the Catholic Church*, pp.4-5

<sup>742</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 6

scattered went about preaching the word. Thus Philip went down to [a] city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing” (Acts 8:1.4-6). In fact, we should take the advantage of every opportunity we have to either evangelize or catechize. Let us examine some of these opportunities under these two headings: Occasions and Gathering.

### **3.8.3.1 Occasions**

These are occasions or celebrations which have fixed dates for their annual celebration. They are such occasions that all the members of the community (believers and non-believers) long for its celebrations every year. They are really occasions and opportunities for evangelization and catechesis. They are:

#### **(I) Processions**

Solemn religious processions can open big avenues to preach the Gospel and deepen the Christian faith. Here we are talking of processions and Christian rallies like *Corpus Christi* and *Rosary processions*. In majority of the parishes in Igboland today, processions have become a monthly occurrence especially among the members of the Marian societies like the Blue Army Members or Sacred Heart of Jesus members etc. There are also some parishes which have the habit of Eucharistic or Rosary processions once or twice every year. Others do so when things are disordered in the community such as when armed robbers or kidnappers terrorize people, or when drought persists during farm seasons. These are days when Christians and non-Christians turn out since it is a matter that concerns everybody. As a matter of fact, a lot of people have embraced Christianity through such processions. But as we acknowledge the importance and relevance of the church’s processions whether Eucharistic or Rosary processions etc., we have also to advice those in charge of the diocese, parishes, and small Christian communities etc. to educate the members of the Christian communities to avoid abuse. This recommendation is necessary because it has been observed that: “from the perspective of the Christian’s faith, votive processions, like other pious exercises, are exposed to certain risks: the precedence of devotions over the sacraments, which are relegated to second place, of external displays over interior

disposition; regarding the procession as the apogee of a feast; the impression given to some of the less competently instructed of the faithful that Christianity is merely a "religion of Saints"; the degeneration of the procession itself from a manifestation of faith to a mere spectacle or a purely secular parade."<sup>743</sup> Therefore to avoid this and "to preserve the character of processions as manifestations of faith, it is necessary for the faithful to be carefully instructed on their theological, liturgical and anthropological aspects."<sup>744</sup> If such instructions are correctly transmitted, then the meaning and religious value of the processions will be appreciated.

## (II) Traditions

Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time. These are the particular forms, adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium.<sup>745</sup> There is, then, Tradition and tradition. There is a tradition with a capital "T" and there is tradition with a small "t". Tradition with a capital "T" is central. It refers to what is always binding for Catholics such as our belief that Jesus is both human and divine, our loyalty to the Pope as Vicar of Christ, and our celebration of the Eucharist as the centre of Christian life. Small "t" traditions, on the other hand, are peripheral. They include much that may be transitory, for example, certain rules regarding fast and abstinence, kneeling and standing in church, Mass facing the altar or people. Both kinds of tradition, however, refer to Catholic beliefs or practices passed on from generation to generation.

Our concern here is "devotional traditions" with small "t". Like the Jewish, the Igbo people have so many traditions which are observed from generation to generation. However, these traditions among the Igbo tribe may be in form of social or religious festival, though both of them

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<sup>743</sup>Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines, no.246

<sup>744</sup>Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, Principles and Guidelines, no.247

<sup>745</sup> CCC 83

are interdependent and interrelated. Therefore, when we say that a tradition is “purely social” we do not mean that there are no religious elements. For instance, among the social festivals such as all cultural ceremonies and celebrations which mark birth, naming and initiation ceremonies, marriage, death and funeral ceremonies; anniversaries of historical events like a triumphant return in ancient wars etc., are social festivals, but religious elements include sacrifices, consultations of oracles, offerings are also sometimes involved. Also when we look at some of the religious festivals which are essentially instituted in honour of deities or deified ancestors, there are also some of the social displays in them.

Our main concern here is that these are some of the traditions and cultures in Igboland where inculturation has to take place. These have been a source of quarrels and conflicts between the Christians and the African traditionalist especially during the preparations for these festivals. For instance, people living in a community are expected to prepare for a community festival. This means, among other things, that the period shortly before the festival, "is devoted to giving the village a festive touch; right from the internal life to the external, there must be a self-evident atmosphere of peace and harmony, characterized by intensified preparation of new dances and songs. The external cleanliness marked the internal hence the land must be at peace."<sup>746</sup> Among these preparations, the issue of “giving the village a festive touch” has always generated problems. The Christians have always time without number exempted themselves from the clearing of the roads or sweeping of the village square when they consider a festival a fetish practice. The community leaders may impose a fine on anybody who did not participate in the clean - up exercise. If the Christians refuse to pay the fine, a big conflict is likely to ensue.

There should be evangelization of these traditions, cultures and customs. Literally, “just as incarnation stands for the manifestation of the divine in a human culture, the mystery of the Word-made-flesh dwelling among us (Jn. 1:14), evangelization is making the Divine Word, the Gospel message, take root in the various cultures, among the people to whom Christ is

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<sup>746</sup> Mair L., *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, in Onwubiko, O.A., *African Thought, Religion & Culture*, Vol. 1, p.46

preached.”<sup>747</sup> Just as incarnation refers to the embracing of the human nature by the Son of God, not merely in appearance but in all its reality and totality (except sin), not merely assuming human nature in the abstract but also the cultural and historical aspects of human existence, such a divine-human encounter is acknowledged as a normative principle, an analogy, a model and a metaphor for the incarnation of the Gospel message and the Church in various cultures.<sup>748</sup> Thus, we need to let the Gospel of Christ penetrate into the depths of our cultures.

### **3.8.3.2 Gathering (Markets, work places, conferences, Crusade etc.)**

In Africa as well as in Igboland; there are various occasions where people meet and interact with one another either for religious, social or commercial purposes. Such places of gathering will always be a fertile ground for evangelization and catechesis.

#### **(I) Market and Work Places**

Christ in sending out His disciples said: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). He never mentioned any particular place or area. This means that we as His disciples are to go, that is go out to wherever the lost sheep may be found. Maybe, this explains why the apostles did not stay anymore in Jerusalem after the Pentecost. They all went out to preach; and so also did St. Paul. Thus, we read from the Acts of the Apostles that: “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:16-17). From Paul's experience, among others, we see that evangelization should not only be restricted to the Church premises. We have to go into the harvest field and seek out the lost. Such places like market will be good for evangelization and catechesis. In the writer’s home diocese, Nsukka, a particular day of the month is marked out for prayer. This is obviously a good development, especially

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<sup>747</sup> Cf. CCC, no.854

<sup>748</sup> Paul VI at the Conclusion of the Symposium of the African Bishops , July 31, 1969

nowadays where traders suspect one another as using diabolic power to enhance their business. It will also be recommendable if the diocese can be sending priests on such days of the month to evangelize and catechize them.

Work places are also a wonderful place for evangelization and catechesis. Work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work, in the midst of all the many activities of which man is capable and to which he is predisposed by his very nature, by virtue of humanity itself. Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself (*Gen 1:26*), and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth (*Gen 1:28*).<sup>749</sup> As the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.<sup>750</sup> Even though, "...the workplace can also be a parched place where faith nonetheless has to be preserved and communicated"<sup>751</sup>; nevertheless, every company is different, so we need to know our company's rules for discussing spirituality at work. However, the first step to take at the place of work should be "personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God's word, perhaps by reading a Bible verse or relating a story, but always keeping in mind the fundamental message: the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship. This message has to be shared humbly as a testimony on the part of one who is always willing to learn,

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<sup>749</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 14 September, 1981

<sup>750</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no.127

<sup>751</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no.86

in the awareness that the message is so rich and so deep that it always exceeds our grasp. At times the message can be presented directly, at times by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation. If it seems prudent and if the circumstances are right, this fraternal and missionary encounter could end with a brief prayer related to the concerns which the person may have expressed. In this way they will have an experience of being listened to and understood; they will know that their particular situation has been placed before God and that God's word really speaks to their lives".<sup>752</sup> We should not think, however, that the Gospel message must always be communicated by fixed formulations learned by heart or by specific words which express an absolutely invariable content. This communication takes place in so many different ways that it would be impossible to describe or catalogue them all, and God's people, with all their many gestures and signs.<sup>753</sup> Hence one should be sensitive to both his environment and the people around him so as to know the appropriate approach to take. Paul's life has to be our watch word here. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some (1 Cor.9:11).

## (II) Leisure and Sport, Travel and Tourism

Also not to be underrated or neglected in this modern age is the role of leisure and sport, travel and tourism in evangelization and catechesis. Thus we agree with the Pontifical Council on Culture which asserts that:

The world of leisure and sport, travel and tourism, is undeniably an important element in modern culture ... in which the Church has long been present, and so is becoming another new forum of evangelization. Having become almost universal, sport undoubtedly has its place in the Christian vision of culture and can promote both physical health and interpersonal relationships. However, sport can be taken over by commercial interests or become a vehicle for expressing tribal, national or racial rivalries, and give rise to occasional explosions of violence which reveal

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<sup>752</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no.128

<sup>753</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium*, no.129

the tensions and contradictions which are part of contemporary society, and thus become an anti-culture. So it is an important area for a modern pastoral approach (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).<sup>754</sup>

In the context of the development of leisure time and religious tourism, it seems right to point out some initiatives which may safeguard, restore and make the most of the existing religious cultural heritage, and also pass on to future generations the treasures of Christian culture.<sup>755</sup> To this end, it seems advisable to promote and encourage several initiatives such as:

- The introduction of pastoral care for tourism and leisure or catechesis through art, as an identifiable and regular activity in a diocese.
- Designing diocesan or regional devotional itineraries based on the networks of holy places which constitute their spiritual and cultural heritage.
- Making churches open and welcoming, by exploiting resources which are sometimes modest but significant.
- Setting up a pastoral programme for the most frequently visited religious buildings, to give visitors the benefit of the message they bear, and publishing documents on religious tourism or simply about tourism on a human scale in association with the appropriate local authorities.
- The creation of Catholic guides' organizations, which would provide tourists with a high quality cultural service backed up with the witness of faith. Such initiatives can also create jobs, even if only temporary ones, for young or unemployed people.
- Support for international organizations like the E.C.A., European Cathedrals' Association.
- Setting up and developing museums of sacred art and religious anthropology: to bring out the quality of the objects on view, with a lively pedagogical presentation, to avoid such museums being storehouses for dead objects.
- Encouraging the formation and expansion of funds or libraries specialized in the Christian and profane cultural heritage of a region, to put as many people as possible in touch with it.

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<sup>754</sup>Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, no.18

<sup>755</sup> John Paul II, *Address to the first Plenary Session of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church*, 1995.

- Despite problems in publishing and book sales in some countries, supporting - and perhaps also starting - Catholic bookshops, especially in parishes and at pilgrimage sites. These need to be run by qualified people who would be able to give useful advice.<sup>756</sup>

Such initiatives can influence non-Christian pilgrims positively and help them to convert into Christianity. Indeed places in Rome and some of the pilgrimage centres are always decorated and painted with figures which normally help people to enter into meditation and have a change of heart. A good number of people who have visited those places came back changed persons. Their spiritual life greatly improved and they joined in preaching to other people.

Having reviewed the proceedings of the Catechesi Tradendae, our next line of action would be to examine how these ideas could help in the formation of lay catechists to assist the ever decreasing percentage of sufficiency of ordained ministers.

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<sup>756</sup>Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, no.37

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**EXPOSITION OF THE DOCUMENT INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS OF THE XIII  
ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON THE NEW  
EVANGELIZATION**

A research on the training of lay catechists towards improving the catechetical apostolate of the Catholic Church in Igboland would be incomplete without a review of this document which discusses new evangelization. Effective evangelization in our time is the one that takes cognizance of the changes of our time. This document was published on the 2 February 2011 being the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. It is called the '*Instrumentum Laboris*' i.e. the agenda of the Synod meeting for the 13<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held in the Vatican from 7 to 28 October 2012. Benedict XVI first announced this synod at the closing of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod Bishops. The purpose of the Synod was to deliberate on the theme "The new Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith". In sum, this document discusses Christian faith - the heart of evangelization and the effective means of its transmission in the present age. Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, the work has four chapters: 1. Jesus Christ, the Good News of God to Humanity, 2. Time for a New Evangelization, 3. Transmitting the Faith, 4. Revivifying Pastoral Activity. This document is relevant to the study of catechesis in Igboland since it discusses new ideas on evangelizations which applies to people of all orientations. What follows is a brief summary of the document.

**4.1. Brief Summary of the Document "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith"**

**4.1.1 The Introduction:**

The *introduction* presents the structure of the document and indicates the meaning of the Synod's theme, the reference and the expectation of the particular Churches, according to the answers to the *Lineamenta*. The timeliness of this Synodal assembly was showcased in the document. According to Benedict XVI, as the time of its celebration coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the inauguration of The Year of Faith,

the Synod will therefore provide a good opportunity to focus on the subject of conversion and the necessity of holiness, emphasized by all these anniversaries. The Synod will also be the place to grasp and repropose to people the invitation to rediscover the faith.<sup>757</sup> The introduction went further to discuss on the expectations of the Synod. It should be an event to energize Christian communities and, at the same time, provide practical answers to questions on the evangelization of the contemporary world. The Synod is expected to be not only a source of encouragement but also the place to compare experiences and share observations on situations and approaches for action. In fact, reasons for these expectations are not far-fetched. Many particular Churches (dioceses, eparchies, Churches *sui juris*) and various episcopal conferences and synods of the Eastern Churches have for the past several years evaluated their programmes in proclaiming and witnessing to the faith. The responses provided an impressive list of initiatives undertaken by various ecclesial realities. Given the considerable number of initiatives and their reported positive and negative aspects not all the initiatives undertaken have produced the desired results.

Also Benedict XVI goes further to remind Christian communities of the primary task facing the Church. The evangelizing mission received from the Apostles, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and forming them as witnesses (cf. *Mt* 28:19-20) and the mission which the Church has carried out and to which she has remained true over the centuries - is today facing social and cultural changes that are profoundly affecting a person's perception of self and the world, and consequently, a person's way of believing in God. Therefore, the Synod is expected to enliven and energize the Church in undertaking a new evangelization, which will lead to a rediscovery of the joy of believing and a rekindling of enthusiasm in communicating the faith.

The origin of the New Evangelization is also discussed in this introduction. It was traced back to Paul VI who initiated the Second Vatican Council and carried on by his predecessors like John Paul II and Benedict XVI. It is not by chance; in the *Instrumentum Laboris* that frequent mention is made of Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, as well as various texts by John Paul II, especially his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and the Apostolic Letter *Novo*

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<sup>757</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 2012, no.2

*Millennio Ineunte*. With regard to Benedict XVI, it is *Porta Fidei* which is cited the most often and insistence is placed on the hermeneutic of reform and on renewal in continuity, with which it is necessary to interpret and absorb the Second Vatican Council so that it can become "increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church."<sup>758</sup> This is in line with Paul VI who continued to emphasize that the Church's evangelizing activity "must constantly seek the proper means and language for presenting, or representing, to them God's revelation and faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>759</sup> It is only a re-evangelization that can ensure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom.

The Igbo missionary space is in need of such new evangelization. Things have changed so much that most of the foundation on which the teaching of religion was based no longer holds firm. The catechists need new forms of approach to tackle the glaring change.

#### **4.1.2 Chapter One**

Here the Church is reminded of her task as well as her vocation: to proclaim to the people the Good News she has received from the Lord (cf. *Mt.* 28:20) and also to live it out. Evangelizing is not something optional to the Church since she exists in order to evangelize. For the Church, therefore, evangelization is not a choice but a duty; she exists in order to evangelize. The Church is evangelized in order to evangelize the world. Everybody has the right to hear the Gospel of God, which is Jesus Christ.

The mission and vocation of the Church: proclamation and transmission of the Gospel are being limited by such erroneous beliefs that "Christ should not be proclaimed to those who do not know him, nor should joining the Church be promoted, since it would also be possible to be saved without explicit knowledge of Christ and without formal incorporation in the Church."<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>758</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, *Instrumentum Laboris*, no.14

<sup>759</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.56

<sup>760</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, 3 December 2007, no.3

Based on this, the Church “has a constant need of being evangelized if she wishes to retain freshness, vigour and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel.”<sup>761</sup> To evangelize, therefore, is to preach “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8).<sup>762</sup> In the words of Paul VI, “he indeed is the hope of the human race, its one supreme teacher and shepherd, our bread of life, our High Priest and our victim, the one mediator between God and men, the saviour of this world and king of the eternal world to come.”<sup>763</sup> Little wonder the document in this chapter ended by reminding us that apart from Christ, the disciples’ effort is fruitless. Therefore, the Church should allow herself to be formed by the action of the Holy Spirit and be conformed to Christ Crucified.

In diverse forms, Christianity is being misinterpreted as a business venture. There is need for the re-evaluation of the purpose of Christianity in Igboland. The multiplication of churches and the great presence during church activities is not directly proportional to the purity of intention. It is possible to find among Christians present in the church, real traditional religionists. As such, evangelization in order to inculcate Christ, and faith in him, which in the real goal of Christianity is a desideratum now more than ever.

### **4.1.3 Chapter TWO**

Chapter Two reminds the Church that the environment where she carries her work of evangelization has “radically changed, for one reason or other, so that an entirely new set of circumstances may arise.”<sup>764</sup> These changes have drastically affected the Church and have brought a “weakening of faith in Christian communities, a diminished regard for the authority of the magisterium, an individualistic approach to belonging to the Church, a decline in religious

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<sup>761</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.15

<sup>762</sup> Quoted by John Paul II in Opening Address at Santo Domingo, 1992, no.6

<sup>763</sup> Paul VI, “Opening of the Second Session of the Ecumenical Council,” *The Pope Speaks*, 9 (1963),p.130

<sup>764</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Ad Gentes*, no.6

practice and disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations.”<sup>765</sup> Based on these problems, the Church is called upon for “a new evangelization.”<sup>766</sup> i.e. “new manner of proclaiming the Gospel, especially for those who live in the present-day situation which is affected by the growing trend of secularization, taking place to a great extent in countries with a Christian tradition.”<sup>767</sup> The new evangelization is for everybody i.e. the west as well as the Africans. The reality of the new evangelization is not the concern of well-defined regions only but the means to explain everywhere the teaching of the Apostles and put those teachings into practice in our day.<sup>768</sup> No area in the Church is outside the parameters of this programme; nor should anyone feel exempt. This new evangelization has the duty to compel the Church to examine the way Christian communities live and bear witness to the faith today in the sectors such as cultures, society, economics, civic life and religion, which have influenced the way people express their sense of religion and seek to orientate every man and woman's human freedom towards God, who is the source of truth, goodness and beauty. In fact, the specific task of the new evangelization is having the courage to raise again the question of God in these places and situations and to restore a high quality and motivation to the faith in many of our Churches of ancient origins. The Parishes being the entry way have major role to play in the new evangelization. The region of Igbo land is among the regions where the church is witnessing a speedy growth. This growth of the church is also coincidental with the growth in other sectors of life that mutually effect one another. A study and knowledge of these developments and changes is the centre of this chapter.

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<sup>765</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.48

<sup>766</sup> The new evangelization is precisely the Church's ability to renew her communal experience of faith and to proclaim it within the new situations which, in recent decades, have arisen in cultures. The same phenomenon is taking place in both the North and South and the East and West; in both countries with an age-old Christian tradition and countries which have been evangelized within the last few centuries. Cf. Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.47

<sup>767</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.44

<sup>768</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.88

#### 4.1.4 Chapter Three

The chapter three handles the kern of the synod which is faith. As stated in the topic for the synod, the purpose of the new evangelization is the transmission of the faith.<sup>769</sup> Faith is essentially a gift from God which prompts self-abandonment to the Lord Jesus. The transmission of the Christian faith is the goal of evangelization today. This task primarily concerns all. The clergy as well as the laity are involved in this task of the transmission of the faith. It is not the task of any one person or a select few, but rather a gift given to every person who answers the call to faith. We have to understand that “the transmission of the faith is a fundamental act of the Church, which leads Christian communities to articulate, in a strict sense, the basic works of the life of faith, namely, charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening and sharing.”<sup>770</sup> Though the importance of faith cannot be over stressed, yet we are all aware of the serious difficulties facing the Church, especially regarding professing the true tenets of the faith and its correct interpretation. The *Lineamenta* responding to this cankerworm refer to such a danger and point out with regret that many communities lack an instruction programme geared to the growth and development of a mature faith... The principal obstacles to the transmission of the faith are the same everywhere and arise from within the Church and the Christian life, namely, a faith which is lived in a private and passive manner; a person's not feeling the need to be instructed in the faith; and a separation of faith from life. The responses also mention obstacles from outside the Christian life, especially from culture, that make it difficult and perilous to live and transmit the faith: consumerism and hedonism, cultural nihilism; and a closure on transcendence which extinguishes any need for salvation. The Synod could provide the occasion to reflect on the above assessment so as to assist Christian communities find the proper remedies for these problems.<sup>771</sup> The aforementioned problems associated with faith necessitated the XIII General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization which took place at the same time with the

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<sup>769</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.90

<sup>770</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.92

<sup>771</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.95

Year of faith. Benedict XVI insisted that The Year of Faith is an occasion to ensure that the essential elements of the faith, professed by all believers over the centuries, are re-stated and examined, always in a new manner, so as to bear witness to the faith in a coherent way in an entirely different historical situation from the past.<sup>772</sup>

The best place to transmit the faith is a community nourished and transformed by the liturgical life and prayer. The liturgy and a life of prayer transform a Christian community from a simple gathering of people into a community which celebrates and transmits the Trinitarian faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Without the liturgy and the sacraments, the profession of faith would lack efficacy, because it would lack the grace which supports Christian witness. For the faith to be transmitted, it must be professed, celebrated, lived and prayed. To help the liturgical life and prayer to be more active in the society; *Lineamenta* suggests the followings: the sacrament of Reconciliation, Liturgy of the Hours, a rediscovery of Eucharistic adoration as a source of personal prayer; an increase in the number of groups for listening and prayer on the Word of God; and the spontaneous formation of Marian, charismatic and devotional groups. The spiritual benefits of all these devotions were acknowledged but they also noted the danger of syncretism and a degradation of the faith.<sup>773</sup> Without faith, religion is impossible. The Igbo people are naturally a faith-filled people. However, changes of the modern world has put into doubt so many things that were held as sacrosanct. There is need now more than ever to rebuild this faith.

#### **4.1.5 Chapter Four:**

The Church in order to carry out the injunction of Christ to make disciples of all nations has to develop pastoral practices for proclaiming the Gospel to human beings rooted in the different cultures. In the face of the considerable changes in today's society, people of the Church have to rethink and revise the ways of introducing people to the faith, of instructing them in it and of

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<sup>772</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, no.94

<sup>773</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, Instrumentum Laboris, nos.97-100

proclaiming the Christian message. The revision is "... not that there is any lack in the constitution given her by Christ, but that she can understand it more penetratingly, express it better, and adjust it more successfully to our times."<sup>774</sup> The Chapter four of this Document in this regard prompted the Church to begin a general process of reflection and reassessment of her pastoral programmes, particularly those devoted to initiation into the faith, instruction and the proclamation of the message of Christianity such as the Baptism of children, and likewise that requested by adults and adolescents. In fact, according to the answers to the *Lineamenta*, "many responses see the new evangelization as an appeal to consolidate past efforts and reforms introduced to strengthen the faith of catechumens and their families, above all, as well as the community which supports and guides them. Pastoral programmes for Baptism are one of the priorities of the new evangelization. In a society which has done away with many references to and talk about God, our institutions need to adopt a bold and even "apologetic" approach and seek ways of publically affirming their faith, fearlessly and with a clear sense of pastoral urgency especially through the initial proclamation of the Gospel which can be inserted into the customary pastoral practices in the day-to-day life of Christian communities, such as preaching, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and popular piety with its many devotions."<sup>775</sup> These programmes are not considered as simply a preparation for this special Sacrament but can increasingly become true and proper ways to reacquire and grow in the Christian faith.

Also the link between education and faith was also discussed here. It is observed that the Church has long realized the bond between education and evangelization and has since then invested much in schools. This same bond between faith and education also exists between faith and knowledge. For faith widens the horizons of reason and reason preserves faith from the danger of drifting aimlessly or manipulating religion. In the transmission of faith, art and beauty play a significant role. In fact, the relation between faith and beauty is a fundamental resource in bearing witness to the faith and developing a knowledge which is truly a "holistic" service to a person's every human need while the knowledge coming from beauty, as in the liturgy, is able to

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<sup>774</sup> Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no.44

<sup>775</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, *Instrumentum Laboris*, nos.135-142

take on a visible reality in its originally-intended role as a manifestation of the universal communion to which humanity and every person is called by God.<sup>776</sup> The *Lineamenta* concluded this chapter by adopting the basic insights of Paul VI, namely, if the Church is to evangelize, she needs to not only renew her programmes, but also increase the calibre of her testimony.

#### 4.1.6 Conclusion

Here we are made to understand that the new evangelization does not mean a “new Gospel” rather an adequate response to the signs of the times, to the needs of individuals and people of today who need hope so that they can really live the present moment looking to the future with eyes filled with faith and not the tears of despair. It made to understand that among the obstacles to a new evangelization is the lack of joy and hope which these situations create and spread among people today. Oftentimes, this lack of joy and hope is so strong as to wear thin the very fabric of our Christian communities. The new evangelization is proposed in these places as a remedy to bring joy and courage to life and become an imperative invigorating our faith. Little wonder Benedict XVI’s intent on gathering the signs of the times in the present of history tell us that faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world. What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end

The words of eternal life, which have been given to us in our encountering Jesus Christ, are destined for everyone and each individual. Every person in our time aware or not, needs to hear this proclamation. Little wonder the new evangelization is a new proclamation of the message of Jesus which brings joy and liberation. This new evangelization compels us to witness to the faith which oftentimes is like engaging in a battle or a conflict. It is an adequate response to the new sectors with their cultures through which we express our identity and the meaning of our lives. It means fostering a culture deeply grounded in the Gospel and discovering the "new man" (*Eph. 4:24*), which is within us as a result of the Spirit who has been given us by Jesus Christ and

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<sup>776</sup> Synod of Bishops XII Ordinary General Assembly, The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith, *Instrumentum Laboris*, nos.156-157

the Father. The new evangelization increasingly strengthens our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, since only he is the surety for the future and the guarantor of a true and lasting love. This watchword nourishes the hope for which we yearn, namely, the Church, born to evangelize, discovers in contemplation the deep source of energy for proclaiming the Gospel.

The study of this document is therefore a great tool in improving the catechetical apostolate of the church in Igboland. The Igbo people have hearts ready to welcome any good development including doctrinal and catechetical developments. A catechist who is so trained as to understand the proposals of this document and implement it in his work is sure to achieve meaningful success. We shall further bring out some of the concepts in the document and study them at closer details.

#### **4.2 The Question of a New Evangelization**

The term *Evangelization* in recent times refers to every aspect of the Church's activity. John Paul II repeatedly defined full evangelization as involving catechetical instruction, moral doctrine and the social teaching of the church. This is because personal transformation requires instruction in sound doctrine, participation in sacramental worship and the acquisition of a mature ethical and social conscience. According to John Paul II also total evangelization, "will penetrate deeply into the social and cultural reality, including the economic and political order... Such a total evangelization will naturally have its highest point in an intense liturgical life that will make parishes living ecclesial communities."<sup>777</sup> In fact, evangelization in its completeness should lead to what John Paul II, following Paul VI, frequently called "a civilization of love."<sup>778</sup> Little wonder the *New Evangelization* is aimed at personal transformation through the development of a personal relationship with God, participation in sacramental worship, the development of a mature ethical and social conscience, ongoing catechesis, and a deepening integration of faith into all areas of life. The purpose of this evangelization is to bring about faith and conversion to Christ. Faith involves a profound change of mind and heart, a change of life, a *metanoia*. Such a

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<sup>777</sup> John Paul II, *Ad Limina* Visit of Puerto Rican Bishops, October 27, 1988.

<sup>778</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, May 5, 1991, no.10

change can only arise from deep within the interior of one's being, where one faces the truly important questions of human life.<sup>779</sup> The New Evangelization calls each of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel. It is the name given to the spiritual revival, the "spiritual reawakening and reanimation of a process of conversion which the Church asks of herself, all her communities and all the baptized" in order to be "the place where God can be experienced even now, and where, under the guidance of the Spirit of the Risen Christ, we allow ourselves to be transformed by the gift of the faith."<sup>780</sup> The focus of the New Evangelization calls all Catholics to be evangelized and then go forth to evangelize. In a special way, the New Evangelization is focused on re-proposing' the Gospel to those who have experienced a crisis of faith. Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel "to those regions awaiting the first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced serious crisis of faith due to secularization."<sup>781</sup> In fact, some traditionally Christian cultures or cultures imbued with thousand-year-old religious traditions are being shattered. Thus, it is not only a question of grafting the faith onto these cultures, but also of revitalizing a de-Christianized world whose only Christian references are of a cultural nature. On the threshold of the Third Millennium, the Church throughout the world is faced with new cultural situations, new fields of evangelization.<sup>782</sup> The New Evangelization invites each Catholic to renew their relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church.

In Igbo land, the great enthusiasm of faith seems to be waning in geometric progressions. This is consequent upon abuses especially by the leaders of the church. What seemed impossible

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<sup>779</sup> National Directory for Catechesis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C, 2005, no. 17, p. 47

<sup>780</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no.88

<sup>781</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily of First vespers on the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul," The Vatican, <http://www.Vatican.va/holy-father/benedict-xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf-ben-xvi-hom-20100628vespripietro-paolo-en.html>...(accessed February 15, 2011)

<sup>782</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, p.5

to be committed by church leaders have been proven to be possible by them. As such, the lay Christians have also followed their shepherd even with greater evil smartness. There is need for new evangelization to assist the church go back to its great history of fidelity to the gospel and to authentic Christian witnessing. Thus, new evangelization does not mean teaching something entirely new as we saw from above, but teaching the same truth in a more lively and effective pedagogy.

The idea of *New Evangelization* has a long history. This plan arose from the Church's commitment to renew her evangelizing activity, which was a major characteristic of the Magisterium and apostolic ministry of both Paul VI and John Paul II. In fact, the origin of the *New Evangelization* can be traced to the Second Vatican Council and its desire to respond to a sense of disorientation experienced by Christians facing powerful changes and divisions which the world was experiencing at that time. John Paul II described the Second Vatican Council as a council "focused on the mystery of Christ and his Church and at the same time open to the world."<sup>783</sup> That openness, he was convinced, was an evangelical response to changes in the world, including the terrible tragedies of the twentieth century. Building on the work of the Council, Paul VI dedicated his pontificate to the task of evangelization. He called for the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to meet in the fall of 1974 to reflect on the topic of evangelization in the light of the Council, which had ended some nine years earlier. His choice of the name Paul signified his intention to take the Apostle of the Gentiles as the model for his papal ministry. Often called "the pilgrim pope," Paul VI was the first pontiff in history to make apostolic journeys to other continents. In 1967 he renamed the Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples. Wishing to engage the entire church more decisively in the dissemination of the gospel, Paul VI chose as the theme of the Synod of Bishops in 1974 "the evangelization of the modern world." That synod provided him with materials for his apostolic exhortation on evangelization, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. Here he described evangelization as the "deepest identity" of the church, which "exists in order to evangelize."<sup>784</sup> While proposing a

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<sup>783</sup> John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, November 10, 1994, no.18

<sup>784</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.14

broad and inclusive concept, the pope made it clear that there can be no evangelization without explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord.<sup>785</sup> It cannot be reduced to any sociopolitical project of development and liberation.<sup>786</sup>

John Paul II was the successor of Paul VI. As a young Bishop he participated in the Second Vatican Council and played a major role at the 1974 Synod on Evangelization. This experience probably so heightened his passion for spreading the Good News that when he finally became Pope on the 16th October 1978, he took the name “John Paul II”. He made Evangelization the “core theme” of his papacy. He restored to Christianity its true face as a Religion of hope, to be lived in history in an 'Advent' Spirit, in a personal and communitarian existence directed to Christ, the fullness of humanity and the fulfillment of all our longings for justice and peace.

In 1979, he visited his own Country Poland and announced “a New Evangelization as if it were a new proclamation but in reality it is the same as ever. Summarizing the main orientation of his pontificate, he declared in Mexico that “the Lord and master of history and of our destinies has wished my pontificate to be that of a pilgrim pope of evangelization, walking down the roads of the world, bringing to all peoples the message of salvation.”<sup>787</sup> He (John Paul II) made the duty to evangelize one of the key points in his vast magisterium, summarizing in the concept of the new evangelization what he systematically developed in many discourses, namely, that this is the task facing the Church today, especially in countries with a Christian tradition. John Paul II explains:

Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith, are now put to a hard test, and in some cases, are even undergoing a radical transformation, as a result of a constant spreading of religious indifference, secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World, in which economic well-being

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<sup>785</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.22

<sup>786</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 31-33

<sup>787</sup> John Paul II, Arrival Speech in Mexico City, May 6, 1990

and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and sustains a life lived 'as if God did not exist' [...] In other regions or nations many vital traditions of piety and popular forms of Christian religion are still conserved; but today this moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed under the impact of a multiplicity of processes, including secularization and the spread of sects. Only a re-evangelization can ensure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom. Without doubt, a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about, what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations.<sup>788</sup>

The “new evangelization” though well-known and undoubtedly a part of the Church’s many projects, remained relatively a new expression and concept in ecclesial and pastoral circles at the beginning. In fact, at the beginning, the expression “*new evangelization*” was not always clear and precise. It was later especially after the publication of Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, titled *Redemptoris Missio* in 1990 that its meaning started to unfold. John Paul II initially introduced “*new evangelization*” during his apostolic visit to Poland<sup>789</sup> in 1979, without any specific emphasis or idea of its future role. Also in 1982 during the visit of John Paul II to Nigeria; he challenged the Catholic Church in Nigeria to a new Era of Evangelization without detailed information on what to do. In His address to the Bishops of Nigeria he said:

Your people are enthusiastic, hospitable, and full of faith. Your seminaries are full, your religious congregations have a steady flow of candidates, and your lay apostolate organizations are dynamic... I have been sent by Christ and you have been sent by Christ. And together with the rest of the college of Bishops throughout the world we are sent to announce Christ, to proclaim Christ, to communicate Christ and his Gospel to the world. In this pastoral visit, I express the hope that it would initiate a “new era of evangelization in Nigeria”. This is my earnest prayer, that zeal for evangelization will envelop the Church in Nigeria.<sup>790</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, 28 June 2003, no. 2

<sup>789</sup> John Paul II, *Homily at the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross*, Mogila, Poland, 9 June 1979, pg.1

<sup>790</sup> John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of Nigeria, Lagos, 15 February 1982

From the above, John Paul II charged that the gospel must now become at home among the cultures of Nigeria. It means inculturation of the Gospel into the lives of the people so that the gospel can reach the core of our beings. The new era is one of effective encounter between the Gospel and culture.

In 1983, he extended the call to the Church in Latin America, for an Evangelization new in zeal, new in expression and new in method. The reception of the calls both in Nigeria and Latin American Countries were laudable and very encouraging.<sup>791</sup> On 7 Dec, 1990 the pope issued an Encyclical Letter: *Redemptoris Missio* - Mission of the Redeemer - and made the New Evangelization mandatory for the Universal Church. On this John Paul II succinctly said

It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support.<sup>792</sup>

Then he went on to declare, in this most solemn document

I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a *New Evangelization* and *Mission ad Gentes*. The number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious.<sup>793</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> Gbuji. O.A, „Homily at the Cathedraticum Mass at Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu”, in: Amuh (ed.), C.U, Here I am Lord, send me (Isaiah 6:8), Enugu: Black Belt Konzult Ltd, 2013, p.67

<sup>792</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, no.3

<sup>793</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.3

He concludes

Christian hope sustains us in committing ourselves fully to the New Evangelization  
and to the worldwide mission ...<sup>794</sup>

John Paul II invested all his time and energy in *New Evangelization*. The term *New Evangelization* is not a matter of redoing something which has been inadequately done or has not achieved its purpose or taking up the first evangelization again, or simply repeating the past. Instead, it is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today.

The era of new evangelization did not end with the death of John Paul II but was taken up by his successor Benedict XVI who offered a very important explanation about the New Evangelization, stressing that whereas “the Church always evangelizes and has never interrupted the path of evangelization”, still “New evangelization means: never being satisfied with the fact that from the grain of mustard seed, the great tree of the Universal Church grew; never thinking that the fact that different birds may find place among its branches can suffice - rather it means to dare, once again and with the humility of the small grain, to leave up to God the when and how it will grow (Mk 4: 26-29). Large things always begin from the small seed and the mass movements are always ephemeral.”<sup>795</sup> Also at the closing of the special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, Benedict XVI announced the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to be held from 7 to 28 October 2012 to treat the topic: “The new Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian faith”. In fact, the need for this Synod of Bishops cannot be overstressed, hence, “the evangelizing mission received from the Apostles, - to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and forming them as witness (cf. Mt 28:19-20) and the mission which the Church has carried out and to which she has remained true over the centuries - is today facing social and cultural changes that are profoundly affecting a person’s perception of self and

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<sup>794</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 86§2

<sup>795</sup> Ratzinger, J, *World Gathering of Catechists and Religion Teachers in Rome*, December 10, 2000

the world, and consequently, a person's way of believing in God.<sup>796</sup> The convocation of the Synod on the new evangelization and the transmission of the Faith is part of a determined effort to give new fervour to the faith and to the testimony of Christians and their communities. Benedict XVI affirmed that the discernment of "the new demands of evangelization" is a "prophetic" task of the Supreme Pontiff.<sup>797</sup> He emphasized that "the entire activity of the Church is an expression of love" that seeks to evangelize the world.<sup>798</sup>

Likewise, in continuity with his predecessors, Francis calls us to the work of the New Evangelization. This was also a major initiative of his when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. As in his ministry there, already we can see as a hallmark in this papacy the emphasis that the Church "go out" into the world, to not stay wrapped up within herself, but to go out to give to people the beauty of the Gospel, the amazement of the encounter with Jesus. I think we are going to have, as we move forward, a time of blessing, a time of renewal, of looking to the future to bring that new Evangelization in the hearts of people we know.<sup>799</sup> Pope Francis has noted the spiritual poverty of our time, which is the "tyranny of relativism," as well as one of the most dangerous pitfalls of our time, "a one - dimensional vision of the human person, according to which man is reduced to what he produces and consumes" (March 20, 2013).

At this point, one might really be rightfully asking: what is the content of this new evangelization. This is the question to which we now turn to.

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<sup>796</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, pgs.9-12, Cf. also Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Porta Fidei*, proclaiming "The Year of Faith (11 October 2011; AAS 103 (2011) 723-734

<sup>797</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* no.12

<sup>798</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, no.19

<sup>799</sup> Donald Cardinal Wuerl, "The Challenges and Joys of the New Evangelization"; in <http://saltandlighttv.org/blog/twitter/the-challenges-and-joys-of-the-new-evangelization>

### 4.3 The Content of the New Evangelization

The content and the message of the new evangelization will ever remain the same. We have to understand that “evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it.”<sup>800</sup> When John Paul II uses the term “a new evangelization” he does not mean a new message. Evangelization cannot be new in its content since its very theme is always the one gospel given in Jesus Christ. Beginning in 1983 John Paul II issued repeated calls for a “new evangelization.” Evangelization, he insisted, cannot be new in its content, since its theme is always the one gospel given in Jesus Christ. If it arose from us and our situation, he says, “it would not be “gospel” but mere human invention, and there would be no salvation in it.”<sup>801</sup> In fact, we do not have the right to change or add anything to the message or to the content.

It is the content of the Gospel, and therefore of evangelization, that she (the Church) preserves as a precious living heritage, not to keep it hidden but to communicate it. Having been sent and evangelized, the Church herself sends out evangelizers. She puts on their lips the saving Word, she explains to them the message of which she herself is the depositary, she gives them the mandate which she herself has received and she sends them out to preach. To preach not their own selves or their personal ideas (2 Cor. 4:5), but a Gospel of which neither she nor they are the absolute masters and owners, to dispose of it as they wish, but a Gospel of which they are the ministers, in order to pass it on with complete fidelity.<sup>802</sup>

Nevertheless, there are certainly many secondary elements. Their presentation depends greatly on changing circumstances. They themselves also change. This is because the audience is different: the world is different; cultures are different; tools of communication are different. But there is the essential content, the living substance, which cannot be modified or ignored without seriously diluting the nature of evangelization itself,<sup>803</sup> because the message of evangelization is always the

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<sup>800</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.63

<sup>801</sup> John Paul II, Opening Address, Santo Domingo, October 12, 1992, no.6

<sup>802</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.15

<sup>803</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.25

same. It is here that the training of the lay catechists is very important since the untrained catechist cannot differentiate between the essential and secondary content of the message.

Also in the new evangelization, we are not “redoing something which has been inadequately done or has not achieved its purpose...but the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today.”<sup>804</sup> The Christian faith which we are transmitting should create a true encounter, personal relationship and communion with Jesus Christ. After this personal encounter with Jesus Christ, faith should take the form of a relationship with Jesus Christ most especially in the Eucharist and the Word of God. It should also make us to recognize our brothers and sisters, gathered by the Spirit in his Church, and, in turn, see ourselves as witnesses and heralds of this Gospel. This encounter should equip us to do new things and witness to the transformation of our lives in the works of conversion as announced by the prophets (cf. *Jer.* 3:6 ff; *Ez.* 36:24-36). Benedict XVI on addressing the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization specified its content:

Making my own the concerns of my venerable Predecessors, I consider it opportune to offer appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization. Above all, this pertains to Churches of ancient origin. [...] And yet it is not difficult to see that what all the Churches living in traditionally Christian territories need is a renewed missionary impulse, an expression of a new, generous openness to the gift of grace.<sup>805</sup>

What we are trying to say here is that in the new evangelization, the centre of the proclamation remains Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb.13:8), who is believed and to whom a person bears witness. The message of evangelization is always the same, the audience is different: the world is different; cultures are different; tools of communication are

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<sup>804</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 20 & 23, cf. also DV. no 5

<sup>805</sup> Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio Ubicumque et semper* (21 September 2010): AAS 102 (2010) 790, 791

different. Because of these differences there is need to proclaim the same Jesus to all peoples in a new way with greater zeal, ardor and clarity, using modern means of communication wherever possible. Transmitting the faith essentially means to transmit the Scriptures, primarily the Gospel, which give a person the opportunity of knowing Jesus, the Lord. Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* brought out the content or the message of evangelization clearly. According to him:

Evangelization will always contain - as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism - a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. And not an immanent salvation, meeting material or even spiritual needs, restricted to the framework of temporal existence and completely identified with temporal desires, hopes, affairs and struggles, but a salvation which exceeds all these limits in order to reach fulfillment in a communion with the one and only divine Absolute: a transcendent and eschatological salvation, which indeed has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity.

Evangelization cannot but include the prophetic proclamation of a hereafter, man's profound and definitive calling, in both continuity and discontinuity with the present situation: beyond time and history, beyond the transient reality of this world, and beyond the things of this world, of which a hidden dimension will one day be revealed - beyond man himself, whose true destiny is not restricted to his temporal aspect but will be revealed in the future life. Evangelization therefore also includes the preaching of hope in the promises made by God in the new Covenant in Jesus Christ; the preaching of God's love for us and of our love for God; the preaching of brotherly love for all men - the capacity of giving and forgiving, of self-denial, of helping one's brother and sister - which, springing from the love of God, is the kernel of the Gospel; the preaching of the mystery of evil and of the active search for good. The preaching likewise - and this is always urgent - of the search for God Himself through prayer which is principally that of adoration and thanksgiving, but also through communion with the visible sign of the encounter with God which is the Church of Jesus Christ; and this communion in its turn is expressed by the application of those other signs of Christ living and acting in the Church which are the sacraments. To live the sacraments in this way, bringing their celebration to a true fullness is not, as some would claim, to impede or to accept a distortion of evangelization: it is rather to complete it. For in its totality, evangelization - over and above the preaching of a message - consists in the implantation of the Church, which does not exist without the driving force which is the sacramental life culminating in the Eucharist.

Evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development- a message especially energetic today about liberation.<sup>806</sup>

In few words then, the content of evangelization is always the eternal revelation of God incarnated in Christ contained in the scripture, in the church's tradition and as taught by the magisterium of the church. The content or message of the evangelization should lead the Christian communities to articulate, in a strict sense, the basic works of the life of faith, namely, charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening and sharing. The content should call people to conversion. In fact, when it comes to proclaiming the Gospel, we must think of a living, effective Word, which brings about what is stated (cf. Heb. 4:12; Is. 55:10) and is a Person: Jesus Christ, the definitive Word of God, who became man. The New Evangelization should restate the core of the Christian faith which is unknown by many Christians. The New Evangelization does not mean a new Gospel, because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8) According to John Paul II's words this means that "we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost."<sup>807</sup> Also the theological foundation of the new evangelization should not be overlooked, but forcefully and authentically stated, so as to give energy and a proper framework to the Church's evangelizing activity. It must initially be seen as an opportunity to gauge the faithfulness of Christians to the mandate received from Jesus Christ. It should also be an auspicious occasion (cf. *2 Cor.* 6:2) to return, as an individual Christian and a community, to drink from the source of our faith, and so become more disposed to undertake the work of evangelization and testimony. Indeed, before becoming action, evangelization and testimony are two states-of-mind which, as fruits of a faith in a continual state of purification and

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<sup>806</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos.27-29

<sup>807</sup> John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Vatican City, 2001, no.40

conversion, result in our lives from an encounter with Jesus Christ, the Good News of God to humanity.<sup>808</sup> The content or the message should constantly nourish the gift of communion among the faithful through the teaching of the faith, the celebration of the sacraments and the works of charity. It should also be a constant stimulus to mission, which sends forth all Christ's disciples to every part of the globe to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. Through the discernment which is necessary in the new evangelization, the Church is discovering that the process of transmitting the faith needs to be re-awakened in many communities.

Pope Francis said, “We know how much violence has been produced in recent history by the attempt to eliminate God and the divine from the horizon of humanity, and we experience the value of witnessing in our societies to the original opening to transcendence that is inherent in the human heart” (March 20, 2013). These challenges must be overcome by a fullness of faith which overflows into the very society in which we live. As the Pope Francis said, only when their faith permeates every aspect of their lives do Christians become truly open to the transforming power of the Gospel. The permeation of faith in all aspects of lives is what the Igbo Christian is in the greatest need of. The message has been received in the greater percentage of the regions of the land. However, the degree of assimilation into various aspects of the practical lives is still low. We shall next, examine those whose task it is, to carry out this work of evangelization.

#### **4.4 The Agents of the New Evangelization**

Christ is the primary agent of evangelization. Anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ's spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips.<sup>809</sup> Isaiah 64:8 described it that we are the clay and God is the potter or as Mother Theresa would say “I'm a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.”<sup>810</sup> Jesus himself, the Good News of God, was the very first and the greatest evangelizer. Christ revealed himself as being sent to proclaim the

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<sup>808</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 20 & 23, cf. also DV. no 4

<sup>809</sup> CT no. 6

<sup>810</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/30608-i-m-a-little-pencil-in-the-hand-of-a-writing>

fulfilment of the Gospel of God, foretold in the history of Israel, primarily through the prophets, and promised in Sacred Scriptures. After their first encounter, St. Philip states: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote." (Jn. 1:45).<sup>811</sup> According to John Paul II

Jesus of Nazareth brings God's plan to fulfillment. After receiving the Holy Spirit at his Baptism, Jesus makes clear his messianic calling: he goes about Galilee "preaching the Gospel of God and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel' " (Mk 1:14-15; cf. Mt 4:17; Lk 4:43). The proclamation and establishment of God's kingdom are the purpose of his mission: "I was sent for this purpose" (Lk 4:43). But that is not all. Jesus himself is the "Good News," as he declares at the very beginning of his mission in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he applies to himself the words of Isaiah about the Anointed One sent by the Spirit of the Lord (cf. Lk 4:14-21). Since the "Good News" is Christ, there is an identity between the message and the messenger, between saying, doing and being. His power, the secret of the effectiveness of his actions, lies in his total identification with the message he announces: he proclaims the "Good News" not just by what he says or does, but by what he is.<sup>812</sup>

This mission of Christ has been entrusted to the entire people of God. Driven by the Holy Spirit, "each disciple of Christ has the obligation of spreading the faith to the best of his abilities."<sup>813</sup> In the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, every Christian has been sent out to bring the Good News where God puts him or her; at home, school, the market place, the place of work, the office and factory, anywhere we find ourselves. There is an obligation to bring the Good News to non-Catholics within our parishes; we must bring the good news to the men and women in villages and towns many of whom are influenced by neo-paganism...<sup>814</sup> In fact, the Church has received

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<sup>811</sup>The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no 21 John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.6 & Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.9

<sup>812</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.9

<sup>813</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 17

<sup>814</sup> Gbuji. O.A, „Homily at the Cathedra Mass at Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu”, in: Amuh, C.U, Here I am Lord, send me (Isaiah 6:8), Enugu: Black Belt Konzult Ltd, 2013, p.24

the Gospel as a proclamation and a source of joy and salvation. She has received it as a gift from Jesus, sent by the Father "to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). She has received it through the Apostles, sent by Christ to the whole world (cf. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19-20). Born from this evangelizing activity, the Church hears every day the echo of Saint Paul's words of warning: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). Little wonder announcing and proclaiming the Gospel message is not the task of any one person or a select few, but rather a gift given to every person who answers the call to faith,<sup>815</sup> hence, the focus of the New Evangelization calls all Catholics to be evangelized and then go forth to evangelize, though in a different way. Let us make a brief summary of these different ways according to the Synod of Bishops for XIII Ordinary General Assembly on the New Evangelization. This is a follow up of our discussion on this same theme in chapter three.

#### **4.4.1 The Bishops and Priests**

The bishops having been appointed by the Holy Spirit are successors of the Apostles as pastors of souls and are "directly responsible for the evangelization of the world, both as members of the College of Bishops and as pastors of the particular churches."<sup>816</sup> The Bishops themselves will carefully pastor the Church which God obtained with the Blood of his own Son, fulfilling the responsibility entrusted to them by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts* 20:28). Bishops as the successors of the Apostles have the power from Christ to teach all nations. In fact, they have been made true and authentic teachers of the faith... through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them.<sup>817</sup> They (bishops) are the pillars on which rest the work and responsibility of evangelization, which have as its purpose the building up of the Body of Christ<sup>818</sup> while Priests are by vocation "responsible

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<sup>815</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 92

<sup>816</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.63

<sup>817</sup> Paul VI, *Christus Dominus*, Vatican City, 1965, no.5

<sup>818</sup> John Paul II, Address to Italian Bishops' Conference, May 18, 1989

for awakening the missionary consciousness of the faithful.”<sup>819</sup> Reasons being that priests represent Christ and are collaborators of the order of bishops in that threefold sacred duty which, of its nature, pertains to the mission of the Church.... Therefore, in their pastoral work priests will stimulate and maintain among the faithful a zeal for the evangelization of the world by teaching them through preaching and religious instruction of the Church’s duty to proclaim Christ to the nations; by impressing on Christian families the honour and the need for fostering missionary vocations among their own sons and daughters; by promoting missionary fervor among young people from Catholic schools and associations so that future preachers of the Gospel might spring among them.<sup>820</sup> With the help of the bishops and priests, we will make a success in the new evangelization. Just as John Paul II would say, “The commemoration of this half of the millennium of evangelization will achieve its full meaning, if as bishops, with your priests and faithful, you accept it as your commitment; a commitment, not of re-evangelization, but rather of a new evangelization, new in its ardour, methods and expression.”<sup>821</sup> However, this can only be a reality if the bishops and priests are to realize that “as ordained ministers, (they) have the strict duty to evangelize”<sup>822</sup>, and teach according to the mind of Christ.

#### 4.4.2 Catechists

The Synod acknowledged the unique and irreplaceable contribution of the catechists as immediate witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers in the proclamation of the Gospel and the transmission of the faith. The role of the catechist has been and remains a determinative force in the implantation and expansion of the Church. It is based on their work that the Synod goes on to recommend that:

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<sup>819</sup> John Paul II, Message for World Mission Day, October 21, 1989

<sup>820</sup> Vat. II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 39

<sup>821</sup> John Paul II, Discourse to the XIX Assembly of C.E.L.A.M, Port au Prince, 9 March, 1993, no.3

<sup>822</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no.11

The Church needs to reflect more deeply on their task and provide them with more stable living conditions and greater training and visibility in their service. With this in mind, the Synod Assembly, while taking into consideration the results of the studies already undertaken in recent decades, can raise the possibility of giving the catechist an instituted, stable ministry within the Church.<sup>823</sup>

If the above recommendations and suggestions of the Synod of the bishops are met such as catechists receiving doctrinal, moral and spiritual formation, bishops and priests having their catechists at heart, seeing to it that they are guaranteed suitable living and working conditions so that they carry out their mission properly, then the catechists will be very useful to the Church especially at “this great moment of renewal in proclaiming and transmitting the faith, a decision to that effect would be seen as a very strong support and resource in the new evangelization called for in the Church.”<sup>824</sup> The Church will receive more if they follow this instruction of the Synod.

#### **4.4.3 Parents and Families**

Among the resource persons in the transmission and formation of the Christian faith from the very beginning of human life are parents and families.<sup>825</sup> Parents gave life to their children, therefore on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. During the African Synod, the role of the parents and families was recognized and the Synod launched an explicit appeal for each African Christian family to become:

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<sup>823</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 108

<sup>824</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 108

<sup>825</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no.111

A privileged place for evangelical witness, a true domestic church, a community which believes and evangelizes a community in dialogue with God and generously opens to the service of humanity<sup>826</sup>

The Synod goes to enumerate the importance of parents and families thus:

It is in the heart of the family that parents are by word and example ... the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized* in a privileged way by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life and self-denial and active charity. Thus the home is the first school of Christian life and 'a school for human enrichment.'<sup>827</sup>

From the above, parents need to know that “their participation in the life of the parish - above all in the Sunday Eucharist - their willingness to evangelize and serve others, and their dedication to daily prayer demonstrate the authenticity of their profession of faith.”<sup>828</sup> They must be primarily and principally responsible for their education in faith. The role of parents in education of the faith of their children is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the sacrament of matrimony that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism.<sup>829</sup> In fact, the responses in *Lineamenta* in the transmission of faith devoted a considerably attention to the family because of the Christian message on family and marriage like the dignity and complementary nature of man and woman, created in the image of God (cf. *Gn.* 1:27); openness to life; sharing and communion; dedication to the most vulnerable; and a focus on formation and trust in God as the source of love, the basis

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<sup>826</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.92

<sup>827</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, no.1657

<sup>828</sup> National Directory for Catechesis, p.234

<sup>829</sup> Vatican II Document, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 18 October, 1965, no.3

for family unity, however, we have to acknowledge that in our days, families are being threatened by the hectic pace of life, the uncertainty of work, increasing instability and fatigue in the education of children which is becoming more difficult.<sup>830</sup> It is based on these problems associated with family that the researcher recommends the training of a catechist who should specialize on family affairs to be able to guide and direct the affected families with their children well. It is essential that every parish catechetical program for children take into consideration the role of parents as primary educators of their children and involve parents in the catechetical formation of their children. Parents form foundational values and beliefs from the earliest beginnings of life. They are “the most influential agents of catechesis for their children” and “catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith.”<sup>831</sup> The Christian family, as a "domestic Church" built on the solid cultural pillars and noble values of the African tradition of the family will be a powerful nucleus of Christian witness in a society undergoing rapid and profound changes.

#### **4.4.4 Deacons and many Women**

The roles and importance of deacons and many women were not left out. According to the Synod, “in recent years, due to a declining number of priests and their being forced to minister to more than one Christian community, the practice of delegating to lay people their work of catechizing is becoming increasingly widespread.<sup>832</sup> This work of the deacons and many women are well known in the West where the vocation to the priesthood is sinking down daily. The institution of the married deacons in the Church is an ancient ministry which is already recorded in Acts 6. This ministry is not needed now in Igboland because of the vocation boom but in the future there may be need for it. It is based on this that the African Synod recommended that

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<sup>830</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, nos.110-111

<sup>831</sup> National Directory for Catechesis, p.234

<sup>832</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 108

“where pastoral conditions lend themselves to respect and understanding of this ancient ministry in the Church, Episcopal Conferences and Assemblies are to study the most suitable ways of promoting and encouraging the permanent diaconate as an ordained ministry and also as an instrument of evangelization. Where deacons already exist they should be provided with an integrated and thorough programme of permanent formation.”<sup>833</sup>

#### **4.4.5 Consecrated life**

Members of religious orders and congregations can play a special role because their total gift of self through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience gives dramatic testimony to the values of the kingdom of God.<sup>834</sup> Little wonder the consecrated life as an agent of the transmission of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel especially the mendicant orders and apostolic and secular institutes was recognized during the Synod because of their unquantifiable contribution in transmission of faith. During the time of the Synod, people really praised them and acknowledged their efforts in their continuing prophetic and evangelizing charisms, despite internal difficulties and moments of renewal in their way of life. Though they do not have much contact with people as they live a secluded life, yet people see their existence “as a source of many spiritual blessings in the missionary mandate which the Church is presently called to fulfill. Many local Churches recognize the importance of this prophetic witness to the Gospel as a dynamic source of energy in the life of faith of entire Christian communities and a great number of the baptized.”<sup>835</sup> In fact, many people still put their hope on them as far as the transmission of faith is concerned. This is explicitly in the *Lineamenta* that:

Many responses voiced their hope that the consecrated life will continue to make an essential contribution to the new evangelization, especially in education, healthcare and

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<sup>833</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.96

<sup>834</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.69

<sup>835</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 114

pastoral activity, primarily among the poor and those most in need of spiritual and material assistance.<sup>836</sup>

It is really true that future of the evangelization lies in the hand of the above mentioned people. They are still very active in the areas of education and health care where the young people are being found today. The Synod acknowledged also the invaluable support coming from the contemplative life, especially monasteries as far the new evangelization is concerned. According to the Synod “the contemplative life is the core of the Church's existence which keeps alive the essence of the Gospel, the primacy of the faith and the celebration of the liturgy and gives a meaning to silence and all the other activities undertaken for the glory of God.”<sup>837</sup>

#### 4.4.6 Laity

The nature of fulfilling the mission of the Church, entrusted to her by Christ, requires a collaborative effort of all the baptized who share in the kingly, priestly and prophetic offices of Jesus Christ. It is no longer reserved to clerics and religious with a special missionary vocation, evangelization is now seen as the responsibility of the whole Church. In fact, it “is a communal duty between the lay and minister.”<sup>838</sup> John Paul II succinctly maintains that:

The new evangelization that can make the twenty-first century a springtime of the Gospel is a task for the entire people of God, but will depend in a decisive way on the lay faithful being fully aware of their baptismal vocation and their responsibility for bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to their culture and society.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 114

<sup>837</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 114

<sup>838</sup> Fuchs, Ottmar, *God’s People: Instruments of Healing*, Berlin, Peter Lang Pub, 1993, p.101; cf. also EV no.66

<sup>839</sup> Williams, T.D (ed.), *Springtime of Evangelization: The Complete Texts of the Holy Father’s 1998 Ad Limina Addresses to the Bishops of the United States*, San Francisco: Ignatius, 1999, p.38

From the above, we can affirm that in the new evangelization, however, it is clear that the call is to the entire people of God. When one reads *Redemptoris Missio*, it is striking to see the number of times John Paul II states that missionary evangelization is the responsibility and calling of all Christians.<sup>840</sup> In the Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, John Paul II says, "I spoke explicitly of the Church's permanent mission of bringing the gospel to the multitudes . . . who as yet do not know Christ . . . and of the responsibility of the lay faithful in this regard. The *mission ad gentes* is incumbent upon the entire People of God . . . missionary activity which is carried out in a wide variety of ways, is the task of all the Christian faithful".<sup>841</sup> In fact, John Paul II went on to declare: "I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid this supreme duty; to proclaim Christ to all peoples."<sup>842</sup> Therefore, we are all involved in work of the evangelization. The person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of the truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.<sup>843</sup> Apart from the Bishops, the priests and the religious, the lay faithful in Christ's Church are equally involved in the apostolate and the salvific ministry of the Church.

From the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II emphasized the participation of all Christians, whether clerical or lay, in the prophetic office of Christ. In his apostolic exhortation on the laity in 1988, he strongly accented the duty of the lay Christians to make their daily conduct a shining and convincing testimony to the gospel.<sup>844</sup> It is their special responsibility, he said, to demonstrate how Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response to the problems and

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<sup>840</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, 1,2,3,11,23,27,30,32,37,42, 47,49, 71,72,92

<sup>841</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.7

<sup>842</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.3

<sup>843</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.24

<sup>844</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.34

hopes that life poses to every person and society.<sup>845</sup> In talks to special groups - such as families, women, students, children, the sick and the disabled - John Paul II illustrated how the special gift of each class can contribute to the total effort.

The instruction of Christ “Go and make disciples of all nations” (cf. *Mt.* 28:18-20) is for all Christians. Each has to carry that out according to his/her ability and state in life. Since Christians have different gifts (cf. *Rom.* 12:6) they should collaborate in the work of the Gospel, each according to his opportunity, ability, charism and ministry (cf. *I Cor.* 3: 10). Florence Gillmann succinctly writes

In the post - Easter period of the Early church many members of the Body of Christ functioned as Charismatics, prophets, teachers, exhorters, overseers, benefactors, benefactresses and financial administrators (*Rom.* 12: 4-5). Many of these people were not priests as they had not been ordained by any laying of hands. ... Lois, Eunice, Damaris are immortalized in Luke-Acts on account of their unwavering faith and dedication to seeing Paul’s ministry through. Ladies like Lydia, Chloe and Nympha were notable house - church heads, friends and acquaintances of Paul. Euodia, Syntyche and Prisca collaborated with the Apostles in the evangelization of their communities. Phoebe worked as a deacon while Junia assisted him as an apostle. A host of other women represented by Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, the Son of Simon of Cyrene, now Libya in Africa were notable workers in the Lord.<sup>846</sup>

The principal duty of both men and women is to bear witness to Christ, and this they are obliged to do by their life and their words, in the family, in the social group, and in the sphere of their profession. In them must be seen the new man who has been created according to God in justice and holiness of truth (cf. *Eph.* 4:24.<sup>847</sup> As members of the living Christ, incorporated into him and made like him by baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful have an obligation to

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<sup>845</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.34

<sup>846</sup> Ukachukwu, C.M, *The Laity: An Oft-Neglected Body of Human Resource in the Church*, in: Obinwa, I.M.C, *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd, 2006, p.116

<sup>847</sup> Vat. II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 21

collaborate in the expansion and spread of his Body, so that they might bring it to fullness as soon as possible (cf. *Eph.* 4 : 13). All the children of the Church should have a lively consciousness of their own responsibility for the world, they should foster within themselves a truly Catholic spirit; they should spend themselves in in the work of the Gospel. However, let everyone be aware that the primary and most important contribution he can make to the spread of the faith is to lead a profound and Christian life.<sup>848</sup> Nevertheless, the laity are to be helped to become increasingly aware of their role in the Church, thereby fulfilling their particular mission as baptized and confirmed persons. Lay people are to be trained for their mission through suitable centres and schools of biblical and pastoral formation. Similarly, Christians who occupy positions of responsibility are to be carefully prepared for political, economic and social tasks by means of a solid formation in the Church's social doctrine, so that in their places of work they will be faithful witnesses to the Gospel,<sup>849</sup> knowing fully well that “faith is strengthened when it is given to others.”<sup>850</sup>

#### 4.4.7 Groups and Movements

The Church in the last decade witness the flowering of groups and movements, oftentimes in an spontaneous, spirit-filled manner, dedicated primarily to proclaiming the Gospel. These groups and movements live their Christian life without fear or sense of shame. In fact, they live an exemplary life in the community where they live. They always render an account for their faith. The Synod commenting on characteristics of these groups and movements said:

These characteristics are related to the calibre of the so-called "new evangelizers", namely: the ability to live out and give reasons for their choice of life and the values they espouse; a desire to profess their faith in a public manner, without fear or false modesty; actively seeking moments of lived communion through prayer and fraternal sharing; an

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<sup>848</sup> Vat. II, *Ad Gentes*, no. 36

<sup>849</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.90

<sup>850</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.2

instinctive preference for the poor and the downtrodden; and a zeal in the work of forming succeeding generations.<sup>851</sup>

In these Groups and Movements, the lay faithful truly find a privileged opportunity to be the “leaven in the dough” (*Mt.* 13:33), especially in the areas concerned with the administration of temporal goods according to God’s plan and the struggle for the promotion of human dignity, justice and peace.<sup>852</sup> In actual fact, their works like the Catholic Action, which have arisen in the course of the history of Christianity, clearly show the radical nature of the Gospel animating these types of experiences and their prophetic vocation to proclaim the Gospel. The admirable and joyous character of their life inspires vocations, a gift to the Church.<sup>853</sup>

Jesus entrusts this work to human beings: to the apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent and principal agent for the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world;<sup>854</sup> therefore, in the final analysis it is not we ourselves who evangelize, rather the principal agent of evangelization, according to Paul VI, is the Holy Spirit, the divine witness par excellence. “It is not by chance,” he wrote, “that the great inauguration of evangelization took place on the morning of Pentecost, under the inspiration of the Spirit.”<sup>855</sup> John Paul II in agreement to this statement said that “Missionary dynamism is not born of the will of those who decide to become propagators of the faith. It is born of the Spirit, who moves the Church to expand, as it progresses in faith through God’s love.”<sup>856</sup> Little wonder the action of the Holy Spirit is preeminent in the

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<sup>851</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 114

<sup>852</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 101

<sup>853</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 117

<sup>854</sup> John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, Vatican City, May 18, 1986, no. 42

<sup>855</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75

<sup>856</sup> John Paul II, To Italian Bishops on Liturgical Course, February 12, 1988

*missio ad gentes*, as can clearly be seen in the early Church: in the conversion of Cornelius (cf. *Acts* 10), in the decisions made about emerging problems (cf. *Acts* 15) and in the choice of regions and peoples to be evangelized (cf. *Acts* 1 6:6ff). In fact, it is the Holy Spirit that imparts the wisdom to seek out new and effective methods, the discretion to speak the appropriate words and the courage to bear witness with power.

#### 4.5 Means of the New evangelization

We have talked about the meaning, the content and the agents of the New Evangelization. There is need to study the means of evangelization as exposed by the document.

##### 4.5.1 Witness of an authentically Christian life

The world is desperately in need of witnesses today. While there are so many people who wordly profess Christ, there is dearth of witnesses. This means that the word has either not penetrated the heart or have not effected the desired change. A total change of heart and mind is the first requirement of New Evangelization. It is a call to Personal Encounter and intimate Communion with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image which is made alive in us by grace and by the power of the Spirit. In order to pass on the Gospel to others it must have first permeated one's lives. This on-going growth of character transformation is both vertical and horizontal: i.e. leading to a deeper relationship with both God and neighbor (cf. *Rom.* 8.3-13.) And to achieve this, there is need for constant spiritual exercises, daily study and reflection on the Scriptures, fervent prayers and frequent reception of the Sacraments especially of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

Actually the call to evangelize is not a new call, even though John Paul II coined the term "new evangelization." What he said is that it must be new in method, new in expression and new in zeal. He reiterated this call in 1991 in these words: "The new evangelization needs new witnesses ... people who have experienced an area of change in their lives because of their contact with Jesus Christ, and who are capable of passing on that experience to others."<sup>857</sup> Actually, the "signs

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<sup>857</sup> John Paul II, Valladolid - Valencia, Spain, September 23, 1991

of the times" should find us vigilant. Either tacitly or aloud - but always forcefully - we are being asked: Do you really believe what you are proclaiming? Do you live what you believe? Do you really preach what you live?"<sup>858</sup> The witness of life without any doubt has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching today. Only a sound and robust faith, witnessed in a poignant manner in the lives of the martyrs; can give impetus to many short - term or long - range pastoral projects, breathe new life into existing structures and spur a pastoral creativity to meet the needs of people today and the expectations of present - day society. St. Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word (*1 Pt.3:1*). It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus - the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.<sup>859</sup> It is here that the laity has a major role to play be it in our families, offices, market places, schools, industries, groups like football clubs, age groups, etc. The ways we discharge our duty in different places of our duty speak louder than the bible. Some people may not read any other bible except the life of the Christians who work in the same offices, market places or companies with them. Vatican II teaching on the role of the laity expressed it thus:

Their apostolate is exercised...when they endeavour to have the Gospel Spirit permeate and improve the temporal order, going about it in a way that bears clear witness to Christ and helps forward the salvation of men. The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, laymen are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigour of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world.<sup>860</sup>

Christ really made it clear when He says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... Let your light so shine before men, that they see your good works and give

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<sup>858</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.76

<sup>859</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.41

<sup>860</sup> Flannery, A.P, *Documents of Vatican II*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978, p.768

glory to your Father who is in heaven (*Mt. 5:14*).” Also Paul VI would say we therefore address our exhortation to our brethren in the Episcopate ..., the priests and deacons..., the religious..., the laity: Christian families, youth, adults, all those who exercise a trade or profession, leaders, without forgetting the poor ....We say to all of them: our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life....The world calls for and expects from us simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man. It risks being vain and sterile<sup>861</sup> In fact, God’s call to us today remains the same: to proclaim Jesus Christ in word and deed! This is a call to renew our baptismal commitment where we pledge to live for God and to be his light in the world. We feel a particular urgency to live this call today in the midst of a disintegrating society marked by such manifestations of darkness as alienation, loneliness, and despair. Only the light of Christ can overcome this darkness, only his love can bring life out of death.

#### **4.5.2 Preaching**

Preaching which is the verbal proclamation of the Gospel message is indeed always indispensable in the life of every Christian and remains the second dynamics of New Evangelization. When one encounters Jesus in that intimate Personal relationship, there arises an urge to tell others about Christ (*Phil 3:8-10; 1Peter 3:15-16*). One’s personal testimony helps for a better understanding of the Gospel message which stimulates faith on the part of the listener. This we can do in many ways such as priests preaching homily, trained evangelizers participating in an organized door-to-door campaign, through radio and television etc. However, among all these means, the preaching of the clergy takes precedence especially during the Eucharistic sacrifice.

##### **4.5.2.1 During the Eucharistic Sacrifice**

Preaching inserted in a unique way into the Eucharistic celebration, from which it receives special force and vigour to the extent that it expresses the profound faith of the sacred minister

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<sup>861</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.76

and is impregnated with love, certainly has a particular role in evangelization. Paul VI expressed this thus:

The faithful assembled as a Paschal Church, celebrating the feast of the Lord present in their midst, expect much from this preaching, and will greatly benefit from it provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardor coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity.<sup>862</sup>

The homily because of its significant role in evangelization must not be neglected in the celebration of all the sacraments, at paraliturgies, and in assemblies of the faithful. It will always be a privileged occasion for communicating the Word of the Lord. According to Paul VI many parochial or other communities live and are held together especially by the Sunday homily when it possesses the qualities mentioned above.

#### **4.5.2.2 Catechetical Instruction**

This is a means of the evangelization which because of its role and importance especially today that faith is exposed to secularism, even to militant atheism must not be neglected. Evangelization according to John Paul II also involves catechetical instruction, moral doctrine and the social teaching of the Church. Those who are incorporated into Christ are incorporated into His Body. They are joined to God through the sacraments and the Church community.<sup>863</sup> Little wonder the role of evangelization is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments as true sacraments of faith- and not to receive them passively or reluctantly. Paul VI expressing the role or importance of catechetical teaching writes:

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<sup>862</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.43

<sup>863</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.51

The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth ... The effort for evangelization will profit greatly- at the level of catechetical instruction given at church, in the schools, where this is possible, and in every case in Christian homes - if those giving catechetical instruction have suitable texts, updated with wisdom and competence, under the authority of the bishops. The methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned, they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life.<sup>864</sup>

For the realization of the above, Paul VI is of the view that “It is necessary above all to prepare good instructors - parochial catechists, teachers, parents - who are desirous of perfecting themselves in this superior art, which is indispensable and requires religious instruction. Such preparation is all the more necessary for those who devote themselves to the ministry of the Word. Being animated by the conviction, ceaselessly deepened, of the greatness and riches of the Word of God, those who have the mission of transmitting it must give the maximum attention to the dignity, precision and adaptation of their language.<sup>865</sup> The art of speaking plays today a very significant role. Therefore, the bishops should make adequate for formation of all the ministers of the Word. This serious preparation will increase in them the indispensable assurance and also the enthusiasm to proclaim today Jesus Christ.

#### **4.5.3 Recognizing and Relying on the Power of the Holy Spirit**

It will really be an utopic idea to think of the realization of the new evangelization or transmission of faith without the action of the Holy Spirit. Evangelization will never and can never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit. Without him, evangelizing mission cannot even begin since the proclamation of the Gospel bears fruit only in communion with the Holy Spirit and in union with the Father and the Son. In actual fact, “the power of the Holy Spirit guides the Church into all truth (*Jn. 16:13*), enabling her to go into the world in order to bear

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<sup>864</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.44

<sup>865</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 44 & 73

witness to Christ with confident resolve.”<sup>866</sup> Jesus made it clear to his disciples the spiritual source of the missionary work saying:

You shall be my witnesses. This is why I will send you what my Father promised. Remain in the city until you are invested with power from above (*Lk.24:48-49*). They would become credible and effective agents of mission only after the united action of the Trinity would have been made manifested by the direct action of the Holy Spirit in them. The Holy Spirit is to teach and enlighten the human agent of mission. From now on the helper the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of all that I have to you (*Jn.14:26*).<sup>867</sup>

Without the enabling action of the Holy Spirit, our services to the Lord are always limited by our human potential; good works performed out of human capabilities and human leading will always achieve merely human results.<sup>868</sup> It is always said and truthfully so that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: it is He who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood.<sup>869</sup> Paul VI made a passionate plea to human agents of mission for openness to the Holy Spirit. He urged them “to pray without ceasing to the Holy Spirit with faith and fervor and to let themselves prudently be guided by him as the decisive inspirer of their plans, their initiatives and their evangelizing activity.”<sup>870</sup> The human agents of mission really need to be led by the power of the Holy Spirit. For “it is not enough for us to have our ears tickled, our minds instructed and illumined, our hearts challenged. God is looking for men and women who are committed to be evangelists in the power of the Spirit, who will pursue training if necessary, who

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<sup>866</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.57

<sup>867</sup> *The Church in Nigeria - Family of God on Mission*, Enugu: CIDJAP Printing Press, 2004, p.55

<sup>868</sup> Gbuji, A.O, *Daily Meditation- Seasons & Feasts*, Bandra: St. Paul’s Publication, 2008, P.224

<sup>869</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.75

<sup>870</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.75

will seek to feed others the same Good News that brings them life.”<sup>871</sup> As human agents of mission, our primary responsibilities are to be rooted in our relationship with God, to be formed in our faith, to accept the empowerment of the Holy Spirit already given to us and to trust in God. For no matter how well trained we are in theology and evangelization, we must always remember that only the Holy Spirit can convert others to Christ. The achievements in the Church of Igbo Land, thanks to the Catholic Charismatic renewal and other societies of the Holy Spirit bear eloquent testimony to the impact of the Holy Spirit in the work of evangelization. Finally, the obvious importance of the content of evangelization must not overshadow the importance of the ways and means.

#### **4.6 Sectors of the New Evangelization**

As the world keeps evolving, new phases keep emerging. The demands of the new evangelization also compel the church to decipher different sectors affected by the new trend in time, so as to find the adequate ways of selling the gospel to them. On this, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria has this to say:

The church must evolve strategies of proclamation of the Good News to these people more vigorously than in times past. She cannot contend herself with simply waiting until people come to her seeking to be admitted into the fold. She must go after them, and seek to bring them to be active members of the one Family of God. She should employ all the available media of communication in doing so, reaching out to people using the print and electronic media, as well as using methods of rallies and revivals.<sup>872</sup>

The document of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization discussed these sectors. These sectors include cultures, society, economics, civic life and religion.<sup>873</sup>

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<sup>871</sup> Martin R & Williamson P, (eds.), *John Paul II and the New Evangelization*, pg.48

<sup>872</sup> The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission, A Pastoral Exhortation of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) To the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful on the First National Pastoral Congress, no. 95.

<sup>873</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 51

#### 4.6.1 Cultural sector

The cultural sector is clearly seen to have undergone great changes. The cultural milieu is so affected that one cannot pretend not to notice the inadequacy of using the former methodology of evangelization. The greatest element identifiable in the culture of today is secularization with its attendant difficulties in the practice of religion. Although secularization is most prevalent in the Western world, the great influence in other parts of the world is very clear. Igboland is not an exception to this sweeping changes. In fact, some have even lost God in their heart such that religion no longer makes meaning to them. Among other things, the document notices:

Secularization is wrongly perceived in our culture today as a sign of liberation and the capability of envisaging life in this world, and human life in general, without any reference to the transcendent. In recent years, secularization has not assumed the form of publically or directly speaking out against God, religion and Christianity, despite the fact that, in some instances, it can oftentimes have an anti-Christian, anti-religious and anti-clerical tone, even in these times. Many responses indicate that the rather subdued tone in secularization has allowed this cultural form to invade people's daily lives to the point that some have developed a mentality in which God is effectively absent, in whole or in part, and his very existence dependent on human consciousness.<sup>874</sup>

As such, the methodology of preaching the Christian faith to someone who already have the sense of the transcendent cannot be the same with another who has lost the sense of Him. Apart from the disadvantages which are not far to see, there are also some advantages of secularization. The document observes:

The *saeculum* is where believers and non-believers interact and share in a common humanity. This human element is the natural point for faith to enter and, consequently, can become the privileged place for evangelization. In the fully human nature of Jesus of Nazareth dwells the fullness of the deity (cf. *Col 2:9*).

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<sup>874</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no. 52

Purifying the human through the human nature of Jesus of Nazareth, Christians can create an encounter with people who exhibit a secularized mentality but continue to question what is really and truly human.<sup>875</sup>

The implication of secularization is that the gospel message is to be transmitted in a cultural milieu different from before, with some advantages against many disadvantages. Suffice it to cite one of the many instances in the Bible. After preaching in a number of places, St. Paul arrived in Athens, where he went to the Areopagus and proclaimed the Gospel in language appropriate to and understandable in those surroundings (cf. *Acts* 17:22-31). At that time the Areopagus represented the cultural center of the learned people of Athens, and today it can be taken as a symbol of the new sectors in which the Gospel must be proclaimed.<sup>876</sup>

#### **4.6.2 Social Sector**

Under the social sector, the phenomenon of rural – urban migration is very evident. This *inter alia* causes cultural erosion as one is no longer at a vantage point to practice one's culture in which is contained traditional morality. This is a challenge to the church as the city is a mixture of the good, the bad and the ugly. Closely linked to the theme of migration is globalization. Igbo land is not immune from these factors and therefore, evangelization in Igboland should take note of it.

#### **4.6.3 Economy**

One of the noticeable changes of the present age is the further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. While the rich gets richer, the poor sinks further poorer. This create an economic crisis, in which everything is understood from the perspective of economic importance. The church is called upon to live exemplary life and create more awareness. This is especially important in Igbo land where the worth of a person is gradually being understood from the perspective of his economic power.

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<sup>875</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no.54

<sup>876</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.37

#### 4.6.4 The Civic life

This sector has witnessed momentuous changes since the time of Vatican II. The freedom of religion and the other social reforms has engendered an atmosphere that were hitherto unknown. Accordingly, in the document we read:

Many responses have highlighted a variety of urgent situations in this sector, namely, a commitment to peace; the development and liberation of peoples; better international regulation and interaction of national governments; the search for possible areas of listening, coexistence, dialogue and collaboration between different cultures and religions; the defence of human rights and peoples, especially minorities; the promotion of the most vulnerable; and the integrity of creation and a commitment to the future of our planet.<sup>877</sup>

In addition to these four sectors discussed, mention must also be made of the sector of the means of social communication, which while today providing great possibilities for the church, also represents one of her greatest challenges. Then, we also mention the changes achieved thanks to scientific and technological research. These sectors must be borne in mind for effective training of the agents of the catechetical apostolate in our time.

#### 4.7 Mission “ad Gentes”: Pastoral care and New Evangelization

The term “ad Gentes” means “to the people.” It is used here as referring to the mission to make known to those peoples who do not know Christ, “the mystery hidden for ages in God” (*Eph.* 3:9). This is to say, evangelization toward those who have not heard the gospel. Every believer is called to assist in the mission of conversion. The new evangelization obliges all who benefits from the riches of the faith to contribute according to varied capacity in the evangelization of those in need. For “He (God) gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor” (*Ecclesiasticus* 17:12); and the strictness of this command varies in proportion to the seriousness of the neighbor's need. Now what class of men is more in need of fraternal help than unbelievers, who live in ignorance of God, and consequently, bound by the chains of their blind and violent desires, are enslaved in the most hideous of all the forms of slavery, the service of Satan? Anyone

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<sup>877</sup>The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, no.57

then who contributes whatever services he can to the work of bringing the light of faith to them - and helping the work of the missions is the best means - would accomplish two purposes at the same time. He would be fulfilling his obligation in this important matter, and he would also be thanking God in a particularly appropriate way for the faith that has been given to him.<sup>878</sup>

The gospels bear great testimony to the universality of the mandate of evangelization. Jesus' last words in St. Mark's Gospel confer on the evangelization which the Lord entrusts to His apostles a limitless universality: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation." The Twelve and the first generation of Christians understood well the lesson of this text and other similar ones; they made them into a program of action. Even persecution, by scattering the apostles, helped to spread the Word and to establish the Church in ever more distant regions. The admission of Paul to the rank of the apostles and his charisma as the preacher to the pagans (the non-Jews) of Jesus's coming underlined this universality still more.<sup>879</sup>

In calling upon all the faithful to proclaim God's word, the Synod Fathers restated the need in our day too for a decisive commitment to the *missio ad gentes*. In no way can the Church restrict her pastoral work to the "ordinary maintenance" of those who already know the Gospel of Christ. Missionary outreach is a clear sign of the maturity of an ecclesial community. The Fathers also insisted that the word of God is the saving truth which men and women in every age need to hear. For this reason, it must be explicitly proclaimed. The Church must go out to meet each person in the strength of the Spirit (cf. *1 Cor* 2:5) and continue her prophetic defence of people's right and freedom to hear the word of God, while constantly seeking out the most effective ways of proclaiming that word, even at the risk of persecution.<sup>880</sup> The Church feels duty-bound to proclaim to every man and woman the word that saves (cf. *Rom* 1:14).<sup>881</sup>

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<sup>878</sup>Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, Vatican City, November 28, 1959, no.31

<sup>879</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nutiandi*, 49,50.

<sup>880</sup> *Propositio* 49

<sup>881</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Vatican City, 2010, no.95

The situation is not different in Igboland. Though there is noticeably greater percentage of Christians, one still wonders whether all those who go by the name Christian, are really Christian in mentality and in practice of life. Accordingly, the task of bringing the Good News to those who are yet to accept it in Igboland as well as in Nigeria is enormous. After one and a half centuries of proclamation of the Good News in our land, there are still millions of people who have either not heard it or are yet to be convinced by it and won over to Christ; they are yet to become disciples of him who desires to be the friend of all peoples in every nation.<sup>882</sup>

The more worrisome reality is that some of the shepherds themselves are mere nominal shepherds. Some have money as their sole teleology, while others have fame and many more are confused about what they really want. The Synod has rightly observed that “there are some shepherds, as you know, Venerable Brethren, who strive to lead away the sheep from this one fold and haven of salvation; you likewise know that this danger is daily growing greater. When We consider before God the immense number of men without the truth of the Gospel, and duly reckon the grave danger that faces many from the prevalence of atheistic materialism or from a certain so-called Christian creed which is infected by the tenets and errors of communism, We feel the deepest concern and solicitude that nothing be left undone to promote the work of the apostolate throughout the world. We make our own the exhortation of the Prophet saying: "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet."(Is. 58:1)<sup>883</sup>

The mission of the proclamation of the gospel has always been the goal of Christianity for the time of her founder, Christ. The followers of Christ took up this task with renewed vigour from the morning of Pentecost. The whole of the New Testament, and in a special way the Acts of the Apostles, bears witness to a privileged and in a sense exemplary moment of this missionary effort which will subsequently leave its mark on the whole history of the Church.

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<sup>882</sup> The Church in Nigeria Family of God on Mission, Enugu: CIDJAP Printing Press, 2004, nos.91

<sup>883</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nutiandi*, nos.51-53.

She carries out this first proclamation of Jesus Christ by a complex and diversified activity which is sometimes termed "pre-evangelization" but which is already evangelization in a true sense, although at its initial and still incomplete stage. An almost indefinite range of means can be used for this purpose: explicit preaching, of course, but also art, the scientific approach, philosophical research and legitimate recourse to the sentiments of the human heart.

This first proclamation is addressed especially to those who have never heard the Good News of Jesus, or to children. But, as a result of the frequent situations of dechristianization in our day, it also proves equally necessary for innumerable people who have been baptized but who live quite outside Christian life, for simple people who have a certain faith but an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith, for intellectuals who feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children, and for many others.

This first proclamation is also addressed to the immense sections of mankind who practice non-Christian religions. The Church respects and esteems these non-Christian religions because they are the living expression of the soul of vast groups of people. They carry within them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God, a quest which is incomplete but often made with great sincerity and righteousness of heart. They possess an impressive patrimony of deeply religious texts. They have taught generations of people how to pray. They are all impregnated with innumerable "seeds of the Word" and can constitute a true "preparation for the Gospel," to quote a felicitous term used by the Second Vatican Council and borrowed from Eusebius of Caesarea. Such a situation certainly raises complex and delicate questions that must be studied in the light of Christian Tradition and the Church's magisterium, in order to offer to the missionaries of today and of tomorrow new horizons in their contacts with non-Christian religions. We wish to point out, above all today, that neither respect and esteem for these religions nor the complexity of the questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary the Church holds that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ.<sup>884</sup>

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<sup>884</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos.51-53

In the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud*<sup>885</sup> of Our Predecessor of immortal memory, Benedict XV, given in the year 1919, and in the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Ecclesiae*,<sup>886</sup> of Our immediate Predecessor of happy memory, Pius XI, it was laid down that the missions would have as the final goal of their activities the establishment of the Church in new territories. And We Ourselves when, as We have said, received in audience the directors of mission activities in 1944, made the following statement: "The magnanimous and noble purpose which missionaries have is the propagation of the faith in new lands in such a way that the Church may ever become more firmly established in them and as soon as possible reach such a stage of development that it can continue to exist and flourish without the aid of missionary organizations. These missionary organizations do not serve their own ends, but it is their task to use every endeavor to realize the lofty purpose we have already mentioned. When that has been attained, then let them be happy to turn to other fields."<sup>887</sup> "Wherefore let the missionary take up no permanent abode in those places where the work of the apostolate has reached full development, since it is up to him to evangelize and sanctify the whole world. The missionary's appointed task is to promote ever more rapidly in district after district till the last man in the most remote corner of the earth has been reached, the Kingdom of the Divine Redeemer Who rose triumphant from the dead and to Whom is given all power in heaven and on earth."<sup>888</sup> (*Mt. 28, 18*)<sup>888</sup>

While pointing out and experiencing the present urgency for a re-evangelization, the Church cannot withdraw from *her ongoing mission of bringing the gospel to the multitudes* -the millions and millions of men and women-*who as yet do not know Christ the Redeemer of humanity*. In a specific way this is the missionary work that Jesus entrusted and again entrusts each day to his Church.

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<sup>885</sup> A.A.S., 1919, p. 440 sq

<sup>886</sup> A.A.S., 1926, p. 65 sq

<sup>887</sup> A.A.S., 1944, p. 210.

<sup>888</sup> A.A.S., 1944, p. 208.

The activity of the lay faithful, who are always present in these surroundings, is revealed in these days as increasingly necessary and valuable. As it stands, the command of the Lord "Go into the whole world" is continuing to find a generous response from laypersons who are ready to leave familiar surroundings, their work, their region or country, at least for a determined time, to go into mission territory. Even Christian married couples, in imitation of Aquila and Priscilla (cf. *Acts* 18; *Rom* 16:3 ff), are offering a comforting testimony of impassioned love for Christ and the Church through their valuable presence in mission lands. A true missionary presence is exercised even by those who for various reasons live in countries or surroundings where the Church is not yet established and bear witness to the faith.<sup>889</sup>

The Apostle of the Gentiles tells us that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (*1 Tim* 2:4-6). Since God, in fact, calls all people to one and the same divine destiny, "we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to everyone the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery. God's redeeming love embraces the whole of humanity, every race, tribe and nation."<sup>890</sup>

The specific purpose of the missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church.<sup>891</sup> The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the second millennium after Christ's coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service. It is the Spirit who impels us to proclaim the great works of God: "For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor* 9: 16)<sup>892</sup>

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<sup>889</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.35

<sup>890</sup> Vatican II Document, *Gaudium et Spes*, no.22, cf. also CCC,no.1260

<sup>891</sup> Vatican II, Decree, *Ad Gentes*, no. 6

<sup>892</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 1

As population increases, the number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase. Indeed, since the end of the Council it has almost doubled. When we consider this immense portion of humanity which is loved by the Father and for whom he sent his Son, the urgency of the Church's mission is obvious.<sup>893</sup>

#### **4.8 Mission of Re-evangelization**

The mission of re-evangelization concerns countries with an age-old Christian tradition which have been evangelized within the last few centuries but the coalescing of social and cultural factors - conventionally designated by the term "globalization" - has initiated a weakening of faith in their Christian communities, a diminished regard for the authority of the magisterium, an individualistic approach to belonging to the Church, a decline in religious practice and a disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations.<sup>894</sup> Today we notice the ever - growing existence of religious indifference and atheism in its more varied forms, particularly in its perhaps most widespread form of secularism, not simply as regards the individual, but in some ways, as regards whole communities, as the Council has already indicated: "Growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice."<sup>895</sup> Accordingly, in such instances, there is the need to repeat the planting of the gospel, just as farmers replant seeds.

#### **4.9 Interreligious dialogue**

The Church considers an essential part of the proclamation of the word to consist in encounter, dialogue and cooperation with all people of good will, particularly with the followers of the different religious traditions of humanity. This is to take place without forms of syncretism and relativism, but along the lines indicated by the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra*

<sup>893</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 3

<sup>894</sup> Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly - The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, nos. 47-48

<sup>895</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Gaudium et Spes*, no.7

*Aetate* and subsequently developed by the magisterium of the Popes.<sup>896</sup> Nowadays the quickened pace of globalization makes it possible for people of different cultures and religions to be in closer contact. This represents a providential opportunity for demonstrating how authentic religiosity can foster relationships of universal fraternity. Today, in our frequently secularized societies, it is very important that the religions be capable of fostering a mentality that sees Almighty God as the foundation of all good, the inexhaustible source of the moral life, and the bulwark of a profound sense of universal brotherhood.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, for example, one finds a moving witness to God's love for all peoples: in the covenant with Noah he joins them in one great embrace symbolized by the "bow in the clouds" (*Gen* 9:13,14,16) and, according to the words of the prophets, he desires to gather them into a single universal family (cf. *Is* 2:2ff; 42:6; 66:18-21; *Jer* 4:2; *Ps* 47). Evidence of a close connection between a relationship with God and the ethics of love for everyone is found in many great religious traditions.

#### **4.9.1 Dialogue between Christians and Muslims**

The Muslim religion has closeness to Christianity in terms of origin. Accordingly, among the various religions the Church also looks with respect to Muslims, who adore the one God.<sup>897</sup> They look to Abraham and worship God above all through prayer, almsgiving and fasting. We acknowledge that the Islamic tradition includes countless biblical figures, symbols and themes. Pope Benedict XVI said: "taking up the efforts begun by the Venerable John Paul II, I express my hope that the trust-filled relationships established between Christians and Muslims over the

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<sup>896</sup> Among numerous interventions of various genres, see: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986): AAS 78 (1986), 809-900; Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990): AAS 83 (1991), 249-340; Addresses and Homilies in Assisi for the 27 October 1986 Day of Prayer for Peace: *Insegnamenti* IX, 2 (1986), 1249-1273; Day of Prayer for World Peace (24 January 2002): *Insegnamenti* XXV, 1 (2002), 97-108; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and of the Church (6 August 2000): AAS 92 (2000), 742-765.

<sup>897</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 3.

years will continue to develop in a spirit of sincere and respectful dialogue.”<sup>898</sup> In this dialogue the Synod asked for a deeper reflection on respect for life as a fundamental value, the inalienable rights of men and women, and their equal dignity. Taking into account the important distinction to be made between the socio-political order and the religious order, the various religions must make their specific contribution to the common good. The Synod asked Conferences of Bishops, wherever it is appropriate and helpful, to encourage meetings aimed at helping Christians and Muslims to come to better knowledge of one another, in order to promote the values which society needs for a peaceful and positive coexistence.<sup>899</sup>

#### **4.9.2 Dialogue with other religions**

Pope Benedict XVI voiced the Church’s respect for the ancient religions and spiritual traditions of the various continents. These contain values which can greatly advance understanding between individuals and peoples.<sup>900</sup> Frequently we note a consonance with values expressed also in their religious books, such as, in Buddhism, respect for life, contemplation, silence, simplicity; in Hinduism, the sense of the sacred, sacrifice and fasting; and again, in Confucianism, family and social values. We are also gratified to find in other religious experiences a genuine concern for the transcendence of God, acknowledged as Creator, as well as respect for life, marriage and the family, and a strong sense of solidarity.

#### **4.9.3 Dialogue and religious freedom**

All the same, dialogue would not prove fruitful unless it included authentic respect for each person and the ability of all freely to practise their religion. Hence the Synod, while encouraging cooperation between the followers of the different religions, also pointed out “the need for the freedom to profess one’s religion, privately and publicly, and freedom of conscience to be effectively guaranteed to all believers”<sup>901</sup> indeed, “respect and dialogue require reciprocity in all

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<sup>898</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to Ambassadors of Predominantly Muslim Countries Accredited to the Holy See* (25 September 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 704-706.

<sup>899</sup> *Propositio* 53

<sup>900</sup> Cf. *Propositio* 50.

<sup>901</sup> *Propositio* 50

spheres, especially in that which concerns basic freedoms, more particularly religious freedom. Such respect and dialogue foster peace and understanding between peoples.”<sup>902</sup>

Islam is currently expanding rapidly, particularly due to migratory movements from countries with rapid demographic growth. Countries with a Christian tradition, where, except in Africa, population growth is slower or even negative, often see the increased presence of Muslims as a social, cultural or even religious challenge. Muslim immigrants themselves, at least in some countries, encounter major difficulties as regards social and cultural integration. Furthermore, the alienation of a traditional community often leads - in Islam as in the other religions - to the loss of certain religious practices and to a cultural identity crisis. True collaboration with Muslims on the level of culture in real reciprocity may foster fruitful relationships in Islamic countries and with Muslim communities established in traditionally Christian countries. Such collaboration does not dispense Christians from bearing witness to their christological and trinitarian faith in relation to other expressions of monotheism.<sup>903</sup>

The Synod Fathers have mentioned that the lay faithful can favour the relations which ought to be established with followers of *various religions* through their example in the situations in which they live and in their activities: "Throughout the world today the Church lives among people of various religions... All the Faithful, especially the lay faithful who live among the people of other religions, whether living in their native region or in lands as migrants, ought to be for all a sign of the Lord and his Church, in a way adapted to the actual living situation of each place. Dialogue among religions has a preeminent part, for it leads to love and mutual respect, and takes away, or at least diminishes, prejudices among the followers of various religions and promotes unity and friendship among peoples."<sup>904</sup>

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<sup>902</sup> John Paul II, Address at the Meeting with Young Muslims in Casablanca, Morocco, 19 August 1985, 5: AAS 78 (1986), 99.

<sup>903</sup> Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, no.22

<sup>904</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.35

#### 4.9.4 Relationship with traditions and cultures

There are still many people who have neither heard nor received the gospel message or may have heard it but are still contemplating on whether to accept it or not. This is always seen when there is any traditional cultural celebration in Igboland that has nothing to do with Christianity like Omaba and Odo<sup>905</sup> festival etc. Omaba and Odo are also symbols of unrestrained periods of enjoyment in terms of consumption and competitive show of opulence and virility among the umuokorobia (the youth).<sup>906</sup> Many people come home from near and far for such celebrations. But when there is Christian celebration, such people will turn down any invitation coming from the church. Therefore the talk of bringing the Good News to those who are yet to accept it in Nigeria remains enormous. It is incredibly true that two thousand years after the coming of Christ, and one and half century of preaching the gospel in Nigeria, that there are still millions of people who have either not heard it or are yet to be convinced by it and won over by Christ; they are yet to become disciples of him who desires to be friend of all peoples in every nation. Paul VI describing this group said

Thus we have atheists and unbelievers and ... (these) groups put up a considerable resistance to evangelization. The resistance ... of a certain refusal and an inability to grasp the new order of things, the new meaning of the world, of life and of history; such is not possible if one does not start from a divine absolute. Atheistic secularism and the absence of religious practice are found among adults and among the young, among the leaders of society and among the ordinary people, at all levels of education, and in both the old Churches and the young ones. The Church's evangelizing action cannot ignore (them)..., nor must it come to a standstill when faced with them; it must constantly seek the proper

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<sup>905</sup> Omaba and odo in Lejja and other parts of Nsukka can, in terms of expenditure, symbolize the European summer period when the whites generally spend lavishly on travels and enjoyments under a limited period of sunshine. They retreat back to offices and farms to work hard under the almost unbearable cold winter season to earn for the next summer season.cf. Dine G.G.U, *Traditional Leadership as Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation*, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig.Ltd, 2007,p.198

<sup>906</sup> Dine G.G.U, *Traditional Leadership as Sample of African Democracy among the Igbo of Nigeria: A Christian Evaluation*, p.198

means and language for presenting, or representing, to them God's revelation and faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>907</sup>

The Church certainly respects and esteems the non-Christian religions professed by very many Africans, for these religions are the living expressions of the soul of vast groups of people. However, “neither respect and esteem for these religions, nor the complexity of the questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary the Church holds that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ (cf. Eph.3:8) - riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth.”<sup>908</sup>

The mystery of the incarnation tells us that while God always communicates in a concrete history, taking up the cultural codes embedded therein, the same word can and must also be passed on in different cultures, transforming them from within through what Pope Paul VI called the evangelization of cultures.<sup>909</sup> The word of God, like the Christian faith itself, has a profoundly intercultural character; it is capable of encountering different cultures and in turn enabling them to encounter one another.

Many meetings with Bishops and men and women from various cultural backgrounds - science, technology, education, art - have revealed what is at stake in such a pastoral approach, as well as its presuppositions and demands, the obstacles involved and where it can look for support. This field of apostolic work is so enormous, in this immense Areopagus the cultural areas are so complex, that it is evidently necessary for all levels to work together, parishes with the Bishops'

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<sup>907</sup>Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.56

<sup>908</sup>John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.47

<sup>909</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007), 78: AAS 99 (2007), 165

Conference, regions with continents.<sup>910</sup> The Pontifical Council for Culture, in line with its mission, is committed to facilitating co-operation and to promoting exchanges, especially between the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, Bishops' Conferences, and international Catholic organizations universities, historical, philosophical, theological, scientific, artistic and intellectual organizations, as it does with the Pontifical Academies and Catholic cultural centres.<sup>911</sup>

Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you (*Mt* 28:19f.). The pastoral approach to culture follows the way the Lord indicated. Closely linked to the Christian witness of individuals and communities, it is part of the mission to proclaim the Gospel to all men and women of all times. It is an excellent way of inculturating faith and evangelizing cultures. The need for such involvement has marked the Church's pilgrimage throughout her history, but today it is particularly urgent ... The process ... is a lengthy one ... a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church's reflection and practice. But at the same time it is a difficult process.<sup>912</sup> On the eve of the third millennium, who can fail to see what is at stake for the future of the Church and the world? The proclamation of Christ's Gospel urges us to build living communities of faith, bearers of hope and love, to bring about and nurture throughout the world a civilization of truth and love and a culture of life, in which each human person will be able to respond both as an individual and as part of a community to his or her vocation as one of God's children in «the fullness of Christ (*Eph* 4:13). The pastoral approach to culture has a great urgency about it, it is a mammoth task, it involves many approaches and there are immense possibilities, on the threshold of the new millennium commemorating the coming of Christ, Son of God and son of Mary, whose message of love and truth fulfils the basic need of every human culture. Faith in Christ gives cultures a new dimension, that of hope in God's kingdom. It is the vocation of Christians to instil in cultures this

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<sup>910</sup>John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.37

<sup>911</sup> Cf. the mission and competence assigned to the Pontifical Council for Culture: John Paul II, Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, 20 May 1982, AAS LXXIV (1982) 683-688, and the *Motu Proprio Inde a Pontificatus*, 25 March 1993, AAS LXXXV (1993) 549-552.

<sup>912</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 52

hope in a new earth and a new heaven ... Far from threatening or impoverishing them, the Gospel increases their joy and beauty, freedom and meaning, truth and goodness.<sup>913</sup>

For all culture “is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving expression to the transcendent dimension of human life. The heart of every culture is its approach to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God”.<sup>914</sup> The decisive challenge of a pastoral approach to culture, for “a faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived”.<sup>915</sup>

The suggestions offered respect Pope John Paul II’s urgent request to the Pontifical Council for Culture: “You must help the Church to respond to these fundamental questions for the cultures of today: how is the message of the Church accessible to the new cultures, to contemporary forms of understanding and of sensitivity? How can the Church of Christ make itself understood by the modern spirit, so proud of its achievements and at the same time so uneasy for the future of the human family?”<sup>916</sup>

Culture only exists through man, by man and for man. It is the whole of human activity, human intelligence and emotions, the human quest for meaning, human customs and ethics. Culture is so natural to man that human nature can only be revealed through culture. In a pastoral approach to culture, what is at stake is for human beings to be restored in fullness to having been created in the image and likeness of God (*Gen. 1:26*), tearing them away from the anthropocentric temptation of considering themselves independent from the Creator. Therefore, and this observation is crucial to a pastoral approach to culture, it must certainly be admitted that man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively

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<sup>913</sup> John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture, 14 March 1997, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 26 March 1997.

<sup>914</sup> John Paul II, Discours à l’Assemblée Generale des Nations Unies, in: Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi-Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, p.5

<sup>915</sup> John Paul II, Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture, in: Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1999, no.1

<sup>916</sup> John Paul II, Address to the Pontifical Council for Culture, 15 January 1985

defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This 'something' is precisely human nature: this nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition of ensuring that man does not become prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being.<sup>917</sup>

In this respect, the call of Abraham is significant: Leave your country, your family and your father's house (Gen 12:1). «By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, living in tents... For he looked forward to the city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God (*Heb.* 11:8-10) The history of the People of God begins with an adherence of faith which is also a cultural split and culminates with what can be seen as another, the crucifixion of Christ. He was lifted up from the earth, but at the same time became the focal point which directs the history of the world upwards and gathers in unity the scattered children of God: When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself (*Jn.* 12:32).

The cultural break with which Abraham's vocation began, he who was the father of believers, conveys what happens in the depths of the human heart when God erupts in the existence of human beings, revealing himself and arousing the commitment of their whole being. Abraham was spiritually and culturally uprooted to be, in faith, planted by God in the Promised Land. Indeed, this break emphasizes the fundamental difference of nature that exists between faith and culture. Unlike idols, which are the product of a culture, the God of Abraham is totally different. It is by revelation that he enters Abraham's life. The cyclical time of the ancient religions becomes obsolete: with Abraham and the Jewish people, a new time begins and becomes the history of man walking towards God. It is not a people making itself a god, but God giving birth to a people, a people of God.

Accordingly, in the encounter between Christianity and Igbo culture, there is need to effect a healthy inculturation. The Igbo people generally are religious. The understanding of their

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<sup>917</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no.53

religious culture would arm any catechist with the arsenal for proper evangelization. Without this encounter with the culture, the Igbo man may continue to profess christianity but at the slightest provocation or challenge in his life, he is likely to follow his world view which is fundamentally founded on traditional religion.

#### **4.10 The demands of initial proclamation**

Preaching, the verbal proclamation of a message is indeed always indispensable. We are well aware that modern man is sated by talk; he is obviously often tired of listening and, what is worse, impervious to words. We are also aware that many psychologists and sociologists express the view that modern man has passed beyond the civilization of the word, which is now ineffective and useless, and that today he lives in the civilization of the image. These facts should certainly impel us to employ, for the purpose of transmitting the Gospel message, the modern means which this civilization has produced. Very positive efforts have in fact already been made in this sphere. We cannot but praise them and encourage their further development. The fatigue produced these days by so much empty talk and the relevance of many other forms of communication must not however diminish the permanent power of the word, or cause a loss of confidence in it. The word remains ever relevant, especially when it is the bearer of the power of God. This is why St. Paul's axiom, "Faith comes from what is heard," also retains its relevance: it is the Word that is heard which leads to belief.<sup>918</sup>

On several occasions, the responses expressed the need to help local Christian communities, beginning with parishes, to adopt a more missionary presence within society. The recurring appeal is that our communities, in proclaiming the Gospel, might better know how to attract people's attention today and interpret their questioning and search for happiness. In a society which has done away with many references to and talk about God, our institutions need to adopt a bold and even "apologetic" approach and seek ways of publically affirming their faith, fearlessly and with a clear sense of pastoral urgency.

The initial proclamation of the Gospel is primarily directed to those who still do not know Jesus Christ, to unbelievers and those who, in fact, live in religious indifference. This proclamation is a

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<sup>918</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.42

call to conversion and must be integrated into other forms of proclamation and initiation into the faith. While these latter forms are geared to guiding and developing a faith which is already present, the goal of initial proclamation is a conversion which then remains a constant part of the life of a Christian. It is initial in the sense that it the primary proposal of the basic contents of the faith.

Initial proclamation therefore requires a form of action, places, initiatives and events which permit the Christian faith to be proclaimed within society itself. In this regard, the responses indicate that general forms of initial proclamation are not lacking. Diverse episcopal conferences have organized national ecclesial events. Along the same line, many responses praise international events, like World Youth Day, as real forms of initial proclamation on a global scale. Even the Pope's apostolic journeys are considered in the same perspective as well as the ceremonies of beatification or canonization of a son or daughter of a particular Church.

In contrast, many responses voice a concern on the scarcity of initial proclamation taking place everyday in neighbourhoods and the workplace. Therefore, many share the idea that work needs to be done to raise the awareness of the parish community to this urgent missionary activity. On the basis of the responses, the Synod can provide further information for comparison and reflection. Several responses mention that initial proclamation can already be inserted into the customary pastoral practices in the day-to-day life of Christian communities, such as preaching, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and popular piety with its many devotions.<sup>919</sup>

As regards preaching, the Sunday homily, above all, as well as the many extraordinary forms of preaching (parish missions, novenas and homilies at funerals, baptisms, weddings and festivals) are excellent occasions for initial proclamation. For this reason, the previous ordinary general assembly asked that homilies be carefully prepared and due attention be given to the core elements of the message to be transmitted, their essential Christological character and the use of a language which will inspire listeners and stir the assembly to conversion<sup>920</sup>

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<sup>919</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, nos.138-142

<sup>920</sup> Benedict XVI, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Vatican City, 30 September, 2010, no.59:

To conclude, popular piety with its devotion to the saints and Mary, in particular, as well as sacred places (shrines) with their opportunities for penance and spirituality, is increasingly being seen as a very timely and original means of initial proclamation. Pilgrimages and devotions can also provide the occasion to introduce a person to a real faith-experience and to respond to the great existential questions which touch upon conversion in one's life. A shared experience of faith opens a person to a world and life of new horizons. Working to well-preserve the richness of Christian prayer in these places of conversion is undoubtedly a challenge for the new evangelization.<sup>921</sup>

While in Igbo land, many people have heard the initial proclamation, there is need now more than ever to re-sell the content of faith to the people. The trained catechists, for the reason of his constant proximity to the people can do this more effectively. Accordingly, there is need to give them the training that would make them aware of the enormous opportunity at their disposal.

#### **4.11 Transmitting the faith, educating the person**

We read the following important words in the Acts of the Apostle: "And they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts and praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (*Acts* 2:42, 46-47).

Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.<sup>922</sup>

Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life

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<sup>921</sup> The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, nos.145

<sup>922</sup> Paul VI, *EVangelii Nutiandi*, no.24

in keeping with Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.<sup>923</sup> The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of liturgical life of Christian families; it is privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.<sup>924</sup>

In order to achieve this purpose, it is hardly sufficient for new Christian communities to convert men to the Catholic religion and, after purifying them with the water of Baptism, to number them among the members of the Church; it is altogether necessary, after giving the individual a Christian education suitable to his circumstances and times, to make him capable of promoting, as much as he can, the present and future good and growth of the Church. The sheer number of Christians means little if they lack virtue; that is, if, while enjoying the name of Catholic, they do not stand firm in their determination; if their spiritual life does not flourish and fails to produce wholesome fruits; if, after being reborn to divine grace, they do not excel in that spirit of vigorous and sensible youthfulness which is always ready to perform generous and useful deeds. Their profession of faith must not only be a statistic in a census, but must create a new man, (*1 Peter 2:9*) and give all his actions a supernatural strength, inspiring, guiding, and controlling them.<sup>925</sup>

Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! ... it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world, a world which has experienced marvelous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself.<sup>926</sup>

It is necessary also to examine the kind of faith transmitted. Religion do not serve the purpose of business. To be frank, the religious atmosphere of Igbo land is one that presents God not only as

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<sup>923</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11

<sup>924</sup> CCC 2226

<sup>925</sup> John XXIII, *Rinceps Pastorum*, Vatican City, November 28, 1959, no. 29

<sup>926</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 2

vengeful but also as commercial, in as much as he revenges against those who take him for granted and blesses those who offer to him and revere him. No doubt, those who specialize in preaching this nature of God use the idea as supportive of their religious merchandism, as the poor masses are coerced psychologically to offer to God through such preachers. The implication is that in the future, the faith transmitted becomes not only distorted but also ground for future crisis among the church in Igbo land.

#### **4.12 Faith and knowledge**

There is a great bond link between faith and knowledge. In fact, the same bond between faith and education also exists between faith and knowledge. The Lineamenta described this relationship by using Pope Benedict XVI's expression of the "ecology of the human person"<sup>927</sup> While pointing out the consequences of a crisis which could threaten the fabric of society as a whole, Pope Benedict XVI described a possible way out of a similar danger by developing a human ecology, which, understood in its proper sense, is a way to understand the world and the development of science that takes into account all the needs of a person, including openness to the truth and the original relationship with God before the Fall.

Faith and intelligence are at the service of each other. The Christian faith assists intelligence to understand the profound balance governing the various aspects of existence and history. This work of faith is not done in a generic sense or from the outside, but by sharing with reason a thirst for both knowing and seeking and then directs reason towards the good of humanity and the cosmos. The Christian faith provides assistance in understanding the intense content of fundamental human experiences. Many responses referred to this age-old task of Catholicism - that of critical appraisal and orientation - by listing institutions, research centres and universities, resulting from the intuition and charism of certain people and the concern for education in some particular Churches, which have made this critical consciousness one of their main objectives. In fact, faith without knowledge is blind while knowledge without faith has no destination.

The time has come when the church should no longer pretend to be detached from the goings on in the scientific and technological arena. Christian reason must make an effort to find those with

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<sup>927</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate*, Vatican City, 29 June 2009, no.51

whom to engage in conversation in the authoritative and decisive areas of world research, especially in the areas of technology and economic development. Consequently, the Church should see this situation as a challenge and a focal area for the new evangelization.

At this point of the discussion of faith and reason, Benedict XVI comes to mind. He has often stressed the complementarity of faith and reason. Faith widens the horizons of reason and reason preserves faith from the danger of drifting aimlessly or manipulating religion. Always attentive to the intellectual content of education exemplified in her many universities and institutes of higher learning, the Church is involved in campus ministry to foster a dialogue with learned people in the various fields of knowledge. Christian people of learning are entrusted with the particular task of bearing witness, in their activities and especially in their lives, to the fact that reason and faith are the two wings with which a person approaches God.<sup>928</sup> and that Christian faith and the sciences, properly understood, can mutually enrich each other for the good of humanity. The only limit to scientific progress is in preserving the dignity of the human person created in God's image, who must always be actively involved in scientific research and technology and never be a mere object of study.

Finally, the foregoing have great implication for the training of lay catechists and indeed every agent of evangelization in Igbo Land. In the next chapter, we shall discuss the training of lay catechists in general but with greater attention to the Igbo spatio-temporal reality.

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<sup>928</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, Vatican City, 14 September 1998, no 5

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE TRAINING OF LAY CATECHISTS IN IGBOLAND NIGERIA

In Igboland and other mission lands, the ministry of the lay catechist arose out of the necessities and difficulties the foreign missionaries experienced in conveying and explaining the message of salvation in mission countries.<sup>929</sup> In the long history of the Church, particularly in the history of the Missions, not a few have played a prominent role and fulfilled an indispensable function. Among them the catechists constitute an important group and rank high.<sup>930</sup> In the era of the missionaries in Igboland as well as in many large geographical parishes in Africa, lay catechists have always been of particular importance and have played significant roles where priests have historically only been able to visit different parts of their parish periodically. In the priest's absence, the parish catechist takes on the role of being the main teacher of the faith in that parish. As such they are honoured within their parish community. More recently also, catechists have become increasingly important in the older Western regions of the Catholic Church, as there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of priests and Religious in these regions. In these areas, lay catechists supply the lack to a certain degree. This is quite appropriate since: “The apostolic work of the catechist springs from the Sacrament of Baptism through which all believers come to share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Church....The call to the ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>931</sup> Consequently, the use of Lay Catechists is a step in the right direction.

Throughout the history of the Church, catechesis has been an esteemed dimension of activities. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “quite early on, the name *catechesis* was given to the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help [people] believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ.”<sup>932</sup>

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<sup>929</sup> <https://www.google.de/search?q=Categories+and+evolution+of+lay+catechists+in+India>

<sup>930</sup> <https://www.google.de/search?q=Categories+and+evolution+of+lay+catechists+in+India>

<sup>931</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis* 54B8, p.228

<sup>932</sup> CCC. no.4

Little wonder the place of the lay catechists in the time of the missionaries in Igboland and in our time is irreplaceable as far as catechesis is concerned. Their work till today in catechizing the adult and children is still unquantifiable. The services they render to the church are of such inestimable value that the Church will not be able to pay them were they to demand full payments according to their efforts. They have been inseparable and indispensable companions of the missionaries as helpers and co-workers in spreading the Gospel. They (lay catechists) were the eyes, the ears, and the voice which the missionaries used as they evangelized Igboland as well as other African countries. This explains why “at inauguration of new parishes and dedication of Churches these days, in most of the Nigerian dioceses, Church communities do not fail to recount the important roles which the pioneer catechists played in the establishment and development of the Church in this part of the Africa”<sup>933</sup> more especially in Igboland. There was never a time when catechists were not invaluable assistants to missionaries. The catechists and missionaries were the co-founders of new ‘Missions, leaving representatives (Station Teachers) behind to consolidate and continue the work of nurturing the seed. The new station catechists or station teachers usually took over the responsibility of building up the Church, winning converts and preparing them for the sacraments. When the priest returned after a year or so, he was expected to administer at least three Sacraments on the same day - Baptism, Penance, Holy Eucharist (and even marriage). The catechist was the coordinator of so many church activities, and also took care of the priest’s rest house. He conducted morning and evening services on Sundays. He instructed the adults in the afternoons and prepared candidates for baptism, confirmation and First Communion. He sent back sick calls to the priest, published banns of marriage and kept track of those who lapsed. In fact, he was, without knowing it, exercising the Priesthood of the Laity in its highest form. Even when the era of the station-teacher (a quasi-help-mate of the traditional catechist) was over, some of the catechists continued their function, whereas others tried to combine both functions.

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<sup>933</sup> Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges*, Onitsha: Effective Key Publishers Limited, 1994, p.186

The role of the catechist in Igboland as well as in the African Church remains vital today even though theoretically it is being phased out of existence in some areas as a result of modernization in Church ministries. One thing clear is that we cannot do without them. Even in Igboland that is blessed with the gift of vocation to the priesthood, the role of the catechist becomes even most indispensable than ever; they are relevant for initial evangelization and are equally needed for continuing evangelization. Thus Nathaniel Ndiokwere summarizes the indispensable role of the Lay Catechist thus:

Catechist remains the link between the old and the new, between the pioneer missionaries and the almost totally indigenized local clergy. In some cases he remains the station or parish “archive”, and can relate all problems the parish or station has had right from the early missionary days to the present. His ‘mission house’ or private home is the ‘rest house’ for visitors to the station or parish, for seminarians on apostolic work, before perhaps a more convenient or permanent place can be found. The care - taker of all Mission Property - buildings, farmlands, cash-crops or other endowments of the Church, he often stood for the Church in the drafting and signing of agreements between the Church and local authorities and communities.<sup>934</sup>

In appreciation of this vital role, John Paul II maintains that:

Even with the extension of the services rendered by lay people both within and outside the Church, there is always need for the ministry of catechists, a ministry with its own characteristics. Catechists are specialists, direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers who, as I have often stated and experienced during my missionary journeys, represent the basic strength of Christian communities, *especially in the young churches*.<sup>935</sup>

This underscores the point that the need for the Lay Catechists will always be there “as long as there are people to be instructed for baptism, newly baptized persons to be brought up in the tenets and practical demands of the Christian faith, sick people to be shown the love of God through visiting them, non-Christians to be converted, lay apostolate organizations to be

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<sup>934</sup> Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges*, p.178

<sup>935</sup> *Redemptoris Missio* 73; Also Canon Law 785 § 1

animated, station/parish/diocesan meetings to be attended, people whose contacts with priests are to be facilitated...”<sup>936</sup> These roles confirm the role of the Lay Catechists. Their services remain necessary so long as the ministry of the church lasts. The Lay Catechist “helps the faithful to discover and develop their own abilities in the service of the community. He guides the development of communities and of neighbourhood association, in which the faith is discussed in connection with their various problems in an atmosphere of fraternal co-operation. He is the adviser of Catholic Action Groups and of Lay Apostolate. He should relieve the priest of the tasks which principally belong to the laity but cannot be fulfilled here and now (principle of subsidiarity)”<sup>937</sup> They are truly the apostles at the grassroots. Little wonder the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, for instance, describes them as “specialized workers, direct witnesses, indispensable evangelizers, who represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young Churches.”<sup>938</sup> Without them, Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up. Hence, the *Guide for Catechists* asserts that: “The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples experiences directly the undisputed effectiveness of lay catechists. Under the direction of priests, in fact, they continue with frankness to announce “the Good News” to their brothers and sisters of other religions, preparing them for entry into the ecclesial community through baptism. Through religious instruction, preparation for the sacraments, animation of prayer and other works of charity, they help the baptized to grow in the fervour of the Christian life...”<sup>939</sup> Lay catechists are essential participants in the Church’s fundamental mission of teaching all nations (*Mt 28:20*), a mission which ranks among the most because it is in continuity with the work begun by the one “Teacher”, Jesus Christ.<sup>940</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Anyanwu, S.O, *Igbo Catholicism on the Move: Pangs of Growth and Signs of Vitality*, p.72

<sup>937</sup> Nwosu V, “Doctrinal Formation of Catechists” in: Ezeanya S.N. (ed.), *Apostolate in Nigeria Today And Tomorrow*, Enugu: Diocesan Catholic Secretariat, 1977,p.20

<sup>938</sup> *Guide for Catechist*, no.3

<sup>939</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, Limuru: Kolbe Press, 2000, P. 7

<sup>940</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.86; Jn. 7:16

At each stage of the mission, catechists have always been actively present. When missionaries arrived catechists were considered *sine qua non* for successful proselytization. Their being indigenous to the area of missionary operation, and the inability of the European missionaries to speak the local language well, made the employment of catechists of much importance. It was the village catechist, in fact, who was responsible for the dissemination of “*missionary propaganda*.” It was he who went to all the out-of-the-way places proselytizing. It was he, too, upon whom the converts, and would-be converts looked for moral and spiritual direction and example.<sup>941</sup> One thing clear is that during the time of the missionaries, the catechists were the principal agents of evangelization in the mission. They were the ones who taught catechism to the children instead of the priests. By then, none of the priests was capable of teaching catechism or preaching the gospel in Igbo Language. In fact, “the ordained missionary was powerless before the foreign language, people and culture, the lay catechist proudly performed with efficiency a very wide range of mediatory roles. The people therefore saw the catechist as performing a mighty job in the sight. Hence the missionary considered him as an indispensable helper/auxiliary in the work of evangelizing the natives by natives.”<sup>942</sup>

The questions that can arise at this point are: why should there still be a need for lay catechists when we already have an unprecedented number of indigenous priests and religious for the ministry especially in Igboland? Why would the emergence of numerous active lay pious organizations or groups like the Catholic Biblical Movement, the Catholic Christian Doctrine Group, the Catholic Fathers’ Association, the Catholic Women Organization, the Catholic Youths Organization, Young Catholic Students Association, the Knights Of the Catholic Church, the Legion of Mary, the Charismatic Movements and other lay movements and confraternities that have made themselves available for such apostolates like: visiting the sick and lapsed Catholics, teaching catechism to children and helping in the sacristy or the presbytery not suffice as a viable alternative to the office and role of lay catechist? A correct response to these questions can be given by simply referring us back to the words of John Paul II, when he addressed the Nigerian

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<sup>941</sup> Ekechi F.K, *Missionary Enterprise & Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, p.78

<sup>942</sup> R. J Dubois in his article “Le role des Catechistes en pays de missions

catechists thus: “my beloved catechists, the Church needs you and she continues to need you; no matter how many priests or religious the Church may have you remain irreplaceable.”<sup>943</sup> Today, we still need the lay catechists than ever because of their special charism which is different from priests and religious. Indeed even with the extension of the services rendered by lay people both within and outside the Church; there is always the need for the ministry of lay catechists, a ministry with its own characteristics. This is because Catechists are specialists, direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers who represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young churches. Hence, the new Code of Canon Law acknowledges the tasks, qualities and qualifications of catechists.<sup>944</sup> Furthermore, the Canon Law strongly encourages their employment in the missionary work.

However, for the catechists to discharge their functions very well, they need to be well-trained. Hence, Canon 785§2 details the need for catechists to be suitably prepared for their work; and also stipulates that their formation is to take place in special schools or under the guidance of individual missionaries in cases where such schools are lacking. In addition, the decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church goes further to say that:

... Training must be so accomplished and so adapted to advances on the cultural level that as reliable coworkers of the priestly order, they may perform their task well.... There should therefore be an increase in the number of schools, both on the diocesan and on the regional levels, wherein future catechists may study Catholic doctrine, especially ... catechetical method and pastoral practice; schools wherein they can develop in themselves a Christian character, and wherein they can devote themselves tirelessly to cultivating piety and sanctity of life. Moreover, conventions or courses should be held in which at certain times catechists could be refreshed in the disciplines and skills useful for their ministry and in which their spiritual life could be nourished and strengthened. In addition, for those who devote themselves entirely to this work, a decent standard of living should be provided and social security, by paying them a just wage. It would be desirable for the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to provide special funds for the due training

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<sup>943</sup> John Paul II, Address in Kaduna to the Laity, Catechists and Catholic Women, no.6

<sup>944</sup> *Canon Law 785§1*

and support of catechists. If it seems necessary and fitting, let a special "Opus pro Catechists" be founded".<sup>945</sup>

Our main task here is to examine different types of catechists as a background to considering different areas or fields where they should be trained and employed, mindful of the fact that their vocation is still a very relevant one in the Church today. We also intend to re-evaluate the vocation and mission of catechists, with a view to making them more apt to serving the Church and the world today. More still, we will survey where the training will take place and look at their ongoing formation. At the end of the chapter, we will look at their maintenance together with their working condition, which has been a problem since the institution of the ministry of catechist.

### **5.1 The Vocation to Lay Catechist**

Every member of the Catholic Church who is initiated into the sacrament of the baptism is personally called by the Holy Spirit to use his or her gift to minister and consistently render quality service in the Lord's vineyard. However, some, like the Lay Catechists, are called to minister in a formal way by proclaiming and teaching God's Word. St Paul in reference to these gifts offers this detailed explanation:

There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given to believers by the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve. But they all come from the same Lord. There are different ways the Spirit works. But the same God is working in all these ways and in all people. The Holy Spirit is given to each of us in a special way. That is for the good of all. To some people the Spirit gives a message of wisdom. To others the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge. To others the same Spirit gives faith. To others that one Spirit gives gifts of healing. To others he gives the power to do miracles. To others he gives the ability to prophesy. To others he gives the ability to tell the spirits apart. To others he gives the ability to speak in different kinds of languages they had not known before. And to still others he gives the ability to explain what was said in those languages. All the gifts are

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<sup>945</sup> Vatican II Document, *Ad Gentes*, no. 17

produced by one and the same Spirit. He gives gifts to each person, just as he decides. (*1 Cor.12:4-11*)

These gifts are really seen among our laity who apart from the clergy have also been called by the Lord to work in His vineyard with the gift or gifts the Lord has given them. Guide for Catechists is therefore right to assert that: “within the lay state there are various vocations, or different spiritual and apostolic roads to be followed by both individuals and groups. Within the general vocation of the laity there are particular ones.”<sup>946</sup> It is in these particular ones that the lay catechist’s vocation belongs. Lay catechists are among those who have received Christ's command to “*go and teach all nations*” (*Mt 28:19*). It is really important and recommendable “for the catechist to recognize the supernatural and ecclesial significance of this call, so as to be able to respond, like the Son of God, “*Here I come*” (*Heb. 10:7*); or, like the prophet, “*Here I am, send me*” (*Is 6:8*).<sup>947</sup> He has also to make effort in listening and following the voice of God who has called him.

The work of the lay catechist will continue to remain irreplaceable. Why? It is because the catechist's vocation is both specific and general. It is specific, i.e. for the task of catechizing, and general, for collaborating in whatever apostolic services are useful for the building up of the Church. Even in the modern day mass media like radio, television, newspaper, internet, Facebook, Skype or the availability of traditional tools of learning, such as books, cannot make the work of the lay catechist irrelevant. The Lay Catechist is not only a teacher but a teacher of faith. It could be assumed that the individual may on his or her own grow in and acquire knowledge by making judicious use of the present means of disseminating information and communication ideas, however, the truth remains that the media of mass communication cannot replace the role of the teacher, especially the teacher of faith, the catechist. As a teacher, the catechist knows the candidates under him and he is armed with the ability to make on-the-spot of

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<sup>946</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.2

<sup>947</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.2

the moment adjustment to improve on the learning and performance of those under his charge.<sup>948</sup> The clergy is not often living within the inner environment of the people; it is here that catechist can do much more than the ordained minister by learning and exposing the ills of their fellow Christians etc. So the fact remains that the teacher, especially the teacher of faith the catechist, still has an important role to play in the transmission of the knowledge of faith to the people of God placed under his care.

### 5.1.1 Qualities of Candidates for the Lay Catechist

Considering the role of the lay catechist in the Church (and community where he lives and works) as we have seen above, we should know that a catechist as a teacher of faith cannot just be anybody but are persons of faith who “feel called interiorly by God”<sup>949</sup> to minister as catechist. Their ministry as catechists springs from the Sacrament of Baptism and is strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation.<sup>950</sup> Subsequently, the Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechize.<sup>951</sup> Consequently, Lay Catechists should “rise from within the community of faith, be invited to consider becoming a catechist, be known to the pastor and prayerfully consider becoming a catechist.”<sup>952</sup> There are certain qualities that are expected and should be associated with such a precious privilege to sacred responsibility. Persons who wish to become catechists should:

- have a strong awareness of God’s presence and a growing faith in response to that grace;
- have a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, who is the center of the message;
- have a strong understanding of and love for the Church evidenced by a personal commitment to: catechize within the Roman Catholic tradition, in light of Vatican II and Post-conciliar Documents and according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*;

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<sup>948</sup> Enwe I.I, “The Role of the Catechist in the Teaching of the Faith”, in: Catholic Diocese of Nsukka 2013 Catechist Seminar entitled The catechist and the Teaching of the Faith Today, 6<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2013, p.8

<sup>949</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 231

<sup>950</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 228

<sup>951</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 231

<sup>952</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 236

- participate actively and regularly in the Church's liturgical and sacramental life;
- deepen an active prayer life; respect the diversity of culture; and
- serve with dedication;
- have an ability to appreciate different types and stages of individual growth and development;
- have an ability to communicate effectively with the persons to be catechized;
- have a willingness to continue their own religious education and formation.<sup>953</sup>

However, we have to acknowledge that most of the times these expected qualities or criteria are ignored or neglected before a person is admitted as candidate to catechist in Igboland. The reasons for this are not far-fetched. Most catechists come into the service as a response to immediate and existing need of the local church, and so do not follow the required procedure. Moreover, how do we talk of quality when most of the times those who present themselves for the service are usually very few; in most cases, we even find a ready and willing person only once in a while. At times, people do not even step forward to take the responsibility once they notice that someone else has volunteered, even if the one that volunteered, from all intents and purposes, is least qualified and quite unfit for the assignment. For instance, the writer has worked in a parish where a catechist was asked to step down because of his scandalous life. For two years the office was vacant. Nobody volunteered to take up the office. The members of the parish council had to go from house to house appealing to people to take the work of the catechist. This is just one among many examples. Lack of candidates for catechists has made it such that catechists are left at their whims and caprices. Some have lapsed to drunkenness, laxity, promiscuity, pilfering etc. and yet they are usually handled with soft hand and tone because there might be nobody to replace them.

Should we now accept all to this vocation ignoring the importance of following some established criteria? This will do us more harm than good. In this regard, *National Directory for Catechesis* warns that: “The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communication involving the recruitment of catechists.”<sup>954</sup> As a solution to this

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<sup>953</sup>*California Guidelines*, p. 4; see also *NDC*, pp 237-238

<sup>954</sup>*National Directory for Catechesis*, p.236

problem, the Bishops of California maintain that it is the responsibility of pastors and catechetical leadership to:

- call forth and screen candidates and evaluate their potential to become faith-filled and dynamic catechists;
- require candidates to complete formation programs for catechist certification as sponsored/developed by the diocese within the period specified by the diocese;
- select, orient, commission, supervise and annually evaluate catechists - both those who hold certification and those in the process of obtaining certification;
- Provide catechists with opportunities for continued personal, spiritual and professional development.<sup>955</sup>

The catechist as a public figure should have a good character and this should be taken serious during the time of selection and the programme for training and guidance. John Paul II emphasizes this when he says that: “For such a fundamental evangelical service a great number of workers are necessary. But, while striving for numbers, we must aim above all today at securing the quality of the catechist.”<sup>956</sup> In the Western world where the shortage of clergy and religious is the talk of the day, they still insist on criteria, quality and formation of the candidates. The *CEP*<sup>957</sup> is of the opinion that a good choice of candidates is essential. They maintain that: “in choosing candidates, some criteria should be considered essential while others might be optional. It is useful to have a list of criteria for the whole Church, which could be referred to by those with the charge of choosing candidate. These criteria, which should be *sufficient, precise, realistic and controllable*, could be adapted to local conditions by the local authorities, who are the ones best

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<sup>955</sup> *California Guidelines*, p.4

<sup>956</sup> John Paul II, Address to the Plenary Assembly cit., 3; cf. S.C. For the Clergy, General Catechetical Directory, 11 April 1971, no.108

<sup>957</sup> CEP means Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

able to judge the needs and possibilities of the community.”<sup>958</sup> The *CEP* recommends such qualities like faith that manifests itself in their piety and daily life; love for the Church and communion with its Pastors; apostolic spirit and missionary zeal; love for their brothers and sisters and a willingness to give generous service; sufficient education; the respect of the community; the human, moral and technical qualities necessary for the work of a catechist, such as dynamism, good relations with others, etc. We will discuss some of these qualities briefly:

#### **5.1.1.1 Disposition:**

The work of catechist is not a job as such but a vocation. One should not go into it simply because other preferable jobs of his choice are not available; nor should one accept the offer merely because the members of the Church community have approached him. If one goes into it without being positively motivated, disposed or having the call, he will definitely be disappointed when the challenges shall arise.

#### **5.1.1.1 Faith:**

The catechist should be a person who has a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as the centre and grounding of his life and ministry, and should also have a strong desire to make Jesus Christ known to others. The catechist should be a person who understands that “at the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father.”<sup>959</sup> The catechist should have the privilege of working toward the aim of all catechesis “to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.”<sup>960</sup> It is impossible to achieve this goal without faith. The Catechist is the one sent to transmit and nourish the faith of the people especially that of the new converts and catechumens. For “catechesis is an *education in the faith* of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and

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<sup>958</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.18

<sup>959</sup>CCC, 426

<sup>960</sup>*General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 80; CT 5

systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life.”<sup>961</sup> So the catechist being the teacher of faith means that a sufficient human maturity, an assumption presumed for growth in the faith, is necessary in the catechists because of their mission. So catechists as teachers in the faith of fellow Christians are required to possess a serious and reliable life of faith, a certain maturity of faith, so that they can present themselves, not only as teachers but above all as credible witnesses. It is therefore necessary for catechists to have deep faith, a clear Christian and ecclesial identity, as well as a great social sensitivity. Catechists must be able to be, at one and the same time, teachers, educators and witnesses of the faith. ...Besides being a witness, the catechist must also be a teacher who teaches the faith.<sup>962</sup>

### **5.1.1.3 Prayer Life:**

The importance of prayer in the life of a catechist cannot be overstressed. It is Christ who calls and appoints or chooses those who work in His vineyard since many are called but few are chosen (*Mt.22 14*). If Christ calls and chooses then there is no way we can succeed without always referring to the Master of the vineyard who has already revealed the key to success by telling us that the one who abides in him while He (Christ) abides in him produces much fruit, and that apart from him you can do nothing (*Jn.15:5*). The fact is that:

No herald will continue to carry out his task effectively unless he is closely and personally attached to the master who sent him out. Such attachment will make him careful, diligent, constant, and daring. But without close personal attachment to our Lord, the teacher will lose his zeal and his own real interest in his catechetical apostolate. He will find himself in great danger of growing more and more tired and disappointed; and his teaching will no longer be a proclamation but, a tiresome lecture. Only personal love for Christ will keep him, year after year, eloquent and inventive, zealous and practical, unwavering, and obliging, patient and winning.<sup>963</sup>

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<sup>961</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no. 18

<sup>962</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, p.237&240

<sup>963</sup> Hofinger J, *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1958, p. 188

Prayer is therefore indispensable since it is through it that a catechist can reach his goal. Furthermore, the catechist “is essentially a mediator, facilitating communication between the people and the mystery of God, between subjects amongst themselves, as well as with the community. The catechist ensures that his/her activities always draw support from faith in the Holy Spirit and from prayer.”<sup>964</sup> Therefore, he needs to be a person of prayer. As one who leads in community prayer, the catechist teaches the importance of prayer by his personal piety. He should daily commit the candidates studying the doctrines of faith and morals under him to the care of the Lord so that his apostolate will be fruitful.

#### **5.1.1.4 Moral Probity**

Every Christian, much more a catechist must know that he is bound by his conscience to the basic, imperative duty of bearing witness to the truth in which he believes and to the grace which has transformed his soul. A great Father of the Church has said:

He (Christ) left us on earth in order that we should become like beacons of light and teachers unto others; that we might act like leaven, move among men like angels, be like men unto children, and like spiritual men unto animal men, in order to win them over, and that we may be like seed, and bear abundant fruits. There would be no need for sermons, if our lives were shining; there would be no need for words, if we bore witness with our deeds. There would be no more pagans, if we were true Christians.<sup>965</sup>

Moral principles, honesty and decency of life are really necessary in the life of any catechist. It is important for the catechist to bear in mind that as a teacher of faith, he assumes the role model for those under his care. *National Directory for Catechesis* underscores this point thus: “Next to home and family, the witness of the catechist may be pivotal in every phase of the catechetical process. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, catechists powerfully influence those being catechized by their faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the transparent example of their Christian lives. For catechesis to be effective, the catechist must be fully

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<sup>964</sup>*General Directory for Catechesis*, p.156

<sup>965</sup> St. John Chrysostom, Hom. X in *I Tim.*, Migne, PG 62.551

committed to Jesus Christ. They must firmly believe in his Gospel and its power to transform lives.”<sup>966</sup> *The Letter of St. Paul to Titus* applies also to all the catechists thus: “the Church leader should be without fault. He must not be arrogant or quick tempered, or drunkard, or violent, or greedy. He must be hospitable and love what is good. He must be self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined” (*Tit.* 1:7-8). Such should be a correct description of a catechist. The leader who discerns a call to minister in evangelization and catechesis must be both a model and a witness. Furthermore, *National Directory for Catechesis* states emphatically that: “Only fully initiated, practicing Catholics who fully adhere to the Church’s teaching in faith and morals and who are models of Christian virtue and courageous witness to the Catholic faith should be designated as parish catechetical leaders.”<sup>967</sup> As a person intimately involved in the evangelizing and catechizing mission of the Church, the minister must first and foremost be a person whose life is centered on Jesus Christ - a person compelled to share the message of Jesus in word and action. In addition to the dispositions mentioned above, the catechist has to understand that he is the light for many people especially the unlearned, new converts, children etc. Catechists should live transparent lifestyles without blemish. More than other Christians, catechists ought to be able to say with St. Paul: “It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me” (*Gal.* 2:20).

#### **5.1.1.4 Patience and Sympathy:**

Our point here is that most of the time, the catechist in the course of executing his duty, has to deal with people with diverse interests and different religious upbringings. For the catechist to carry all of them along in his teaching, he has to be patient with them. This is even more challenging given the fact that the work of the lay catechist till today in Igboland is still undermined and less appreciated. Thus, a lay catechist, as he carries out his duties, experiences in one way or the other the same hardship as the apostles and martyrs. By so doing, he partakes in the Passion of Christ. Hence Paul admonished Timothy thus: “Take your share of suffering as a

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<sup>966</sup>*National Directory for Catechesis*, page 101

<sup>967</sup>*General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 225

good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him” (2 *Tim.* 2: 3-4). If a soldier expects to endure hardship, then a catechist as a soldier of Christ should be fully prepared for any eventuality. About his own service Paul said: “We put no obstacle in any one’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watching, hunger” (2 *Cor.* 6: 3-5, 11: 23-28).

The same thing applies among the children during the catechism classes. It is not uncommon to encounter children who are unmannered and rude or slow learners among them. It is here that the gift of sympathy will play its role. If the motive of the catechist is to help these children, he will be able to show them the needed tenderness and feeling of pity that will help in modifying their childish behaviour. In fact, the way he handles learners even in administrative matters like lateness to class, bullying among children, noise-making in class, etc. expresses how sympathetic he is to the people placed under his care. It is at such moments that the catechist should let them understand that someone is there for them and understands their problem and predicament and is ready to help them. This need of sympathy cannot be overstressed especially among the children born with disability.

#### **5.1.1.5 Sufficient Formation**

We have to bear in mind that proclaiming the Gospel message also involves proclaiming it to professional, scientific and academic circle.”<sup>968</sup> Jesus did not do His ministry at random rather, He had a clear plan. He prayerfully selected and trained His disciples. Likewise, catechists today must know what they are doing. Handing on faith is not just a nice idea, a nice way of sharing stories, but is specifically aimed at proclaiming the Good News. For the catechist, this calls for careful planning in a number of areas, such as what techniques to use and how to balance

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<sup>968</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no.132

content and method. The treasure of faith must not be handed on haphazardly. The catechist must be fully aware of the mission and ministry of catechesis.<sup>969</sup> Sequel to this, it is not just enough to enlist someone among the catechists simply because he has a good character. Catechists should be formally formed as they are teachers of faith and morals in parish and primary schools where they are in-charge. *The General Directory for Catechesis* states with conviction that: “the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel. The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists.”<sup>970</sup> Therefore, catechists are called to prepare for this important ministry by acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate Gospel values and Church teaching effectively for different age groups. Consequently, the formation of the catechists should be, as a matter of necessity, the major concern of the Church both at local and general levels.

### 5.1.2 Types of Catechists

Since the Second Vatican Council there has been a remarkable increase in the number of people who exercise ministry in the Catholic Church. Several ministries that had for a time been retained by the Presbytery (priests) were returned to the laity, and several new forms of ministry emerged. Included in this general lay ministry are several specific ministries designed to support the Church community, such as lector/reader, extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, catechist, sponsor/god-parent, spouse, parent, etc. In addition to this general lay ministry, there are a number of non-ordained people who have undertaken roles that prior to Vatican II belonged entirely to the ordained, including parish pastoral and catechetical staff, hospital and prison chaplain, campus ministers, and many other diocesan leadership roles. Today, even the Roman Curia includes a small number of lay ecclesial ministers. In 1995, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reflecting on the thirtieth anniversary of the “Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity” issued a document entitled “Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium.” This document affirmed the gifts of the laity and used the term “lay ecclesial minister” to describe laypersons who hold positions of pastoral leadership in Church but are

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<sup>969</sup> Kelly L, *Catechesis Revisited: Handing of Faith Today*, New York: Paulist Press, 2000, pgs.106-107

<sup>970</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.234

not ordained. Lay ecclesial ministers are co-workers with the bishop alongside priests and deacons. The term “lay ecclesial minister” does however reflect certain “key realities such as:

- The ministry is *lay* because it is service done by lay persons. The sacramental basis is the Sacraments of Initiation, not the Sacrament of Ordination.
- The ministry is *ecclesial* because it has a place within the community of the Church, whose communion and mission it serves, and because it is submitted to the discernment, authorization, and supervision of the hierarchy.
- It is *ministry* because it is a participation in the threefold ministry of Christ who is priest, prophet and king. The application of “ministry” to the laity is not something to be confused with ordained ministry or in any way construed to compromise the specific nature of ordained ministry.<sup>971</sup>

Each and every member of the Christian community by the virtue of his/her baptism, shares in this responsibility of the catechetical effort. So important is the catechetical mission to the church that it is to be the concern of every believer. It is the God-given vocation, a right as well as a duty. Christ gave his Church a mandate of preaching and making disciples of the whole world. This implies that the Church is “the great giver as well as the great receiver of catechesis. The whole church is catechist.”<sup>972</sup> This mission, the proclamation of the Gospel is required of all: bishops, the priests, the deacons; religious, laity. It is always expected of us that: “When Christians enter a personal relationship with Christ, faith cannot remain individualistic or stay enclosed within a small, close-knit group. Our faith must go beyond; it must bring others into the believing community or, if they are already in it, bring them to the fullness of revelation....Fulfilled faith puts people on the road because of their urge to share the Good News that they cannot keep to themselves.”<sup>973</sup> We are evangelized or catechized in order to evangelize or catechize others. However, specific catechetical roles are there according to each one’s

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<sup>971</sup>Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord - A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, DC.: USCCB, 2005, p.11

<sup>972</sup> John Paul II., *Catechesis Tradendae*, no.45

<sup>973</sup> Kelly L, *Catechesis Revisited: Handing of Faith Today*, p.111

ecclesial function. Hence St. Paul has aptly admonished: “So brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God” (*1 Cor.7:24*). Little wonder we have two types of catechists:

#### 5.1.2.1 **The Primary Catechists:**

They include the Church, the hierarchy of the Church; the bishops, priests and the consecrated persons (the Religious). All the presbyters (e.g., pastors, vicars, chaplains, deacons, etc.) have the great responsibility of preaching the Gospel of the Lord. The 1983 *Code of the Canon Law* makes it emphatically clear that: “It is proper for presbyters who are co-workers of the bishops to proclaim the gospel of God; pastors and others entrusted with the care of souls are especially bound to this office as regards the people entrusted to them; deacons also are to serve the people of God in the ministry of the word in communion with the bishop and his presbytery.”<sup>974</sup> Even though, bishops are above all, “heralds of the faith, seeking new disciples for Jesus Christ, and authentic teachers, transmitting the faith to be professed and lived to those entrusted to their care”<sup>975</sup>, they cannot do the work alone. The assistance of the priests, religious and deacons will always be needed.

#### 5.1.2.2 **The Secondary Catechists:**

These are all other baptized members of the church who are called by the virtue of their baptism and confirmation to bear witness to Christ, live and preach Christ to others. The Code of Canon Law states: “When the necessity of the Church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors and acolytes, can also supply for certain of their offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the Word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer Baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of the law.”<sup>976</sup>

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<sup>974</sup> Canon 757

<sup>975</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.222

<sup>976</sup> Canon 230 § 3

Therefore, lay persons either men or women and of whatever responsible age, can be delegated on a less permanent basis to perform different forms of liturgical functions. The Fathers of Vatican II in affirmation to this say:

Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their baptism and confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.<sup>977</sup>

Our major concerns are the catechists under these groups. They can further be grouped into: untrained and trained catechists. We will make effort to differentiate between the untrained and the trained catechists. We will occupy ourselves with the necessity of training lay catechists in this chapter.

### **5.1.2.3 Untrained Catechist**

The word “untrained” does not mean that they are unlettered people. It means that they were not trained to be catechists as such. They never received any formal training as catechists. Some of these people may be more educated than most of the trained catechists. They may be professionals like medical doctors, Engineers, Bankers, Lecturers etc. but that does not make them competent catechists. Their activities in the world actually bring out the conception the Fathers of Vatican II have about laity when they say:

The faithful who by their baptism are incorporated into Christ ... to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like

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<sup>977</sup>CCC,no.900

leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected, and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer.<sup>978</sup>

Their Christian vocation makes them to be a leaven of holiness in those secular<sup>979</sup> realities which characterize their profession. They really understand that these words of Jesus apply not only to the apostles but to all His disciples: You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (*Mt* 5:13-16) These people are normally found among some indigenous personnel and pious societies in the church such as the teachers in the Church's Nursery and Primary Schools, Legion of Mary, Catholic Charismatic Renewal Group, Block Rosary, St. Jude, Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine etc. Even though they are untrained; we still call them catechists since they render similar functions in many respects to that of professional catechists. The Vatican II Council has this to say about them: "There is great variety of association in the apostolate. Some set themselves the broad apostolate purpose of the Church; others aim to evangelize and sanctify in a special way. Some propose to infuse a Christian spirit into the temporal order. Others bear witness to Christ in particular way through works of mercy and charity."<sup>980</sup> Such persons are treasure to the church. Their service is unquantifiable. Little wonder John Paul II says that these images taken from the gospel of salt, light and leaven, although indiscriminately applicable to all Jesus' disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful. They are particularly meaningful images because they speak not only of the deep involvement and the full participation of the lay faithful in the affairs of the earth, the world and the human community, but also and above all,

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<sup>978</sup> Vatican II Document, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 31

<sup>979</sup> *Secular* must be understood in light of the act of God the creator and redeemer, who has handed over the world to women and men, so that they may participate in the work of creation, free creation from the influence of sin and sanctify themselves in marriage or the celibate life, in a family, in a profession and in the various activities of society

<sup>980</sup> Vatican II Document, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 33

they tell of the radical newness and unique character of an involvement and participation which has as its purpose the spreading of the Gospel that brings salvation.<sup>981</sup>

One surprise the researcher has gained in the course of this research is that these people do not even know that they are catechists or that they are discharging catechetical functions. Despite the fact that they discharge all those roles in parishes and dioceses which the Fathers or Vatican II assigned to the laity like lectors, members of pastoral councils, or financial committees, of diocesan tribunals, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, etc. *in addition to those which were already being carried out by the laity before Vatican II like the Seminary Professors*; yet they all think that the only catechist in the parish is the institutionalized ones i.e. the salaried or uniformed catechist who has his office in the parish. These well-known associations gather once or twice every week with the objective of deepening their faith through prayer. At the end of every prayer meeting, there is always in their agenda the external apostolate which is often given as home work. The people have apostolic zeal and are ready to carry out assignments given to them or mapped out for their associations. Under this external apostolate come the following works:

#### 5.1.2.3 Teaching Apostolate

For a very long time, it is quite common in the Catholic Church in Igboland for pious associations especially the Congregation for Catholic Doctrine (C.C.D.) and the Legion of Mary to devote themselves to teaching catechism to both children and adults preparing for the reception of the first communion or the sacrament of confirmation. They also help in marriage instruction or conducting the Sunday instructions in the areas where the priests have a lot occupying them. Those that are musically gifted do also contribute in the teaching of songs or helping the church community in learning new hymns or new responses during the Eucharistic celebration. These people have helped the Church to save a lot of money. We all know that in the Western world, all these people are employed by the church and are well paid. But in Africa in general, it is a voluntary service rendered free of charge.

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<sup>981</sup> John Paul II., *Chrisfideles Laici*, no.15

#### **5.1.2.4 Visiting Apostolate**

The members of this group are equally generous. They are always ready to help the poor, the aged and the handicapped in their midst. Generosity can be extended to the needy through such associations or societies like Saint Vincent de Paul, and the Red Cross. They always try to see Christ in the poor, the sick, the downtrodden etc. Christ made it clear that whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me (*Mt.25:40*). Some of the members are assigned to visit the childless poor widows, the sick people, the prisoners etc. thereby fulfilling the injunction of the Lord: I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcome me, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me (*Mt. 25:35-36*). Time without number, this visitation has been a source of consolation to many people. It has also brought back those who would have left the Catholic faith due to sickness or hardship.

#### **5.1.2.4 Evangelical Apostolate**

The members of this group try also not only to hear the word of God but also to put into practice the instructions of Christ “go and make disciples of all nations... and teaching them...” (*Mt.28:19*). They go around looking for those who have not embraced the Catholic faith. They try to preach to them and when they eventually accept the faith, they catechize them so that they may receive baptism and become Christians. They also periodically check on those they started or helped to start, ensuring they have remained faithful. These people are often the link between the lay faithful and the parish priest. They gather information and messages from the people to the parish priest and also give messages from the parish priest to the faithful.

These various groups in the church who are helping in the catechetical work convince us really that the laity is a strong force to reckon with in the grassroots evangelization. They also show that catechesis is not the work of one person rather “the concern of all the Christian faithful, under the guidance of legitimate ecclesiastical authority.”<sup>982</sup> Every member of the Christian

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<sup>982</sup>Can. 774§1

community shares in the responsibility for the catechetical effort in proportion to each one's role. In the same line also *Ecclesia in Africa* as well as *Directory for Catechesis, General Catechetical Directory, Catechesi Tradendae* all emphasize that catechesis has always and will always be a work for the whole church derived from each member's share in the priestly, prophetic and leadership of Christ's mission. Ndiokwere sees this Group apostolate as a really good development that exists today in Nigeria such that:

At least we are sure that a change of mentality has been brought about by the phenomenon of 'Group Apostolate'.... It is no more believed that only the priests or the catechists can fulfill these ministerial obligations and that Church is no more that of the missionary, the priest and his catechist. If these failed to perform or if they annoyed any member, the aggrieved one may not abandon the Church! No. There is that awareness of Group ownership and Group concern.<sup>983</sup>

These Groups apostolate when it is well organized and supervised by the Parish Priest have many advantages. It helps people to discover their talents and the group co-ordinates the little helps which people give from their talent. It also provides a wider and more varied apostolate since different people with different talents are members.

### **5.1.3. Trained Catechists**

They are the lay men and women called in their state of life by God to serve in the Church. In Igboland, they are mostly men. They are employed by the local ordinary or priest in accordance with the needs of the local community to carry out the missionary work i.e. to make Christ known, loved and followed daily by all humanity. They are lay members of Christ's faithful who have received proper formation and are outstanding in their living their Christian life. Under the direction of the missionaries, they are to represent the gospel teaching and engage in the liturgical worship and in works of charity.<sup>984</sup> They are the people that Canon 785§ 2 says

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<sup>983</sup>Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow*, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges, pgs.193-194

<sup>984</sup> Can. 785§1

should “receive their formation in schools founded for this purpose. If there are no schools, they are to be formed under the direction of the missionaries.” The CEP only recognized two types of catechists under this group namely, the full-time catechists and part-time catechists. However, in the course of our research we discovered more groups like the Volunteer and Missionary Lay Catechists; we shall also discuss them below:

#### **5.1.3.1 Full-time Lay Catechist**

Here, the candidate devotes his life completely to this service and is officially employed and paid either by the parish community or the diocese. He is officially recognized as the Catechist by everybody who knows him. The name Catechist takes over his real name. People who will remember his real name are mostly his age or class mates in the school. He is a community animator. His work cuts across almost every aspect of the parish activities. He gives out his whole time and energy in discharging this apostolate in accordance with the decision of the Parish Priest who determines his daily programme. He spends most of his days in teaching catechism in the Church, in compounds, village centres, schools or other such institutions of learning, preparing candidates for various sacraments. Sometimes he can also delegate his work to the Group Apostolates who are ready to help him. He has also office in the Church compound, - most of the time near the Parish Priest’s office. He always acts as the go-between with regards to the Christian community and their Parish Priest on the one hand, as well as among the Parish Priest, the Church and indigenes on the other hand. He is in most cases consulted before people see the Parish Priest. As Innocent Enweh observed: “He takes the people’s request to the Parish Priest and books appointment with the priest on behalf of the people.... When young couples wish to get registered for marriage in the Church they begin the process by consulting with him who gives them the necessary counsel on the initial steps to take. Sometimes he takes them to the Priest.”<sup>985</sup> He is really the bridge between Parish Priest and the people. People normally take his advice very seriously. In fact, more people come to his office than that of the Parish Priest. He is most of the time more in the office than the Parish Priest himself. Sometimes he conducts

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<sup>985</sup> Enwe I.I, “The Role of the Catechist in the Teaching of the Faith”, in: Catholic Diocese of Nsukka 2013 Catechist Seminar entitled The Catechist and the Teaching of the Faith Today, 6<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2013, p.10

enquires and forwards the end result to the Parish Priest to take decision. He also attends to the other needs of the Local Church Communities. In most cases and unless another person is co-opted to take up these roles, he is the Parish Registrar i.e. keeping records is part of his work. It is his duty to register all the baptized, the confirmed and the married in the Church's official register for administrative purposes. He publishes marriage Banns. For him, religious instruction is of primary importance and takes most of his time.

At times he is delegated by the Parish Priest to represent him in most of the religious affairs taking place in nearby parishes or communities. In the absence of the Priest, he baptizes the dying, buries the dead and leads also in community prayers. He is the director of Sunday services without a priest. He also visits the Christian families (Home Visitation). He also pays visit to the sick and distressed. During such visits he prays for the individuals involved and brings them comfort by ministration of the word of God to them. He acts as an informant to the Parish Priest, where the matter is grave such as cases of severe sickness or bereavement, he reasons with the Parish Priest to arrange a visit to the family to give the afflicted hope and encouragement. Sometimes in the course of his visitation he may find and settle some minor misunderstanding among Christians which do not require the attention of the Parish Priest.

He also has other liturgical responsibilities like preparing for masses. Most of the times his programs lies in the hands of the Parish Priest who may need his attention at any moment of the day for any message or work directly touching the parish activities. Many of them normally live near the Parish for prompt response to urgent calls.

#### **5.1.3.2 Part-time Lay Catechists**

The Part-time Catechist has less responsibility than the Full-time Catechist. The Full-time Catechist is completely occupied with the Parish work while the Part-time or Auxiliary Catechist spares some of his time to participate in the catechetical apostolate of the Church. In the Western world where the work of the priests, religious, deacons and catechists is regarded as a job, we can say that the Part time Catechist works for 30 or 50% of his daily work time. He usually has another job that occupies his time. He could be a civil servant, businessmen, or professional handworker etc. One thing clear is that he does not depend totally on his salary or allowance to

take care of his family or himself. In the Parish where we have both Full-time and Part-time Catechists, the Part-time Catechist most of the time takes order from his Full-time colleague. He regards the Full-time Catechist as his senior colleague. In most cases, the Part time catechist does not receive direct information from the parish priest and vice versa. The Full-time Catechist is the official channel of information most of the time.

It is really unfortunate that most of the parishes in Igboland make use of the Part time Catechist who does not invest his full time and energy in the catechetical work. Today the catechist office no longer exists in many parishes. In the home parish of the writer, most of the catechists double also as businessman, professional wine taper or civil servants etc. The same is also applicable to most of the parishes in his home diocese (Nsukka) and also most of the parishes in Igboland. Nowadays, the Full-time Catechist is only found in rich urban parishes where the parish priest and his parish councilors see his inevitability based on great work to be done. But the truth of the matter is that rural parishes also seriously need the Full-time Catechist and can afford to foot his bill if they make it a priority. If actually they understand the significance of a catechist and his vital role in evangelization, they would do all it takes to employ him on a full-time basis. Their inability to realize this need can be rightly blamed on the rural parish priests who should not only know better, but also has the responsibility to make their parishioners realize the importance of both the catechist and catechesis. We should not forget the consequences of part time services of lay Catechists as observed by Ndiokwere:

- Unavailability of the catechist when his services may be needed urgently, e.g. at Mass, sick-calls or funeral ceremonies etc.;
- Laxity, arising from possible tiredness after completing his main assignment from which he derives financial support;
- Haphazard attention may be paid to the part-time job.<sup>986</sup>

One thing clear is that our catechesis will continue to depreciate and suffer in as much as we continue to look at the cost and employ cheap labour in carrying out the work of catechesis.

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<sup>986</sup> Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges*, p.220

### 5.1.3.3 Volunteer Lay Catechist

Here we refer to the Lay Faithful who out of their magnanimity make themselves available to do the work of a catechist without any remuneration. Their singular motivation is to use their time and talent to serve God and mankind for the expansion of the Gospel and deepening of the Christian faith. They mostly work as Part-time Catechists since they also have to do other jobs or business to sustain their family. In this group, every baptized Christian is expected to play his role in the work of the catechesis since “the vocation of the *laity* to catechesis springs from the sacrament of Baptism.”<sup>987</sup> All the baptised (Bishops, priests, religious and laity), according to their specific ecclesial, hierarchical roles have a specific catechetical mission. In other words, all baptised are catechists in the broad sense of the term. In fact, parents, teachers, principals in Catholic schools, directors of religious education and youth ministry, deacons, priests and bishops etc. are all called to the ministry of catechists. All of these catechists have their own role and unique responsibilities in helping people acquire and deepen their Christian faith. Christ made it clear when he said: “Go therefore make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (*Mt.28:19-20*). We are all called to continue this mission of Jesus’ first disciples. The ministry of catechesis is one of the central means to accomplish this “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” Through catechesis we are educated and formed in the faith and called to “make disciples of all nations.”

For many people, the office of the catechist like that of the pastor or the deacon should remain a voluntary service since it is a vocation. According to the *National Directory for Catechesis*, “men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds are called to share in the Church's catechetical mission. Most are volunteers. They bring a wide variety of talents and abilities to their task. They have widely divergent levels of experience and competence in catechesis. Programs of formation should be designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as

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<sup>987</sup>*General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 231

disciples in Christ.”<sup>988</sup> Also the *General Directory for catechesis* notes that the call to the ministry of catechesis “springs from the Sacrament of Baptism” and that “the Church awakens and discerns this divine vocation and confers the mission to catechize”.<sup>989</sup> The catechetical leader is sent with “a mission or a purpose to be for others, to hear the call of one’s faith so penetratingly that the natural response is to be for others, enabling that same faith to happen over and over again” (LL:19, 243). The Catechetical or Evangelization minister is a professional by virtue of training, expertise and experience in ministry. They should be well-formed, skilled and competent to complete their work. Consequently it is not enough for one to volunteer to do this job. Therefore, care should be taken in assuring that those properly trained be involved in handling Catechesis and in this regard, those to occupy the position of lay catechists.

#### **5.1.3.4 Missionary Lay Catechists**

When we talk of Missionary Lay Catechists, what quickly comes to mind is the catechists who worked with the foreign missionaries. Such catechists saw their existence out of the difficulties the foreign missionaries encountered in conveying and explaining the message of salvation in Asia and Africa.<sup>990</sup> The missionaries encountered on the local soil series of handicaps in the service of the gospel. The main handicap was the local language. The customs and habits of the people were also a barrier to their mission to communicate fully with the people.<sup>991</sup> It is under such situation, that the Lay Catechist was born. *Catechesi Tradendae* declares that they are absolutely necessary for the growth of the Church. “Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up without them.”<sup>992</sup> And in the same document, John Paul II remarked that “the term ‘catechists’ belongs above all to the catechists in mission

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<sup>988</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 55A

<sup>989</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, p.231

<sup>990</sup> SEUMOIS, A., *Problems of the Missionary Catechist*, 200.

<sup>991</sup> Comby, J., *How to Understand the History of Christian Mission*, 94, 100-101

<sup>992</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.66

lands. There are those who have the “specific responsibility for catechesis”; and there are those who collaborate in various forms of the apostolate.<sup>993</sup>

Missionary catechists are indigenous lay people, mostly fathers of families, taken into the service as salaried employees and dependent on missionary priests, in order to help in catechetical work as well as in the other functions of the ministry for which holy orders are not necessary.<sup>994</sup> The tasks entrusted to them are multiple: preaching to non-Christians; catechizing catechumens and those already baptized; leading community prayer, especially at the Sunday liturgy in the absence of a priest; helping the sick and presiding at funerals; training other catechists in special centres or guiding volunteer catechists in their work; taking charge of pastoral initiatives and organizing parish functions; helping the poor and working for human development and justice.<sup>995</sup> These lay catechists became the missionary’s local collaborators. Although these native collaborators knew very little of the theological and philosophical structure in which the articles of faith were set, yet, with their simple but firm conviction of the kerygmatic message, they were able to relate the story of salvation and the mysteries of redemption, teach the essential prayers and duties of a Christian, help in the communication between the priest and the people and visit the sick and the needy. With all these duties, around and for the priest, except those that required the power of orders, functionally they grew to be pastors and teachers in one.<sup>996</sup> They performed functions such as interpretation, catechesis, pastoral care, etc.

With the missionary era over in many places especially in Igboland, it is almost generally taken for granted that we no longer have missionary catechists. However, such assumption has been faulted by the discovery of this researcher that there are still today Lay Catechists who work as missionaries especially in places where the Catholic faith is still in the elementary stage. Such

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<sup>993</sup>*Guide for Catechist*, no.4.

<sup>994</sup> Seumois A., “Missionary Catechists, ”*New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. III, McGraw Hill Book Company, New York, 1967, p.235.

<sup>995</sup>*Guide for Catechist*, no.4

<sup>996</sup>Emmanuel, S.J., *The Lay Catechist, Ecclesiological Considerations Toward identifying Him in the Ministerial Structure of the Mission Churches*, Colombo: Lake House Printers and Publishers, 1978, pgs. 57-58.

Catechists migrate to a place where the faith is not strong and live there permanently for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel. Even without any attractive remuneration, they still insist on living in the area and preaching the Gospel. An example of such missionary catechist is Catechist Augustine Iwuh from Mbaise, Ahiara Diocese, Imo State of Nigeria, who migrated to Regina Caeli Parish Obehie Asa, Aba Diocese, Abia State Nigeria for full-time missionary catechist work, and has been doing it for more than forty years now. He is still not retired, and has resolved to die a catechist in that rural parish where he has been working. This is happening in Igboland, Nigeria. This catechist rightly sees himself as a missionary. Indeed he is. In a discussion with him, he told the researcher of Catechist Godwin Akwarandu who also migrated to the same parish he is working and worked for over twenty years as a missionary catechist before he went back to his village to continue with the work of Full-time Catechist till date. However, he remarked that missionary catechists are now endangered species in the Catholic Church. It is very rare to see such people today. Nevertheless, even if Catechist Augustine Iwuh should be the last man standing among the missionary catechists, the truth remains that the Church has missionary catechists. It is also possible that there are a few others like him scattered and blooming in some remote areas. There might also be catechists or other lay persons who are ready to be missionary catechists if the Church shows an encouraging interest in their sponsorship.

## 5.2 Responsibilities and Tasks of a Lay Catechist.

There is this constantly repeated question concerning the Lay Catechists in Igboland: Are Lay Catechists still needed in Igboland? Many are of the opinion that their roles and responsibilities in our time is fast fading or have faded, because we have many indigenous priests who have no need of interpreters like the missionaries before them. Besides, with advancement in technology, people can now stay in their houses and book appointments with the priest through phone calls, e-mails, etc. Today one can stay in any part of the world and scan a document and send it directly through WhatsApp to the parish priest and also get an electronic feedback. Many parishes nowadays have websites where current issues are raised and answered. There are also group apostolates by pious associations who offer voluntary services in areas like preparing candidates for first communion and confirmation; marriage instructions, including family planning; preparing catechumens for baptism; and organizing Bible classes and Bible quiz. All these factors raise some doubts as to the need for and relevance of Lay Catechists today.

However, the lay Catechist is still needed despite the invaluable assistance of these various group apostolates and associations. In fact, it is now that the catechist has more jobs. The catechist helps to organize and harmonize the catechetical activities of these groups under the special directives of the parish priest. His role is no more merely that of the Lay Catechist of the old missionary era, whose function was limited to translating the language of the White Missionary into the vernacular, and perhaps collected the A.M.C or other Church levies for the parish priest. In our modern age, his role has taken different shape which has more responsibilities. Today “he is a teacher, an instructor, counsellor, community leader, social organizer and mobilizer, an animator, father of the priest, vocation promoter, and custodian of the Church property as well as a Soldier of Christ - more important than the knight. Most importantly, he is the priest’s closest helper in the pastoral ministry.”<sup>997</sup> Group apostolates and associations are very important and helpful to the church and will help to lessen the burden of the catechist but these cannot take the place of the catechist. They can only supplement and help to reduce his work-load because “as regards the authentic teaching of the Church and the perennial tradition of the Church, especially in the local areas, the catechist is more competent, trustworthy and reliable promoter and defender of the Catholic faith. In spite of their enthusiasm and knowledge of the bible and catechism, these other bodies cannot be trusted.”<sup>998</sup> So, even if the activities of the group apostolates help in the growth of the Church especially local Church, the catechist still remains in-charge as the overall coordinator of these catechetical activities.

The catechist of today has still other areas of the apostolate apart from being the chief coordinator of the catechetical activities such as:

- I. Sick call and visitation of the sick;
- II. Funeral arrangements, especially in situations where the priest is not available;
- III. Marriage instructions and banns of marriage;
- IV. General supervision of Church activities in the community;
- V. General catechism classes;

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<sup>997</sup> Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges*, p.217

<sup>998</sup> Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges*, pp.211-212

- VI. Organization and supervision of lay apostolate groups;
- VII. Organizing catechist's Sunday services.<sup>999</sup>

Outside the above, catechists in the secularized atmosphere of the modern world, as lay people have a particular role to play in bringing the light of the gospel to bear on various situations. In any discussion on the theology of the laity, catechists will necessarily occupy a special place.<sup>1000</sup> Pope John Paul II's word to the catechists of Angola during his visit to that country will help us to see the importance of our lay catechists. He said: "So many times it has fallen to you to strengthen and build up the young Christian communities, and even to found new ones through the first proclamation of the gospel. If missionaries could not be there for this first proclamation or had to leave before it could be followed up, it was you, the catechists, who instructed the catechumens, prepared people for the sacraments, taught the faith and were leaders of the Christian community..."<sup>1001</sup> The fading role of the catechist can never be generalized. In some dioceses in Nigeria, for example the home diocese of the writer, the role of the catechist is still indispensable especially since there are many people who cannot read and write. The lay apostolate groups and voluntary organizations are very useful, however, they cannot take the place of the Lay Catechist.

### 5.3 Necessity of Formation of Lay Catechists

Catechizing and being catechized are lifelong responsibilities for every Catholic. Days are gone when children do not ask question during the catechism classes. Today nobody can effectively teach catechism classes without doing enough research and reading of the documents of the church. Little wonder the catechists of today is expected to use the insights from sound education like psychology, and other human sciences, in presenting the Christian message according to age, needs, circumstances, and capabilities of the learner. The catechist of today is also expected to utilize various communication methods, creative activity, and group skills which

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<sup>999</sup> Ndiokwere N.I, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol. 1 Prospects and Challenges*, p.216

<sup>1000</sup> *Guide for Catechist*, no 33

<sup>1001</sup> *Guide for Catechist*, no 37

help the art of teaching. All these demand the formation of the catechist. Therefore, unless a catechist is adequately prepared, the teaching ministry will be of little effect, and in limited cases, may even be detrimental to the faith development of the young.

Those entrusted with catechetical ministry should recognize the necessity for adequate preparation and training of their catechists. In an address to a Plenary Assembly in April 1992, Pope John Paul II stated that: “To set high standards (for catechist training) means both to provide a thorough basic training and to keep it constantly updated. This is a fundamental duty, in order to ensure qualified personnel for the Church’s mission, with good training programmes and adequate structures, providing for all aspects of formation - human, spiritual, doctrinal, apostolic and professional.”<sup>1002</sup> Similarly, the NDC delineates the inclusion of the following six interrelated tasks for the development of full Christian faith:

- To deepen knowledge of faith;
- To provide a liturgical education that brings the faithful to full, conscious, and active participation in liturgy;
- To provide a moral formation that transmits Jesus’ attitudes to the faithful in a way that leads to interior transformation;
- To teach people to pray in such a way that catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer;
- To prepare the Christian to live in community;
- To prepare Christians to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.<sup>1003</sup>

Training of the catechist is very vital since catechesis is an integral part of the Church's evangelization ministry and the Church has always seen “catechesis as one of her primary

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<sup>1002</sup> John Paul II., *Christifideles Laici*, no. 60

<sup>1003</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, nos. 85-86; NDC, pp.59-62

tasks.”<sup>1004</sup> It follows that the formation, training and continued growth of catechists is a priority for diocesan and parish catechetical leadership. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that: “At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father...he suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever. To catechize is to reveal in the Person of Christ, the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him. Catechesis aims at putting people in communion with Jesus Christ.”<sup>1005</sup> The vision as described in the *GDC*, where an entire chapter highlights the importance and breadth of “formation for the service of catechesis,” guides the diocesan formation program. After detailing aspects of pastoral care of catechists in the local church, the Directory states that: “All of these tasks are born of the conviction that the quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel. The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained catechists.”<sup>1006</sup> Catechesis is so central to the Church’s mission of evangelization that if evangelization were to fail to integrate catechesis, initial faith aroused by the original proclamation of the Gospel would not mature, education in the faith through a deeper knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ would not transpire, and discipleship in Christ through genuine apostolic witness would not be fostered.<sup>1007</sup>

The training of the catechists will make them Christocentric in their teaching, which means the intention to transmit not one’s own teaching or that of some other master, but the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Truth that he communicates or, to put it more precisely, the Truth that he is....Whatever be the level of his [or her] responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his [or her] teaching and behavior the teaching and life of

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<sup>1004</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.1

<sup>1005</sup> CCC, 425

<sup>1006</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 234

<sup>1007</sup> *National Directory for Catechesis*, pp. 67-68

Jesus.<sup>1008</sup> This was why John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae* counsels that Catechists must be properly trained so that they can be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls them to account for the hope that is in them. Moreover, ten years before John Paul II elaborated the importance of the training of our catechists, Paul VI in his homily of 31st July, 1969 during the Eucharistic Celebration at the conclusion of the Symposium Organized by the Bishops of Africa in Kampala (Uganda) emphasized the importance of this training thus:

An immense task awaits your pastoral efforts, in particular the work of training those Christians called to the apostolate—the Clergy, the Men and Women Religious, the Catechists, the active Lay Men and Women. For, on the training and preparation of these local elements, these choice workers of the People of God, will depend the vitality, the development, and the future of the African Church. This is quite clear. It is the plan selected by Christ, that brother must save brother. But to achieve this evangelical purpose, may truly qualified brothers be the ministers, the servants, the spreaders of the good news and of grace and charity, in favour of their other brothers, who will themselves be called in turn to co-operate in the common work of building up the Church. All of this you know. We have therefore only to encourage and bless your resolution.<sup>1009</sup>

From the above, this formation is meant for all catechists<sup>1010</sup>, formation is not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all. In fact, both lay and religious, and also for Christian parents, who will be opportune to receive effective help for taking care of the initial and occasional catechesis for which they are responsible. In all areas of Church life formation is of primary importance. People who have never had the chance to learn cannot really know the truths of faith, nor can they perform actions which they have never been taught. For this reason “the whole community needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelization, each according to

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<sup>1008</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 6

<sup>1009</sup>Paul VI, Homily: Eucharistic Celebration at the Conclusion of the Symposium Organized by the Bishops of Africa, Kampala (Uganda), 31 July, 1969, no.1

<sup>1010</sup>Vatican Council II Documents, *Ad Gentes*, nos.17 & 26

his or her specific role within the Church.”<sup>1011</sup> Paul VI advised bishops to take pains to see that catechetical instruction -which is intended to make the faith, as illumined by teaching, a vital, explicit and effective force in the lives of men-be given with sedulous care to both children and adolescents, youths and adults. The bishops should take care that catechists be properly trained for their function so that they will be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church and will have both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of pedagogical methods.<sup>1012</sup>The need for the proper training of catechists has often been stressed by the Magisterium, because every apostolic activity “which is not supported by properly trained persons is condemned to failure.”<sup>1013</sup> The issue of training of our catechists must be seen as a *sine qua non* if we really have to take very seriously the command of Christ which is to “go and teach all nations” (*Mt 28:19*). If we should really understand the description of Catechesis given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as the education in the faith of children, young people and adults, and add that to the position of *Catechesi Tradendae* which includes especially “the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted generally speaking in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life,”<sup>1014</sup> then it becomes obvious that there is no way this can be achieved without the proper training of our catechists.

#### **5.4 Specific Aspects of the Training for Lay Catechists**

The formation of the catechists is one of the major responsibilities of the Church. The observation of Lucio Soravito that nobody is born a catechist and nobody becomes a catechist by a spontaneous mutation remains valid till today. What this means is that those who are called to be catechists need to be trained in different and various areas where the local Church have need. We have to understand that catechists are facilitators who need to be trained before actually entering into this ministry because the development of those capabilities, qualities and skills

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<sup>1011</sup> Synod of Bishops, Special Assembly for Africa, *Relatio ante disceptationem*, 11 April 1994, no. 8

<sup>1012</sup> Paul VI, *Christus Dominus*, Vatican City, 1965, no.14

<sup>1013</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.19

<sup>1014</sup> CCC, art.5, Also CT, no 18

which are indispensable for evangelization can only be acquired through an organized itinerary of formation. It is necessary and laudable to prepare good instructors in a field of such urgency and delicacy like catechesis on which the future of the Church depends. The *General Catechetical Directory* rightly observes that the summit and centre of catechetical formation of any sort lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the catechists as the co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord be adequately prepared to assume responsibility for their work in the parish. This implies that this training of the catechists has to touch different aspects of formation such as “good training programmes and adequate structures, providing for all aspects of formation - human, spiritual, doctrinal, apostolic and professional;”<sup>1015</sup> for as the needs differ from group to group, so the training of catechists will have to be adapted for the groups envisaged. It would be useful, therefore, for catechists to know in advance the sort of work they will be called to and make acquaintance with the groups concerned.<sup>1016</sup> They need to be trained in different fields of the catechetical ministry since there are various groups in the community that may require the services of him like the young people and adults, men and women, students and workers, Catholics, other Christians and non-Christians; and also he has to reply to any arguments against the faith that are brought to him. In such a situation it would be a shocking anomaly to see those entrusted with the message of truth bested by teachers of error.<sup>1017</sup> We will take a step further to discuss in detail the aspects of the training of the catechists demanded by the church for their unique apostolate.

#### **5.4.1 Theological Training**

The term “theology” comes from two Greek words *theos* meaning God, and *logos* meaning word or study. Therefore, Theology simply put means the study of God. The whole idea we are trying to put across here is that the catechists should be thought Theology which is the science that handles the existence, character, and attributes of God, his laws and government, the

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<sup>1015</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.60

<sup>1016</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no 11

<sup>1017</sup> Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, Vatican City, November 28, 1959, no.22

doctrines we are to believe, and the duties we are to practice... the science of Christian faith and life.<sup>1018</sup> Theological training is a necessity for every catechist. With the daily offshoot of the Pentecostal Churches and their influence in the modern world, it is not enough to impart on catechists a shallow knowledge of the faith. On the contrary, a sound doctrinal training is required that will enable them to stand their ground whenever they are challenged for their belief. Adequate knowledge of Catholic doctrine with certain degree of scientific theological methods must become the norm of the catechetical centre. The need for the doctrinal training is obvious for the catechists since catechists must first and foremost understand the essentials of Christian doctrine before they can adequately communicate it to others in a clear and interesting way without omissions or doubt of error.<sup>1019</sup>

In the training institute, Sacred Scripture should be as it were the soul of the entire formation. The reason for this is that: “Sacred scripture is the written record of the faith-life of the people of God responding to his revelation of himself. The extensive use of scripture which is such an integral parts of the modern catechetical renewal demands of necessity that the teacher, the catechist, is a living witness to this faith, a person whose life is lived in faith.<sup>1020</sup> Sacred Scripture will always be the main field of study and will be the soul of the program. Around it will be structured the other branches of theology. It should be borne in mind that the catechist must be qualified in the biblical pastoral, also in view of the comparison with the non-Catholic confessions and with the sects which often use the Bible in an incorrect way.

Next to the scripture, another important document which every catechist needs to master as an indispensable aspect of his theological training is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It is a book that contains an orderly synthesis of the basic doctrines of the Catholic faith. As the Holy Father John Paul II affirms in his Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, in the *Catechism* there

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<sup>1018</sup><https://bible.org/article/what-theology>

<sup>1019</sup>*General Catechesis*, no.23

<sup>1020</sup> Frances M.C., “Catechetical Formation of Religious”, In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetics*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, pp.229 – 230

are "new things and old things (cf. *Mt* 13: 52), since the faith is always the same and at the same time it is the source of the lights which are ever new." The service which the *Catechism* aims at pertains and is relevant to each catechist. The same Apostolic Constitution attests that it is offered to the Pastors and to the faithful, so that it may help them to fulfill, inside and outside the ecclesial community, "their mission to announce the faith and to call to the evangelical life." Moreover, it is offered to each man who may ask us the reason for the hope in us (cf. *I Pt* 3:15) and who may desire to know what the Church believes. There is no doubt that the catechists will find in the new Catechism a source of inspiration and a mine of knowledge for their specific mission.<sup>1021</sup>

*The General Directory of Catechesis* sees also as absolute necessity, that the formation of catechists should acquaint them with certain fundamental elements of human science, which have greatly developed in our time. For in pastoral care sufficient use should be made not only of theological principle but also of secular findings especially in the fields of psychology, sociology and African anthropology.<sup>1022</sup> In addition to these sciences that have been recommended by the Second Vatican Council, other relevant human sciences, which should be emphasized in the formation of catechists, are the sciences of education, communication and social ethics. Also for the effective handling of catechetical instruction, it is recommendable that the catechist should have adequate knowledge of the liturgy, church history, apologetics and vocational training. Other areas that should not be neglected under the theological trainings are pastoral methods such as on the building of small Christian Communities especially now that the grass root of evangelization is the concern of every diocese, approaches to evangelization, pastoral planning within the Small Christian Communities.<sup>1023</sup> It is therefore worrisome that most of the lay catechists in Igboland are bereft of any theological training. For instance, in the Catholic Diocese of Aba, Igboland Nigeria, the researcher learnt through the Chairman of the Catechist in that

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<sup>1021</sup> *Guides for the Catechists*, nos. 39-40

<sup>1022</sup> Vatican II Council Documents *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 Dec. 1965, no.62

<sup>1023</sup> Barga T., *Catechetical Mission of the Church in Nigeria - A Collaborative Ministry*, Maiduguri: Fab Anieh (Nigeria) Limited, 2006, p.138

diocese that only catechist Nnachi has a Diploma in Theology among all the lay Catechists in the diocese. Some diocese in Igboland may not even have any Catechist with that level of theology training.

#### **5.4.2 Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism**

In our world today, there is constant rivalry, rancor, unhealthy competition even among those who confess and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. The daily occurrences of this ugly experience of hatred among Christians of different confessions continue to increase as new sects of churches spring up every day claiming to be the right church from Jesus Christ and condemning others to be the fake ones. In sadly, discord among Christians “openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature.”<sup>1024</sup> This is also against the wish of our Lord Jesus Christ who prayed to the Father, “may they be one in us ... so that the world may believe it was you who sent me” (*Jn.17:21*), and goes on to warn us that “if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” (*Mk.3:24*). Also St. Paul in support of this said, “We are one body and one spirit...called to the one hope...One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all” (*Eph. 4, 4-6*). It is based on this that all Christian communities are advised to participate in ecumenical dialogue and in other initiatives designed to promote Christian unity so that Jesus' prayer for Christian unity will not be in vain. A renewed commitment to ecumenism is another fruit resulting from the Church's allowing herself to be transformed by the Gospel of Jesus and his presence. The Second Vatican Council recounts that the divisions among Christians are a counter-witness: "Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature."<sup>1025</sup> Overcoming these divisions is undeniably a part of a fully credible following of Christ. What unites Christians is much stronger than what divides them. Consequently, we need to encourage each other in seeking to be faithful in witnessing to the Gospel and to learn to grow in unity and dialogue. Such dialogue can be conducted through initiatives such as

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<sup>1024</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.23

<sup>1025</sup>Vatican Council II Documents, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 1

ecumenical translations of the Bible, theological study of various dimensions of the Christian faith or by bearing common evangelical witness to justice, peace and respect for human dignity. For this purpose care will be taken to set up national and diocesan commissions for ecumenism.<sup>1026</sup>

More still, dialogue with those of other religions like Muslim, African Traditional Religion, etc. should form part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Therefore, commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of good will. Christians cannot forget that many Muslims try to imitate the faith of Abraham and to live the demands of the Decalogue. In this regard the message of the Synod emphasizes that the Living God, Creator of heaven and earth and the Lord of history, is the Father of the one great human family to which we all belong. As such, he wants us to bear witness to him through our respect for the values and religious traditions of each person, working together for human progress and development at all levels,<sup>1027</sup> especially, in these times when people belonging to different religions are increasingly living together in the same areas, in the same cities and their daily workplaces. According to John Paul II

When Christians live side-by-side with persons of other religions, they have a particular obligation to testify to the oneness and universality of the saving mystery of Jesus Christ and to the consequent necessity of the Church as the means of salvation for all humanity. This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that 'one religion is as good as another. It is clear, then, that interreligious dialogue can never be a substitute for the proclamation and propagation of the faith, which constitute the primary goal of the Church's preaching, catechesis and mission.<sup>1028</sup>

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<sup>1026</sup>John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 65

<sup>1027</sup>John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 66

<sup>1028</sup>John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis*, no.68

Following from the above, the realization of the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue should be the concern of every baptized Christians more especially the catechists. The very mission of the catechists makes them to be necessarily involved in this aspect of the apostolate of promoting an ecumenical spirit in the community, beginning with the catechumens and newly baptized. They should have a deep desire for Christian unity, should willingly engage in dialogue with Christians of other denominations, and should commit themselves generously to ecumenical initiatives, keeping to their particular role and following the Church's directives as specified by the Episcopal Conference and the local Bishop their catechetical activity, therefore, and their teaching of religion in schools should instill an openness to ecumenical cooperation.<sup>1029</sup>

Sequel to this, catechists, with their task of communicating the faith, should be open to this kind of dialogue and be trained to take part in it. However, catechists being considered to be the suitable candidate for counteracting the influence of the sects as they have the task of teaching the faith and of fostering the growth of Christian life, should as a matter of priority be made

To study first of all what exactly the sects teach and the points on which they particularly attack the Church, so as to be able to point out the inconsistencies in their position; to forestall their encroachment by giving positive instruction and encouraging the Christian community to greater fervour; and to proclaim clearly the Christian message. They should give personal attention to people and their problems, helping them to clarify doubts and to be wary of the specious promises of the sects.<sup>1030</sup>

They should also be taught to be open to Inter-religious dialogue and be made to realize its value and put it into practice in accordance with the guidelines of the *Magisterium*, especially those of *Redemptoris Missio*, and of the subsequent document *Dialogue and Proclamation*, which was drawn up jointly by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the *CEP*, and of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. These guidelines include:

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<sup>1029</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.14

<sup>1030</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.16

1. Listening to the Spirit who blows where He wills (cf. *Jn. 3:8*); respecting his work in souls; and striving for inner purification, without which dialogue cannot take place or bear fruit.
2. Accurate knowledge of the religions practiced in the area: their history and organization; the values in them which, like "*seeds of the Word*", can be a "*preparation for the gospel*"; their limitations and errors which are not in conformity with the gospel and which should be respectively completed and corrected.
3. A conviction that salvation comes from Christ and that, therefore, dialogue does not dispense one from proclamation, that the Church is the ordinary way of salvation and that only she possesses the fullness of revealed truth and salvific means ...
4. Practical cooperation with non-Christian religious bodies in facing the great challenges to humanity such as the bringing about of peace, justice, development etc... There should always be an attitude of esteem and openness towards persons. God is the Father of all, and it is his love that should unite the human family in working for good.<sup>1031</sup>

Initiatives in this area should be undertaken in the context of programs approved by the Bishop and, when necessary, by the Episcopal Conference or the Holy See. Catechists should not act unilaterally, and especially should do nothing against the norms laid down.

In addition to the above, attention should also be given to other subjects connected with local conditions: the inculturation of Christianity in the country or region; the promotion of justice and human development in the local socio-economic situation; the history of the country; the religious practices, language, problems and needs of the area in which the catechist is to work.<sup>1032</sup> Catechists, by their very mission, are necessarily involved in this aspect of the apostolate and should promote an ecumenical spirit in the community, beginning with the catechumens and newly baptized. They should have a deep desire for Christian unity, should willingly engage in dialogue with Christians of other denominations, and should commit themselves generously to ecumenical initiatives, keeping to their particular role and following the Church's directives as specified by the Episcopal Conference and the local Bishop. They should also try to have good relations with catechists and leaders of other denominations, in accord with

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<sup>1031</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.15

<sup>1032</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.23

their Pastors and, when so charged, as their representatives. They should avoid stirring up useless rivalries; should help the faithful to live in harmony with and respect for Christians of other denominations, while fully maintaining their own Catholic identity; and should join other believers in working for peace. The Lay Catechist cannot accomplish this arduous task without adequate training in these areas.

With regard to African traditional religion, a serene and prudent dialogue will be able, on the one hand, to protect Catholics from negative influences which condition the way of life of many of them and, on the other hand, to foster the assimilation of positive values such as belief in a Supreme Being who is Eternal, Creator, Provident and Just Judge, values which are readily harmonized with the content of the faith. They can even be seen as a *preparation for the Gospel*, because they contain precious *semina Verbi* which can lead, as already happened in the past, a great number of people to be open to the fullness of Revelation in Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel. Therefore, Lay Catechists should be trained to treat the adherents of African traditional religion with great respect and esteem, and all inaccurate and disrespectful language should be avoided. For this purpose, suitable courses in African traditional religion should be given in houses of formation for priests and religious.<sup>1033</sup> The same training requirement is applicable to the Lay Catechists.

### 5.4.3 Liturgical Training

Liturgy is the outstanding means where by the faithful may express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery<sup>1034</sup> of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.<sup>1035</sup> It is the peak

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<sup>1033</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 65-67

<sup>1034</sup> A mystery is a reality that is both visible and hidden. Jesus Christ's death and Resurrection become present to us and effective for us in the liturgical life of the Church. His death and Resurrection are hidden now in the eternity of God, but as Risen Lord and Head of the Church, Jesus Christ calls us to share in them through the liturgy of the Church, that is, by the visible gathering of the community for worship and remembrance of what God has done for us. It is the Holy Spirit, the source of the Church's life, who draws us together through liturgical actions, the chief of which are the Sacraments. The term liturgy itself has a broader application than that of Sacrament, for it embraces all the official public prayer life of the Church, while the term Sacrament refers to a particular celebration of Christ's salvific work. cf. <http://rediscover.archspm.org/belonging/what-is-liturgy-why-is-it-important/>

of Christian expression of faith and the official public worship as a Christian community's action. The ultimate goal of catechesis remains to bring Christians to meet their God in the liturgical events being celebrated in worship. It is only through the liturgical celebrations of the Church that we can participate in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, that is, his passing through death from this life into eternal glory. The liturgies of the Church also help to teach us about Jesus Christ and the meaning of the mysteries we are celebrating. Little wonder the Christian Liturgy contains reading from the bible, prayer of the church, sermon often as catechesis and most importantly the sacramental celebration. Its purpose is to continue the work of evangelization and to inflame the hearts of the assembled people to open the treasure of their hearts to the sacraments as the redemptive action of Jesus in time. Liturgy therefore, is a source of catechesis bringing the word to life by the official encounter of Christians with their God through worship.<sup>1036</sup> In order to encourage active participation in this Paschal Mystery of Christ, the Second Vatican Council, in its epoch - making document on the Sacred Liturgy: the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), gave the local worshipping community a sense of belonging in the liturgical life of the Church thereby encouraging the Christian faithful to take full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebration of the sacraments<sup>1037</sup>, particularly, the Eucharist, which is the 'source and summit of the Christian life'.<sup>1038</sup> To achieve this, this document states thus: ...the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes...<sup>1039</sup>

John Paul II in his *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa* supports this idea of the active participation of the laity when he admonishes that "in practice, and without any

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<sup>1035</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963, no.2

<sup>1036</sup> Ekstron, R.R, *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary*, p.270

<sup>1037</sup> Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.cf. SC no.14

<sup>1038</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November, 1964, no.11

<sup>1039</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no.30

prejudice to the traditions proper to either the Latin or Eastern Church, "inculturation of the *liturgy*, provided it does not change the essential elements, should be carried out so that the faithful can better understand and live liturgical celebrations".<sup>1040</sup> This entails that the people should be guided and encouraged to celebrate the liturgy as a 'people', as a 'community', sharing one faith, one baptism, and one God, who is Father of us all (Eph. 4:5-6). However, this remains only a dream in as much as our catechists are untrained. Therefore, for a proper training of our Lay Catechists, liturgy must also, obviously, be given a prominent place, as catechists are to be leaders of community prayer.<sup>1041</sup> It is quite unfortunate that there are some of the catechists who do not know even the meaning of most of the things we do during the liturgy of the Holy Mass. Some untrained Lay Catechists may not even be able to explain why we bow before a crucifix, and genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament. Such ignorance will affect not only the quality of Catechesis given by such ignorant Lay Catechists; it will also affect their personal spirituality. They need to understand our way of worship so as to be able to explain it to those entrusted to their care. The need for the liturgical training was clearly brought out in the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* by the council Fathers. They went further to lay great emphasis on the urgent need of training our liturgical resource persons, through the compulsory teaching of the liturgy as a major subject by liturgical experts in seminaries, religious houses of studies, and other houses of formation (like catechetical schools), as well as imbuing the spiritual formation and atmosphere in such institutions with the spirit of the sacred liturgy.<sup>1042</sup> With the training of our catechists in liturgy, this will go a long way in making people to participate actively in every liturgical celebration.

#### 5.4.4 Cultural Training

Inculturation of Catechesis is an uphill task that demands caution. But it is a duty that the Church cannot dismiss today if she must evangelize the world as the Lord Jesus calls her to do.

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<sup>1040</sup>John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, no 64

<sup>1041</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.23

<sup>1042</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963, nos.14-17

The mission of translating the content of faith into the cultural milieu of our time is an ongoing process that demands the effort of the church authorities as well as the Christian community. The general trend of inculturation has its beginning in Old Testament from the book of Genesis through the New Testament to the present ecclesial community of today.<sup>1043</sup> It is on this point that “the training of catechists is to be thorough and adapted to cultural advances that more schools should be established for this purpose, and that spiritual sustenance and continuing education for the catechists must also be provided.”<sup>1044</sup> Culture whether African, Western or Asian etc. is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, which is defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts etc. The importance of cultural training continued to be realized daily. Little wonder the series on the *Christian Mission and culture in Africa*, insist on the proper understanding of the relationship between the Church, culture and Religion (Christianity and African Traditional Religions), because this is necessary for the success of the Christian Mission in Africa. They aim at helping people, especially the young to fit in well into cultures other than their own, so that cultural differences cease to be permanent source of tension and of personality fragmentation, leading, in the practice of the Faith, to what has been described as the ‘split-level Christianity’. To avoid this, in the interest of the Faith, the series insist that bicultural education must be balanced by trans-cultural education which aims at impressing on people that the Christian Religion and Faith transcends all cultures while doing their mission of evangelizing them without destroying them.<sup>1045</sup>

We can appreciate the cultural training of our catechists when we look back on our missionaries who brought us the gospel of Christ. As gratitude is shown for all the risks they took in trying to bring us the gospel, it is also to be borne in mind that the evangelizing-missionaries in Igboland instead of making the Gospel to penetrate the very life of cultures thereby becoming incarnate in them and overcoming those cultural elements that are incompatible with the faith and

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<sup>1043</sup> Barga; T, *Catechetical Mission of the Church in Nigeria-A Collaborative Ministry*, pp.111-112

<sup>1044</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Ad Gentes*, no.17

<sup>1045</sup> Onwubiko; O.O, *African Thought, Religion & Culture*, vol.1, p.viii

Christian living, and raising their values to the mystery of salvation which comes from Christ; ended up condemning and terming every culture and the tradition in Igboland which they did not understand taboo and fetish practices. The effect of this condemnation is still present today igniting unquenchable fire among families, relations, clans, villages, towns etc. among our people. Till today in the home diocese of the researcher, the Church is still in an unhealthy relationship with many individuals, groups, clans, villages etc. The missionaries went further even to condemn our endowed cultural values and priceless human qualities like our “profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world.”<sup>1046</sup> Also condemned was the veneration of our ancestors where we express our belief that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with the living. Is this not in some way a preparation for belief in the Communion of the Saints? These are the values which would have contributed in the evangelization of Igboland during their time. It is either that they were biased or that they were ignorant. This is true because the missionaries who evangelized Igboland forgot to remember that the Catholic Church “has never fostered an attitude of contempt or outright rejection of pagan teachings but, rather, has completed and perfected them with Christian doctrine, after purifying them from all dross of error. So, too, the Church, to a certain extent, consecrated native art and culture..., as well as the special customs and traditional institutions of the people...; she has even transformed their feast days, leaving unchanged their methods of computation and their form, but dedicating them to the memory of the martyrs and to the celebration of the sacred Mysteries.”<sup>1047</sup> Also Saint John’s proclamation that the Word became flesh reveals the inseparable bond between God’s word and the human words by which he communicates with us. There should be a relationship between the word of God and culture since God does not reveal himself in the abstract, but by using languages, imagery and expressions that are bound to different cultures. ...The phenomenon of culture is, in its various aspects, an essential datum of human experience. In the words of John Paul II “Man lives always according to a culture which is properly his, and which in turn creates among persons a bond which is properly theirs, one which determines the inter-human and social character of human

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<sup>1046</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesial in Africa*, no.42

<sup>1047</sup> John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, Vatican City, 1959, no.19

existence”.<sup>1048</sup> It is here that catechesis is expected to exhibit its role. Catechesis like all forms of evangelization is called to bring the gospel into the heart of the different cultures. For the Church makes the gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community; she transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within.<sup>1049</sup> John XXIII goes further to reiterate this point that: “Wherever artistic and philosophical values exist which are capable of enriching the culture of the human race, the Church fosters and supports these labors of the spirit. ... The Church, however, which is so full of youthful vigor and is constantly renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit, is willing, at all times, to recognize, welcome, and even assimilate anything that redounds to the honor of the human mind and heart..”<sup>1050</sup>

It is here that an urgent task awaits us to re-establish the bonds which have been strained and sometimes broken between the cultural values of our time and their lasting, Christian foundation. The political changes, the economic upheavals and the cultural changes have contributed greatly to this painful but clear moral awakening. Today there are many young and not so young people in industrialized nations who in every way cry out their discontent that what they "have" suffocates what they "are", while many others do not "have" what they need merely "to be". Everywhere people are demanding respect for their culture and their right to a fully human life. It is therefore through culture that the saying of Pascal is verified "Man surpasses man, infinitely."<sup>1051</sup> It is based on this that the Father, of the Second Vatican Council emphasized the urgency of forming the laity in order to make the gospel more present in the living fibre of Cultures, in the surroundings which will form tomorrow's mentalities and inspire its actions: the

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<sup>1048</sup> John Paul II, Address to UNESCO, 2 June 1980, no.6

<sup>1049</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 52

<sup>1050</sup> John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, no.19

<sup>1051</sup> John Paul II, “Letting the Gospel take root in every culture”, The Holy Father’s addresses to the Members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 10 January 1992,nos.5-6

family, school, university and means of social communications.<sup>1052</sup> Though all the laity is involved in this task, but the catechists will have a major role to play. They should according to the direction of the Vatican II Fathers be specifically prepared for it, with courses on the elements of Cultural anthropology and on their own culture, and should be aware of the guidelines that the Church has laid down on this matter and which may be summarized as follows:

- The gospel message, though it can never be identified with any one culture, is necessarily incarnated in cultures. From its very beginnings it was incarnated in certain specific cultures and one must take account of this if one is not to deprive the new Churches of values which are now the patrimony of the universal Church.
- The gospel is a force for renewal, and can rectify elements in cultures which do not conform to it.
- The local ecclesial communities, which are the primary subjects of inculturation, live out their daily experience of faith and charity in a particular culture, and the Bishop should indicate the best ways to bring out the positive values in that culture. The experts give incentive and support.
- Inculturation is genuine when it is guided by two principles: it must be founded on the word of God, revealed in the Scriptures, and must follow the Church's tradition and the guidance of the Magisterium; and it must never go against the Church unity that was willed by the Lord.
- Popular piety, understood as an expression of Catholic devotion colored by local values, traditions and attitudes, when purified of defects caused by ignorance and superstition, expresses the wisdom of God's people and is a privileged form of inculturation of the gospel.<sup>1053</sup>

If the above directives are followed and our catechists are well culturally trained and instructed, they will, under the guidance of their bishops, make highly valuable contributions in evangelizing the culture in Igboland. For according to John Paul II, "Faith in Christ who became incarnate in history does not only transform individuals inwardly, but also regenerates people and

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<sup>1052</sup> John Paul II, "The Gospel must bear fruit in every culture", in: The Holy Father's addresses to the Members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 15 January 1988, nos.2-3

<sup>1053</sup> *Guide for catechists*, no.12

their cultures. Thus at the end of antiquity, Christians, who lived in a culture to which they were greatly indebted, transformed it from within and instilled a new spirit in it. When this culture was threatened, the Church - with Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great and many others - passed on the heritage of Jerusalem, Athens and Rome to give birth to an authentic Christian civilization. Despite the imperfections inherent in any human achievement, this brought about a successful synthesis between faith and culture.”<sup>1054</sup> This explains that culture is the medium through which the Christian faith is incarnated and lived among people. It is also the fundamental dimension of humanity and that in promoting both the dialogue between cultures and the Gospel, the ideological divisions of mankind could be overcome and its threats to human existence removed.<sup>1055</sup> Ignorance of this reality makes Christianity look foreign and out of touch with people’s experience and living. So if our catechists are well informed and trained about the culture where they carry out their work of the evangelization, they will be better equipped to make greater and lasting impact among the people of God they work for.

#### **5.4.5 Intellectual Formation and Spiritual Training**

In the formation and training of the lay Catechists; the church will really benefit a lot if they are equipped like the priests intellectually, spiritually and with other forms of formation that will help them carry out the duty entrusted to them by the mother Church in whose vine yard they are working. According to Pius XII: ... it is necessary that those who are called to this kind of apostolate should not only get the spiritual and intellectual training ..., before going out on the mission field, but should learn in addition those subjects which will be most useful to them when they come to preach the Gospel...<sup>1056</sup>

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<sup>1054</sup> John Paul II, “The Gospel is good news for cultures”, The Holy Father’s addresses to the Members of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 14 March 1997, no.1

<sup>1055</sup> Shorter, A; *Towards A Theology of Inculturation*, New York: Orbis Books, 1997, p.230

<sup>1056</sup> Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, (on promotion of Catholic Missions to our Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and Other Local Ordinaries Enjoying Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See), 2 June 1951, no.21

From the above, it is recommendable that catechists should get different types of training to enable them discharge the work entrusted to their care effectively. Our next focus will be the need for the intellectual formation and spiritual training.

#### **5.4.6 Intellectual Formation**

To take the values of the gospel into the economic, social and political fields is a task especially for the laity. Catechists have an important role in the field of human development and the promotion of justice. Living as lay people in society, they can well understand, interpret and try to bring solutions to personal and social problems in the light of the gospel. They should therefore be close to the people, help them to understand the realities of social life so as to try to improve it, and, when necessary, they should have the courage to speak out for the weak and defend their rights.<sup>1057</sup> It is to be acknowledged that the need for intellectual formation of the catechists finds its specific justification in the challenge of the “new evangelization” to which our Lord is calling the Church. Also if we expect every Christian to be prepared to make a defense of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us (*I Pt.3:15*), then all the more should catechists who teach and guide others have diligent care of the quality of the intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity.

Today our society is marked by religious indifference, by a widespread mistrust regarding the real capacity of reason to reach objective and universal truth, and by fresh problems and questions brought up by scientific and technological discoveries. Such is the environment where we expect our catechists to carry out their catechetical ministry and perform very well. Little wonder John Paul II in His Apostolic Exhortation on the *Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day* observed and recommends thus:

It strongly demands a high level of intellectual formation, such as will enable priests (as well as catechists) to proclaim, in a context like this, the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make it credible to the legitimate demands of human reason. Moreover, there is the present phenomenon of pluralism which is very marked in the field not only of human

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<sup>1057</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.13

society but also of the community of the Church herself. It demands special attention to critical discernment: it is a further reason showing the need for an extremely rigorous intellectual formation.<sup>1058</sup>

Looking at the above citation, it will be very helpful if every catechist in the course of the training will have knowledge of philosophy and inculturation. Philosophy will be of great help in enriching his intellectual formation in the "cult of truth" and in answering the questions posed by the modern man while inculturation will help him in understanding the culture of the people where he discharges the duty entrusted to him. One of the major challenges of the Church today in the world as well as in Igboland is the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the message of faith. John Paul II succinctly puts it thus:

A further problem that is strongly felt these days is the demand for the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the message of faith. An eminently pastoral problem, this should enter more broadly and carefully into the formation of the candidates ...: In the present circumstances in which, in a number of regions of the world, the Christian religion is considered as something foreign to cultures (be they ancient or modern), it is very important that in the Whole intellectual and human formation the dimension of inculturation be seen as necessary and essential. But this means we need a genuine theology, inspired by the Catholic principles on inculturation.<sup>1059</sup>

It must be acknowledged that in the face of all the different and at times contrasting cultures present in the various parts of the world, inculturation seeks to obey Christ's command to bring the Gospel to all nations even unto the ends of the earth. Such obedience does not signify either syncretism or a simple adaptation of the announcement of the Gospel, but rather the fact that the Gospel penetrates the very life of cultures, becomes incarnate in them, overcoming those cultural elements that are incompatible with the faith and Christian living and raising their values

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<sup>1058</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Vatican City, 1992, no.51

<sup>1059</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.51

to the mystery of salvation which comes from Christ. The problem of inculturation can have a particularly great interest when the candidates are themselves coming from indigenous cultures. In that case, they will need to find suitable ways of formation, both to overcome the danger of being less demanding and to proper use of the good and genuine elements of their own cultures and traditions.<sup>1060</sup> The fact remains that only the intellectually educated catechist can understand the above characteristics of inculturation.

#### 5.4.7 Spiritual Training

The need for a spirituality proper to catechists springs from their vocation and mission. It includes, therefore, a new and special motivation, a call to sanctity. John Paul II's saying: "The true missionary is the saint"<sup>1061</sup>, can be applied without hesitation to the catechist. Like every member of the faithful, catechists are "called to holiness and to mission,"<sup>1062</sup> i.e. to live out their own vocation "with the fervor of the saints."<sup>1063</sup> Catechists' spirituality is also conditioned by their apostolic vocation, and therefore should bear the marks of: openness to God's word, to the Church and to the world; authenticity of life and missionary zeal. It is always advantageous to the catechist and also very beneficial to the Christian community if before the Lay Catechists are allowed to proclaim the Christian message to others, they should themselves experience the transforming power of the Christian message, rightly proposed. This is precisely what St. Paul meant when he emphasized the "power" (virtues) of his preaching: "And my speech and my preaching (the Greek original has *kerygma*, message) were not in the persuasive words of (sophistical) wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and the power" (*1 Cor. 2:4*)."<sup>1064</sup>

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<sup>1060</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.55

<sup>1061</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.90

<sup>1062</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.90

<sup>1063</sup> CIC c.225,2

<sup>1064</sup> Hofinger J., *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame press, 1958, p.199

To be pastorally effective, intellectual formation is to be integrated with a spirituality marked by a personal experience of God. In this way a purely abstract approach to knowledge is overcome in favour of that intelligence of heart which knows how 'to look beyond', and then is in a position to communicate the mystery of God to the people.<sup>1065</sup> Besides, the Spiritual formation aims to arouse and animate true hunger for holiness, desire for union with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, daily growing in love of God and neighbor in life and ministry, and the practices of prayer and spirituality that foster these attitudes and dispositions. It promotes and strengthens that fundamental conversion that places God, and not oneself, at the center of one's life. It will be very important for those training the catechists to understand that as we seek to teach the truth of the Church and to impart knowledge about our faith, we also are called to form the heart. The wonderful image in St. John's Gospel of the Samaritan woman at the well and her encounter with Christ compels us, as ministers, to respond to the thirst for God among the people we serve and to communicate how that thirst is addressed through a relationship with Jesus Christ in and through the Church. Benedict XVI Succinctly puts it thus: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."<sup>1066</sup> Hence, a personal witness and continued formation in one's own faith, along with the development of your knowledge and skills, are essential to ones formation as a catechist.

It is also expected that, the spiritual formation or training will help the catechist to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the integral relationship between life, prayer, and discipleship through experiences such as days of reflection, retreats, parish missions, prayer groups, spiritual direction, etc. John XXIII expressed this clearly to catechists thus:

We, too, while again giving catechists our warmest praise, exhort them to meditate even more attentively on the happiness of soul which this work brings, and never to cease from making the greatest efforts, under the guidance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to

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<sup>1065</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.51

<sup>1066</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, Vatican City, 2005, no.1

cultivate better the study of religion and their own spiritual formation. Catechists must learn from the hierarchy not only the rudimentary elements of the Faith, but also the practice of virtue and a fervent, sincere love for Christ. Instrumental in the establishment and subsequent abundant growth of new Christian communities is the care devoted to increasing the numbers of those who effectively help the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and to perfecting their formation for any other labors they may have to perform in order to carry out their task in the most effective and perfect manner.<sup>1067</sup>

Along this line of thought, Lucker and Stone made us to understand that:

The foremost purpose of catechetic is not to teach about God but rather to lead students to God... No teacher truly catechizes children unless they recognize through his teaching an actual personal call from God. What kind of training will best form the lay catechist into a faithful and effective messenger of God's Word? To a large extent the answer depends on the goal one wishes to achieve through the teaching of religion. Some wish to emphasize as the immediate objective the imparting of religious knowledge; others stress as primary and immediate the formation of dedicated Christians; still others assert that personal encounter between God and the student is what is to be sought. All three have an important position in the religion lesson and are to be taken into account in training the religion teacher.<sup>1068</sup>

All the above illustrate the importance of the spiritual training of the catechists, who is clearly and specially a religious teacher. Therefore, every effort should be made for them to understand that the essential characteristic of missionary spirituality is intimate communion with Christ. We cannot understand or carry out the mission unless we refer it to Christ as the one who was sent to evangelize. In fact, Hofinger has made it explicitly clear that:

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<sup>1067</sup>John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, Vatican City, November 28, 1959, no.42

<sup>1068</sup>Lucker R & Stone T.C., "Formation and Training of Lay Catechists", In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetics*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, p.244

Everyone connected with the CCD work of training lay catechists realizes, of course, that without a thorough spiritual formation they cannot adequately fulfill their apostolic task. If such formation is necessary for priestly and religious teachers, obviously it is needed for layman. And this formation must, for them too, be of such a kind as to teach them how to carry it on for themselves, how continually to deepen and grow in their personal participation in the Mystery of Christ all through their lives. Otherwise, there is obviously far greater danger than with those who are living the priestly or religious life, that these lay teachers may lose their living interest in the message they are proclaiming, and that their catechetical efforts will therefore bear little or no fruit.<sup>1069</sup>

He goes on to explain the importance of this spiritual training in the lives of the catechist as they discharge their duty saying:

No herald will continue to carry out his task effectively unless he is closely and personally attached to the master who sent him out. Such attachment will make him careful, diligent, constant, and daring. But without close personal attachment to Our Lord, the teacher will lose his zeal and his own real interest in his catechetical apostolate. He will find himself in great danger of growing more and more tired and disappointed; his teaching will no longer be a proclamation, but a tiresome “lecture”. Only personal love for Christ will keep him, year after year, eloquent and inventive, zealous and practical, unwearied, and obliging, patient and winning. Yet we have still deeper reasons for close personal contact with our Lord. Our King is not far away from His heralds; He is always with us. While we are proclaiming His message, we are instruments in His hands; He works through us and in the souls of our hearers. Thus only by close and continuous collaboration with Him can we reach our goal...

And such a close personal union with our Lord will result in our becoming like to Him. To proclaim His message effectively, we must be like Him, and it is with His spirit that we must proclaim.... We should be able to say to our hearers what St. Paul could say: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1Cor.11:1; 1Cor.4:16; Phil.3:17; 1Thess.1:6).<sup>1070</sup>

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<sup>1069</sup> Hofinger J., *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, p.200

<sup>1070</sup> Hofinger J., *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, p.189

Those in charge of the training of the catechists should make every effort to make the catechist understand who they are. Let them know that their function in the community has brought them to the position of being leaders elders and light etc. for others. Teach them to meditate daily and to understand the word of Jesus Christ that admonishes us: "Even so let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven"; (*Matt. 5.16*). Let them live an exemplary life. And apply these words of St. Paul to Timothy daily to themselves, "Let this be thy study, thy employments, so that all may see how well thou doest. Two things claim thy attention, thyself and the teaching of the faith, spend thy care on them; so wilt thou and those who listen to thee achieve salvation" (*1 Tim 4:15-16*). As they seek how they may better teach others what they have learned, they will better understand "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (*Eph. 3:8*) and the manifold wisdom of God.

Furthermore, in the training of the catechists, efforts will be channeled to grasping and experiencing how the all-holy God comes into personal contact with man and how man meets God in faith. This opens the way to a view of teacher-training which includes three broad divisions: 1) God meeting man; 2) man meeting God in faith; 3) transmission of God's message. This first division of catechetical training, God training man, treats of revelation. God comes into personal contact with the believer in four marvelous ways. Through the *Holy Scriptures* God personally comes into our midst; in *liturgy* through sacramental signs he enters into personal communion with the believer; he uses the Christian community and individual Christians as *witnesses* through which he continues his personal intervention into men's lives. And finally he comes through the *church teaching* under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1071</sup>

The formation of the catechists therefore, must aim to provide Christians not only with technical expertise in passing on more clearly the content of the faith but also with a profound personal conviction enabling them to bear effective witness to it in daily life. All those called to proclaim the Gospel will therefore seek to act with total docility to the Spirit, who "today, just as

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<sup>1071</sup> Lucker R & Stone T.C., "*Formation and Training of Lay Catechists*", In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetical*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, p.248

at the beginning of the Church, acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by him."<sup>1072</sup> Hence, it is important to note that whereas "Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. Even the most thorough preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the most convincing dialectic has no power over the human heart. Without him the most highly developed schemes on a sociological or psychological basis are quickly seen to be quite valueless."<sup>1073</sup> In fact, for the man who enters upon the apostolic life there is one attribute that is indispensable: the sanctity of life. For the man who preaches God must himself be a man of God. The man who urges others to despise sin must despise it himself. Preaching by example is a far more effective procedure than vocal preaching, especially among unbelievers, who tend to be more impressed by what they see for themselves than by any arguments that can be presented to them. Give the missionary, if you will, every imaginable talent of mind and intellect, endow him with the most extensive learning and the most brilliant culture. Unless these qualities are accompanied by moral integrity they will be of little or no value in the apostolate, On the contrary, they can be the cause of disaster, both to himself and to others.<sup>1074</sup>

Hence, if we fail to give our catechists an adequate spiritual training, we will reap the consequences involved. John XXIII in His Encyclical *Princeps Pastorum* (The Prince of the Shepherds) writes the consequences as follows: "Indeed, a Christian formation and education which would only consider teaching the faithful the formulas of the Catechism and inculcating in their minds the principal precepts of moral theology, with a brief list of possible cases, without inspiring their souls and wills to act according to the instructions received, would run the serious risk of acquiring for the Church a passive flock."<sup>1075</sup>

He goes further to write thus:

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<sup>1072</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.75

<sup>1073</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 65-66

<sup>1074</sup> Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, Vatican City, November 28, 1959, no.26

<sup>1075</sup> John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, Vatican City, 1959, no.31

On the contrary, it is necessary that the sheep of the Christian flock not only listen to their Shepherd, but also know his voice, and that the faithful willingly follow him to the pastures of eternal life, so that one day they may receive from the Prince of Shepherds the unfading crown of glory. These sheep as we said, recognizing and following the Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep, will give themselves entirely to him, and, obeying the Divine Will with the most ardent zeal, will lovingly and actively strive to bring into the one and only true fold all the other sheep, who not only are not following him, but have long been straying away from him, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life."<sup>1076</sup>

The attitude of Christ which St. Paul so well pictured in his letter to the Philippians should be embraced by all the catechists. "Have this mind among yourselves. Which is yours in Christ Jesus? Who, though he was in the form of God" did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death. Even death on a cross (*Phil 2:5-8*) Therefore, every catechist ought to renounce himself, and to make himself everything to everyone. This he does by a poverty which sets him free for the Gospel, overcoming attachment to the people and things about him, so that he may become a brother to those to whom he is sent and thus bring them Christ the Saviour. This is the goal of missionary spirituality: "To the weak I became weak...; I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel..." (*I Cor. 9:22-23*). It will be quite appropriate if Lay Catechists imbibe such spiritual mindset.

#### **5.4.7.1 The Life of Spirituality expected of the Catechists**

I share the view of John Chrysostom that:

Anyone who deems himself a Christian must know that he is bound by his conscience to the basic, imperative duty of bearing witness to the truth in which he believes and to the grace which has transformed his soul. A great Father of the Church has said: "He (Christ) left us on earth in order that we should become like beacons of light and teachers

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<sup>1076</sup>John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, no.31

unto others; that we might act like leaven, move among men like angels, be like men unto children, and like spiritual men unto animal men, in order to win them over, and that we may be like seed, and bear abundant fruits. There would be no need for sermons, if our lives were shining; there would be no need for words, if we bore witness with our deeds. There would be no more pagans, if we were true Christians."<sup>1077</sup>

From the above, it entails that all the Christians are expected to live a life of witness. If so, therefore, more expectations await the catechists. John XXIII agrees on this when he says: "We, too, while again giving catechists our warmest praise, exhort them to meditate even more attentively on the happiness of soul which this work brings, and never to cease from making the greatest efforts, under the guidance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to cultivate better the study of religion and their own spiritual formation. Catechists must learn from the hierarchy not only the rudimentary elements of the Faith, but also the practice of virtue and a fervent, sincere love for Christ."<sup>1078</sup> The catechists have to live a life of witness more than any other Christians in his community. Also Benedict XV in His Encyclical *Maximum Illud* enumerated the life expected of a catechist. He maintains that the catechist should then be an example to those he deals with. Let him be humble and obedient and chaste. Let him be a devout man, dedicated to prayer and constant union with God, a man who goes before the Divine Majesty and fervently pleads the cause of souls. For as he binds himself more and more closely to God; he will receive the grace and assistance of God to a greater and greater degree. Particularly applicable here are the words of St. Paul: "Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and well beloved, clothe yourselves with sentiments of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering" (Colossians 3:12). With these virtues the missionary will open for the Faith he preaches a smooth and unobstructed entrance into the hearts of men. All obstacles will melt from his path, for no man's will is obdurate enough to oppose their attraction with equanimity."<sup>1079</sup>

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<sup>1077</sup> St. John Chrysostom, Hom. X in *I Tim.*, Migne, PG 62.551.

<sup>1078</sup> John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, no.42

<sup>1079</sup> Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, Vatican City, November 28, 1959, no.27

#### **5.4.8 Human Relations Training**

The work of catechist is multi-dimensional. He is obliged to render his service to the community as a whole as well as to particular groups and individuals. Different age groups in the community require his services such as young people and adults, men and women, students and workers, Catholics, other Christians and non-Christians etc. It is not the same thing to be a catechist for catechumens preparing for baptism as to be community leader for a village of Catholics, with responsibility for various pastoral activities, or to be a religion teacher in a school, or to be charged with preparing people for the sacraments, or to be assigned to pastoral work in an inner-city area, etc. What this means is that every catechist must possess human relational skills. He must be able to relate well and work effectively with others. He must hold a healthy respect for individual growth and differences and has to be aware of individual and community needs and should be capable of adapting to various situations. He has to be sensitive to differing personality types, a variety of leadership styles and varying views of Church and ministry. He should be skilled in communication techniques and the dynamics of working with various ages and groups. The effective catechist can creatively dwell within tension, bringing a sense of balance which prizes unity and appreciates diversity.

Over and above, he has to be disposed to attend to the inevitable “unplanned for” events that creep into the daily routine. He must be gracious and approachable, with a spirit of hospitality. Every catechist has to understand that numerous persons whom one encounters, the phone calls and emails, and the written communications to which one must attend each day are not interruptions in one’s planned events but rather are opportunities for evangelization and ministry. The attentive catechist is aware that he is often a person's initial contact with the Church when they inquire about neglected sacramental preparation for their children, or how to become “Catholic” or how to “come back” to the Church.

In the training or recruitment of those to be assisted in the catechetical ministry; we have to borrow a leaf from the California Diocesan Directors of Catechetical Ministry and Directors of Youth Ministry. They proposed several competencies which should be possessed by those involved in the ministry of catechesis. Those leaders should have the ability to:

- assist people in understanding and interpreting their lives and faith experiences in light of Scripture and the Church's Tradition;
- articulate a vision of evangelizing catechesis and the catechetical process as stated in contemporary documents of the Church;
- apply appropriate principles of human development, especially faith and moral development in programs;
- utilize appropriate methodologies of adult-centered or child-centered learning;
- implement and support the program of catechist certification in accordance with diocesan guidelines;
- choose and implement an appropriate curriculum consistent with diocesan guidelines;
- provide opportunities to experience Christian service, linking such opportunities to foster peace and justice;
- recognize the various cultural expressions of Christian faith within the community and incorporate them into programs and celebrations;
- Provide opportunities for participation in prayer, personal spiritual development and communal worship.<sup>1080</sup>

From the above, it entails that as the needs differ from group to group, so the training of catechists will have to be adapted for the groups envisaged. It would be useful, therefore, for catechists to know in advance the sort of work they will be called to and make acquaintance with the groups concerned. With this training, the Catechist will be expected to promote communication and communion between the members of the community, and will devote themselves to the groups committed to their care, trying to understand their particular needs so as to help them as much as possible.

Besides, in the training of the catechists the following qualities should be taken into consideration:

- In the purely human sphere: psychophysical equilibrium; good health, a sense of responsibility, honesty, dynamism; good professional and family conduct; a spirit of sacrifice, strength, perseverance, etc.;
- With a view to the functions of a catechist: good human relations, ability to dialogue with those of other religions, grasp of one's own culture, ability to communicate, willingness to work with others, leadership qualities, balanced judgment, openness of mind, a sense of realism, a capacity to transmit consolation and hope, etc.;
- With a view to particular situations or roles: aptitudes for working in the fields of peacemaking, development, socio-cultural promotion, justice, health care, etc.<sup>1081</sup>

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<sup>1080</sup><http://www.sdcatholic.org/diocese/pastoraloffices/al/evangelizationcatechetical/handbook/ministryprofession.asp>

#### **5.4.9 Training Catechists Concerning the Physically Challenged and Mentally Retarded**

Catechists have obligations toward all men but should have a special obligation to the physically challenged persons living in the area where they discharge their apostolate. This mission had already started with Christ who showed that he was united to them and who also said: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (*Mk 2:17*). Indeed, Jesus Christ showed special care to the suffering, in all the wide spectrum of human pain. During His ministry He embraced them with His merciful love, and He showed forth in them the saving power of the redemption that embraces man in his individuality and totality. The neglected, the disadvantaged, the poor, the suffering and sick were the ones to whom He specially brought, in words and actions, the proclamation of the Good News of God's kingdom breaking into human history. With this action of Christ towards the disabled, Christians now know that in the disabled person there is reflected in a mysterious way the image and likeness which God Himself impressed upon the lives of His sons and daughters. Thus, as they remember that Christ Himself mystically identified Himself with the suffering neighbour and took as done to Himself everything done for the least of His brethren (cf. *Mt. 25:31-46*), they feel a call to serve, in Him, those whom physical accidents have affected and disabled; and they are resolved not to omit any of the things that must be done, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, in order to alleviate their disadvantaged condition.<sup>1082</sup>

Consequently, like Priests, Catechists should be particularly solicitous for the sick, the afflicted, those overburdened with work, the lonely, those exiled from their homeland, and those who suffer persecution.<sup>1083</sup> The catechist is involved in the ministry of the sick and distressed because “these persons deserve the practical concern of the world community, both by reason of their numbers and especially for their particular human and social condition.”<sup>1084</sup> This care of the sick is carried out through the visitation of those concerned. On the occasion of such visits the

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<sup>1082</sup> Document of the Holy See for the International Year of Disabled Persons (To All Who Work For The Disabled), Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, March 4, 1981, pp. 3-4

<sup>1083</sup> Paul VI, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no.8

<sup>1084</sup> Document of the Holy See for the International Year of Disabled Persons, p.1

catechist is expected to pray for the persons concerned and to bring them comfort by ministering the word of God appropriately to the situation before him. Where the matter is much more grave, in the case of the sick or of bereavement, he is expected to inform the priest in charge who should arrange to visit the family in order to give the afflicted hope and beef up their morale.<sup>1085</sup> He is expected to pay a special attention to the sick and aged because their physical and psychological weakness calls for greater charity and concern. The *Guide for Catechists* made it explicit that:

- The sick should be helped to understand the redemptive value of the cross, in union with Jesus, who took upon himself the weight of our infirmities (cf. *Mt* 8:17; *Is.* 53:4). Catechists should visit them frequently, offering them the comfort of God's word and, when commissioned to do so, the Eucharist. Catechist has to understand that connected with human development is the question of the preferential option for the poor. Catechists, especially those engaged in the general apostolate, have a duty to make this ecclesial option, which does not mean that they are interested only in the poor, but that these should have a prior claim on their attention. The foundation of their interest in the poor must be love, for, as John Paul II explicitly says, "*love has been and remains the driving force of mission*".<sup>1086</sup>
- The aged too should be followed with special care, for they have an important role in the community, as John Paul II recognizes when he calls them "*witnesses of the tradition of faith (cf. Ps 44:1; Ex 12:26-27), teachers of wisdom (cf. Sir 6:34; 8:11-12), workers of charity*". Families should be encouraged to keep their elderly members with them, to "*bear witness to the past and instil wisdom in the young*". The aged should feel the support of the whole community and should be helped to bear in faith their inevitable limitations and, in certain cases, their solitude. Catechists will prepare them for their meeting with the Lord and help them experience the joy that comes from our hope in eternal life
- Catechists will also show sensitivity in dealing with people in difficult situations such as those in irregular marriages, the children of broken marriages, etc. They must be able to share in and express the immense compassion of the heart of Jesus (cf. *Mt* 9:36; *Mk* 6:34; 8:2; *Lk* 7:13).
- Catechists should also have a special interest on the poor. By the poor should be understood especially the materially poor, who are so numerous in many mission territories. These brothers and sisters of Christ should be able to feel the Church's maternal love for them, even when they do not yet belong to it, so as to be encouraged to accept

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<sup>1085</sup> Enweh, I.I; "The Role of the Catechist in the Teaching of the faith", in: Catholic Diocese of Nsukka 2013 Catechist Seminar, The catechist and the Teaching of the Faith Today, 6<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2013, p. 10

<sup>1086</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no.60

and overcome their difficulties with the help of Christian faith and themselves become agents of their own integral development. The Church's charitable activity, like all pastoral activity, "*brings light and an impulse towards true development*" to the poor."

- Apart from the financially deprived, catechists should pay special attention also to other groups in need: those who are oppressed, persecuted or marginalized, the handicapped, the unemployed, prisoners, refugees, drug addicts, those suffering from AIDS, etc.....<sup>1087</sup>

Like his model, the Lord Jesus, the good catechist burns with charity, and he numbers even the most abandoned unbelievers among God's children, redeemed like everyone else with the ransom of the divine blood. Their lowly difference does not exasperate him; their immorality does not dishearten him. His bearing toward them is neither scornful nor fastidious; his treatment of them is neither harsh nor rough. Instead, he makes use of all the arts of Christian kindness to attract them in order that he may eventually lead them into the arms of Christ. He makes it a custom to ponder the thought expressed in Holy Scripture: "Thy kindly influence, Lord, Thy gracious influence is all about us. At the first false step, none is so ready to rebuke us, to remind and warn us of our error, bidding us come back and renew our loyalty to Thee... With such power at Thy disposal, a lenient judge Thou provest thyself, riding us with a light rein, and keeping Thy terrors in reserve" (*Wisdom* 12:1-2, 18). Thus Benedict XV wonders what obstacle can arise, what annoyance or danger exists that could deter this emissary of Jesus Christ from fulfilling the task he has begun? There is none. This man, who has attained great favor with God by his free choice of the lofty work he has taken upon himself, will cheerfully endure whatever adversity or hardship befalls him. Toil, scorn, want, hunger, even a dreadful death - he will gladly accept them all, as long as there remains a slight chance that he can free even one soul from the jaws of hell.<sup>1088</sup>

The Church during the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 emphasized on the dignity of the disabled persons, their pain, the trauma of their family and the challenge that their

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<sup>1087</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, nos11-13

<sup>1088</sup> Benedict XV, *Maximum Illud*, no.28

condition poses to those who will render services to them. Thus, the Church observed, among others, that:

The disabled person (whether the disability be the result of a congenital handicap, chronic illness or accident, or from mental or physical deficiency, and whatever the severity of the disability) is a fully human subject, with the corresponding innate, sacred and inviolable rights. This statement is based upon the firm recognition of the fact that a human being possesses a unique dignity and an independent value, from the moment of conception and in every stage of development, whatever his or her physical condition. This principle, which stems from the upright conscience of humanity, must be made the inviolable basis of legislation and society.

- It must be clearly affirmed that a disabled person is one of us, a sharer in the same humanity. By recognizing and promoting that person's dignity and rights, we are recognizing and promoting our own dignity and our own rights.

- A particularly delicate moment in the life of the disabled person is the passage from school to placement in society or professional life. In this phase the person needs particular understanding and encouragement from various sectors of the community....

- Those who commendably dedicate themselves to the service of the disabled should have scientific knowledge of their disabilities, but they should also comprehend with their hearts the person who bears the handicap. They should learn to become sensitive to the special signs with which the disabled express themselves and communicate. They should acquire the art of making the proper gesture and saying the right word. They should know how to accept with calmness possible reactions or forms of emotion and learn to dialogue with the parents and families of the disabled. This competence will not be fully human unless it is interiorly sustained by suitable moral and spiritual dispositions: attentiveness, sensitivity and particular respect for everything in the human person that is a source of weakness and dependence. Care and help for disabled persons then becomes a school of genuine humanity, a demanding school, a noble school, an uplifting school.<sup>1089</sup>

At this juncture, it is good to commend the efforts of those who take care of the sick, the infirm and the afflicted of every kind; including hospitals, leprosaria, dispensaries and homes for the aged and for maternity cases, and orphanages. They should know that the Church is aware of the efforts they are making. Pius XII in His Encyclical, *Evangelii Praecones* praises them thus: “these are to our eyes the fairest flowers of missionary endeavor; they give us as it were a vision of the Divine Redeemer Himself, who "went about doing good and healing all that were

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<sup>1089</sup> Document of the Holy See for the International Year of Disabled Persons, pgs.3-14

oppressed.” Such outstanding works of charity are undoubtedly of the highest efficacy in preparing the souls of non-Christians and in drawing them to the Faith and to the practice of Christianity.<sup>1090</sup>

More still, our catechists are reminded of the word of the Lord who said to His Apostles: "Into whatever city you enter, and they receive you . . . heal the sick that are therein, and say to them: the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you (Luke. 10:8-9). Hence, attending to the sick and disabled is part of the work of the catechists. accordingly, to be able to Minister to the sick and disabled, they must acquire the professional training and knowledge which are today required in these matters.

### **5.5 Method of Teaching**

Methodology by its very nature is nothing other than careful consideration of means that have stood the test of time and experience. As instructors in the Christian faith the catechetical training institute should equip the catechists in the use of appropriate methods of catechesis...<sup>1091</sup> Various methodologies or approaches approved as befitting are essential and should be included in the curriculum. The issue of teaching method has remained relevant till today. Being intelligent is different from being a teacher. It is not every intelligent person who can communicate the knowledge he has acquired. Little wonder those who are preparing themselves as the future teachers are always sent into teaching practice where they will practice what they have learnt in the course of their training. It is not also absurd if the catechists on the course of their training are sent to parishes, schools, hospitals etc. to practice first what they have learnt before they are finally sent out. *General Directory for Catechesis* recommends that “this is to be done with supervision by the parish priests, catechists’ instructors and the director. It is also necessary that in the formation of catechists the Church takes an analysis of the religious situation as well as of the sociological, cultural, political and economic conditions to the extent that these

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<sup>1090</sup>Pius XII, *Evangelii Praecones*, (on promotion of Catholic Missions to our Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, Bishops, and Other Local Ordinaries Enjoying Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See), 2 June 1951, nos.45-46

<sup>1091</sup> Barga; T, *Catechetical Mission of the Church in Nigeria-A Collaborative Ministry*, pp.138-139

facts of collective life can greatly influence the success of evangelization".<sup>1092</sup> Furthermore, whatever method found suitable to each situation of the people, its adaptation should be tested at the catechetical institutes.

Every catechist needs to understand how their students learn, their learning methods, developmental stages of the students, and the needs of the students. Catechists must lead students into a dialogue about a subject in the context of their experience until they reach a new way of thinking, doing and living their Catholic life. On the catechetical teaching method, *Guide to Catechesis* has this to say:

- Regarding the methodological training one should bear in mind that many catechists will be working in various pastoral fields, and almost all will be in contact with people of other religions, they will be taught not only how to teach the catechism but also how to go about the various tasks connected with the proclamation of the Christian message and the life of an ecclesial community.
- It will also be important to grant the catechist contents and materials connected to their new and emerging life situations. The programs of study, which has a starting point in the actual reality and from foresight, can also include subjects that help them to face the phenomena of urbanization, secularization, industrialization, emigration, socio-political changes, the world of youngsters, etc.
- In spite of the diversity of subjects, one should aim at a global and not compartmentalized theological formation, i.e. there should be an overall vision of faith that brings unity and harmony to the knowledge acquired, to the catechists' personalities and to their apostolic service.<sup>1093</sup>

Discovering and using the method appropriate to each situation they encounter would greatly facilitate the activities of catechists. This does not in any way mean that they will no longer face very demanding challenges in their assignment. However, being equipped with the right methodology makes them ready and able to discharge their duties accordingly.

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<sup>1092</sup> *General Directory for catechesis*, no.242

<sup>1093</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.23

## 5.6 Catechetical Training Centres for Lay Catechists

The *General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)* rightly observes that any pastoral activity that does not start with the right formation and preparation will necessarily come to nothing. This is because all working tools themselves cannot be effective unless used by catechists who have been rightly formed. As such, the suitable formation of catechists must come before reform in texts and strengthening of the organization for handling catechesis.<sup>1094</sup> In respect to this development GDC suggests that Higher Institutes for training in pastoral catechetics should be established and promoted so that catechists and even lay leaders capable of directing catechesis at the diocesan level or within the area of activities may be prepared for service in the church.<sup>1095</sup> Consequently, the need for catechetical training centres or institutes cannot be over stressed. The fact is that “in our days the work of catechists is becoming more and more difficult and demanding as a result of ecclesial and cultural changes, therefore catechists need a more careful doctrinal and pedagogical training, continuing spiritual....”<sup>1096</sup> According to John Paul II in His Encyclical *Catechesi Tradendae*: “Their preparation calls on us to organize special Centres and Institutes, which are to be given assiduous attention by the Bishops. This is a field in which diocesan, inter-diocesan or national cooperation proves fertile and fruitful. Here also the material aid provided by the richer Churches to their poorer sisters can show the greatest effectiveness, for what better assistance can one Church give to another than to help it to grow as a Church with its own strength?”<sup>1097</sup>

Similarly, the *General Catechetical Directory* recommends that:

Higher institutes for training in pastoral catechetics should be promoted or founded, so that catechists capable of directing catechesis at the diocesan level, or within the area of activities to which religious congregations are dedicated, may be prepared. These higher

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<sup>1094</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.108

<sup>1095</sup> *General Directory for Catechesis*, no.108

<sup>1096</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 73

<sup>1097</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*,no.71

institutes can be national or even international. They ought to function as a university so far as curriculum, length of courses, and requisites for admission are concerned. Schools of religious education should also be founded within individual dioceses, or at least within the area of regional Conferences, in order that, through a curriculum that is less advanced but still effective, full-time catechetical personnel may be prepared.<sup>1098</sup>

The *Canon Law* and *Ad Gentes* on their own side are also in support that Catechists are to be educated in schools destined for this purpose...<sup>1099</sup> The *Ad Gentes* goes further to state that:

There should therefore be an increase in the number of schools, both on the diocesan and on the regional levels, wherein future catechists may study Catholic doctrine, especially in the fields of Scripture and the liturgy, as well as catechetical method and pastoral practice; schools wherein they can develop in themselves a Christian character, and wherein they can devote themselves tirelessly to cultivating piety and sanctity of life. Moreover, conventions or courses should be held in which at certain times catechists could be refreshed in the disciplines and skills useful for their ministry and in which their spiritual life could be nourished and strengthened.<sup>1100</sup>

From the above, we have seen how the Church documents from *Ad Gentes* to *Redemptoris Missio* stressed the importance of making efforts to establish and support schools for catechists. These are the characteristics of such centres:

- The centres are very different entities: some of them being large residential centres with a team of formators and well organized training programs, while others are smaller centres for restricted groups or short courses. Most centres are diocesan or inter-diocesan, some of them national or international.
- There are common elements to these centres, such as a formative program, which makes the centre a place of growth in faith, a possibility of residence, school teaching combined with pastoral experiences and, above all, the presence of the team of formators.

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<sup>1098</sup> *General Catechetical Directory*, no.109

<sup>1099</sup> Canon 785§2

<sup>1100</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Ad Gentes*, no.17

- There are also some proper elements which distinguishes one centre from the other; among them, for example, the minimum qualification and other conditions for entry, the length of the course, the methods employed, with a view to local conditions, and the categories of students: men or women or both; young people or adults; married or unmarried people or couples. Some centres will include training for the wife or husband of the candidate and issuing of diplomas.<sup>1101</sup>

They also went on to recommend the followings:

- There should be contacts between catechetical centres, especially at a national level, under the guidance of the Episcopal Conference. Formators from the different centres should meet from time to time to exchange ideas and teaching methods and learn from the experiences of others.
  - Centres should aim not merely at training their students but at being places of research and reflection on themes connected with the apostolate, such as: catechesis itself, inculturation, interreligious dialogue, pastoral methods, etc.
  - Besides the centres or schools, there should also be courses and encounters of diverse duration and composition, organized by the dioceses and parishes, particularly those in which the Bishop and the parish priests participate. These are very significant means of training and, in certain zones and situations; they become the only way of formation. These courses do not counteract the programs of the centres, but help them keep on the impact or, as very often happens, compensate for deficiency.
  - Each diocese should make sure that it provides the books, audiovisual material and other teaching aids necessary for catechetical training, and it would be good if there could be a pooling of ideas, information and teaching aids between centres, dioceses and neighboring countries.
  - The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) insists on the fact that it is not sufficient to propose high objectives in formation, but one should identify and use efficacious means. Therefore, besides confirming the absolute priority of formators, who must be well prepared and sustained, the CEP asks that a strengthening of centres should be at work everywhere. Here too, a healthy realism is essential in order to avoid a theoretical discourse. The objective is to do things in such a way that all the dioceses have the possibility to train a certain number of their catechists, at least, the cadres in a centre. Besides this, fostering the initiatives on the post, particularly the guided and programmed

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<sup>1101</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no. 30

meetings, because they are indispensable for the first training of those who were not able to frequent a centre, and for the permanent formation of all.<sup>1102</sup>

The importance of having catechetical training centres cannot be over emphasized. Although to provide adequate training is not easy and will require personnel, structures and financial support, nevertheless, in view of the importance of catechists, the challenge should be faced courageously, with realistic and intelligent planning. Training courses for catechists are best given in centres built for this purpose, but because of its importance, where these are not available, shorter courses may be provided in other locations by dioceses or parishes, and individual instruction could be given by a priest or an expert catechist. The courses should include lectures, group discussions and practical exercises, as well as personal study and research.<sup>1103</sup>

John XXIII in his Encyclical, *Princeps Pastorum* goes further to showcase the importance of these catechetical training centres. He began by reminding us how everyone is aware of the great importance, present and future, of the mission country schools, and of how much effort and work the Church has devoted to establishing schools of every description and level, and went as far as defending their existence and well-being. It is obviously difficult to add to school curricula a program of formation for Catholic Action executives, and therefore it will often be necessary to resort to extracurricular methods to bring together the most promising youths, and train them in the theory and practice of the apostolate. The local ordinaries must, therefore, use their prudent judgment in assessing the best ways and means for opening schools of the apostolate, in which, obviously, the type of instruction will be different from that in ordinary schools. Sometimes the task will be to preserve from false doctrine children and adolescents who must attend non-Catholic schools; in any event, it will always be necessary to balance the humanistic and technological education offered by the public schools with a formation based on spiritual values, so that the schools may not turn out falsely educated men, swollen with arrogance, who can hurt

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<sup>1102</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no. 30

<sup>1103</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no. 23

the Church and their own people instead of helping them. Their spiritual education must always be commensurate with their intellectual development, and must be planned to make them lead a life inspired by Catholic principles in their particular social and professional environments; in time, they must be able to take their places in Catholic organizations.<sup>1104</sup>

Looking at the importance of the catechetical training, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (CEP) urges individual bishops' and Episcopal Conferences to continue and even increase their attention and care for catechists, making sure that there are developing programs and structures for the formation of the catechists. They should take an interest in their catechists and, as far as possible, have a personal relationship with each of them. The CEP among others suggests the following points for special attention:

- Making the faithful, and especially priests, aware of the importance and role of catechists.
- Drawing up or renewing catechetical directories on a national or diocesan level, so as to apply and adapt to local conditions the guidelines of the *General Catechetical Directory*, the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* and the present *Guide for Catechists*.
- Guaranteeing a minimum of teaching aids and equipment for the formation of catechists, so that they will be properly trained for their task; also, if possible, founding or improving catechetical centres.
- Encouraging the preparation and selection of *cadres* i.e. catechists who have been well trained in a centre and who have had a certain amount of experience, to work closely with the Bishop and priests, to help in the training and guidance of volunteer catechists, and to take leading roles in the application of the catechetical program.
- Providing, with the help of the community, a budget for the training, activities and maintenance of catechists.<sup>1105</sup>

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<sup>1104</sup>John XXIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, no.47

<sup>1105</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.34

Over and above the issues raised already, the individual bishops' and Episcopal Conferences have special responsibilities of providing formators for the catechists. The training of catechists is usually entrusted to qualified persons, either in special centres or in the parishes. These formators have an important role and make a valuable contribution to the Church. They should be aware, therefore, of the responsibility that is theirs. When a person accepts the mandate to train the catechists, he should consider the concrete expression of the care of Pastors and should seriously follow their directives. In the same way, he should live the ecclesial dimension of this mandate, realizing it in a communitarian spirit and following the programs therein. In fact, formators should be chosen for their spiritual, moral and pedagogical qualities. They should be exemplary Christians, able to educate others by the witness of their own lives. They should be close to their students and should communicate their own fervour and enthusiasm to them. Every diocese will do its best to have a team of formators, made up possibly of priests, brothers, sisters and lay people, who could be sent to parishes to help in the selection and training of catechists.<sup>1106</sup> The Church in Igboland is still very far from realizing these objectives. Whereas some dioceses in Igboland have no Catechetical training centre, a few of them have non-functional centres. Even at the regional or provincial levels, it is embarrassing that good and effective catechetical centres are not found in Igboland. This non-compliance with the directives of the Mother Church is mainly responsible for the proliferation of incompetent and ill-equipped Lay Catechists in Igboland.

### **5.6.1 Ongoing Formation of the Lay Catechists and their Formators (Conferences/ Seminars / Workshop)**

The role of the catechist has been and remains a determinative force in the implantation and expansion of the Church in Africa. In this dialogue between God who offers his gifts, and the person who is called to exercise responsibility, there comes the possibility, indeed the necessity, of a total and ongoing formation of the lay faithful, as the Synod Fathers have rightly emphasized in much of their work. After having described Christian formation as a continual process in the individual of maturation in faith and a likening to Christ, according to the will of the Father,

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<sup>1106</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, nos.34-36

under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they have clearly affirmed that the formation of the lay faithful must be placed among the priorities of a diocese. It ought to be so placed within the plan of pastoral action that the efforts of the whole community (clergy, lay faithful and religious) converge on this goal.<sup>1107</sup>

It is in ongoing formation that catechists refuel, and pump themselves with the word of God and the church doctrines. As Catechists and teachers of faith, if they are not well prepared and do not regularly update their knowledge on what the church teaches and her doctrines, they cannot bring their people to the full knowledge and practice of the Christian faith. In fact, all our efforts concerning the training of the catechists will be a bulk of wasted efforts should there be no continual program for the training and updating of the catechists and that of their formators knowledge. The CEP got it right when she said that: “the fact that persons should never stop growing interiorly, the dynamic nature of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the process of continual conversion and growth in apostolic love, changes in culture, the evolution of society and constant updating of teaching methods, all mean that catechists should keep themselves in a process of ongoing formation during the whole course of their service.”<sup>1108</sup> It is a thing of recommendation for every catechist with their formators to be aware of the signs of times and be informed on the difficulties which the people face in the church and society so as to be able to empathize with them and guide them in the truth.

Every catechist has to understand that even the best training course is only a good initiation. Even after trainees have completed the follow-up course they ought not to be left with the impression that they are now full-fledged teachers of religion. Opportunities should be provided for the catechists’ continued formation and training. Lay catechists should be led to look upon their first years of teaching in the parish, schools of religion as a continuation of their training. During these years they should be encouraged to participate in brief supplementary courses and seminars designed as part of the total training program. Depending on the subject, seminars may

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<sup>1107</sup> John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no.57

<sup>1108</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.29

run from six to twelve hours. They can be conducted in connection with diocesan institutes, in workshops and at any convenient time during the year. A variety of topics may be offered simultaneously since religion teachers experience different needs and interests. The availability of personnel and relative importance of the topic will determine how frequently a supplementary course is offered or repeated. Participants may be given a small certificate at the completion of each supplementary course, so that they will know their participation is being counted toward a religion teacher diploma.<sup>1109</sup> Let it be known also that for this ongoing formation to be fruitful, that the catechists “must have facilities to continue their own formation. To do so efficiently they need three things above all: first, sufficient time for their own development through private reading; second; the right material for this reading, and consequently a well selected library; third, occasional courses in the content and methods of religious education...”<sup>1110</sup> There should be a personal effort in this their ongoing formation through the means of reading, prayer and contacts with others. This is important because “the catechists themselves can also be considered formators, in that they are responsible for their own interior growth through their response to God. They should be aware of this and should strive to listen always to the Divine Master so as to grow in wisdom and love.”<sup>1111</sup>

Also the continuing formation is not the responsibility of the catechetical centre/institute alone, but that should be attended to in each parish community. However, the catechetical centres are certainly the most suitable agencies for promoting ongoing formation. They should follow up their former students, especially soon after they graduate, through circulars and individual letters, teaching aids, visits from formators, refresher courses or meetings at the centres, etc. Small Christian communities and, cluster parishes should organize courses, seminars and workshops for the catechists at the centre or outside in some other institutions of higher learning. For proper ongoing formation, haphazard individual initiatives are not enough. The nature of ongoing

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<sup>1109</sup> Lucker R & Stone T.C., “Formation and Training of Lay Catechists”, In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetics*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, p.259

<sup>1110</sup> Hofinger J., *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, p.225

<sup>1111</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no.27

formation should be an organized program covering the various aspects of catechists work, the development of their personalities and, above all, their spiritual growth as that cannot be dispensed with at all times.<sup>1112</sup>

### **5.7 Annual Retreats**

Retreats are the time when the clergy or the laity acknowledges their dependence on God. They (retreats) are time away from our normal activities in order to spend time getting reacquainted with God, to examine the priorities of life and to make concrete and practical resolutions for improvement. It should be noted that: “Retreats differ from conferences, seminars, and meetings in that the primary work is interior spiritual development through a prolonged period of reflection rather than simply being exposed to information, techniques, and inspiration, then returned immediately to the daily routine.”<sup>1113</sup> Thus retreats can be a powerful step toward personal conversion. Time spent at a retreat site would involve a minimum of about 6 hours for a single day retreat; there is a preference - in terms of renewal and refreshment - for an overnight retreat when possible, which may be extended to several days. A common format is a three day retreat that begins Friday evening and ends Sunday afternoon. For most modern circumstances, a one week retreat (5-7 days) is the maximum that can be readily arranged (clergy, oblates, catechists typically arrange one week retreats each year). A 30-day retreat is an established format among religious orders and often serves as part of the discernment process for entering religious life involving monastic living.<sup>1114</sup> Retreats can also be done in group or private, may be organized for men or for women, or for couples together. They may follow a traditional format with a priest-preacher as the retreat master, offering several spiritual conferences or meditations daily. Or they may be more charismatic in tone. This means that retreats can take the shape of directed or undirected. All depends on one’s financial capacity. However, majority of the group retreats take the shape of directed retreat such as diocesan priests retreat, parish retreat, catechists’ annual retreat, etc.

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<sup>1112</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no.27

<sup>1113</sup> <http://www.itmonline.org/bodytheology/part1.htm>

<sup>1114</sup> <http://www.itmonline.org/bodytheology/part1.htm>

The history of retreat can be traced back to the time of our Lord. Before He began His public ministry, He spent 40 days in the desert praying and fasting as a way of preparing for the important work ahead (*Lk* 4:1-13). When Jesus entered forcefully into the life of St. Paul, He directed him to rise and go into the city, where he would be told what to do. For three days St. Paul neither ate nor drank, preparing himself to receive the spiritual direction of Ananias (see *Acts* 9:1-9). Little wonder retreats precede the priestly ordination, first profession, catechists' ministry or any of the reception of the sacraments etc. Besides, during our Lord's three years of public ministry, He would sometimes invite His disciples to "come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (*Mk* 6:31). Little wonder also the current Church legislation encourages the parish pastor to organize periodic retreats or missions for the good of the faithful, while all those who are to be ordained are required to make a weeklong retreat. Similarly, priests and Religious are asked to make a yearly retreat. For the good of the Church, as well as for the good of their own souls and the sake of their families, lay people are also encouraged to get away for a few days each year to rekindle their relationship with Christ.<sup>1115</sup>

Sequel to this, the catechists are obliged to have their annual retreats also. This can take place in Religious houses that offer retreat centres or the seminaries. For example in the diocese of the researcher, the annual retreat of the catechists takes place in their minor seminary. Catechists are reminded that apart from their annual catechists' retreat that personal retreat is also encouraged, Prudent pastoral experience suggests that the following elements are most helpful for making a good retreat:

#### 5.7.1 **Silence**

Retreats are better done in an atmosphere where silence is guaranteed, not as a penance, but as a means for listening to the Holy Spirit and getting to know Jesus while getting to know yourself. Retreat means seeking the face of God to hear his voice. To hear His voice; we have to turn off our cell phone and unplug ourselves from all cyber-communication. God wants your attention. Everyone else can wait.

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<sup>1115</sup> <https://www.osv.com/MyFaith/Mass/Article/TabId/683/ArtMID/13727/ArticleID/10536/Why-go-on-a-Spiritual-Retreat.aspx>

### 5.7.2 **The Holy Eucharist**

The Holy Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, it's most helpful for a retreatant to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion daily while on retreat. He has to make effort to spend time in silent conversation in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and even to participate in Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament during the course of the retreat. The Church so warmly recommends Eucharistic Adoration that a plenary indulgence can be gained whenever any of the faithful spend 30 minutes in adoration before Our Lord.

### 5.7.3 **Confession**

A retreat is all about seeking, finding and loving Christ. As you spend time in silent reflection and examination of conscience, the Holy Spirit will prompt you to confess your sins to a priest. For true and lasting spiritual progress, it's essential that a person make a deep and searching examination of conscience, express heartfelt contrition, and confess his or her sins to a priest.

### 5.7.4 **Spiritual reading**

This is the time to feed the soul with spiritual books. Such books as Father Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange's *"Three Ages of the Interior Life,"* or Thomas á Kempis' *"Imitation of Christ,"* or Father Francis Fernandez's *"In Conversation with God,"* are always a good bet. The soul benefits greatly by reading and thinking about the words and actions of our blessed Savior. Early in the morning is often the best time to feed the soul and spirit with the words of the Gospel. Many have also found it very helpful to read spiritual works by the saints and great masters.

### 5.7.5 **Closeness to the Blessed Mother Mary**

After Our Lord ascended into heaven, the apostles gathered around Our Lady and accompanied her in prayer. After 10 days, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit infused grace in each one in the Upper Room, and the Church was born. Those days of prayer and petition were fruitful because of the apostle's closeness to the Blessed Mother. During our retreat, we have to take time

to pray the Rosary daily and meditate deeply upon each mystery. As we reflect on the example of the Blessed Mother, we will draw closer to Our Lord.<sup>1116</sup>

We remind also our catechists that retreat refreshes and revitalizes, gives the opportunity for more time spent in prayer and contemplation, and rekindles and deepens one's relationship with God. One may take this opportunity to more clearly hear God's call and to seek God's healing grace and thereby attain a degree of spiritual renewal. The purpose of a spiritual retreat, as an addition to daily spiritual activities, is to temporarily leave behind the usual distractions we all face for a time long enough to allow relaxation and for an inner change to occur: the ongoing conversion of heart that is critical to deepening faith.<sup>1117</sup>

### **5.8 Maintenance and Remuneration of Lay Catechists**

Christians and non-Christians in Igboland are generally known for their generosity towards the clergy as well as the catechists or any man doing the work of God. Shanahan could not hide his observation of the generosity of the Igbo people and their support for the Prefecture. On one of his reports; he describes them thus: "In Igboland, the Catechist-Teachers as well as the missionaries when they visited the outstations were generously supported by the members of the community, Christians and pagans alike, with livestock, eggs, agricultural products, food, salt, fish, meat, fruits, and yams with the result that despite the hardship of their work, they lived comfortably."<sup>1118</sup>

Outside the testimony of Shanahan, the researcher has witnessed where a man single handedly built a house for his home catechist who also happened to be his teacher in his secondary school (We will respect the man's wish as he wants to remain anonymous). The generosity of the Igbo people extends not only to the clergy and catechist but also to all the

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<sup>1116</sup> <https://www.osv.com/MyFaith/Mass/Article/TabId/683/ArtMID/13727/ArticleID/10536/Why-go-on-a-Spiritual-Retreat.aspx>

<sup>1117</sup> <http://www.itmonline.org/bodytheology/part1.htm>

<sup>1118</sup> Okwu, A.S.O, *Igbo Culture And The Christian Missions 1857-1957*, p.191

employees in the church and to the works taking place in the church etc. We have a litany of those who have single handedly built parish churches and Fathers' houses or who have bought cars or built houses for indigent priests.

Despite the generosity of the Igbo people, the fact remains that their catechists are not generally well paid and taken care of. The problem associated with the payment of the lay catechists in Igboland is as old as the Catholic Church in Igboland. It is really incredible that as far back as 1897 that the catechists were already complaining. As at then, there was even already discrimination in the payment as we shall see below:

(A) Sierra Leone and Lagos

1. Junior Catechist £36 on arrival. After three years and passing the language examination £40

2. Senior Catechist £60 with £10 marriage allowance

(B) Natives of the Niger

1 Junior Catechists £30

2 Senior after 5 years £40

While the CMS 'foreign' Africans received an increment after three years, the 'natives' increments was after five years. The Spiritans, it was commonly known, were illiberal in the payment of their mission employees and Shanahan admitted that his Catechist-Teachers were paid less than the Protestants, probably due to the fact that they had many more Catechist-Teachers to pay than their rivals.<sup>1119</sup>

From the above, one discovers that even at the time of the missionaries, catechists were already registering their dissatisfaction. With the establishment of the administration of the new Protectorate; most of the Catechists became restless and dissatisfied as they saw the opportunity for alternative employment with higher wages. Such was the case of one Nathaniel Nzekwu, a CMS school master at Obosi, who a week after he wrote to know whether he was a school master or catechist, was asked to be relieved of all his duties so that he might devote his time to his

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<sup>1119</sup> Okwu, A.S.O, *Igbo Culture And The Christian Missions 1857-1957*, p.187

studies.<sup>1120</sup> Till today we still experience the same. People take up Church employment only when they are left with no other choice or alternative. Immediately such a person gets job either with the government or private sector, he will put up a resignation letter. Some working for the church in different fields like hospitals, schools etc. see their jobs as pass-time, ready to resign at the slightest break of opportunity. Some Church institutions are so bad in remuneration of her workers that:

To work for the church is to be perpetual volunteer, a beggar and an irresponsible family person. No wonder that the Church in the AMECEA cannot attract great brains and efficient personnel. From low input one can only get low output. Our inefficient non-productivity, and administrative stagnation and far from full committal of the laity to evangelization stem from absence of just pay and adequate motivation based on contemporary terms and conditions of services.<sup>1121</sup>

Generally, the Church does not pay their workers well, but that of the catechists has continued to be a re-occurring topic and a matter of concern for anyone who has the progress of the Church at heart. Almost everybody agrees that the catechists have never been paid well. Their maintenance has always been a big problem especially in Igboland and in African as a whole. Some have long depended on the charity and disposition of the parish priest and his counsellors or on the generosity of some of the philanthropists in the Church etc. Often the catechist salary is not fixed or paid at the right time. It is said that:

In Tanzania, for example, the expression 'poor as a catechist' is born out in the missions. As a result of his poverty, the parish priest, station and parish counsellors are ever suspicious of the catechist when these handle money. He is often accused of appropriation

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<sup>1120</sup> Okwu, A.S.O, *Igbo Culture And The Christian Missions 1857-1957*, pgs.187-188

<sup>1121</sup> Ukachukwu, C. M, "The Laity: An Oft - Neglected Body of Human resource in the Church", In: Obinwa I. M. C (ed.), *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd, 2006, P. 132

of funds, false accounting, occult compensation practices and embezzlements. Many a time he is probed, scolded and humiliated by the priest and the people.<sup>1122</sup>

What baffles the researcher is that some of these people probing or accusing their catechists are not even up to the age of their grandchildren. It is pathetic that while working tirelessly and earning meagre remuneration, one is still insulted by sometimes a younger person. What would have happened if they were to be receiving salaries like government workers? There are many implications if we do not pay our catechists well. The CEP made it clear that:

... When catechists are paid by the Church, especially when they have a family to support, their salary must be adequate and must take full account of the cost of living. If the salary is not high enough, there will be several negative consequences: on the choice of candidates, because capable persons will prefer better paid jobs; on commitment, because it might be necessary to take on other work to make up the deficit; on formation, because some might not be able to attend the training courses; on perseverance and on relations with the Pastors.<sup>1123</sup>

‘High enough’ here could mean simple, decent and affordable salaries that can guaranty their social security. We are not expecting the church to pay them like the people working in oil companies or other well paid jobs. However, we have to make their lives and ministry comfortable and attractive.

Presently in Nigeria, the National Minimum wage is #18,000 only, which translates to less than \$60 US per month. Poor as this standard is, yet, many Catholic catechists in Nigeria in general, and Igboland in particular, earn as low as #10,000 per month which is less than \$30 US per month. Such income put the average Catholic catechist among the poorest of the poor. Their condition would have been bearable if the Church in Igboland was too poor to pay them a

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<sup>1122</sup> Ndiokwere, I.N; *The African Church Today and Tomorrow*, Vol.1. Prospects and Challenges, p.205

<sup>1123</sup> *Guide for Catechists*, no. 31

substantial remuneration. Surprisingly, the church in Igboland can comfortably afford to take good care of her catechist if she considers their welfare one of her priority. However, there seems to be no administrative will to pull resources together for the welfare of catechists. If the Church authorities should appeal to the laity to donate for the welfare of their catechists, their pitiable financial condition will be transformed without negatively affecting the annual budgets of the various dioceses. The catechists too are often bitter about their working condition and poor maintenance, since they know very well that the Church can give them a better package if only their Bishops and Priests would decide to do so. Worst of all is that, in most dioceses and Parishes in Igboland, there is no pension or other welfare packages for retired catechists. They are not also entitled to gratuity either.

What baffles the researcher and many concerned Christians in Igboland so much is: Why should this ugly situation be allowed to exist when huge sums of money are regularly dispensed by various Pontifical charity organizations and agencies for assisting catechists training and maintenance? To date, large subsidies for the catechists and their ministries are known to be dispensed by Pontifical missionary bodies such as the society for the propagation of faith, the society of St. Peter the Apostle and the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood.<sup>1124</sup> Though these funds may be dwindling because the West we depended on their generosity are no more active in the church as before, but the catechists salary are included in the yearly budget of the diocese, parish and station that could supplement and cater for the catechists' remuneration. The Church in Igboland has to adhere to the injunctions of John Paul II that: "...the Church is bidden by God and by events - each of them a call from him - to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith. And an attitude of faith always has reference to the faithfulness of God, who never fails to respond."<sup>1125</sup> The church in Igboland has to read the signs of the time in order to buckle up

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<sup>1124</sup> Ndiokwere, I.N, *The African Church Today and Tomorrow, Vol.1, Prospects and Challenges*, p.205

<sup>1125</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.15

in her catechetical work. She has to examine her priorities in order to provide a just salary for their catechists. Let her remember that the new evangelization calls for a greater involvement of catechists and, likewise, a greater commitment by the Church on their behalf. Catechists are immediate witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers, who represent the basic strength of Christian communities. The Church needs to reflect more deeply on their task and provide them with more stable living conditions...<sup>1126</sup> At least we have to pay our catechists the normal minimum wage. But the minimum wage should be such that it would be enough to sustain the catechist and his family and enable him to fulfill some basic responsibilities and still make some savings for the rainy day.

It is also to be understood that paying our catechists is their right and a duty upon their employers and not a privilege. The earlier both the clergy and laity understand this, the better. In fact, “the question of a just wage is a thorny issue but it remains the right of those who are paid employees. There are circumstances which can influence what can be called a just wage in any context. Sometimes it is called “a living wage” to stress the function it should perform in the life of workers. The principle is that someone who is employed devotes his working hours to this particular employment, has the right to live by what he earns, feed his family and fulfill other basic necessities of life. For Pope John Paul II, such a wage is the test of the proper functioning of a wage economy.”<sup>1127</sup> The Church has to maintain what she professes or teaches. By this we mean that if the church professes herself as a champion and custodian of human rights; the implication is that her workers should expect a fair treatment. On the side of the volunteers in the catechetical work, we have to say that “the good will of voluntary catechists, who have another job but are willing to devote part of their free time to catechetical work, are certainly to be encouraged...”<sup>1128</sup> but those we employed, we have to pay them at least the minimum wage.

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<sup>1126</sup>*The XIII Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, no. 108

<sup>1127</sup>Okeke, V.M., *The Dignity of Human Labour*, Pastoral Letter 2012, Enugu: Snaap Press Nig. Ltd, 2012, no. 82

<sup>1128</sup>*Guide for Catechists*, no. 32

Furthermore, the maintenance and payment of our catechists has also a scriptural background. According to Christ, "The laborer deserves his wages" (*Luke 10:7*). Paul would begin his own with question thus: "Do we not have the right to our food and drink? ... Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?" (*1 Cor. 9:4, 6, 7*) Although Paul chose not to use this right in certain circumstances, he defends it: "Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain. 'Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the ploughman should in hope and the thresher in hope of a share in the crop. If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefit? ... Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple-service get their food from the temple and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel get their living by the gospel" (*1 Cor. 9:8-11, 13, 14*).

Also the Popes on their own side have not kept silent concerning the maintenance and payment of the catechist. Pius XII during the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate made it clear that: "We have often been struck by the fact that the obligation to give these coworkers the salary which is due them is recalled in missionary congresses for the lay apostolate. The catechist is often totally occupied with his missionary work and, therefore, he and his family depend for a living on what the Church gives them."<sup>1129</sup> The Fathers of the Vatican II in *Ad Gentes* expressed their own feeling that "those who give themselves fully to this work should be assured, by being paid a just wage, of decent standard of living and social security. It is desirable that the sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, in some suitable manner, provide special aids for the training and upkeep of catechists. If it seems necessary and right an institute for catechists should be founded. The churches should also gratefully acknowledge the generous work of auxiliary catechists of whose help they have such need. These preside at prayers in their communities and also teach sacred doctrines. Proper care should be taken

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<sup>1129</sup>Address of His Holiness Pope Pius XII to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate October 5, 1957.

regarding their doctrinal and spiritual formation. It should be desirable too, wherever it seems opportune, to confer the canonical mission on properly trained catechists in the course of a public liturgical celebration, so that in the eyes of the people they might serve the cause of the faith with greater authority.”<sup>1130</sup> So if both ecclesiastical and divine laws are in support of the maintenance of our catechists; the implication is that the Christian faithful, cannot remain aloof and think that they have done their duty when they have satisfied their own spiritual needs; every individual must give his assistance to those who are working for the increase and propagation of God's kingdom. Pius XII on this issue stressed on it and reminded all of their common duty in these words: "A principal note of the Church is catholicity; consequently, a man is no true member of the Church unless he is likewise a true member of the entire body of Christian believers and is filled with an ardent desire to see her take root and flourish in every land."<sup>1131</sup> We have to make an effort as Church and also as individual to see to the payment and good maintenance of our catechists. The relevant diocesan authority with the Local Ordinary should proffer practical solutions to this practical problem, of course depending on the local church's financial situation. The diocese and parishes in the pastoral planning should set aside a reasonable proportion of their annual budgets for catechists, and in particular for their formation. The faithful should contribute generously to their support especially in farm labour and other difficult times<sup>1132</sup> such as in matters of health, disasters and death etc. The diocesan effort to maintain catechists should equally be extended to the catechetical training centres for a decent training of catechists.

Apart from the material consideration for the catechists to themselves and families, a cordial relationship between the catechists, parish priests and the Christian communities is very important. No amount of money can gain and preserve this fundamental factor. These relations should be characterized by a mutual esteem and appreciation of one another's service for God.<sup>1133</sup>

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<sup>1130</sup> Vatican Council II Documents, *Ad Gentes*, no.17

<sup>1131</sup> Pius XII's Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis*, AAS 35 (1943) 201

<sup>1132</sup> *General Catechesis*, no.32

<sup>1133</sup> B. Anthyme, „The Catechists' Work in Africa,“ in: *The Catechist According to the Council, International Sunday-Week*, Aachen, 11-17 September 1967, p.95

Priests and religious should have special regard and responsibility for their catechists and in particular the weak ones.

What we are saying is that priests should look on catechists as co-operators, collaborators, responsible for the ministry entrusted to them by the Lord Jesus, and not as subordinates carrying out instructions. They should encourage them to be creative and educate the small Christian communities to respect their catechists, support them in their ministries and to contribute generously toward their social welfare.<sup>1134</sup> With the provision of these necessary considerations in the ministry of catechists, the mission of catechesis will bear fruit, as catechists will not be thinking of quitting their vocation because of untold hardships due to the conditions of service.

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<sup>1134</sup>*General Catechesis*, no.35

## CHAPTER SIX

### RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

At this point, no one doubts the importance of the Lay catechists. Their role is not circumstantial but ontologically linked to the nature and structure of the church. Echema puts it very correctly thus: "...the relevance of the lay catechist is not anchored merely on the insufficiency of manpower in the clergy. The importance of the laity has nothing to do with the lack of priests and religious. Even if they were in abundance, the apostolate of the laity would still remain as necessary as ever. It is a necessity which does not have an ecclesiastical origin, but which is of the divine order, willed by God himself."<sup>1135</sup> This need is especially felt in the Igbo church. There is vocation boom to the priesthood, yet the necessity of lay catechist is felt more than ever. However, this need would not be satisfied unless the lay catechists are trained. In fact, to employ untrained lay catechists is to increase the need as they would themselves constitute greater needs. As a way out, this researcher has outlined some recommendation concerning the situation of the church in Igbo land and concerning what is to be done to have trained lay catechists, towards improving the catechetical apostolate of the church in Igbo land.

#### **6.1 Catechetical Institute**

The establishment of catechetical institute has continued to be a recurrent topic. However, this topic has not been given sufficient practical attention. As we noticed on the course of this work, there are few catechetical institutes in Igbo land and even these ones are not appropriately funded. As such, they are suffering, not only the dearth of personnel but also the dearth of material resources which both combine to make the training unattractive and ineffective at the end.

Accordingly, this researcher recommends that each Diocese in Igbo land can establish a catechetical institute for her lay catechists. This is in accordance with the recommendation of the Church as we saw in this work. Where the source of funds poses a difficulty, the establishment should be undertaken by the ecclesiastical province. Ecclesiastical or Diocesan catechetical

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<sup>1135</sup> Echema A, *Priest and Laity Collaboration in the Postmodern Church*, p.182

councils could be set up to direct and manage this establishment. The aim of the establishment would be to train the lay catechists without any profit making motivation in view. Every parish has catechists. Thus every parish has to contribute to this establishment.

## **6.2 Recommended Spiritual Training for Lay Catechists**

### **The daily life of Spirituality expected of every catechist.**

I. **Reception of the Eucharist:** Every catechist is expected to receive the Holy Eucharist daily so as to nourish himself with the “bread of life” (Jn. 6:34). He should also form the habit of having holy hours before the Blessed Sacrament. It is here that he draws the power and the strength to carry out his work.

II. **Meditating on the word of God:** He should cultivate the habit of daily meditation especially on the word of God, in an attitude of contemplation and response; Experience shows that, even for lay people, regular meditation and *lectio divina* (*spiritual reading*) bring order to one's life and guarantee spiritual growth.

III. **Personal prayer:** Apart from the community prayer; there is the need of personal relation with God in whom he works in his vineyard. Catechists should allow themselves to be drawn into the circle of the Father, who communicates the word; of the Son, the incarnate Word, who speaks only the words He hears from the Father (cf. *Jn.* 8:26; 12:49); and of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the mind to help it understand God's words and opens the heart to receive them with love and put them into practice (cf. *Jn.* 16:12-14).

IV. **Sacrament of Penance:** Frequent reception of the sacrament of penance, to ask pardon for faults committed and renew one's fervor with his God, will help a Catechist to remain in the state of grace.

V. **Spiritual Retreats:** He has to find time for his annual retreats with his fellow catechists and for his personal retreat. It will help him for personal and community renewal.

VI. **Spiritual Direction:** There is the need for every catechist to have a spiritual director and to take going to spiritual direction very seriously. Dioceses are also encouraged to name specific priests to avail themselves to the catechists and their work and provide spiritual guidance. But it is important that each catechist should choose a personal spiritual director from among the priests who are easily accessible. Parish priests in particular should be close to their catechists and help them even more in their spiritual growth than in their work.<sup>1136</sup>

In summarily, a catechist has to be trained to be an example to the Church Community or Parish he is attached to. He should be humble, obedient and chaste. Above all, he should be a devout man, dedicated to prayer and constant union with God, a man who goes before the Divine Majesty and fervently pleads the cause of souls. A man who understands that as he binds himself more and more closely to God, he will receive the grace and assistance of God to a greater degree. Particularly applicable here are the words of St. Paul: "Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and well beloved, clothe yourselves with sentiments of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering" (Colossians 3:12). With these virtues, a Catechist is most likely to make great exploits and impact in his Ministry and many who encounter him will likely find him and his message irresistible. This kind of training is only possible with the establishment of institutes where candidates are prepared before taking up the work as lay catechists.

Once established, the training of lay catechists must be made compulsory for every catechist prior to commencement of duty unless there is urgent reason otherwise. But no one would contend the suitability of a trained lay catechist over the untrained, even if educated.

### **6.1.1 Training in Igbo Culture**

In Igbo culture, religion and culture are intertwined. This is why it is often to find the practice of syncretism among Christians. The Church in Igbo land has not taken the implication of Igbo culture very seriously in evangelization. Most times, the theology taught is so far removed from

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<sup>1136</sup>*Guide for Catechist, no.22*

the reality, that one wonders the suitability without proper contextualization. The chapter one and two of this work discussed this culture extensively and we do not want to replicate them here.

The lay catechists need to study the Igbo culture with the view to understanding the implication for the reception of the gospel on the part of the Igbo man. Though context without theology is directionless and empty, we should not forget that theology without context lacks suitability.

## **6.2 Lay Catechists' Role Definition**

In Igbo land as in most part of Nigeria, the role of the lay catechist is fluid. It depends on what the Parish priest want to make out of him. This kind of gross dependence on the whims and caprices of the parish priest, makes the lay catechist unsure and incapable of acting from initiative, especially bedeviled as he largely is, by poverty and lack of basic necessities. There is need for some role definitions of lay catechists. This description can then serve as the point of departure for the priest with whom he works.

On this matter, it is the view of this researcher that in addition to the assistance in liturgy, which is the primary role of the catechists now in Igbo land, there is need to officially attach the catechists to the school run by the parish. This was the practice of the early missionaries as we saw from the foregoing. An attachment such as this, takes the presupposition of some kind of training already received by the catechist. In such schools, the catechists could act as catechetical instructors, not only during moral instructions, but also as part of the curriculum of the church owned schools. It could be arranged in such a way that after certain years, a student can be administered sacraments based on the catechetical training received in the class. While this may not work in every case since not all parishes have schools, the researcher looks from the background of Nsukka Diocese, where every parish either already has, or is making plan towards establishing one.

Moreover, it is worthy of note here that the lay catechists' role should not be limited to children during Catechism classes. This is a conception that is not only wrong but also causing poor growth of catechesis in the church in Igbo land. In fact, adult catechesis occupies an important place in the heart of the church. Catechesis strives to lead all persons to a deep and mature

faith. The Bishops of the United States note that “maturity of faith is the intent of all catechesis from the earliest years.”<sup>1137</sup> Adult formation is the “principal form of catechesis because it is addressed to persons who have the greatest responsibilities and the capacity to live the Christian message in its fully developed form.”<sup>1138</sup> While the Bishops emphasize that they in no way wish to weaken the commitment to catechetical formation for children, they also make it abundantly clear that adult faith formation is a priority and that “catechesis needs to give more attention to adults than it has been accustomed to do”<sup>1139</sup>. This priority of adult formation is reinforced in the National Directory when it notes that “the catechetical formation of adults is essential for the Church to carry out the commission given the apostles by Christ”<sup>1140</sup> and that formation needs to be addressed to adults in “different stages in the development of their faith.”<sup>1141</sup>

Dioceses and parishes have roles to play regarding adult catechesis. They “are to include a programme for the family apostolate in the overall pastoral plan. There should be periodic catechesis of parents and guardians on their role as educators of their children. Members should foster family prayer in the homes. Curricular for religious education are to be made available to parents for the education of their children in family on mission awareness.”<sup>1142</sup> These programs will help couples to live a simple, evangelical life in a family where the members grow in the spirit of the Beatitudes. There is to be a well-grounded biblical, theological and Christian pedagogical formation for parents, based on the truths of the Catholic faith, to meet the demands and challenges of their children’s catechesis. They will be urged to base, permeate and nourish this ministry on an intense spiritual and sacramental life of ecclesial communion, projected and

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<sup>1137</sup> *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, a Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States, p.13

<sup>1138</sup> John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 43

<sup>1139</sup> *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, a Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States, p.14

<sup>1140</sup> National Directory for Catechesis, p. 187

<sup>1141</sup> National Directory for Catechesis, p. 187

<sup>1142</sup> *The Church in Nigeria: Family of God on Mission*, no. 149

prolonged in family prayer and in offering to God their family's entire life and activity.<sup>1143</sup> The lay catechists are to take part in this training and formation as part of their official role.

### **6.3 Remuneration**

Missionary work generally understood, belong to the work of charity and love. As such, much material rewards are not expected. "You receive without charge, give without charge..." (Mt. 10:7-10) has often been employed to excuse the poor maintenance of the lay catechist. However, we should be careful not to quote this out of context. Ps. 128:2 says that "you will eat the fruit of your labour". When the apostles reminded Jesus the sacrifices they have made in order to follow him, he said: "Truly I tell you, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel, will receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life" (Mk 10:29-30).

It is the humble view of this researcher that it is high time the maintenance of the lay catechists in Igbo land be practically considered with a view to ameliorating their pains and sufferings. This is especially true for the full time catechists who have no other means of income. In chapter five, we have discussed the implication of improper care of the lay catechists on their families. Their attachment to schools would enable paying them not only easy but well regulated. This researcher is of the opinion that full time catechists after training should be earning a minimum of Forty Thousand Naira (40,000), per month, to enable them live a quasi-decent life with their families. In a situation where this is not possible, it would be clear even to the catechist. But in most cases, it is possible.

### **6.4 Priestly formation**

The priests under their bishops and in co-operation with them, are the primary leaders of the Church. As such, the training they have would influence their relationship with the lay catechists. It is unfortunate that in Igbo land, some priests do not work well with their catechists but see

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<sup>1143</sup>*Going, Teach ... Commentary on the Apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae of John Paul II, P.346*

them just as make-shift arrangements of the church just to make their work easy. This is why some priests appoint and dismiss catechists by mere volition. There is need that priests accept the catechists as collaborators.

In addition, the priests themselves need to be serious with catechesis. Till now the course in catechetics seems not to be taken seriously. The reason is not far-fetched. If a seminarian is mastering *theology* what earthly need had he to learn how “to teach *catechism*”? The old Latin adage: “Qui plus valet minus valet” (he who can do greater thing can do the lesser) seem to apply here with all its rigor<sup>1144</sup> as if to say that catechesis is all about teaching catechism in terms of children catechism classes. The importance of the catechetical course in the seminary should be apparent to all. The seminarian of today must be able to assume his proper catechetical role as the priest of tomorrow. This means that he must have the clearest possible grasp of the Christian message in all its fullness and that he must be able to communicate that message to the men, women and children of his day. In other words he must know *what* to teach and *how* to teach it. Content and method therefore will be the great concerns of catechetics course.<sup>1145</sup> Consequently if the catechetics course in a seminary (or anywhere, for that matter) is going to achieve its full effect, the total life of the seminary must be an experience of the full Christian life. Primarily this means that the seminary must be a true Christian community, a reflection of the total living unity-in-love for which the son of God died.<sup>1146</sup>

## 6.5 Conclusion

The church in Igbo land remains a great hope for the universal church in the future. The present vocation boom and enthusiasm for church matters must be harnessed for maximum profit. This researcher is of the opinion that this can be done through the instrument of catechesis. He is

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<sup>1144</sup> Norris F.B., “The Catechetics Course in the Major Seminary”, In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetics*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, P.213

<sup>1145</sup> Norris F.B., “The Catechetics Course in the Major Seminary”, In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetics*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, P.216

<sup>1146</sup> Norris F.B., “The Catechetics Course in the Major Seminary”, In: Hofinger J. & Stone T.C (ed.) *Pastoral Catechetics*, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, P.216

of the view that if lay catechists are trained and employed into the service, their collaboration with the priests would bring abundance harvest in the vine yard

Bishop Augustine Nobou from Côte d'Ivoire speaking on the catechist as a witness to the gospel of Christ said: "For a long time it was thought that evangelization concerned only clergy and religious. Today, it calls upon all the dynamic element committed to following Christ. The lay faithful have understood that they are part of the royal priesthood. The African church is proud of its millions of catechists who transmit the message of Christ throughout Africa. The young dynamic African churches should reveal themselves as such in their different initiatives. The hour has come to look at evangelization in in-depth."<sup>1147</sup> This view holds true for the Igbo church in particular. Speaking with reference to lay catechists, Nobou continued that in Africa today, the task of "indigenization" which the church has always supported and spearhead everywhere needs to be continued with greater impact. Catechist will therefore play a predominant role. Being layman and woman, will be in the best position to keep in close touch with the communities and will share the lot of the communities and thereby maintain them, holding them together by the force of their example and by the power of their doctrine. A well trained catechist who is at the same time deeply conscious of his mission and loyal to the church will do a tremendous service. He will bring the image of the church to bear on his social milieu in as much as he deploys zeal to his duties and wins confidence of his fellow men and women.<sup>1148</sup>

This researcher joins the view of Pope John Paul II In *Catechesi Tradendae*, in encouraging lay catechists:

I am anxious to give thanks in the Church's name to all of you, lay teachers of catechesis in the parishes, the men and the still more numerous women throughout the world, who are devoting yourselves to the religious education of many generations. Your work is...carried out with ardent and generous zeal, and it is an eminent form of the lay apostolate, a form that is particularly important where for various reasons children and young people do not

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<sup>1147</sup> Nobou A, „The World expects a Witness of Missionary Cooperation, in L'Osservatore Romano 17 (English Ed., 27 April 1994) 12

<sup>1148</sup> Nobou A, „The World expects a Witness of Missionary Cooperation, in L'Osservatore Romano 17 (English Ed., 27 April 1994) 12

receive suitable religious training in the home. How many of us have received from people like you our first notions of catechism and our preparation for the sacrament of penance, for our first communion and confirmation! The Fourth General Assembly of the Synod did not forget you. I join with it in encouraging you to continue your collaboration for the life of the Church.<sup>1149</sup>

### SUMMARY

Regarding the Catholic Church in Igbo land, there are variegated opinions on the challenges and prospects of her continued existence, nay, growth. Some have identified syncretism as the greatest challenge, proffering authenticity of religious mind as the way out. For others, vocation boom is the greatest prospect and as such, proper harnessing of the candidates' intention is the challenge. For many more, natural religious consciousness is the vantage point and proper inculturation would set the stage for a greater future. Many still identify the generous hearts of the Igbo people towards the religious leaders and functionaries as the greatest sign of hope and suggest that caution is to be observed not to offend this sensibility. The list can go on endlessly. There is a common denominator in these opinions and findings. This is precisely that something must be done to sustain and improve on the positive status quo. The single word that can describe this something that must be done is Catechesis. Catechesis cannot be possible without agents. Catechetical agents cannot be effective without training.

Accordingly, it is the task of this writer to carry out a research on the topic: **THE TRAINING OF LAY CATECHISTS: A MEANS TO IMPROVING THE CATECHETICAL APOSTOLATE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IGBOLAND.** We desire to shift attention from the training of ordained and professed catechists, on which there are deluge of literatures already, to the training of lay catechists, an area that seems to receive less attention until now but without less significance. In doing this, we took the first step from the time of the arrival of the Catholic Church in Igbo land, through the pioneering work of the early missionaries to Igbo land. After this, we examined the Igbo people and their culture, looking critically at the prospects and challenges. The two documents of the Church, *Catechesi*

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<sup>1149</sup>John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, no.66

*Tradendae* and the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the XII ordinary Synod for the New Evangelization were reviewed with a view to building the training of lay catechist in Igbo land on orthodox foundation. This training is then discussed in details, beginning from a look at what is on ground already and how we can move forward. At the end of the research, we made some recommendations and conclusions. In addition to the introduction, the work has six (6) chapters.

In the introduction section, after restating the indispensable place of catechesis in the transmission of the faith, it is laid bare that the church in Igbo land has both problems and prospects. Syncretism and backsliding to Traditional religions in difficult times, shows that the faith has not really taken root in the heart of majority of the people. The ground-breaking success being achieved by Pentecostal Churches, whose members are mostly drawn from the Catholic Church also portends danger for the future of the Catholic Church in Igbo land. However, one looks immediately at the openness of the people to religion as a positive sign of great hope. The people still come to church in great numbers and still have respect for the teachings of the church, especially those taught by ministers who are also witnesses. The training of lay catechists is a means to improve this catechetical apostolate. The lay catechist in respect to his closeness to the people has great advantage in knowing where it pinches, being himself one of those pinched. If he is trained, he would go a long way to improve the catechetical result of the church in Igbo land.

Who are the Igbo people? How can we describe their cultural, political, and religious life? These are some of the questions that we answered in chapter one. In the main, we discovered that these elements are linked in the life of the Igbo person. To talk about his culture, is to refer to his religion and politics. Accordingly, the Igbo man's hunger affects his religion and his misfortune has intimate root and consequence in his religion. The implication of this is the difficulty of imparting Christian doctrines that are in contra position with cultural doctrines. How did the early missionaries handle this? In fact, who were they? We also answered these questions in chapter one. The different epochs were discussed as well and the implication for the training of lay catechists become clearer.

It is not enough to lament that there are challenges to the Igbo church. It demands explication. This was our task in chapter two. But prior to this description, we undertook the description of who the lay catechists are and their relationship to the challenges of Igbo church. Then we described in details the challenges of the Church in Igbo land mentioning the numerous areas where cultural practices are at loggerheads with Christian teaching. After this chapter, it becomes very clear that the church in Igbo land is in serious need of training lay catechists who will live among the people and use the variously learnt pedagogy and methodology in furthering the catechetical apostolate.

Chapter three and four discuss *Catechesi Tradendae* of Pope John Paul II (1979) and the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the XII ordinary Synod for the New Evangelization respectively. These documents are on catechesis in general but made great allusion to the training of lay catechists. The evident point is that the training of lay catechists has remained in the heart of the church right from its origin. We discussed the various areas where these documents made references to the training of lay catechists and proposed the implementation of the views therefrom.

The major discussion of this work is in chapter five. Moving from the description of the present state of lay catechists in Igbo land today, the discussion takes us through various types of catechists there are, and qualities needed of a catechist. Then comes the discussion of the training of lay catechists. Pope John Paul II has proposed in the *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, an integral formation for priests. This write up agrees that similar training is required for a lay catechist. As such, there was discussion on the spiritual, theological, intellectual, cultural, liturgical, catechetical, human training of lay catechists.

In the final chapter, six, we made recommendations. This writer believes that the establishment and maintenance of more catechetical institutes is a desideratum today. Lay catechists can then receive appropriate training in these institutes. It is after such training that the lay catechists' role in catechesis can be formally defined. Once this is done, their remuneration could be better organized. Priests also need to be trained to work with the lay catechists. When this is done, it is the humble belief of this researcher that catechetical apostolate in Igbo land would be improved



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Tübingen, im Dezember 2017