

**COLLABORATIVE
MINISTRY
IN MISSION:
THEOLOGICAL AND
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**



Proceedings of the Second
International Conference of
The Theological Institute of
Consecrated Life in Africa

KANU, Ikechukwu Anthony, O.S.A (Ed)

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A Publication of
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*To Members of
Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life in Africa*

Foreword

Last year 2017, the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life in Africa organized the First International Conference on Collaborative Ministry in Mission and Canonical Processes. This Conference was held in Abuja with facilitators from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life. The conference was the first of its kind and thus left a mark on the history of the Church in Nigeria. The conference introduced the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life in Africa aimed at providing qualified service to Consecrated Life through the systematic theological research on Consecrated Life in its various dimensions and aspects; the academic training, by conferring academic degrees, Doctorate, Licentiate and Master; the research and publication of various works on Consecrated Life and other services to Consecrated Life, such as counseling, animation of retreats, chapters, etc.

This year 2018, the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life in Africa organized the Second International Conference on Collaborative Ministry, looking at it from different perspectives: Doctrinal/Church documents perspective, Cultural/African perspective, Biblical perspective/St. Paul's experience, Skills and Challenges of Collaboration. More interesting about this second international conference is the fact that it did not only bring together consecrated persons of different affiliations but also diocesan priests to discuss the issue around collaboration. The conference was a huge success and would remain in the minds of those who attended a reference point for many years to come.

I, therefore, present to you the book of proceedings of the Second International Conference of the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life in Africa. My sincere gratitude goes to Rev. Fr. Prof. Kanu Anthony, O.S.A who edited this book of proceedings, and also all those who worked hard towards the success of the Conference. We look forward to a more interesting and engaging conference in 2019.

Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Onyeayana, CMF

Delegate Superior, Claretian Missionaries West Delegation

Introduction

This year's International Conference organized by the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life for Africa owned by the Claretian Missionaries can best be described as a festival. And one of the images that comes to mind is the New Yam festival. At this 2018 International Conference, there was a harvest of thoughts. The conference was an opportunity for consecrated persons and diocesan priests to gather together, in terms of a harvest, from the immense and measureless garden of knowledge, which has matured for us as a result of the labors of the Claretian Missionaries. Implicit in the concept of harvest is a preceding period of sowing or planting. In this cosmological drama of human existence, harvest is characterized by a period of blissful celebration, marked for us, especially as Africans, by group dances and colorful masquerades, by goodwill visits and exchange of gifts.¹ Thus, the nature and quality of the harvest are logically determined by the kind of seed we sowed, on what kind of soil we sowed it and how painstakingly we manured and tended it. The quality of the International Conference tells us the story of how skillfully and beautifully well seeds were sowed in thought, word and deed.²

To avoid a limited and narrow conception of harvest period as a time of winning, dinning and mutual congratulations, a broader conception reminds us that harvest is also a season of reappraisal and stock-taking. For instance, the New Yam Festival is a time of appraisal of performance during the previous agricultural year. In the comfort provided by relatively plenty, plans are made, at least

¹A. E. Afigbo, *The age of innocence: The Igbo and their neighbours in pre-colonial times*. A lecture delivered at the 1981 Ahiajoku Lecture, p.7.

²A. E. Afigbo, *The age of innocence: The Igbo and their neighbours in pre-colonial times*. A lecture delivered at the 1981 Ahiajoku Lecture, p.7.

mentally, for the next season. In keeping with this tried and tested tradition, the International Conference did not fail to cease the opportunity of a lifetime to critically, soberly, appreciatively and deprecatingly examine the major concerns within the parameters of collaboration in Ministry.

The present book of proceedings is a collection of the different presentations that were harvested at the 2018 International Conference. I, therefore, beat the drum for this book of proceedings which is a collection of the works of the best minds you can ever imagine. In them are individual perceptions crystallized as thought contributions which will survive the physical structures of generations yet to come.

KANU, Ikechukwu Anthony, O.S.A.

Professor of Religion and Cultural Studies

Tansian University, Nigeria

WELCOME ADDRESS

Rev. Fr. Peter Okonkwo, CMF
(Coordinator of the Steering Committee of TICLA)

My Lord Bishops,
Secretary General of CSN,
The President,
Major Superiors,
Frs. Generals,
Mother Generals
Brothers and Sisters

On behalf of the Claretian Missionaries in Africa and the steering committee of the Theological Institute of Consecrated life for Africa (TICLA), I heartily and humbly welcome all of you to this all important Second International Conference on Collaborative Ministry in Mission.

This is the second of its kind. The first was held in Abuja this same time last year, 2017 with some facilitators from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life. The theme was Collaborative Ministry in Mission and Canonical Processes. The attendance was very good. The audience was very good. The audience was mainly the consecrated persons; it was very insightful and enriching. It was at that conference that decisions were made to bring the Diocesan Priests on board for meaningful dialogue.

So, this year again, we promise it will be more exciting, engaging and enriching. This year there is still Collaborative Ministry and Mission. We intend to create a platform to engage the Diocesan Priests and Consecrated persons in a meaningful and fruitful dialogue regarding collaboration in the Mission of Christ.

We hope to raise some pertinent issues concerning collaboration in the Ministry of Christ and draw up some road maps and compass that will enhance and encourage effective and efficient skills for collaboration among the different Pastoral Agents.

We are going to look at Collaborative Ministry from different perspectives. Viz Doctrinal/Church documents perspective, Cultural/African perspective, Biblical perspective/St. Paul's experience, Skills and Challenges of Collaboration.

We hope to publish the acts of this Conference as we did that of last year to keep the series going.

Actually these Conference series are meant to introduce us into Theological Institute of Consecrated life for Africa (TICLA) that the Claretians in Africa are building in Bwari Abuja for the entire continent of Africa. The Institute will be affiliated to Veritas University, Abuja, Pontifical Lateran University, Rome and to other such Institutions that Cleratian Missionaries own and run in other parts of the world like Italy, Spain, India and Philippines. This school may commence studies by October 2019, God willing. At this juncture, may I introduce our Consultor in Rome, representing the Father General of the Claretian Missionaries Worldwide, at this conference, Very Rev. Fr. Henry Omonisaye, CMF to present to us the greetings of the father General and the Vision and Mission of this Theological Institute of Consecrated Life for Africa.(TICLA).

Once again you are all welcome. May our Mother Mary, Ever Virgin intercede for us.

THE VISION AND MISSION OF TICLA

Very Rev. Fr. Henry Omonisaye, CMF
General Consultor and President of the Board of the
Institutes of Consecrated Life,
Claretian Missionaries General curia, Rome

Your Excellencies, Superiors General, Major Superiors, my Sisters and Brothers.

I wish to use this medium to welcome you all to the 1st conference on Consecrated Life organized by the Claretian Missionaries as a step towards bringing into greater lime light the establishment of the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life in Africa. It is particularly heartwarming to acknowledge the presence of your Excellencies at this edition of the Conference. It is a clear demonstration of the communion that exists with the local Church. This is more imperative when taken within the context of the theme chosen for these days- Collaborative Ministry in Mission.

The Vision and Mission of TICLA

What is TICLA?

TICLA is the acronym for Theological Institute of Consecrated Life for Africa. It is a Theological Institute that will focus primarily on Consecrated Life as a form of life and vocation in the Church. This will of course take into cognizance all the theological implications and dimensions.

The Claretian Congregation has been involved in the Institutes of Consecrated Life with the establishment of Claretianun, Rome in 1935. *Claretianum* officially became an Institute with all the rights and privileges of an ecclesiastical Institute with the decrees

of the Vatican on 6th June 1971, 47 years and about 5 months ago. With the official establishment of the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life (*Claretianum*) in Rome and the *Instituto Teológico de Vida Religiosa* in Madrid, same year, 1971. We have over the years consolidated this service to Consecrated Life in the other Continents with the establishment of a similar Institute- 1996 in Quezon City, Philippines and in 1998 in Sanyasa, Bangalore (Bangaluru) in India. Thus, we have:

- The *Istituto di Teologia della Vita Consecrata - Claretianum* (ITVC) in Rome, Italy, incorporated to the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome.
- The *Instituto Teológico de Vida Religiosa* (ITVR), in Madrid, Spain, a section of the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of Salamanca.
- The *Institute for Consecrated Life in Asia* (ICLA) in Culiati Quezon City, Philippines, affiliated to the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas in Manila and recognized also by “St. Anthony Mary Claret College” in Quezon City.
- The *Sanyasa Institute of Consecrated Life* (SICL), in Bangalore, India, affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome and associated with “Christ University” of Bangalore.

You can obviously see that we have 2 Institutes each in Europe and Asia. Africa is up till now, visibly absent in the whole project. We think it would be important to establish one in Africa given the number of Religious Institutes in Africa and some locally founded Institutes that would require a lot of help and formation in building up their vision and charism for the good of the Church in Africa. We have the same vision and mission for Africa that is part of the *raison d'etre* here today. With this seminar, we want to start this

project which will involve building of Structures- physical, academic, spiritual and formative in service of the Church in Africa. The project is also on in Colombia For the American Continent.

Let me just quickly add that the service to the Church in the Area of Consecrated Life is not restricted to the Academic (the different Institutes) level but more practically many of our brothers work in the Congregation for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in the Vatican and some are Consultants to the Holy See in this and other spheres especially in the discipline of Canon Law.

Mission

In our Corporate Statement of the Theological Institutes of Consecrated Life (TICL) the set of principles, motivations and criteria that guide the mission of the Claretian centers serving Consecrated Life (CL) within the Church and the entire evangelizing mission of the Church as a whole is presented. Therefore, we conceive and develop our mission within the evangelizing mission of the universal Church, under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church directed to Consecrated Life and the guidelines and directives issued by the particular churches.

We are inspired also by the very special dedication of St. Anthony Mary Claret, our founder, to Consecrated Life and heirs to a long history of missionary service to Consecrated Life in the world developed by our Congregation. Therefore, following his explicit desire, our theological Institutes unreservedly offer their service with renewed dynamism to Consecrated Life in its rich diversity.

This diversity is an important aspect of this Institute as it stands to contextualize the reflection on Consecrated Life taking into cognizance the diversity, fecundity and values of different cultural

milieu where it serves. Therefore, the African values and points of view will be part of the ingredients of TICLA.

Motivation and purpose of our missionary work

We unite our efforts to better support the process of formation and renewal of CL in today's world, meeting the guidelines of the Church and in permanent dialogue with the various socio-cultural contexts.

We are living in the era of globalization. Therefore, working together, we intend to give a qualified answer to the challenges posed to Consecrated Life today especially in Africa. We also take seriously into account the ecclesiology of communion and the new theology of the forms of Christian life. These are not also strange to us in Africa.

We adopt as a priority the specific theological reflection on Consecrated Life in tune with the guidelines of Vatican II. We continue to further deepen the prophetic and eschatological dimension of Consecrated Life. We opt for a comprehensive and thorough training of those who will be the future leaders of the Church's mission or will have responsibilities in formation.

Therefore, we develop this qualified service to Consecrated Life through,

- The systematic theological research on Consecrated Life in its various dimensions and aspects.
- The academic training (by conferring academic degrees, Doctorate, Licentiate and Master).
- The research and publication of various works on Consecrated Life
- Other services to Consecrated Life, such as counseling, animation of retreats, chapters, etc.

Priorities, areas of cooperation and coordination structures

Guidelines, criteria and priorities of our curriculum:

Our missionary work in the TICLA will start with an accurate attention to the cultural, religious, socio-political, etc. context, both globally and locally.

In our service to Consecrated Life we adopt a holistic approach that aims to address the student's person comprehensively, covering both the academic and life experience.

Our academic plans give priority to fundamental subjects such as:

- The inspiration and biblical foundation of CL.
- The history and experience of CL.
- The theological reflection on the various forms of CL and of evangelical life (monastic, contemplative life, apostolic life, secular institutes, new forms of consecrated life).
- The systematic study of the theological elements of CL (consecrated life, relative to other forms of Christian life, evangelical counsels, community life, mission).
- The study of CL as a gift of God to the Church in its various charisms.
- The development of the theology CL benefits also of the contributions of those sciences that provide essential insights into human baseline (anthropology, psychology, sociology, law). Some of our students will probably become formators in their respective institutes. This is why a particular attention to educational matters is given in our academic plans.

Areas and forms of cooperation/collaboration

We join forces to optimize the results of the research and teaching of the theology of CL. For this purpose, we want to increase the collaboration of professors from various institutes, (intra-congregational) and different other Religious Institutes and societies of Apostolic Life (Inter-congregational).

Conclusion

The TICLA project has the objective of enhancing and promoting quality of Consecrated Life in Africa through the service of the Institute. We consider this kind of Institute as being indispensable for the continent now because of its epistemological, religious and institutional advantages for the Church in Africa and the different religious institutes that are in the continent. Permit me to conclude by saying that we thank God for the numerous vocations that we have in Africa, especially for the growth of the Church not only in Africa but universally. It would, therefore, be our collective responsibility to prepare, train and make people available for the Mission Dei. This is what TICLA aims at and with the cooperation of the Nigeria Church and gracious permission of his Eminence, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, the Archbishop of Abuja in whose territory the institute will be established. It is our hope that the construction of the Institute will begin a new phase in the growth of the theology of Consecrated Life in Africa.

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF CONSECRATED LIFE IN AFRICA

Rev. Fr. Charles I. Amadi, CMF
Claretian Scholasticate, Enugu

Introduction

Many renowned projects in the world normally start in a simple, humble and ordinary way. It requires inspiration and a lot of planning and often time challenging. There are similar projects like TICLA functioning in different parts of the world: Madrid in Spain, Rome in Italy, Bangalore in India, Manila in Philippines, Portugal and another in Poland and Argentina. On our own part, we have to see the origin and history of TICLA so far.

“The whole idea to begin a Theological Institute of Consecrated Life in Africa brewed for a long time before a set participants (especially Nigerians) in the *Claretian General Chapter of 2003* brought it openly to the Chapter members in projects. It was when all the members of ACLA gathered the following year that they decided unanimously that this institute be located in Nigeria where there is great possibility for this because of resource persons and the number of religious men and women in Nigeria and nearby countries. The Provincial Government in Nigeria by then under the leadership of Fr. Wence Madu, Cmf followed this up and constituted a committee in which Fr. Charles Amadi, Cmf was made the Chairman. A lot of work was done with regard to the statutes of the institute. Abuja was originally taken as a proper and central place to locate the institute and a good number of consecrated men and women are living there. But we have to start

from a point and a place. This was why we organized the 1st Consecrated Life Week 2004 (CLWK2004) at Maryland Nekede, Owerri”.

The team took up the task immediately and that led to the first meeting. According to the invitation sent by the Chairperson, Fr. Charles Amadi, CMF to the members of the team: “This note is principally to invite you to our maiden meeting after the inauguration of the committee of the Institute of Consecrated Life on 22nd April, 2005 at Maryland Nekede. The meeting takes place on the *9th of June 2005 here at MARYLAND at exactly 10.00AM*”.

A good number of things would be there for the Agenda:

1. Our main work for the meeting will be very much focused on the status and the preparation of the Brochure for the Institute
2. Personnel
3. Source of Funding
4. Construction (Library and Classrooms)
5. Other things

Aim of TICLA

“The aim of this Institute is to have a serious and continuous research and reflection on Consecrated Life considering its theological, anthropological, historical, social, apostolic, human, ecumenical and psychological dimensions and spirituality which brings a true balance. Many religious men and women in Nigeria applaud this project having known of similar projects and their good consequences in other continents”. (Statutes #2, paragraph 1)

Again, we cannot lose sight of: “TICLA responds to the great need of studying more systematically and profoundly the

Consecrated Life in African and Nigerian context since Africa contributed a lot in this regard in the early history of the Church. Many of the African religious Men and Women and other Evangelizers in the continent are in daring need of a deep knowledge of Consecrated Life in general and an inculturated African type. This institute can properly offer this service or apostolate to all Consecrated Men and Women in our continent and to the Church” (Draft Statutes of TICLA #2.2).

Activities of TICLA

1. Consecrated Life Week

This was one of the major annual activities of TICLA. It attracted many consecrated men and women of different religious institutes from Nigeria and other nearby countries to come and reflect together on this style of life in reference to other Christian vocation including world and continental realities. It was very much a period of great renewal and sharing. People looked forward to it yearly.

1.11st Consecrated Life Week 2004 at Maryland Nekede (CLWK2004)

This was the very first encounter that started from (Thursday) 11th – (Sunday) 14th November, 2004 with the title DISCIPLESHIP AND RENEWAL. There were 8 interventions by 8 resource persons while the participants from different Institutes of Consecrated Life were 26 and many of our Claretian students and others in philosophy (CIP) participated. The conferences/lectures were immediately published with the above mentioned title.

1.22nd Consecrated Life Week 2005 (CLWK2005)

This began from (Thursday) 8th till (Sunday) 11th of December 2005 titled DISCERNMENT AND INCULTURATION IN CONSECRATED LIFE. A good number of resource persons were present and the participants were of good number there in Claretian Institute of Philosophy where it was organized. It is not yet published.

1.3 3rd Consecrated Life Week 2006/2007 (CLWK2006/2007)

The theme of this year was on CONSECRATED POVERTY. It lasted from (Thursday) 26th - (Sunday) 29th April 2007. There were 27 participants from 17 different religious Institutes. Some of our Claretian Priests and Brothers living around Owerri were present coupled with some 45 Claretian professed students, some members of the Order of the Mother of God, Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Monks and Sisters of other Congregations in Claretian Institute of Philosophy (CIP) where this was organized.

1.4 4th Consecrated Life Week 2008/2009 (CLWK2008/2009)

Movement to Enugu (Attakwu or Trans – Ekulu): It is important to note that a lot of work was done in a section of our Claret House of Theology Attakwu Enugu in view of situating TICLA there for the meantime. We thank the Province of Nigeria under the leadership of Very Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Edeh, CMF and his council for their audacious and encouraging steps and financing. As we could not complete all the repairs in 2008, the celebration/encounter of CLWK 2008/2009 were combined and had to be there at Attakwu.

The theme was CONSECRATED CHASTITY. One can see that we follow and treat the essentials in Consecrated Life and of course bearing the context in mind (Nigeria and Africa). It was scheduled from (Wednesday) 2nd - (Saturday) 5th December, 2009. There were 50 participants with 4 resource persons and lots

of workshop. All our theology students and others seminarians living with us participated in the afternoon/evening period because they had to go to school in the morning.

1.5. 5th Consecrated Life Week 2010 (CLWK2010)

The Theme was centered on OBEDIENCE, AUTHORITY AND FREEDOM. It commenced on (Wednesday) 1st till (Saturday) 4th December 2010 at Claret House of Theology Attakwu Enugu. There were a good number of participants including our seminarians. Several resource persons made their input and there were workshops and other open and general discussion as agreed upon.

1.6. 6th Consecrated Life Week 2011 (CLWK2011)

The theme of this year concentrated on COMMUNITY LIFE, COMMUNION AND SERVICE. This lasted from (Tuesday) 22nd till (Friday) 25th November 2011. It attracted many Consecrated Men and Women. Claretians students and others were in the afternoon session. This provoked a lot of sharing. The work is yet to be published.

1.7 (7th) 1st International Conference 2017 in Abuja (CLWK2017)

Movement to Abuja, capital of Nigeria:

Actually this was not the first International Conference that attracted many resource persons from Rome including the Holy See representative, Madrid, Philippines and surely many from Nigeria especially Presidents of Male Religious and that of Female Religious and some of their officers. It was organised under the chairman, Starring Committee, TICLA, Very Fr. Fr. Peter Okonkwo, CMF. We appreciate very much the vital role played by Very Rev. Fr. Henry Omonisaye, CMF, General Consultator who is responsible for all the Theological Institute of Consecrated Life

in the Claretian Congregation. Fortunately, the theme of this year centered on Collaborative Ministry, emphasized in the modern time and in our Church. This was scheduled from (Monday) 13th till (Thursday) 16th November, 2017. It took place in Daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Center (DRAAC) Abuja. The participation was high. We are happy that this work was published immediately.

1.8. (8th) 2nd International Conference (CLWK2018)

This is what we are in now. The theme is on COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY IN MISSION. This is one of the best way that the Church in the world, Africa and Nigeria can make such impart. It lasts from (Tuesday) 13th till (Friday) 16th November, 2018. The venue is daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Center (DRAAC) Emene Enugu.

2. Retreats

We are also very much involved in the preaching of retreats for different groups in the Church especially to the Consecrated Men and Women.

Eleven retreats for the Immaculate Heart Sister Nigeria: The Sisters requested the CMF to preach their 11 annual retreats very much centered on Mariology and the rudiments of Consecrated Life. They chose for this because of our Marian Charism (Cf. Report from Theological Institute of Consecrated Life (TICLA) 10th May, 2007).

3. Courses organised for different stages of Consecrated Life and Groups

3.1. First Degree/Licentiate in Theology of Consecrated Life

- 3.2. Doctorate in Theology of Consecrated Life
- 3.3. Courses for Major Superiors
- 3.4. Course for Local Superiors
- 3.5. Courses for Formators
- 3.6. Courses for Novice Masters/Mistresses and Directors of Spiritual Year
- 3.7. Renewal courses for Consecrated Men and Women
- 3.8. Internovitiate encounter
- 3.9. Quinquenum for young Priests; Junioriate period - Consecrated men and Women ranging from one to five years of Religious Profession
- 3.10. Tertiary course or 2nd Novitiate - This is an organised formation and preparation for final profession
- 3.11. Courses for 3rd age group of Consecrated Men and Women
- 3.12. Preparation for silver jubilee and jubilee
- 3.13. Teaching Theology of Consecrated Life in Major Seminaries
- 3.14. Lectures/Conferences on mutual relationship and Collaborative Ministry between Consecrated Men/Women and the Diocesan Priests (in different Dioceses), the Laity and others.

Note. There are many other programmes that need to be developed for the Church and entire humanity.

May God bless you all.

GOODWILL MESSAGE

Very Rev. Fr. George M. Okorie, SMMM
President, Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria (Men)

Preamble

It is with warm greetings from the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria (Men), and on their behalf, that I express my unreserved gratitude to the organizers of this conference for inviting me to deliver a goodwill message and to participate in this enriching colloquium once again. It is a gracious opportunity to attend this unique conference this year which embraces the Diocesan priests and the Religious. Those who witnessed the maiden edition of this International Conference last year, 2017, at Abuja, would agree with me that it was indeed creative, informative, educative and highly persuasive, to say the least.

I, therefore, congratulate the Claretians for this noble idea which also aims at creating awareness of their plan to establish a mega Theological Institute in Abuja, specifically for the Theology of Consecrated Life. We commend them for choosing Enugu for this year's conference and sensitization; an environment with a dense population of priests and religious within Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province. We thank the Bishop of Enugu, His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Callistus Onaga and his closest collaborator, the Auxiliary Bishop of Enugu, His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Ernest Anaezichukwu Obodo, for their hospitality. We equally thank our Liaison Bishop, His Excellency Most Rev. Dr. Hillary Dachellem, CMF, who was recently appointed to oversee the affairs of the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria.

This year's conference is phenomenal as the theme hinges on

collaborative ministry among the Diocesan Priests and the Religious. I think this is the first time the Diocesan Priests and the Religious are having conference of this nature at the national level. What a wonderful ingenuity. We look forward to more of this fruitful encounter that will embrace the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria and Diocesan Priests at the national, provincial and diocesan levels. I thank our erudite scholars, priests and religious who have been invited to enrich us with the wisdom God endowed them.

Our Common Mission - Missio Dei

Our mission as priests and religious is the mission of God - Missio Dei, through the Church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Evangelization remains essential to the Church's identity today. Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelisation in the Modern World) describes evangelization as the Church's core identity and mission. According to him, the Church “exists in order to evangelize” (EV no. 14). In line with his predecessors, evangelisation is clearly central in the pontificate of Pope Francis who issued his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), on the theme of evangelisation. He speaks of the urgency of this mission and calls each one of us and our parishes and Church institutions to “missionary conversion” (EG no. 30). He challenges Bishops and priests to take the lead in creating dioceses and parishes that are on fire with the mission of spreading the Gospel. He challenges religious men and women “to wake up the world” by their witnessing to the kingdom of God and challenges the lay faithful to engage robustly in this mission in their families and their daily work.

Understanding the Context of our Ministry

We have been convened by the Claretians to reflect more deeply on our vocation amidst the changing face of Christianity in our contemporary and challenging world as well as in our relationship with one another as collaborators in the Lord's vineyard. In order to exercise this ministry effectively within our present context, it would be necessary to understand and appreciate the socio-cultural situation in which we operate currently. We live in the world where people are searching for a relevant spirituality. Our cultural values are gradually eroding and we are slowly but steadily sinking. Days are gone when missionaries were admired in an exceptional way. Being a missionary in today's world demands an extraordinary act of witnessing which involves a genuine commitment to the message of the Gospel as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Such a manifestation and a call to live fully our Christian responsibilities invite us to reflect more deeply on the signs of our time in order to discover clearly what our response to our vocation as custodians of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the present times ought to be. We need to know our boundaries and limits. All priests and religious should have knowledge of the theology of consecrated life. This knowledge will enhance mutual understanding and collaboration.

Today, more than before, priests and religious are confronted daily with many issues that threaten their traditional roles and relevance. In the Western world for instance, scandals have rocked the Church and undermined her authority. This situation has terrible consequences on effectiveness of priests and religious. The Church is enduring the worst collapse in trust ever recorded in the recent times because of scandals, especially that of disunity and divisions among the ministers. The public's confidence in the

traditional structures of the hierarchy IS GREATLY UNDERMINED and has been replaced with a strong sense of fear, suspicion and uncertainty. This calls for renewed witness of faith by Priests and Religious. Inertia is not an option, neither is silence. It is a challenge we must face and surmount. We will continue in our mission with faith, without despondency, based on ethics of fraternity and love among one another and respect for one another. There is no need to see the other as a threat or hijacker.

Urgent Need for Intense Collaboration

The document, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum Ordinis, clearly encourages brotherly bond and mutual cooperation among priests. In no. 8, the document states: “All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood; but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached to their own bishop.” The Code of Canon Law stipulates clearly that “since all clerics are working for the same purpose, namely the building up of the body of Christ, they are to be united with one another in the bond of brotherhood and prayer. They are to seek to cooperate with one another, in accordance with the provisions of particular law” (Can 275 § 1). For this reason, therefore, it is of great missionary importance that all priests, whether diocesan or regular (or religious), should help each other, so that they may be fellow-helpers of the truth. Each is joined to the rest of the members of this priestly body by special ties to apostolic charity; of ministry and of brotherhood (PO no. 8). Thus, in order to enable priests to find mutual help in cultivating the intellectual and spiritual life, to promote better cooperation amongst them in the ministry, to safeguard them from possible

dangers arising from loneliness, it is necessary to foster some kind of community life or social relations (cf. PO no. 8).

Let our Love for one another be Intense

Fraternal solidarity is one of the ways in which we can support one another as priests and religious. We need one another. Fraternal solidarity is central in traditional African society.

It cannot now diminish because we are Christians. After all, Christianity does not abolish but rather nourishes this cultural value. Christ called for himself many followers and selected twelve collaborators and companions, whom he called Apostles. Before his passion, he prayed that they may be one and dramatized this through washing of their feet to imprint this message of love in their hearts. Priests and religious need to be at the forefront of this call to witness love in the world; what St. John Paul II calls “The Civilization of love.” In the early Church, Tertullian tells us that pagans were struck by the witness of Christian love: “see how they love one another!” they would remark. I wonder if people can look at us today and say the same.

Love is a litmus test of faith. Christ knew that unity among the Apostles and indeed all Christians would make their mission of spreading the gospel more effective. Little wonder Jesus tells the Apostles, “by this people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35). Effective ministry is not how much we pray or labour but how much we love one another like Christ. This is true since our mission is the mission of God, through the Church. God is supreme in the ministry of the Church, both in the planting and watering and also giving the growth (cf. 1 Cor. 3:7ff). Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Therefore, “let our love

for one another be intense.” The latter plea of St. Peter bothers on love as forgiveness- 'love that covers over a multitude of sins' (cf. 1Pt 4:8). Christ enjoins us thus: "If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." Hence, there is need for forgiveness and reconciliation among us.

The Way Forward

We all are called to service and should eschew competition and quest for position and authorities. The essential qualities of priesthood and the religious life relate to cooperation and mediation, not dominance and competition. Unhealthy competition diminishes collaboration. When priests and religious abhor competing with one another, a collegial form of leadership can emerge; characterized by discernment, patience, kindness, compassion, caring and understanding. The question is: do priests feel that they have the collaboration of other members in the hierarchy, especially those placed over them in authority and are they treated as inferior males in a system where authority figures frown upon personal autonomy and responsibility? Also in religious communities, do Superiors see themselves as semi-gods? No one can deny the radical challenges that the priesthood and religious life are undergoing in our times. We need wisdom and insight, genuine collaboration, love for one another and obedience to our Bishops and Superiors to understand how God's grace is at work in this turbulent period instead of fighting one another. Hence, we ought to be fervent in prayers and strive for holiness of life. Pope Francis maintains that: “Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence” (EG no. 259). For Pope St. John Paul II, “Our contemporaries want to see in consecrated persons

the joy which comes from being with the Lord” (VC no. 109).

Once again, I thank the Claretians - the thoughtful organizers of this conference and I look forward to further and deeper discussions on collaboration. I wish everyone a fruitful and enriching deliberation.

GOODWILL MESSAGE

Very Rev. Fr. Zacharia Nyantiso Sanjumi
Secretary General, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria

Your Excellencies
Major Superiors of
Male and Female Religious in Nigeria
Monsignori
Very Rev. Fathers
Rev. Sisters
Rev. Brothers
Brothers and sisters in Christ

We thank God for enabling us to gather here in DRACC, Enugu, for the purpose of deepening collaborative ministry in the mission of the Church, especially for us priests and religious in Nigeria. It is truly a laudable initiative undertaken by the Claretian missionaries to provide us with this platform to dialogue among ourselves on how best we can be the salt of the earth and light of the world, to ourselves as priests and religious, and to the people we minister.

Before this symposium, dialogue on collaborative ministry had taken place between Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria and Major Superiors in Nigeria in the context of mutual relations. A document was produced to this effect by the Pastoral Agents Department of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. The document has a wider circulation among Priests, religious, and Seminarians in Nigeria. We cannot thank enough the Claretian Missionaries for organising this Symposium purposely to arouse a meaningful dialogue between Diocesan Priests and Religious in Nigeria.

Since the time of missionaries, pastoral ministry has been zealously carried out by both Diocesan Priests and Religious. Catholic Missionaries, apart from first attempt made by the Portuguese missionaries, were mostly the late arrivals in most part of Nigeria. Thanks to the diligent pastoral work out by both Priests and Religious, significant human development in areas of Evangelization, Education, Health and infrastructure has been recorded. Still, with the departure of most foreign missionaries and emergence of Diocesan Priests as well as indigenous Religious men and women, Pastoral ministry has continued to soar. To this, we are grateful to all the Pastoral agents for their continued collaboration. The reason for this Symposium is to grease so as to make softer and conducive our collaborative relationship.

It is important to note that in all the successful years of collaboration, there has been palpable tension between the Diocesan and Religious Priests, often occasioned by the question of survival as both face meager resources in relation to their astronomical growth and expansions. There has been struggle over property ownership and management. There has been the question of autonomy. There has been the issue of "I belong to this Diocese, you don't. or, I am international and you are not. Perhaps, more worrisome is the re-surfacing of the argument which took place among the Apostles, "who is the greatest?" No doubt, both Diocesan and Religious Priests perceive their identities differently, but very often, it hardly border on self emptying as in Pauline understanding of the Lord Jesus who humbled Himself to become man and not stopping at that, but also accepting death, even on a cross.

Unconsciously, Diocesan Priests tend to see themselves as heirs to the Kingdom established for them by the Church, namely, Diocese. It is their home, they belong there. Very often we hear

Bishops say the same thing, "In my Diocese," whereas it should be in the Diocese I serve." This perception tends to alienate the Religious. On the other hand, the perception of the Religious, even by the Laity, put the Diocesan Priests in a second position. The Religious themselves tend to present themselves as the 'real, and the original' while Diocesan Priests are either irreligious or secular. For example, for the past six years, the religious have been insisting that religious life must be taught in the seminaries. The understanding is that the Diocesan Priests will come to value the Religious more and thus, give them their rightful place. Whether these are founded or unfounded concerns, we must dismiss them by the wave of hand. We must, like the apostles in response to their Hellenists complaint, come together from one time to time for the progress of the work entrusted to us and for our good also.

Not unconnected, is the overarching purpose of this symposium, namely to help us to further an ecclesiology of communion wherein, whether as Diocesan or Religious, we must as a matter of principle understand ourselves as co-essential for the sustenance of our communal ecclesiology. For this reason, I want to, on behalf of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, in particular, the Department of Pastoral Agents, thank all of you for adding value to our on-going conversations on collaborative ministry with your esteem presence. I pray that this platform will enhance genuine brotherliness in Christ in the understanding of co-essentiality in doing Pastoral ministry.

I wish you all, fruitful fraternal conversion

GOODWILL MESSAGE

Very Rev. Fr. Cletus O. CMF

Vicar for the Consecrated Life, Catholic Diocese of Enugu

Your Excellency, monsignors, Rev. Fathers and Sisters, brothers and sisters, I am extremely grateful to the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 2nd International Conference on Collaborative Ministry in Mission. I am sure the participants at this conference will feel at home in Enugu diocese with one of the highest number of members of the Consecrated Life in Nigeria. It is good to know too that Enugu is a peaceful cosmopolitan city, the capital of many regions and states. Enugu was the capital of former Eastern Region, Capital of former Eastern State, Capital of Old Anambra, capital of current Enugu. In this Coal City and diocese, you have the biggest seminary in the world, the Biggard Memorial Seminary; you have the first International Seminary in Nigeria, the Spiritan International Theological Seminary(SIST). We have the Claretian House of theology, the Saviorites, the Vincentian theological Seminary, the formation house of the Conceptionists and the Marist Brothers. We have too, Daughters of Divine Love Generate and Junicrates, the formation house of the Holy Rosary Sisters and the Monasteries of men and women in the diocese. Enugu diocese is hosting many regional and provincial houses.

One thread linking all these institutions is the mission towards growth and government and the church in many areas. And the master planner of this collaboration in the church was started by his Excellency here, Most. Rev. Anthony Okonkwo Gbuji. Enugu is the home of collaborative ministry with over 50 congregations, male and female. Collaborating does not mean renouncing one's congregational principles and charisms. It means coming together

in our different identities, despite our charisms and our deferent apostolates to carry out as far as it is possible the mission of illuminating all humanity with the light of the gospel by both our words and our actions. Collaboration makes more meaning and more effective when it begins intra, that is, with us in our various congregations with inter congregations and then with the clergy at large.

There are many areas we can collaborate. We can collaborate in the work of peace and reconciliation. We do this through the application of the gospel in the zones of conflict. Our society is being threatened by war, terrorism, and land grabbing in many part of the country. All religious and catholic priests must defend peace with all our might. Out today society is becoming more and more dechristianized, and the fundamental values of the gospel are becoming less and less important. It is important we, as religious, clergy and lay faithful work together to examine and solve this common burning problem.

At the pastoral levels collaboration is possible. It is possible that a joint action on research on those areas whose examination could help in solving problems in the area of evangelization such as secularism, cultism, and ethnic and communal conflicts is quiet necessary. At the diocesan level, collaboration does not engender the spirit of competitiveness ad rivalry but rather it animates the spirit of unity. Working together creates a sense of unity, in education and health services, there has been an improved spirit of collaboration. It should however be further strengthened.

Let us use St. Paul's analogy on collaborative ministry. For Paul, the body is one but has many parts, so it is with Christ, (1Cor. 12:12 – 26). The image Paul presented is as fresh as it was over 2,000 years ago. Paul will excuse us to expand upon his analogy to discuss the value of a variety of shared ministries and charisms in

the same diocese or at regional or national levels. Some of us are in this collaborative work, the “feet” or the “eye” or the “ears” in the body of Christ and Christ ask us to use it to run an errand through our various ministries. We are on our way.

My dear brothers and sisters, this international workshop comes up at a time when our society is undergoing the experience of loss of Christian values, when we are experiencing the explosion of churches, when crime is increasing at the same time, and assuming digital dimensions. It is at the same time, when the church is every day being challenged and insulted by politicians, lawyers and none politicians alike and many sons and daughters of the church are drifting from the true faith.

This is an opportunity to collaboratively work out strategies to enhance the proclamation of the gospel truths. We can achieve this only through shared ministry. It is better and more effective. Shared ministry introduces us to a pool of resources: charisms, talents, personalities and methodologies.

I wish you once more a fruitful discussion in the diocese. It is a diocese where collaborative ministry has endured and had made tremendous progress in evangelization. May the workshop help in strengthening the collaborative work among members of consecrated life, diocesan priests and lay members of the church.

SHARING ON THE COLLABORATIVE PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE NEW EVANGELIZATION IN NIGERIA

+Anthony O. Gbuji
Bishop Emeritus of Enugu Diocese

Introduction

My dear collaborators in the pastoral Ministry of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I heartily welcome you to Enugu Diocese in union with the local Ordinary, Most Rev. Dr. Callistus V.C Onaga who had been with you much earlier. I am happy to be alive to renew my acquaintance with members of the Claretian Missionaries. I had the privilege to invite the congregation to work in Enugu Diocese some years ago. We all thank God for the happy and cordial relationship that exists between Enugu Diocese and Claretian Missionaries.

I thank the organizers of this conference for inviting me to share with you some experiences on Collaborative Pastoral Ministry in the New Evangelization in Nigeria.

In the Beginning

In 1982 Pope John Paul II visited Nigeria on a Pastoral visit. At the end challenged the church in Nigeria to a New Era of Evangelization. In 1963 during his visit to CELAM, Haiti, he defined the New Evangelization as Evangelization that is new in zeal, new in expression and new in method.

In 1984 the CBCN organized a seminar with workshops on the pastoral implications of the NEW ERA OF EVANGELIZATION in Nigeria. Some of the disturbing discoveries are:

- i. The faith of all our Christians in Nigeria is superficial. Our faith – commitment to Christ is shallow.

- ii. The secularization of the mission Schools posed serious social and religious dangers.
- iii. Christian marriage and family life had been eroded.
- iv. Islamization of Nigeria is well planned and vigorously pursued at all levels of the social life of the nation: religious, economic and political. (cf. *New Era of Evangelization* pages 75 – 135.)

The workshops proposed several solutions to the situation in Nigeria. These are: (cf. *New Era of Evangelization* pages 72 – 235.)

- i. Deepening of faith of all Believers at different levels and situations.
- ii. Bringing Gospel values to Muslims
- iii. Sharing Gospel values with non – Catholic Christians
- iv. Dialogue with A.T.R.

In the overall interpretation of the national seminar on the New Era of Evangelization, the general option was clearly articulated: “DEEPENING OF FAITH OF BELIEVERS” (*New Era of Evangelization* page 152;2.)

The focus is to bring people to know, love, serve and witness better to Christ. The challenges were global and not peculiar to Nigeria alone.

Period of Search and Discernment

In 1987, the CBCN mandated the chairman of the Pastoral Affairs of its Secretariat to search and propose solutions. The lot fell on me as the Chairman to shoulder this onerous task. In the effort to find solution, I met a group known as Evangelization 2000 Rome, in 1987. They were also searching for solutions to the same

challenges at the Universal Church level. They offered tremendous assistance to the Church in Nigeria in the search for a solution to deepen the faith of our Catholic Christians, especially in the areas of training priests, organizing seminars and retreats for our Bishops. For over three years Evangelization 2000 sponsored financially all the training I had to undergo through week-long seminars and workshops organized three times a year in either Rome, or Malta, Poland, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast and most often in Kenya. Evangelization 2000 Rome supplied social media equipments to Pastoral centers and seminars in Nigeria. For the continent of Africa, they established in 1989 the Emmaus School of Evangelization in Issele-Uku Diocese. Emmaus School has helped to train evangelizers who founded other schools in the dioceses of Nigeria. The co-ordinators of the Schools meet once every year to share their experiences.

In the training of the Lay faithful, the areas of focus are:

1. The spirituality of the New Evangelization.
2. Sacred Scriptures, Philosophy, Theology, Ecclesiology, Mariology, Ecumenism, Religious Dialogue e.t.c
3. Skills and Techniques for ministry.

For several years, many of the trained evangelizers were readily accepted by the sponsoring Priests but many more were rejected for lack of fund to pay them. Unfortunately, a good number of trained lay faithful in our schools of Evangelization opted to establish their own ministries (prayer, music and healing ministries) outside the control of their pastors.

This sad experience led us promoters and coordinators of the New Evangelization to search for solutions quickly. An option was found in the development of areas of Collaborative Pastoral Ministry.

The Present Situation

The Research into the areas of the Collaborative Pastoral Ministry has been guided by the clear and powerful directives on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained faithful in the sacred Ministry of Priests. Vatican City 1997.

Our Schools of Evangelization have added to their curricular acquisition of skills in Collaborative Pastoral Ministry, this focuses on the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA); Small Christian Communities (SSC); Preparing Couples for Marriage. Deepening of faith fir greater faith commitment to the person of Christ. These are areas our priests do not have the time to devote to them; they are usually abandoned to the Catechist. Textbooks are available in all of these. The course takes a minimum of two years of at least 270 Credit hours, to 500 Credit hours maximum.

Last week at Enugu about 70 lay faithful thus trained were commissioned by the Auxiliary Bishop. During their training they were sent to their parishes to work in collaboration with the priests who happily and gratefully accepted them. They are not paid for the services they render.

About a month ago, Godfrey Okoye University, with the permission of the NUC, established NEW EVANGELIZATION RESEARCH AND MINISTRY INSTITUTE for the training of lay faithful. It is a three month programme of 30 Credit units minimum for the award of a professional Certificate. This will enable our lay faithful trained in the programme to teach religion in any of the primary/secondary institutions in the country. The candidates may also gain direct entry into the university to do a degree course in Religious Studies. Six of our Schools of Evangelization(Iselle-Uku, Onitsha, Enugu(2), Uyo, and Zaria have been approved to adopt the new programme. This event has attracted a large number of our lay faithful to apply for admission

into our 2 schools of Evangelization here in Enugu.

Thus, the hope of training a great number of lay faithful across the country for greater Collaborative pastoral ministry has been greatly enhanced. I believe that if we train and mobilize adequately many of our lay faithful, the deepening of faith of our Christians- the Pastoral plan 36 years ago of the CBCN- will be achieved in a near future to the honour and glory of God and salvation souls.

PAUL AND COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY: A LESSON FOR THE CHURCH TODAY

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Introduction

From the time of the beginnings of Christianity to the present day, questions about the role of women in the Church, the society and the home have remained unsettled, with more questions than there are answers. One of the root problems is that the most important document of faith 'the Scripture' is deeply rooted in a patriarchal-sexist culture that silenced or repressed the presence and participation of women, and that over time this patriarchal culture has continued to dominate our vision and interpretation of our past and present history. Secondly, discussions about attitude towards women, especially about the participation of women with men in leadership and ministerial roles have not gone beyond the margins in most societies, with reference to the Churches in Nigeria. Where do we go from here? Why is it that after 19 or 20 centuries of the beginning of Christianity the question of the collaboration of women with men in the mission of the Church is still a question to be solved.

Given the enormous work that has been done in this area, especially over the last century we do not intend to repeat discussions. Studying the letters of Paul, my concern is on the impact of culture on the different ways Paul construed his message of collaborative ministry. This contribution looks specifically at the problem of contexts, placing the New Testament writings within the context of the religious, social, political, economic institutions and conventions of the time, to rediscover as closely as

possible information about how understanding contexts can inform our own context in relation to women's active presence and role in the missionary activity of the Church. Furthermore, we shall argue that most of our resistance and reservations toward women's full participation in collaborative ministry in the Church's mission borders more on cultural expressions than on the Gospel message we have received. Finally, this paper shall proffer possible suggestions as way a forward.

Collaborative Ministry: A Controversial History

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed the rise of women in a revolutionary call to re-evaluate the struggles of women in relation to men, especially in the way women were thought about, acted towards and spoken of because of their humanity and gender. Since that time until now, the discussion has not abated. On the contrary, it grows from strength to strength, with various degrees of theological and non-theological reflections, practical engagements and continuous paradigm shifts in the way women embrace and act on the world around them.¹ It is this revolutionary call that led to the rise of Christian feminists, that is, the rise of Christian feminist theologians who have taken up the task of deconstructing the culture and religion of Christianity as embedded in the Scripture – to go back to the roots and foundations of Christianity as to understand the true message of the Gospel, to divest the Scripture of Patriarchal ideologies and influences, which in their opinion is responsible for the "rationalization" of women's inferior status in our culture today.²

¹ For further enlightenment, see Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2004), 4-24.

² For further studies, see Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (London, 1968); Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983), Gaia and God: *An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1992); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation" *Theological Studies* (1975), 605-626.

In response, Christian feminists have discovered that the Scripture, when carefully read has liberative powers despite its male-centred and Patriarchal background that seem to have distorted the view about women and poisoned human relationships, especially in the collaboration of men and women in the Church.³ They also argue that the social and religious realities of the early Christians, as well as the example of Jesus' interaction with women in the Scripture, are good news enough to deconstruct our theology that is deeply rooted in a patriarchal-sexist culture, re-evaluate the influences of the Greco-Roman world on the Scripture, hermeneutically restudy our Christian teachings and traditions, reconstruct women's early Christian history and see how all these can speak to us in the overall social and religious contexts of our time.⁴

It is good here to point that the Church has not been left untouched by this new theological wave. On one hand is the criticism, and on the other hand is the response of the Church. Christian feminists, especially radical Christian feminists, have accused Christianity in its past and present history as culpable of victimizing women. According to Christian feminist, the Church has exalted the image of women (especially in the case of Mary as the ideal, the model), but has also degraded and humiliated women.

³See, for instance, Berenice A. Carroll, *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1976); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1995); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions (The Liberating World: A Guide to Nonsexist Interpretation of the Bible, Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1976).*

⁴See compendium of articles in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Searching the Scriptures 1: A Feminist Commentary* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1993); *Searching the Scriptures 2: A Feminist Commentary* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1994); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1992); Virginia Fabella and Mercy A. Oduyoye, *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology: Reflections from the Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1988).

Mary Daly, who is one of the voices in this debate, accused Christian anthropology of negative view of women which had stemmed from its adoption of Judeo and Greco Roman ideologies, especially the dualistic separations of every existing reality within the human society into the good and the bad.⁵ While a few feminist scholars have continued in this line of thought, others have sought for critical ways to restudy and reinterpret the Bible. The later focuses on placing the Scripture within the contexts of the religious, social, political, economic institutions and conventions of the time, to rediscover as closely as possible information about women in early Christianity, especially of their active presence and role in the missionary activity of the early Christians.⁶

This later interpretive framework has now given way to studies on the Scripture, with a more positive outlook that seeks for a holistic anthropological understanding of humanity - a humanity that includes women as part of creation; a subject in her own right and a truly human person. It also acknowledges the active presence and participation of women in the social, religious and political realities of early Christian communities, as well as the sense of equal partnership that existed among the early Christians. This in time has built up women's consciousness and generated a positive feminist theological hermeneutics that has enabled women speak the truth about themselves, of their experiences of God and others.

⁵ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), see especially pages 150-155.

⁶ There are plethora of studies here, but a few references suffice, Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), Rose Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (eds.), *Women and Christian Origins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," *Word and World* 6 (1986), 420-433; Wendy Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?," *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994), 354-372; L. M. Russell (ed), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985).

One of the feminist arguments that have attracted the attention of the Church is the inclusion of women in the ministerial priesthood. Most feminist have critiqued Christianity in its inability to include women into the order of priesthood, maintaining that women have been excluded from the order of priesthood on the very fact of their gender alone.⁷ The second criticism is that the Church is traditionally governed by male persons; liturgical functions are mostly performed by men, women go to confession in the hands of men, most administrative functions are done by men, and so forth. And in a situation where a society is patriarchally oriented, like Nigeria, the social and religious situations of women become more difficult and looks unredeemable.

Although the Church has not always welcomed this new theological development, it has also remained open to the new findings, interpretations and views on Christian anthropology, Christian traditions and teachings, as well as ministry. Pope Francis in his *Evangelii Gaudium* §103 speaks of the need “to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church” and to find ways to include women in decision-making roles in different areas of the Church's life.

Without exaggeration, certain changes have taken place in the Church. On one hand, more women now study theology and can engage in theological debates; women are now part of seminary teaching staff and formation teams; women are leaders of various organizations and groups in the Church, including those that have male presence; certain organizations in the Vatican are governed by women; many churches are employing women for specific roles

⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, no. 4; *Codex Iuris Canonici* Canon no. 1024. c.f. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 1577 which states "Only a baptized man (vir) validly receives sacred ordination".

and special ministries; more women are becoming preachers and pastors and evangelists.

While the above changes and many more have taken place in the Church, the Church still has her reservations, or rather resistance towards women collaboration in the institutionalized ministry. This is with reference to the major orders of deacon, presbyter, and bishop. Unlike in the past when women were not allowed to participate in any responsibility or position attached to the order of the priesthood – that is, the minor orders of acolyte, lector, exorcist and porter, and the major orders of deacon, priest and bishop. Today, and in most churches and parishes, we have female lectors. In other regions, US for example, acolytes and extraordinary ministers of the Holy Communion have almost equal if not more women. As for the major orders, the Church has kept its position that it is a ministry reserved only for men (cf. Code of Canon Law, #1024; *Mulieris Dignitatem*, #26; Paul VI, Apostolic Letter on First Tonsure, Minor Orders and the Subdiaconate, *Ministeria Quaedam*, #7; *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* #4; the letter of Pope Paul VI to Archbishop Coggan, Archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual leader of the Anglican Church, concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood (November 30, 1975).

While the Church continues to insist on men having the sole right to the sacrament of Holy Orders, the issue that divides is not whether women can be in the ministry of holy orders, but the grounds on which these debates are built. Although the Church may not be credited to have completely overcome the various discrimination against women, there are external forces outside the Church that inhibit the effort made so far, thus, leaving women with a very poor experience of the liberative message of the Gospel. Our African culture, and especially the prevalent culture in Nigeria is Patriarchy. Patriarchy is a cultural system that places

limitations on women. With the African patriarchal culture, on one hand, and the Judeo-Christian patriarchal culture on the other hand, the interrelationship between the two has not been too favorable for the cause of collaboration of men and women in the mission of Christ. Culture evolves. And in our context, these cultures did not decline or change but have gained much root and impact in a cultural context that is traditionally patriarchal in nature. Many aspects of our culture which were practiced in the past are no longer in practice now. In addition, many aspects of biblical culture that so strongly shaped our past are no longer practiced today. Most importantly, while Paul was greatly influenced by his three cultural backgrounds (Judaism, Greek, and Roman), he modified some aspects of these cultures to fit the message of the Gospel, such that he has become a prophetic voice in the various aspects of the Church's life and mission.

The question arises then, where do we go from here? What can we and what have we learnt from Paul, who in his struggle for cultural transformation critiqued the culture of his time, especially those that were at odds with the ideals and values of the Gospel? Cultural baggage, which remains the central and fundamental problem with understanding, interpreting and applying the message of the New Testament can also be (re)evaluated especially in the light of its evolving nature to see how a new approach to culture can encourage a better active involvement and collaboration in the mission of Christ and the Church.

Collaborative Ministry: Inspiration from Paul and his letters

Any exegetical effort to unearth and explain the New Testament texts for our contemporary Church today must begin with addressing the questions (i) what was the overall context of the

social, religious, cultural (and if possible the political) conventions of the time in question?, (ii) what was the specific issue that necessitated the writing of the letters in question, taking into consideration the origin and nature of the community?; (iii) what was the author/community's theology of collaborative ministry, which will include a selection of certain historical realities that remain part of the living experience of the community and leaving out others? (iv) how did Paul effectively interacted with the culture of his time, especially in dealing with certain problematic relationships between men and women in some of the communities identified with Paul?

One of the lessons we have learnt from reading Paul and the other New Testament writers is that the Greco-Roman world of Paul's time was a world of three worlds – Judaism, Greek and Romans. These three worlds had by the time of Paul undergone massive transformations giving birth to the Greco-Roman world that shaped the world of the New Testament and worldview of Paul. The Greco-Roman world was a world influenced by the different socio-political, religious and cultural contexts of first, the Jews, then followed by the Greeks, and then the Romans. Thus, to speak of first century Mediterranean world is to acknowledge that it was not a monolithic society. To speak of Greco-Roman world is to identify the existence of world of Palestine, world of Achaia, world of the Romans, world of Asia Minor, world of Egypt and so forth. While each of these worlds have embraced the Greek culture at one time, and the Roman culture at another time, each of these worlds had retained certain aspects of their own culture, ethos, view of everyday life, ethnic mix, especially on the parameters given to women.⁸

⁸ See also Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green & Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 17-18.

Among the 13 letters attributed to Paul, the cities of Colossae, Corinth, Cenchrae, Philippi, Galati, Ephesus and Rome have significant importance for understanding the backgrounds of early Christianity, the social cultural status, rights and duties accorded to women, the tone of the theology of each of the letters, especially as it speaks in favour of or against collaborative ministry. The cities (excluding Colossae) were very much influenced by Roman culture. Under the aegis of Roman Empire, women were given special prominence and privilege authorities that reflected not only in the societal households but also in the Christian households led by the women.⁹ Differences in gender were more pronounced in the legal and political realm than in other social activities. For instance, while women in the Roman world could not hold public offices, vote, serve in the military or appear in court without a guardian, they were free to appear in variety of public places, manage their households, be patrons of clubs, benefactors and could also be accepted as priestesses and prophetesses.¹⁰

Judaism of the first century, on the contrary, had some restrictions on the right and role of women. Legally the Jewish woman was under the control of first her father, then her husband. Women were not required to fulfil most religious obligations apart from dietary and sexual laws and the lighting of Sabbath candles. Not only were “men cautioned against speaking to women in public, women also were not permitted to be witnesses in a court of law nor were they to be counted in a quorum necessary for the

⁹ Wendy Cotter, “Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?” *Novum Testamentum* 36 (1994), 354-372, 355-372.

¹⁰ Judith P. Hallet, “Women's Lives in the Ancient Mediterranean,” in Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (eds.) *Women and Christian Origins* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford, 1999), 13-34, 19; Gary R. Glanville, *The Prominence of Women in the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg fortress, 2011).

formation of a synagogue congregation”.¹¹ Examination of rabbinic literature shows that women were regarded as socially and religiously inferior to men, and some even expressed contempt for them. Rabbi Judah says, “three sayings must a man recite every day” “Thank you for not making me a gentile (non-Jew), thank you for not making me a woman, (thank you) for not making me a boar”.¹² Speaking about female image, Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher writes, “The serpent is in close proximity [in the Torah] to the woman, because Satan was created together with her, she is the embodiment of the evil inclination, and she is easily tempted” (commentary on the Torah, Gen. 3:1). The woman's sexual appetite is great; she possesses demonic powers, by means of which she tempts males, and even places their lives in danger.”¹³ Rabbi Eleazer in the Talmud, “I would rather have the roll of the Law burned than have it taught to a woman.”¹⁴

Situating the possible backgrounds of the early Christians, the second point of interest is Paul's audience. It should not come to us as a surprise to learn that the Christian communities founded in the cities of Colossae, Corinth, Cenchrae, Philippi, Galati, Ephesus and Rome were heterogeneous in nature, with a multiplicity of social, religious and cultural backgrounds. While many of the members of the household churches or groups located within the

¹¹ Glanville, *The Prominence of Women in the Early Church*, accessed at http://www.augsburgfortress.org/media/downloads/0800638263_Chapter1.pdf?doMainRedirect=true (28/10/2018); Ross S. Kraemer, “Jewish Women and Christian Origins: Some Caveats,” in Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (eds.), *Women and Christian Origins* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford, 1999), 35-49, 35-36.

¹² see E. Lohse and G. Mayer eds., *Die Tosefta: Rabbinische Texte, Seder 1: Zeraim* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer; 1999) 18.

¹³ Yosef Ahituv, “Modesty and Sexuality in Halakhic Literature,” in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. accessed at <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/modesty-and-sexuality-in-halakhic-literature> (8/11/2018).

¹⁴ Yerushalmi, *Sotah* 3:4. A version of this story also appears in the Bavli, *Yoma* 66b)

Roman Empire were Gentiles, there were also Jews, not excluding slaves and freed men and women. The Church at Corinth included some Jews (1Cor 7:18-19), though it was largely composed of Gentile converts (1Cor 6:9-11, 1Cor 8:7, 1Cor 12:2), the Church in Galati had Jewish Christians, so also the Church in Rome.

Overall, the presence and social cultural interactions between Jewish Christians and the Gentile believers would not have excluded some troubles. The presence of Jews in many diaspora cities was marked by 'isolationist purity'- the belief that they are separated from non-Jews because of their beliefs, righteousness, virtue and morality.¹⁵ Along with this attitude was their insistence on maintaining their religious customs and rights, which also extended to attitude towards women.

It is in response to the problems that have arisen in the different communities that Paul had written his letters. In each of his letters, Paul operated with the structure the society offered him; either with the view of challenging the culture to change it, turning it around to bring the best out of it for the good of the Christians or adopting it. As Paul J. Achtemeier et al., rightly notes "the world as represented by a NT writer will overlap with but is not identical to the real world, since authors shape their messages by emphasising what they regard as having particular importance."¹⁶

In many scholarly writings, Paul has been classified as a misogynist, as one who is responsible for the many demeaning and

¹⁵ In his study of Jewish history, Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, p.5 cites the Letter of Aristeas where the High Priest Eleazar spoke highly of Jews as people who did not compromised their faith in the Diaspora. According to the letter, Jews built impregnable fences and iron walls that separated them and non-Jew in accordance with the laws of Moses. And from the verses for the Third Sibylline Oracle, comped by a Jew, he mentioned that the Jews trumpeted the righteousness and virtue of faithful Jews who shun the misguided beliefs, absence of morality, and reprehensible behavior of their Gentile contemporaries.

¹⁶ Achtemeier, et al., *Introducing the New Testament*, 19.

androcentric behaviour towards women in history. Texts that are used to defend this position include,

1. But I should like you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

..... For any man to pray or to prophesy with his head covered shows disrespect for his head. And for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered shows disrespect for her head; it is exactly the same as if she had her hair shaved off. Indeed, if a woman does go without a veil, she would have her hair cut off too; but if it is a shameful thing for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, then she should wear veil. But for a man it is not right to have his head covered, since he is the image of God and reflects God's glory, but woman is the reflection of man's glory. For man did not come from woman; no, woman came from man; nor was man created for the sake of man: and this is why it is right for a woman to wear on her head a sign of the authority over her, because of the angels.

- Decide for yourselves: does it seem fitting that a woman should pray to God without a veil? Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but when a woman has long hair, it is her glory? After all her hair was given to her to be a covering.

..... If anyone wants to be contentious, I say that we have no such custom, nor do any of the churches of God. (1 Cor. 11: 3-10; 13-16.)

.... [As in all churches of God's holy people, women are to remain quiet in the assemblies, since they have no permission to speak: theirs is a subordinate part, as the Law itself says. If there is anything they want to know, they should ask their husbands at home: it is shameful for a woman to speak in the

assembly. Do you think that you are the source of the word of God? Or that you are the only people to whom it has come? (1 Cor. 14: 33b-36).]

2. During instruction, a woman should be quiet and respectful. I give no permission for a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. A woman ought to be quiet, because Adam was formed first and Eve afterwards, and it was not Adam who was led astray but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin. Nevertheless, she will be saved by child-bearing, provided she lives a sensible life and is constant in faith and love and holiness (1 Tim. 2: 11-15)

These passages, when taken at face value are enough in themselves to condemn Paul. With the emergence and contribution of social-scientific criticism of the Bible, there has been a paradigm shift in the way Paul has been interpreted especially regarding the 'misogynist' attitude of Paul in his letters. Most recent contemporary Bible scholarship are no longer taking the hard stand on Paul as in the past. Just as in other areas of biblical studies, insights from the social scientific criticism which understudies the social background of a text have helped illumine the Scripture.¹⁷ One of the importance of this method is that it has exposed some of the ills of Greco-Roman culture, which though part of the culture that produced the Scripture were not part of the message of the Gospel.

¹⁵ Social-scientific criticism is the stage in the exegetical process that brings scrutiny to bear on the religious, geographical, historical, economic, social codes, and cultural values operative within the world of early Christianity. See Daniel J. Harrington, "Second Testament Exegesis and the Social Sciences: A Bibliography" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 18 (1988): 77–85 for a bibliography of early studies of the New Testament from a social-scientific perspective. Horrell, David G. "Social Sciences Studying Formative Christian Phenomena: A Creative Movement." In Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte (eds.), *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2002), 3–28.

With reference to Paul, the observations are, first, Paul had more egalitarian passages than chauvinist passages and that the chauvinist passages were deutero-Pauline. Second, the justification of woman's subordinate status resulted from a selective reference to and literal interpretation of the male chauvinist passages, with little or no reference to Paul's egalitarian passages. In addition, for a study of Paul's stand on women's collaboration in the Church the *Sitz im Leben* (the situation at hand) in the deutero-Pauline churches and Churches founded by Paul should be taken seriously. Third, although Christianity grew up in a patriarchal cultural context, patriarchal domination was not part of the Gospel message of Christ or of most of the New Testament authors' message.¹⁸ According to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, the early Christian beginnings allowed for the leadership not only for men but also for that of women. Thus, a feminist hermeneutic approach to the issue of men/female participation in the mission of Christ is such that should be open to the critical methods and impulses of historical scholarship on one hand and in the theological goals of liberation theologies on the other hand.¹⁹

It is based on this brief exposé on social scientific approach to the bible that we can situate Paul's letters, especially those referenced in this work. In the letter to the Corinthians there was the problem of factionalism, in Galatia there was the problem of Judaizing faction, and in the letters to Timothy and Titus there was a growing consciousness about reputation in early Christian communities, especially with the behaviour of women as outsiders

¹⁸ See, for instance, Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex*; Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk*; Jana Opocenska, "Feminist Theology," *Indian Journal of Theology* 37.2 (1995): 40-46.

¹⁹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women's Early Christian History," *Word and World* 6 (1986), 420-433, 424.

may perceive it as immoral, compromising the honour of the group. In the different responses of Paul to the communities in question, he tries to present his message in such a way that the original audience will make sense of his teaching, while at the same time daunting the cultural standards where need be.

For instance, in the letter to the Corinthians where Paul talks about head covering in 1 Cor 11:2-16, Paul was subtly manoeuvring the cultural situation for the benefit of both men and women. In the Roman Empire of the time, both men and women wore veils, either for religious reasons or to elevate their status in imitation of the Emperor. Such act was creating confusion as the men dressed as much as the women and visa-versa. In addition, for a married woman to leave her head uncovered sends the signal that she is free from the husband, since it was only widows and prostitutes that did not wear the head cover. In such cultural situation and considering the situation at hand, Paul subtly manoeuvres the women back into sexual relationships with their men to keep the Corinthian men out of the brothels.²⁰

As for the letter to Timothy, while the authorship of the letter has been disputed, it is quite important to note that the apparent circumstances behind the letter to Timothy, a letter written around the end of the first century, is quite different from the letters that Paul wrote in the 50s and 60s. To begin with, the community in question was not Paul's own community. The letter was written to Timothy as Paul instructs him on how to direct a community. Secondly, the concept of honor and shame was part of the social norm of the time. The concept of honor and shame was a

²⁰ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990); Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).

patriarchal understanding of gender roles and responsibilities where men are “expected to defend family honor in the face of public challenges or threats [and] women were expected to embody family honor by their modest, chaste, and submissive behavior. Honorable behavior was expected of all family members in order for the household to remain honorable in the eyes of others.”²¹ Thus, in the context of a community where the behavior of the women was causing problem, it was not well out of place that the author should send word of advice to the women (1 Tim 2:8-12).

In the letter to the Romans, where early Christian missionary activities were already gaining full momentum, Paul did not mince words in acknowledging the immense contribution of collaborative ministry among the Christians in Rome. Paul praised many women – Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Julia and Nereus' sister. These women were ministers, patroness and co-workers with Paul: Phoebe was identified as “deacon” (*diakonos*, Rom 16:1), Prisca was a co-worker in Christ (*synergosen Christô[i]*, Rom 16:3), Mary was one “who has worked very hard among you” (*kopiaô*, Rom 16:6), Junia was an apostle (*apostolos*, Rom 16:7), Tryphena and Tryphosa were identified as “workers in the Lord” (*kopiaôenkyriô[i]*, Rom 16:12), Persis was greeted as one “who has worked hard in the Lord” (*kopiaôenkyriô[i]*, Rom 16:12).

The letter to the Romans is one of the major early Christian literature that offers us insight into important roles women played in the work of the early Church. Given that Paul lived in a social cultural world that did not allow women much freedom, yet Paul

²¹ Mona Tokarek LaFosse, “Women's Roles in the Letters to Timothy and Titus” (The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2013), 30-39, 33. Accessed at, <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/199645.pdf>, (30/10/2018).

spoke so much about their active participation. The question is, what could be the compelling reason or reasons for Romans 16? Could it be that the Roman community had only women audience? Could it be that the women of Roman 16 were unmarried, childless or both, divorcées and widows such that their freedom were not limited? Could it be that the Roman women were members of Aristocratic elites or women of good social standing such that they have the privilege of supporting the Christian community at Rome and the apostles?

Apart from the fact that the letter was to encourage the believing community to be open to active women leadership, and to embrace it “as a diversity that enriches their unity in Christ and enhances their service of the common good,”²² the letter was a message of hope. In the words of Achtemeier, the world of the New Testament is a world of hope.²³

In Romans, as well as in other Paul's letters, Paul moves beyond the conventional – the convention of Judaism, Hellenism and Romanism. It is possible, as Cotter argues, that the authoritative roles of the women leaders in the Hellenized cities were not counter-cultural, since the women could exercise authorities as benefactress and patrons, had certain financial dependence with greater social mobility that could enable them set up networks for evangelization.²⁴ Nevertheless, Paul was a man, though steeped in

²² J. Paul Sampley, “Introduction,” in J. Paul Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 1-15, 10.

²³ Achtemeier, et al., *Introducing the New Testament*, 19. A similar appraisal of the world of the New is found in Mary Elsbernd and Reimund Bieringer, *Normativity of the Future: Reading Biblical and Other Authorative Texts in an Eschatological Perspective* (*Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia*, 61. Leuven: Peeters, 2010). Here the editors take a hermeneutical approach that integrates the past (the world behind the text), present (the world in the text) and future dimensions (the world before the text) of a text, paying special attention to the future the text reveals as normative to be applied to the concrete contemporary situations.

²⁴ Cotter, “Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Churches,” 368-369.

the traditions and perspectives of his people and time. Yet, he moved beyond that to offer us a 'message of eschatological and revolutionary hope' – a hope that has survived the test of time and continue to inspire generations after generations. Paul's message of hope is eschatological, but it is a future eschatology that begins now. Paul worked out the Gospel of Christ within two horizons, the horizon of his time and the horizon of the Spirit that brings to due completion the mission Christ had started.

Though Paul may have sounded misogynist, especially in the letter to the Corinthians, there are passages where he gave us hope. In the letter to the Romans and the letter to the Galatians, we have definite texts that show Paul's love and appreciation for women despite his androcentric views. We need to work with these positive texts, to readdress our own culture, especially in the various areas where the Nigerian man's interpretation of Scripture is not creating “broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church” (Evangelii Gaudium §103).

Collaborative Ministry: A Lesson for Today's Church

Within the ongoing debate about just how we can use the theology of Paul to shed light on collaborative ministry in our church today, we recall that Paul critiqued the culture of his time, especially those aspects of culture that were not maintaining the proper order of things. Undoubtedly, he was influenced by the wider Greco-Roman culture of his time. It must be noted, however, that throughout his letters, he demonstrated how the principal forces of culture could not dominate or overshadow the principles of the Gospel of Christ.

To begin with, most of the things that we do in our Church were not originally part of our Christian heritage. Society has evolved,

so is our culture and so is our Church. The organization of Church leadership, institutionalization of the Church, concept of ordination, form of celebration of liturgy and sacraments, bureaucratic administration of the Church, institutional training of people to occupy several ministerial or leadership positions in the Church, the hierarchical distinctions between the community of the believers – lay people and cleric²⁵ and so forth, are developments that have evolved with time. While these are new forms or ways the Church has come up with being Church in the world to accomplish its mission both to the Church and society, the interpretation of the Church's mission for and with women is taking a different tone as it still rests on the fringes of culture.

Underlying the Church's insistence on the unique distinction between the laity and the hierarchy is the cultural opposition against women. In many respects, the Church has encouraged, appreciated, recognized and emphasized the contribution of her members with their different charisms and gifts for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church.²⁶ With special reference to the dignity and equality of all human beings, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, §208 states, “From their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality regarding dignity and action by which they all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ according to each one's own condition and function. *Amoris Laetitia* §54 re-emphasized the equal dignity of men and women by challenging gender stereotypes and promoting women's rights, strongly criticizing

²⁵ The contribution or work of the early Christians was distinguished on reason of charism and ministries with a chief shepherd that guards the people of God (1 Cor 12:4-11; 1 Pet 5:2-4). There were many ministries in the Church, but there was no radical opposition between the charismatic and administrative ministries (Rom 12:6-8 and 1 Cor 12:28). Everything was done for the common good.

²⁶ Paul VI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *On Evangelization in the Modern World*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8 December 1975. English Translation is taken from Austin Flannery, OP. ed., *Vatican Council II, Vol. 2: More Post Conciliar Documents*, no. 73.

domestic violence, female genital mutilation and the 'commercialization and exploitation' of women's bodies in the media. It also challenged the view that numerous modern problems have arisen as a result of female emancipation, presenting this as 'false, untrue, a form of male chauvinism' and welcoming an understanding of the equal dignity of men and women as making 'old forms of discrimination disappear'. Even the just-concluded Synod of Bishops on the Youth retreated the Church's commitment to addressing every form of discrimination against women.²⁷

Although, as stated above, that the universal Church has not entirely embraced its own Gospel message of co-responsibility and collaborative participation in the mission, the Church in Nigeria has not learnt well enough from the struggles of the early Christians, the universal Church and from the positive things in our culture to propagate authentic collaboration of men and women in the Church.

First, is the issue of our culture. Our culture is very patriarchal and very little effort is being made to overwrite oppressive patriarchal structures, theories and actions with liberative message of Christianity. Take for instance, John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* used the symbol of family to demonstrate communitarian life and the importance of affective dimension of Christian faith, beyond just the rational. The image of the family supposed to make immediate sense to the African than those high-sounding language of communitarian perichoresis, like 'People of God' etc. It was also a document that speaks against modernity's emphasis on individualism, and parallel developments without concern for others.²⁸

²⁷ Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly: Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment (*Instrumentum Laboris*, § 48).

²⁸ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa: On Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000*,²⁷ 14 September 1995, § 42, 43,

Despite the beauty of this document, the Nigerian woman finds it difficult to locate herself within the liberative and empowering message of this unique document. The reason is that there are some elements in our culture, especially areas bordering on sociopolitical oppressions that need to be purged in the light of kerygmatic imperatives. The voice of Ecclesia in Africa must be liberative for the social experiences of women within their environments. In some communities, to cite a few examples; family of equals does not exist since women are subject to their husbands, women are victims of many family circumstances and they go through all sorts of violence (domestic, verbal and physical, including death). In other communities, a childless woman is castigated and spited, another woman is sent out of her matrimonial home because she gave birth to only girls and a widow is tormented because she is accused of killing her husbands, even when she had sold all their life earning to cure the sickness that killed the husband. Most of these women are members of our Christian communities, our daughters or even our wives. It is as if the Church in Nigeria is silent towards this violence against women since she does not speak hard against it. Often you hear Christian male believers insisting on the privilege of men's sexuality, of the importance of our patriarchal culture and of the precedence of culture over certain religious practices. Little wonder, Elochukwu E. Uzukwu commented in his *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* that “the idea of Church as Family should not be construed to mean that the African cultural experience would uncritically set the terms for the construction of this new family of God.”²⁹

It is not as though the Church in Nigeria is not making effort to understand, encourage and support theological reflections and

²⁹ Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (New York: Orbis Books 1996), 66.

praxis on the identity and mission of women with men in the church and in society, but there are individuals and groups who keep sabotaging that effort in the name of culture. How many male believers, and even female believers, believe in the dynamism and diversity that comes with the Holy Spirit. How many people are open to allow the spirit of the Gospel to penetrate the hidden, oppressive and ill culture of our time? What are we protecting in the name of culture?

Our insufficient response to the challenges of our time is not an indication that we have not reached a certain level of faith maturity that we can seek out to purify and elevate certain elements or expressions of our culture that mitigate against Christianity and its message of liberation. No, the problem is the issues of power and control, as well as ignorance.

There is this certain resistance from most male Christians to accept the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of transformation that comes with the knowledge of Christ. This resistance cuts across every group of persons in the Church, not excluding the hierarchy. Most people resist authentic collaboration of men and women in the Church, not because the culture is patriarchal, but because they have a way of life to protect. Some are afraid of losing the empire they have built around their ego, others are afraid of losing their power and authority, others still are afraid of losing their control over female sexuality, headship of the family, religious and political power that may lead to religious and political marginalization of the men.³⁰ In the words of Pope Francis, these “various forms of enslavement which, rather than a show of masculine power, are craven acts of cowardice.”³¹

³⁰ See also, Gesila Uzukwu, “Religion and Religiosity of Women in the Scripture and Africa: A Study of a Living Paradox”. *Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 4 (2014), 19-36, 28.

³¹ Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “On Love in The Family”, *Amoris Laetitia* §54

Second, is the issue of ignorance of the lay faithful. The level of ignorance, especially among women has serious effect on the empowerment of women in order to achieve better understanding of themselves and religion and to be able to deal with the social religious reality around them. Education offers a child, a girl or a woman the opportunity to improve the self and to know more about the tenets of her faith, rights and duties. It also offers opportunities to take up responsibilities and position in the Church and in the society. It empowers women to reject certain demeaning attitude towards them, and to a large extent, avoid being a victim of abuses, discrimination, isolation, exclusion, grief, crime, domestic and societal violence, to mention a few. Ignorance, on the other hand, ruins one's life, denies the child, the girl or the woman the potentials of personal, religious, economic and social growth, freedom and independence. In addition, ignorance feeds myth, for the inability to criticize opinions leaves one at the mercy of unfounded truths and opinions.

Religious nuns have reached where they are today because at a certain point their leaders have allowed them the opportunities to improve the quality of their education. According to Sr. Immacula Chukwunyere (HHCJ), “most congregations of women religious commit to educating their members not only as a way of witnessing, but also as a means of upholding and expanding their charism and ministries.”³² With education at hand, nuns can take care of their economic needs without being dependent on anyone, establish institutions to educate and empower millions of children, men and women, offer the nuns greater opportunity to be actively involved in the mission of teaching and evangelization. For Sister Teresa Maya, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, education “empowers people, it broadens horizons, it deepens values, it engages conversation between faith and culture.”³³

³² Sr. Immacula Chukwunyere, “Education of sisters around the world”, accessed at A Nuns Life Ministry [https://anunslife.org/blogs/nun-talk/education-of-sisters-around-the-world\(9-11-2018\)](https://anunslife.org/blogs/nun-talk/education-of-sisters-around-the-world(9-11-2018)).

³³ Culled from interview with Theresa Maya CCVI for Leadership Conference for Women Religious Newsletter (May 2018), pg. 6.

This contribution is not a piece to advocate for women's ordination, but to highlight the fact that the Churches in Nigeria need to do more for the effective collaboration of men and women. We need to educate our women such they can be well informed of their roles, duties and responsibilities in the Church and to be effectively engaged in mission of evangelization, as well as the interpretation of the signs of the times. Collaborative ministry is not only restricted to subsidiary roles such as in the caring of youths, widows, orphans and the destitute, financial support for the maintenance of seminaries and seminarians, priests, orphanages, pastoral initiatives, the building and equipping of Churches, rectories and colleges, cooking and serving during social functions.³⁴ If our women are given the opportunity and the basic training they need they would be equipped for every good work, including administration of leadership roles, policy making, spiritual directress and consultants. They can be trained to give reflections/homily during mass. They can be principal administrators of certain sacraments. They can be incorporated into administrative teams as consultants, counsellors, spiritual directress, pastoral counsellors, financial administrators etc. These responsibilities require skills, and these will be achieved through training.

The voice of women cannot only be heard on the margins. The universal Church, in different times and in different means, has called on every believing community to get women involved in the different areas of the church's mission. Pope Francis has spoken about “expanding the spaces of a more incisive feminine presence of women” in the Church because the “feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society,”³⁵ of involving women in

³⁴ Innocent O. Dim, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with Reference to Awka Diocese* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 398.

³⁵ Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation On “The Proclamation of The Gospel in Today's World” Evangelii Gaudium* §103.

interreligious dialogues, of making women “become fully involved in exchanges at the religious level, as well as those at the theological level,” of giving women the opportunities to be part of the body that defends Catholic doctrines.³⁶ Pope Francis also wants the women, like men, to have the possibility to express themselves within the Church, also taking on roles of greater responsibility, but without crushing man, but rather, by bringing out their own talents, that particular capacity for regeneration and maternity. No payback, therefore, even if women up to now have not had enough room, in the Church as well as in society.”³⁷ It is left for the local churches to seek for ways to apply these teachings.

We cannot allow the evils or obstacles posed by culture affect women in their dignity and in their role. Domination and oppression of women by patriarchy is a major obstacle that must be removed if women will feel their dignity restored. As long as patriarchal mindset and exclusion from institutionalized ministry are in place, women's dignity and equality with men remain elusive regardless of soothing token offered women by a sexist church.

If the theology of collaborative ministry of Paul is to have serious impact on our theology today, the culture of common human nature, equality of mission, liberation and collective responsibility must be preached and emphasized. Let us do more than just assigning women subsidiary roles. Paul applauded the Roman women of responding to the needs of the mission in their capacities as loyal companions and missionary collaborators,

³⁶ on April 21, 2018, Pope Francis appointed five new Consultors of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), and among these five were three women. This was a historic move taken by the Church on affirming an authentic, real rapport of collaboration between man and women in the Church. It was a landmark because the appointment became the first time that any woman has ever been appointed to the CDF. Accessed at <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2018/05/08/pope-asks-vatican-group-to-examine-role-of-women-in-the-church/> (9-11-2018).

³⁷ Culled from Interview of Maria Voce on “Women's role and challenges of the Catholic Church” for *Famiglia Cristiana* (17/January/2018), accessed at <http://www.focolare.org/gb/news/2018/01/17/maria-voce-womens-role-and-challenges-of-the-catholic-church/> (9/11/2018)

deacons and teachers. Women need to be given the opportunity to do the same in our time. Let us not limit our language about women's participation in mission to 'this is how it was in the old'. The potential roles for me as a woman today, both relational and vocational, encompass a much larger range of possibilities than the roles for women in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Let our language about God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Church and the mission of the kingdom be inclusive. Let us not divorce liturgy from life, for it is the same people that live in world that also serve in the liturgy. Let us not forget that in the beginnings of Christianity, women played significant role in the creation and formation of the Church. We are a liberated humanity and every human person is entitled to this experience. A better understanding of the Church as a communion of the believers where every member with their respective diversities of function and charisms are harnessed for the good and mission of the Church cannot be reached without a true and fair acknowledgment of the place and role of women in the Church.

Conclusion

The mission and needs of the Church in our present time is not the same as of Paul's own time. Just as in Paul's own time the Greco-Roman context in its various religious, social and political dimensions shaped the theology of Paul, our contemporary context in its various dimensions has played and continues to play its part in shaping our theology/ecclesiology. The problem, however, is that our assessment of the collaborative mission of men and women in Christ, especially the way Christianity is lived out in Nigeria has not significantly changed or improved. We are still held hostage by our expressions of culture, ignorance, power and control.

Paul's message for collaborative ministry was eschatological because it preaches of a communion of life that transcends cultural epochs and issues. It is revolutionary because it is a return to the unity of the created order (So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen. 1:27 NRS). It is hopeful because it is achievable. It is liberative because it energizes women to continue to seek for positive ways to oppose and overcome patriarchy, thus making women agents of their own destiny. :

COLLABORATION WITHIN THE 'ECOLOGY OF MISSION': AN AFRICAN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Collaborative ministry concerns the dynamics of relationships between the clergy, consecrated persons and lay faithful, that is, how they are able to work together as Christian ministers, each in his or her own right, being mutually supportive and acting in fellowship with the wider church.¹ However, in recent times, the issue of collaboration in ministry has become one of great importance with the passage of time, especially, as continuing cultural, economic and political changes have brought present conditions to such a point of development that completely new delicate and complex problems have arisen. This paper discusses not just the issue of collaborative ministry, but introduces an innovation as it colors the discourse with an African cultural perspective. The major question looming at the horizon of this work is: what has the African worldview to offer in the evolving discourses on collaborative ministry? In response to this question, this piece has explored the African background for African

¹Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, 'Collaborative ministry': Consecrated Life within the ecology of mission. In Kanu I. A. (Ed.) Consecrated persons and mutual relations: The dynamics of collaboration within the ecology of mission (pp. 56-75), Decent Global, Lagos, 2018, p. 56

categories that would make discourses on collaborative ministry more meaningful to and at home in Africa. Having discussed the African worldview and developed models for collaborative ministry in Africa, this piece strongly submits that collaborative ministry studied from the African cultural perspective enriches the concept and makes more meaning to the African. For the purpose of this research, the contextual method of inquiry would be employed as it emphasizes circumstances and experiences of each people for the appropriation of the Christian faith. The complementary approach would also be patronized, especially as it expresses the nature and rhythm of the African universe.

Keywords: Collaboration, Ecology, Mission, African, Cultural, Perspective.

Introduction

A cursory glance at the historical development of the theology, spirituality and ecclesiology developed by the Church, especially during the Second Vatican Council, teach us that the different forms of life in the Church cannot and should not be compartmentalized, but are always in correlation with one another. And this perspective is based on the concept of the nature of the Church. St Paul, around 90 AD, described the Church as “the fullness of Christ and of fellowship” (Ephesians 3:19).² The early Fathers of the Church referred to the church as the Ecclesia- 'the called out ones', 'the elect', 'the saints' and 'the school of truth and the fellowship of adepts'.³ These perspectives define what quality

²Kanu I. A. Introduction. In Kanu I. A. (Ed.) Consecrated persons and mutual relations: The dynamics of collaboration within the ecology of mission (pp. 4-5), Decent Global, Lagos, p. 4.

³Kung H. *The Church*. New York: Image Books. 1981, p. 32.

of collaboration should be found in the Church.

The Second Vatican Council describes the singular constitutive nature of the Church, presenting her as *Mystery*.⁴ From Pentecost, there exists in the world a new People⁵, which, vivified by the Holy Spirit, assembles in Christ in order to have access to the Father⁶. She is gathered from all nations and merged into such an intimate unity by the power of the Holy Spirit that its reality cannot be explained by recourse to mere sociological formula.⁷ Only in this transcendent perspective can we rightly interpret the relationships among various members of the Church⁸. Intimately related to the idea of the Church as a mystery is the image of the Church as the body of Christ; unity in Christ involves a mutual communion of life among her members⁹. The very life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit builds up organic cohesion in Christ and unifies the Church “in communion and in the works of ministry”¹⁰. As the body of Christ, the Church is also the Sacrament of salvation, with a visible social organism and an invisible divine presence intimately united¹¹. In this relationship, the social structure of the Church serves the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it.¹² The intimate reciprocal

⁴ Lumen Gentium, In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council* (pp.350-428). Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1964, No. 1.

⁵ Lumen Gentium. In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council*, No. 4.

⁶ Kanu I. A. The theological foundations of mutual relations. In Kanu I. A. (Ed.) *Consecrated persons and mutual relations: The dynamics of collaboration within the ecology of mission* (pp. 4-5), Decent Global, Lagos, 2018, p.7.

⁷ Lumen Gentium, In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council*, No. 9

⁸ Lumen Gentium, In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council*, No. 4; 7; 8; 9; 12; 18; 21.

⁹ Lumen Gentium, In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council*, No. 9

¹⁰ Lumen Gentium, In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council*, No. 4.

¹¹ Kanu I. A. The theological foundations of mutual relations. In Kanu I. A. (Ed.) *Consecrated persons and mutual relations: The dynamics of collaboration within the ecology of mission* (pp. 4-5), Decent Global, Lagos, 2018, p.8.

¹² Lumen Gentium, In A. Flannery (Ed). *Documents of the second Vatican Council*, No. 8

connection of the two elements, therefore, confers upon the Church her special *sacramental* nature¹³ and thus, challenges her towards collaboration.

This notwithstanding, with the passage of time, the issue of collaboration in ministry has become one of great importance in the Church, especially, as continuing cultural, economic and political changes have brought present conditions to such a point of development that completely new delicate and complex problems have arisen. This paper provides a context for discussing the issue of collaborative ministry in the Church from an African cultural perspective. The uniqueness of this discourse springs from the contribution that the African cultural worldview makes to the discourse on collaborative ministry. The phrase: 'Ecology of Mission' is very significant in this paper because it serves the understanding of the Church as an ecosystem in which we find mission in different layers and levels, but all of them in mutual interconnection.¹⁴

The contextual method of inquiry would be employed for the purpose of this study. This is importance because it emphasizes circumstances and experiences of each people for the appropriation of the Christian faith. Contextualization removes theology from the ivory tower of merely academic engagement and situates it on the ordinary experience of people. Contextualization is cognizant and also respectful of the distinctiveness of the various human conditions and pays attention to them in their particularity.¹⁵

¹³ Gaudium et Spes (1965). In A. Flannery (Ed), Documents of the second Vatican Council (pp.903-1001). Dublin: Dominican Publications. No. 42

¹⁴ Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, 'Collaborative ministry': Consecrated Life within the ecology of mission. In Kanu I. A. (Ed.), p. 56.

¹⁵ Joseph Ogbonnaya, African liberative theologies. In Introducing African liberative theologies (pp. 26-46), New York: Orbis Books, 2015, pp. 31-32.

The complementary approach would also be patronized, especially as it expresses the nature and rhythm of reality in the African world.

Consequently, my reflection would be divided into four parts:

1. What the African perspective has to offer
2. The imperatives for a cultural perspective
3. Understanding African cosmology
4. African cultural models for collaboration
5. Articulating an African cultural perspective of collaboration

What has an African Perspective to offer?

The Western educational system has extolled the achievements of the West and denied African contributions so that what is known of Africa in many instances is limited to the usual stereotypes of the primitive, the savage, the inferior, etc.¹⁶ This is evident in the writings of many Western scholars.

Linnaeus, writing in the 18th century, argues that all creatures were arranged by God in a great chain of hierarchy. In this hierarchy, the *Americanus* were considered tenacious, contented, free and ruled by custom. The *Europeanus*, he says are light, lively, inventive and ruled by rites. The *Asiaticus* are stern, haughty, stingy and ruled by opinion. *Africans* are cunning, slow, negligent and ruled by caprice¹⁷. Gobineau, writing in the 20th century, developed a racial anthropology, which argues that Europe had attained civilization while others are yet to.¹⁸

As a child of the same racial climate, Hume writes: "I am apt to

¹⁶Innocent Onyewuanyi, *The African origin of Greek philosophy*. University of Nigeria Press, Enugu, 1994, p. 33.

¹⁷Linnaeus, C. *System of nature*. Stockholm: Laurentius Salvius, 1758, p. 57.

¹⁸Gobineau, A. *The inequality of human race*. London: William Heinemann, 1915, p. 36.

suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even an individual eminent in action or speculation”¹⁹. While Hegel avers that: “In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness had not yet attained to the realization of any substantial existence”²⁰, Levy-Bruhl questions the veracity of an untutored African knowing God²¹. Baker did not spare the Negro: “The Negro is still at the rude dawn of faith-fetishism and has barely advanced in idolatry.... he has never grasped the idea of a personal deity, a duty in life, a moral code, or a shame of lying.”²²

Unfortunately, while this was part of the curriculum of the western educational system, here in Africa, African students were starved of information about their rich heritage and the achievements of their ancestral home, while being stuffed with an overdose of the history and achievements of the West. There is, therefore, the need for an honest re-evaluation of what is African. Saint Pope John Paul II, in *Ecclesia in Africa*, observes that the African continent: “is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the Churches and to humanity as a whole.”²³

These values became more visible through the writings of Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Leon Gontran Damas in the 19th century. This did not only change the course of the intellectual history of Africa, but has also affected the way the

¹⁹ Kanu, I. A. *An Ontologico-Existential Hermeneutic approach to classical and contemporary issues*. Augustinian publications, Nigeria, 2015, p. 10

²⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. *The philosophy of history*. New York: Dover. 1956, p. 93

²¹ F. O. C. Njoku. *Essays in African philosophy, thought and theology*. SNAAP Press, Enugu, 2002, p. 199.

²² F. O. C. Njoku. *Essays in African philosophy, thought and theology*, p. 199.

²³ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Post Apostolic Exhortation. 2000, No. 42. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html.

gospel message is proclaimed to the Black Continent.²⁴ Since then, African theologians began to debate on the value of the gospel message announced to Africans by Western missionaries.²⁵ The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were years of passionate and fruitful discussions. It is in this same spirit that this paper echoes the relevance of an African cultural perspective in the discourse on the theology of collaboration.

The clause “African cultural perspective” is employed to reflect that every culture makes a contribution from its house of experience to the universal themes of theology, thus, making theology relevant to the reality of life.

To speak of an African cultural perspective does not in any way undermine the differences obtainable in Africa. It rather points to the many similarities and points of convergences in Africa because of which a scholar can make limited generalizations.²⁶

Theological Imperatives for an African Cultural Perspective

Before we undertake the study of collaborative ministry within the context of an African cultural perspective, it would be necessary to investigate the imperatives for such a study. The imperatives are taken from the Scripture and the history of the Church.

a. Imperatives from the Scripture

Jesus came from the Jewish background whose religiosity, prayers and practices of worship were well defined. However, His attitude towards the Jewish cult was one of Fidelity and autonomy. In

²⁴ Bujo, B. and Muya J. I. General Introduction: African theology today. In Bujo, B. and Muya J. I. (eds.). African theology: The contribution of the pioneers. Paulines, Nairobi, 2006, p. 7.

²⁵ Bujo, B. and Muya J. I. *General Introduction: African theology today.*, p. 7.

²⁶ Kanu, I. A., *Towards an Igbo Christology: A Cultural Christological Construct in Post-Missionary Africa.* Germany: Lambert Publications. 2016, p. 22.

fidelity, Jesus had respect for the traditions of His time. He came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). He was faithful in observing the offering of sacrifices in the temple (Matthew 21:12), the service of Word in the synagogue (Matthew 6:6), observing the day of the Sabbath, the feasts of Passover, Tabernacle, and Dedication (Matthew 26:17-19). However, His fidelity did not lie in passivity, but represented that of a “critical yes”, a reforming fidelity, that placed a demand of purification to the worship of his time. His autonomy found expression in His challenge to fellow Jews to spiritualize and interiorize the Jewish religion.²⁷

When Jesus preached the Gospel, He used categories familiar to His audience. We hear of absentee Lords and Tenant revolts (Matthew 21:31-45); Small family-run farms (Matthew 21:28-30); debts and debtors (Matthew 18:25-35); extortion and corruption (Luke 16:1-9); uncaring rich (Luke 12:18); day labourers paid merely subsistent wages (Matthew 20:1-6); these graphically reflect the detail of the picture of Palestinian countryside during His time. St Paul writes, “To the Jews I became a Jew, in other to win Jews... I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some” (9:20 & 22). In this context, St Paul was talking about mission, in a way that brings the Christian experience into the cultural experience of the people.²⁸

b. Imperatives from Church History

Justin the Martyr holds that different cultures were inspired by God and should be appropriate for His service. He saw culture as a

²⁷Kanu, A. I. Towards an Igbo-African Christology: A cultural Christological construct in post-missionary Africa, p. 58

²⁸Kanu, I. A. & B. A. C. Obiefuna, Inculturation as the Reconciliation of Cultures: Implications from Africae Munus. A paper presented at the 27th Annual Conference/Meeting of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN). April 20th - 13th. At the Redemptorist Conference Centre, Ibadan, Oyo State, 2012, p 12.

prefiguration of Christ: a Logos spermatikos (seed bearing word). He taught that the Spermatic Logos has been implanted in the heart of every human culture since all things were created through Christ, with Him and for Him.²⁹

Clement of Alexander established a fundamental theory- a harmony of faith and Greek culture, which places Greek philosophy at the service of faith.

Philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness until the coming of the Lord, and even now it is useful for the development of true religion, as a kind of preparatory discipline for those who arrive at faith by way of demonstration. ... philosophy was given to the Greeks directly; for it was a “schoolmaster”, to bring Hellenism to Christ, as the law was for the Jew”.³⁰

As the Church expanded from Palestine to Rome, it became clear that it was going into a new culture and would have to have new ways of expressing herself. In 312 Constantine and Licinius issued the Edict of Milan decriminalizing Christian worship. This paved the way for the initiation of large numbers of people to Christianity and the shaping of their belief systems on the Greek and Roman cultures. St Augustine taught that “as faith runs on earth and takes its citizens from all nations and languages; and faith is not to be pre-occupied with customs, laws and institutions, neither is it to reject or destroy any of these, but rather it should observe and conserve them so that they do not constitute an obstacle to the religion that teaches the true worship of God”.³¹

²⁹Kanu, I. A. *Towards an Igbo-African Christology: A cultural Christological construct in post-missionary Africa*, p. 59.

³⁰Kanu, I. A. *Towards an Igbo-African Christology: A cultural Christological construct in post-missionary Africa*, p.58

³¹Kanu, I. A. & Elizabeth Ezenweke, *Revisiting the Lessons of the Interaction between Faith and Culture in North Africa*. A paper presented at the International Conference on Sustainable Development. Vol. 8. No. 2. pp. 67-71. Uyo: International Research and Development Institute, 2012.

The African Cosmology and Inter-Subjective Relations

The structure of the African cosmos is the basis for an African theology of collaboration. It is a universe of particularities that, however, exist in a thermodynamic system- where every creature as an independent but interacting entity, negotiates another's existential highway for mutual survival.³² Negotiation is very important in the African universe because it is a world that one shares with the other in an atmosphere of inter-subjective relations. This inter-subjective relations only plays out without chaos when the individual is able to skillfully bridge his or her interiority with the individuality of the other.

African universe has physical and spiritual dimensions. In the spirit realm, God represents the Chief Being, and sits at the apex of power. In the physical world, human beings dominate, occupying the central position in the scheme of God's creation. The structure of the African universe can be illustrated in three levels: the sky, the earth and the underworld: “the sky is where God Chukwu or Chineke and angels reside; the earth where human beings, animals, natural resources, some devils and some physical observable realities abide; and the underworld where ancestors and some bad spirits live”.³³

³² F. O. C. Njoku, *Ana Atutu Igbo philosophy: An African perspective on the problem of identity and conflict resolution*. Goldline and Jacobs publishers. USA, pp. 119.

³³ Ijiomah, C. African philosophy's contribution to the dialogue on reality issues. *Sankofa: Journal of the Humanities*.3. 1. 81 – 90., 2005, p. 84.

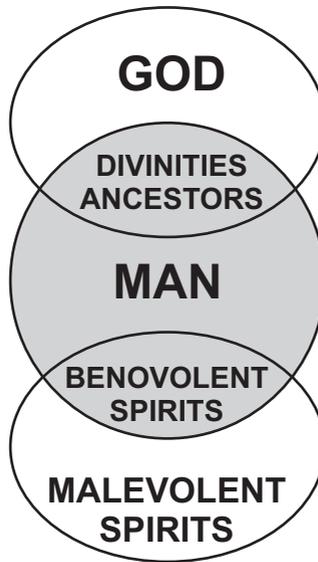


Figure 1: The African Cosmos

The African universe persists because of a healthy inter-subjective relation. The spiritual and physical realms, although they have separate existence, interact. This is reflected in the above diagram as the three circles representing the spiritual worlds of (God), the spirits and the physical world of human beings overlap and, therefore, interact. There is really no demarcation between the physical and spiritual worlds, between the visible and invisible, the sacred and profane; as there is a cooperate existence of reality in the African universe. This is seen in the fact of the possibility of certain elements to move from one structure to another to commune with other elements. In this interaction, human beings commune with God, the divinities, the ancestors and vice versa.³⁴

³⁴Ekwealor, C. C. The Igbo world-view: A general survey. E. Oguegbu (Ed.). The humanities and all of us (pp.29-33). Onitsha: Waterside, 1990, p.30.

African Anthropology

The human person in African ontology was created by God, and this makes life sacred and thus deserving of respect and dignity. This is why the Igbo-African bear the names: *Chi-nyere ndu*: God gave life; *Nke-chi-yere*: the one God has given; *Chi-n'eye ndu*: God gives life; *Chi-nwe- ndu*: God owns life; *Chi-ji-ndu*: God owns life. Among the Yoruba such names also abound: *Araoluwa* – Wonder of God; *Araoluwanimi* – I am God's wonder; *Ayanfeoluwanimi* – I am God's beloved; *Ereadura* – Reward of prayers; *Eriadurami* – Testimony of my prayer; *i* – Beauty of God.

It is because the human person is understood as *Ewaoluwa* – Beauty of God that the Igbo cannot but call the human person *Mmadu*, which means that 'there is beauty'. The human person is not *mmadu* because he or she has a physical beauty. If it were based on this then many human beings would be referred to as '*Njodu*' (there is ugliness). We are *mmadu* because of our ontological connection with God who is Beauty itself.

The divine presence in us, which one could refer to as the Chi-the spark of the divine in all human beings, provides a unity even in the midst of the plurality of humanity. This unity helps us to develop a philosophy of relationship with the other, *Ibem*. The Igbo would refer to the 'Other' as *Ibe*, which means 'a piece of' or 'a part of', as in *ibe anu* (a piece of meat) or *ibe ede* (a piece of cocoyam). Since the 'other' refers to my own piece, it would, mean that to love the other is to love oneself, to help the other is to help oneself and to respect the other is to respect oneself. In a paradoxical way Ekwulu writes that:

The term *ibe* brings out the reciprocity tension between the self and the other. The self is always implicated in the other. The self's reference to the other always points back to the self. I am, as it were, in the other and the other is in me. He is

my piece as i am his piece. That which is different from me is 'my piece' or 'my other'. That which is different from us is part of us.³⁵

One can, therefore, argue that the differences among human beings is absolved in identity, for that which is different from me is part of me, *ibe m*, and, in turn, identity is absolved in the otherness, because I am part of the other who is different from me. Identity and otherness are in a sense two related concepts, for the one implies the other.³⁶ This anthropology can be a solid ground for constructing an African theology of collaboration.

African Cultural Models of Collaboration

The idea of models employed here is within the context of a proposal that would serve as a basis for further study in the area of collaboration from an African perspective. While they might look strange, this proposal is in harmony with the economy of the incarnation and the teaching of *Ad Gentes* that calls for borrowing from the customs, traditions, wisdom and learning of local people.

In harmony with the economy of the Incarnation, the young churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf Ps. 2:8). They borrow from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and disciplines, all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, or

³⁵ Ekwulu, B. I. Igbo concept of *Ibe* (the other) as a philosophical solution to the ethnic conflicts in African countries. In B. I. Ekwulu (Ed.). *philosophical reflections on African issues*, 2010, p. 188.

³⁶ Kanu, I. A. African philosophy, Identity and the Otherness. A paper presented at the philosophy week of Saint Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary, School Auditorium, Makurdi, Benue State 13th May, 2017, p. 10.

enhance the grace of their Savior, or dispose Christian life the way it should be.³⁷

Ad Gentes teaches further:

From here... the Christian life will be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture. Particular traditions, together with the peculiar patrimony of each family of nations, illumined by the light of the Gospel, can then be taken up into Catholic unity. Finally, the young particular churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion, saving always the primacy of Peter's See, which presides over the entire assembly of charity.³⁸

In this regard, five African cultural models of collaboration would be entertained. And although they are treated as different models of collaboration, the nature of the African worldview, allows for an interaction in meaning.

a. The 'Nri' Negotiative Model of Collaboration

The story of the Igbo, no matter how briefly considered, would be incomplete if one omits the Eri-Nri contribution.³⁹ Tracing this history, Afigbo avers that Eri clan originated from the regions of Omumbala River, in Aguleri; from there they fanned eastward and established various communities.⁴⁰ Uzukwu describes Eri as the father of all Nri; and tradition says that he came from *Chukwu*.⁴¹ It is reported that the earth was not firm when he came into it. To

³⁷ Ad Gentes, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, No. 22

³⁸ Ad Gentes, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, No. 22

³⁹ Madubuko, L. Igbo world-view. *Bigard Theological Studies*. 1994, 14, 2. 13.

⁴⁰ Afigbo, A. E. *Ropes of sand: Studies in Igbo history and culture*. Ibadan, 1981, p.48.

⁴¹ Uzukwu, E. E. Nri myth of origin and its ritualization: An essay in interpretation. In E. E. Uzukwu (Ed.). *Religions and African culture, Inculturation: A Nigeria perspective* (pp. 56-80). Enugu: Spiritan Publications. 1994, p.73.

solve the problem of flood, he employed blacksmiths from Awka to use their bellows to dry the flooded land. There was also no food for people on earth to eat. To provide food, he prayed to God and God demanded that he should sacrifice his first son and daughter to him. After the sacrifice and burial of his son and daughter, yam and palm tree began to grow out of the place where he buried his first son, while vegetables and cocoyam grew out of the place where he buried his daughter. If yam germinated from where Eri's first son was buried, it means that yam is the resurrected son of Eri, given to man to sustain life. Yam is also regarded as life.⁴²

In this myth, there is a cosmic drama between God, human beings, land and crops. Eri, the civilization hero enjoys a special relationship with Chukwu, and through Eri's sacrifice, humanity now enjoys a special relationship with the land which offers food for its sustenance. The ritual act performed by Eri established a covenant between Eri, his descendants and Chukwu. This explains why yam is very prominent in Igbo sacrifice and life, one which warrants its annual elaborate festival throughout Igbo land.⁴³

These notwithstanding, we draw from this myth that collaboration can guarantee the survival of a people. Where there is no collaboration, even the most self-sufficient in the ranks of creatures would find it difficult to survive.

b. The 'Ife' Thermodynamic Model of Collaboration

Very interesting is the Yoruba mythology of creation, which can serve as a basis for an African theology of collaboration. The myth holds that Olodumare, the Supreme God, originally lived in the lower part of heaven, overlooking endless stretches of water. One day, Olodumare decided to create Earth. He sent an emissary, the

⁴² Madu, E. J. *Honest to African cultural heritage*. Coskan Associates, Onitsha, 2004, p. 43

⁴³ Madu, E. J. *Honest to African cultural heritage*. p. 44.

Orisha Obatalá to perform this task, giving him what he needed to create the world: a bag of loose earth, a gold chain, and a five-toed hen.⁴⁴

These different elements had their purposes. Obatalá was instructed to use the chain to descend from heaven to the water below. When he got to the last link of the chain, he poured the loose earth on top of the water and placed the hen on the pile of earth, and ordered it to scatter the earth with her toes across the surface of the water. When the hen was done, Obatalá climbed the chain to heaven to report his success to Olodumare, who then sent his trusted assistant, the chameleon, to verify that the earth was dry, after which Olodumare gave the earth as name: *Ile Ife*, the sacred house.⁴⁵

After the creation of the earth, Olodumare returned to the uppermost part of heaven. However, before his retirement, he distributed his sacred powers to Obatalá, the Orisha of creation, and Yemayá, the orisha of the ocean, who gave birth to a pantheon of orishas, each possessing a share of Olodumare's sacred power. Olodumare gave Obatalá the sacred power to create human life. Obatalá was the divinity that created our ancestors, endowing them with his own divine power.⁴⁶

From this creation myth, we draw that in collaboration, you share power, and by sharing power, you do not lose power as a leader but balances power. This perspective is very important as collaboration may wrongly be understood as loss of power or control.

⁴⁴Marta Moreno Vega, "The Altar of My Soul: The Living Traditions of Santeria," One World/Ballantine, 2001. <http://www.religioustolerance.org/ifa.htm>

⁴⁵Marta Moreno Vega, "The Altar of My Soul: The Living Traditions of Santeria," One World/Ballantine, 2001. <http://www.religioustolerance.org/ifa.htm>

⁴⁶Marta Moreno Vega, "The Altar of My Soul: The Living Traditions of Santeria," One World/Ballantine, 2001. <http://www.religioustolerance.org/ifa.htm>

c. *The 'Kola Nut' Symbiotic Model of Collaboration*

Of the many cultural symbols in Igboland, none has received attention like the kola nut. It is very important and central to the life and ceremonies of the Igbo.⁴⁷ For the Igbo it goes beyond the red and yellow seed that you find in trays sold on the street and in kiosks. It is not just the biannual crop grown and stored in sacks and baskets soaked with water to preserve it. It is not just the seed crops grown in the central and western parts of Africa. It is more than all these. It is a food that must be eaten with relish; it commands adoration and many accolades and must be attended to with deserving feast.⁴⁸ It is a holy communion that unites the living and dead. It symbolizes a feast of togetherness, love and trust. The Kola nut is a symbol of Life ndu, this is why the Igbo say: “He that brings kola brings life”, and to share in it is to be part of the project of the preservation of life. It is, therefore, not surprising that the poetry of the Kola breaks the day for the typical Igbo.⁴⁹

Every Kola can be broken into lobes, and these lobes signify numbers. And number is very important for the African. Some have 2 lobes, some 3, some 4, some 5 and some 6. Kola nut with two lobes is a dumb kola and is not eaten because it is understood as the *Kola of the Spirits*. When it has three lobes, it is called the *Kola of the Valiant*. As a matter of principle it is eaten only by warriors, brave men, the consecrated or ordained. The Kola with four lobes is the *Kola of Peace and Blessings*.⁵⁰ It is a sign of completeness and signifies four market days in Igbo society. The Kola with five lobes is the *Kola of Procreation, Protection and Good luck*. The

⁴⁷ Philips Nwachukwu. What is this about Kola nut in Igbo land? Vanguard Newspaper. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/04/what-is-this-about-kolanut-in-igboland>.

⁴⁸ Philips Nwachukwu. What is this about Kola nut in Igbo land?

⁴⁹ Philips Nwachukwu. What is this about Kola nut in Igbo land?

⁵⁰ Jon Ofoegbu Ukaegbu, The Kola Nut: As an Igbo Cultural and social symbol. IgboNet. <http://kolanutseries.igbonet.com/jukaegbu>.

Kola with six lobes is indicative of communion with the ancestors. No wonder the smallest part of it is not eaten but given to the ancestors.⁵¹

This notwithstanding, among the lobes, there is always a female and male lobe. When these lobes stay together they remain alive, but when they separate they die and dry off. Their togetherness is a symbol of life, and their separation, death. It's a symbiotic relationship in the sense that they need each other to remain alive. Here in, the concepts of co-essentiality and co-responsibility begin to make a profound meaning.

d. Proverbial Model of Collaboration

One of the major traditional vessels where African philosophy, religion and culture have continued to be preserved is in African Proverb. Mbiti writes that: "It is in proverbs that we find the remains of the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom"⁵². Their relevance in African life and philosophy is the basis for the Igbo referring to them as *vegetables for eating speech and as the palm oil with which words are eaten*. The Zulu of Southern Africa describe proverbs thus: *without proverbs, language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without a soul*. The Yoruba would say that *proverbs are horses for chasing missing words*.⁵³

Proverbs are very important for our study of collaborative ministry within the context of the African cultural setting because they contain the wisdom and experience of the African people, usually of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression.

⁵¹ Jon Ofoegbu Ukaegbu, The Kola Nut: As an Igbo Cultural and social symbol

⁵² John Mbiti, African religions and philosophy. East African Education Publishers, Nairobi, 1969, p. 89.

⁵³ Kanu I. A., A Hermeneutic approach to African traditional religion, philosophy and theology. Augustinian Publications, Nigeria, 2015, p. 65

Proverbs spring from the people and represent the voice of the people and express the interpretation of their beliefs, principles of life and conduct. It expresses the moral attitudes of a given culture, and reflects the hopes, achievements and failings of a people.⁵⁴

1. A person is a person because of other people
It speaks of the importance of alterity in collaboration
2. Sticks in a bundle cannot be broken
It speaks of the importance of collaboration
3. When spiders unite they can tie up a lion
It speaks of the power of relating with the other
4. If one finger tries to pick up something from the ground, it cannot
It speaks of the ontological need for collaboration
5. Behind an able man there are always other able men
It speaks of our achievements as the result of collaboration
6. It takes a village to raise a child
It speaks of the other as a complementary force
7. If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together
It speaks of the fact that you need the strength of others to reach self-realization
8. I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am
Your existence is ontologically linked with that of the other
9. If a lizard stays off from the foot of a tree, it would be caught
It speaks of the danger of avoiding collaboration
10. A tree does not make a forest
It speaks of the incompleteness of being without the other

⁵⁴Kanu I. A., *African philosophy: An ontologico-existential Hermeneutic approach to classical and contemporary issues*. Augustinian Publications, Nigeria, 2015, pp. 55-56.

11. If two or more people urinate in the same place at the same time,
it would produce more foam

If more impact must be made, then collaboration is indispensable

12. When a bird builds its nest it uses the feathers of other birds

We have to collaborate with other people to get the job done

13. One person is not the whole world

Strength is in collaboration

14. It is by taking a goat around that you are able to sell it

It speaks of the importance of meeting the other

e. The 'Choosy Princess' Complementary Model of Collaboration

There was once a choosy princess who turned down the requests of those who asked for her hand in marriage. Her father was disturbed because of her choosy attitude and made public that any man who would win the love of his daughter would have half of his kingdom given to him. This was heard by a python that lived in the river and immediately it went about borrowing the parts of the human body and when it looked fully human, physically, it stormed the palace of the king in a grand style. Immediately the princess saw the human python, she was attracted to him, fell in love and decided to marry him. The human python departed with her and owned half of the wealth of the kingdom as the king had promised. When the python was returning with her to his home, just before the river, it turned into a python and went into the river with the princess. Those who witnessed this brought word back to the king that his son-in-law is not a human being but a python.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Kanu I. A., Sources of Igwebuikwe Philosophy. International Journal of Religion and Human Relations. 9. 1. 1-23. June 2017. p. 10.

This bordered the king who assembled the wise men in his kingdom for a way forward towards rescuing the Princess. They came to the decision that to rescue her, extraordinary talents would be required for the mission. This included professionals like: a boat rider, a thief, a carpenter, a diviner, a hunter and a swimmer. When they got to the river, and did not know where to begin to find her, the diviner did some incantations and found out where the princess was hidden by the python. Having discovered her, the thief went into the river and stole the princess from where she was hidden. He handed her over to the skillful swimmer who immediately moved with her behind him. At this point, the python woke up from its slumber and angrily went after the swimmer. This was when the hunter came in and fired at the python. While the boat rider was heading to the shore with her, the anger of the python was stirred and it hit hard on the boat damaging a good part of it; and to save the boat from sinking the carpenter came in and mended the damaged part of the boat that they may continue on their journey. With a combined effort, the team was able to take the princess back to the king.⁵⁶

We draw from this story that our differences are a basis for collaboration. Even what we consider as a negative potential in the other, like the case of the thief in the story, when properly harnessed can be very useful. Thus, weakness is not a reason for not collaborating.

Articulating an African Cultural Perspective of Collaboration

A discourse on collaborative ministry that requires an African cultural perspective would be almost incomplete if reference to the document on the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of

⁵⁶Kanu I. A., Sources of Igwebuike Philosophy. p. 11.

Bishops held in Rome in April and May 1994, was neglected. Such exclusion would be even more serious considering that we are dealing with a topic which was at the heart of the key contributions of the African Synod. In this document, the Synod Fathers expressed the relevance of cultural perspectives in theological discourses.

The Synod observed that the structure of the African socio-political life, which is, the family and community is a key, not just for understanding the African life and philosophy, but also for important theological discussions that pertain to Africa:

In African culture and tradition the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental. ...African cultures have an acute sense of solidarity and community life. In Africa it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village. Indeed, community life in African societies expresses the extended family. It is my ardent hope and prayer that Africa will always preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation to individualism, which is so alien to its best traditions.⁵⁷

The African family functions by way of shared responsibilities. Everyone is consulted, before decisions concerning the family are taken. When a task is to be performed, everyone gets his or her own share, regardless of age, gender or status. The result is that success is everyone's success, and failure is everyone's failure.⁵⁸ To take advantage of this cultural structure already disposed towards the gospel, the Synod Fathers stressed the particular importance of

⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Post Apostolic Exhortation. 2000, No. 43. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html

⁵⁸ John Aniagwu. *Collaborative Ministry in the Church*. Unpublished material. 2013, p.8

inculturation. And by inculturation they meant:

...the process by which "catechesis 'takes flesh' in the various cultures".(86) Inculturation includes two dimensions: on the one hand, "the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity" and, on the other, "the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures".⁵⁹

Inserting Christianity into the African culture in a way that the Gospel message would become culture and the African culture become a Christian message, the Synod Fathers developed the ecclesiology of the *Church as God's Family*, enriching ecclesiology from Africa's rich cultural heritage, and taking this as its guiding principle for the evangelization of Africa. The Synod, therefore, acknowledged the family as:

...an expression of the Church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa. For this image emphasizes care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust. The new evangelization will thus aim at *building up the Church as Family*, avoiding all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among the particular Churches, without undue ethnic considerations.⁶⁰

An important element which cannot be neglected in the idea of Church as family is the reality of openness to dialogue, without which there can't be collaboration. For the African, this begins from the family. It is in the family that the art of dialogue is learnt,

⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Post Apostolic Exhortation. 1995, No. 58.

⁶⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Post Apostolic Exhortation. 1995, No. 63.

and further extended to other persons or communities outside of the family. The Synod Fathers did not only observe that dialogue was crucial to evangelization, but saw collaboration as an important aspect of dialogue that should exist within each particular church:

*Dialogue is to be practised first of all within the family of the Church at all levels: between Bishops, Episcopal Conferences or Hierarchical Assemblies and the Apostolic See, between Conferences or Episcopal Assemblies of the different nations of the same continent and those of other continents, and within each particular Church between the Bishop, the presbyterate, consecrated persons, pastoral workers and the lay faithful; and also between different rites within the same Church.*⁶¹

Although the African world is one of relationships, it is also a chaotic universe where conflicts are very possible and sometimes unavoidable. What is required of the individual African is not to brood over a world that is chaotic or to create a world where chaos is absent, but to negotiate the other's existential highway for mutual survival in the midst of the struggles, ironies and weariness of the present world. This is important as chaos is a fundamental ground for coming into being in African ontology.

This notwithstanding, conflicts in African ontology are regulated through Covenants. "A covenant is a solemn pact made binding by an oath by which people establish relations to henceforth treat themselves and their relatives".⁶² It is the covenant that guarantees impartiality among the covenant parties,⁶³ mutual

⁶¹ Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Post Apostolic Exhortation. 1995, No. 65.

⁶² F. O. C. Njoku, *Ana Atutu Igbo philosophy: An African perspective on the problem of identity and conflict resolution*. Goldline and Jacobs publishers. 2014, USA, p. 120.

⁶³ F. O. C. Njoku, *A perspective of an African philosophy on the problems of identity and conflict resolution*. Mbari: The International Journal of Igbo Studies. 1. 1. 2008. pp.40-41.

treatment and rights of partners, and respects due to their persons and property. Covenants provide the principles of truth and justice, and thus the part towards mutual co-existence. This helps us to understand why there is always an emphasis on the signing of contracts and agreements. Wherever and whenever a covenant is made and respected, a new life of relationship is born in the world.

The complementary nature of the African cosmos is another cultural element that enriches our discourse on the theology of collaboration. It is in fact, a preparation for the Second Vatican Council's concept of shared mission: *Est in Ecclesia unitas missionis, pluralitas autem ministerii* (In the church there is unity of mission and plurality of ministries). In the African universe, power is generated, shared and exercised. It is a universe of powers, with a rhythm that is a response to the exercise of power. God is the most powerful force and the initiator of movements, including collaboration. What we actually do in collaborative ministry is that we share in the Ultimate Power's power and generatively bestow power. In most cases where collaborative ministry fails, it is because people understand power as an element to be grabbed rather than shared. The distribution of power is resisted by authorities in many occasions for fear of diminution. The result is that rather than creating a balance of power, we create an environment of conflict and competition rather than cooperation. Certainty, sureness and creativity is denied, while the gifts of the other are left unused and thus mismanaged.

As a result of the African's holistic awareness of belonging to a universe, in which everything is interconnected,⁶⁴ when he or she engages in collaboration, it is understood as fulfilling the mission of God, since it is a movement that begins from heaven to the earth, to humanity, in which we are involved and engaged. Our

⁶⁴ Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, 'Collaborative ministry': Consecrated Life within the ecology of mission, p. 56.

collaboration with one another is, therefore, in a way, a partnership with God for the fulfillment of His purpose. This is very different from the Western conceptualization scheme. From the Cartesian model, the Western pattern of thought is exclusivistic, depersonalized, objectivised and more concerned with analysis;⁶⁵ the African scheme of conceptualization is inclusivistic, integrative, non-reductionistic, concrete, personalized and subjectivised in all its manifestations, expressing the interconnectedness of reality- a world of relationship, harmony, continuity and complementarity. The dualistic and exclusivistic Western perception of reality understands a person in relation to the other in terms of “I and Not-I”. This creates a dichotomy that brings in a strong divide between the “I and the other”, which could set groups and individuals against themselves.⁶⁶

For the African, the 'other' is part of him or her. It is not an exclusive 'other', but an 'other' that is part of himself or herself. This has huge consequences in his or her understanding of the theology of collaboration; the approach towards mission is done from the angle of concrete ecclesial community, and not from the perspective of the individual person and function. When there is an emphasis on the individual person and function, the consequence is the empowering of the individual sense of call, the basis for the consciousness of spiritual superiority and hierarchical relations, and the neglect of the community sense of mission which continuous to impede the development of a richer theology of mission in the church. And this is a major contribution that an

⁶⁵Kanu, I. A. African Philosophy, Globalisation and the Priority of Otherness. A paper presented at the 2017 Philosophy Week of Saint Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary, Makurdi, Benue State Chapter of the Nigerian Major Seminaries Association of Philosophy Students. On 13th May, 2017, p. 8.

⁶⁶Kanu, Ikechukwu A. Igwebuike as a Hermeneutical Hermeneutic of Individuality and Communitarity in African Ontology. A paper presented at the 5th International Annual Conference of the Association of African Traditional Religion and Philosophy Scholars, held on 28th June, at the PG School Auditorium, 2017, p. 7.

African cultural perspective makes to the theology of collaboration.

Conclusion

The foregoing has studied the African cultural perspective of collaborative ministry. It began by asking the question as regards what the African/cultural perspective has to offer in relation to a discourse on collaborative ministry. Having discovered the rich African cultural background, it developed imperatives for an African cultural perspective from the roots of Scripture and church history. Since we are dealing with the African/cultural worldview, this piece also ventured into a study of the African worldview from which was developed African cultural models for collaboration. These models were developed from Africa's rich religious and cultural heritage, from African proverbs, mythologies and parables. Rising beyond the literal understanding of these heritages, the meanings echoing from behind the words were captured in view of their relevance to the development of an African theology of collaboration in the ecology of mission.

In the past decades, scholars from different backgrounds have discussed the theology of collaborative ministry. And each scholar has added to the development of the concept from his or her own rich cultural and theological background. Collaboration is obviously a developing concept. It is, therefore, not surprising that competing terms have continued to emerge: Total Ministry,⁶⁷ Local Shared Ministry, Every Member Ministry, Shared Mission.⁶⁸ As a

⁶⁷ S. C. Zabriske, *Total Ministry*. University of Nottingham. Alban Institute, New York, 1991, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes, 'Collaborative ministry': Consecrated Life within the ecology of mission. In Kanu I. A. (Ed.) *Consecrated persons and mutual relations: The dynamics of collaboration within the ecology of mission* (pp. 56-75), Decent Global, Lagos, 2018, p. 56.

developing concept, an African cultural perspective is very relevant and timely, as it would bring about the emergence of a theology of collaboration that is richer in content. The relevance of pluralistic perspectives cannot be undermined in our age of globalization.

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SKILLS AND CHALLENGES OF COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

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Introduction

Man is a social being who lives in the society. He is a being with others and he is a being in relation. Heidegger in his analysis of *Dasein* will insist on the fact that “*Dasein*” is “*Dasein* – with (*Mit-Dasein*)”. On a simpler note, Aristotle will tell us that he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need of it because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god. Even the National Geographic Television Channel shows us how animals tend to work together. This is a great brain teaser and clarion call for human beings to do same. We are becoming more and more convinced of the fact that united “we stand and divided we fall”. This fits well into our traditional socialism quest. Whether you call it the *Ujamaa*¹ or the *Ubuntu*²; the *Harambee*³ or the *Igbo Kwenu*⁴; the French *vivre ensemble* or let us move to India to call it *Sarvodaya*⁵, the long and the short as shown in the above analogies is that we are called to be together. This entails therefore that

¹Swahili word for extended family or family hood as propagated by Nyerere.

²The ancient Ubuntu philosophy of South Africa recognizes the humanity of a person through their interpersonal relationships.

³A term that originated among natives, specifically Swahili porters of East Africa and the word Harambee traditionally means “let us pull together”.

⁴During my beautiful stay in Igbo land I can still remember the great Igbo Kwenu which is used as a supreme rallying call to attention and order to speak in a culturally appropriate way. In my philosophical intuitiveness I came to understand that the phrase “Igbo kwenu” most literally means, “We the Ibo people stand together in agreement and collective will.” It does not end there...It is also a shortened form of a longer phrase, “Igbo kwere na ihe ha

kwuru” which means roughly, “The Igbo believe in what they have agreed upon to think, say, and do.”

⁵Hindi word for welfare for all as propagated by Mahatma Gandhi.

working together is a challenge if we need a better society. We need to work in teams to realize common projects.⁶ The African adage becomes more and more pertinent that “it takes a whole village to raise up a child”.

In order to work together well, there are skills that we need to acquire. Some may be natural or innate. However, they can be learnt, acquired or developed. On another note, in our working together, there are some challenges that come up. There are often clashes of interest and the desire at times to dominate or being superior to others due to one's education, culture, race, gender, social status etc. It should be noted that though all fingers are not the same, it takes all the fingers of the hand to comfortably lift up things. If you want to doubt, just wound the smallest finger you have, and then try to use only the other four to carry a burden.

Our work will concentrate on two main points: *primo* the skills in collaboration in ministry and *segundo* challenges for collaboration in ministry. But before delving into these, there is need to define the main concepts being used here.

Definition of concepts Skill and challenge

A skill is “an ability to do an activity or job well, especially because you have practised it”⁷. One can be skilled may be in writing, in sewing, dressmaking, etc. Some of these activities may be innate or do not need more efforts. However most will be acquired through training or formation. That is why we are going to be talking about some skills we need to acquire or develop for effective collaborative ministry.

⁶Let us see for example. In the early periods of evangelization, some congregations thought they could do it all alone, they sent priest to go and convert the beasts in the forests and force them to baptism. Nowadays it is becoming more and more necessary to do it together, lets take for example the case of Southern Sudan.

⁷Cambridge advanced learners dictionary, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Challenge is the: “ Situation of being faced with something needing great mental and physical effort in order to be done successfully and which therefore tests a person's ability”.⁸

Collaboration

It comes from the Latin *Collaborare* (*Co* and *laborare*) – work with. The verb collaborate thus means “to work with someone else for a special purpose” The noun “collaboration” entails “when two or more people work together to create or achieve the same thing” Following same, the Adjective collaborative means “involving two or more people working together for a special purpose”.⁹ For Echema, “Collaboration implies a coming together of two people or groups that are different, but who for a common purpose must put aside their differences in order to achieve a common goal”.¹⁰ It is necessary in all sectors of human life be it social, civil or ecclesiastical.

Sofield and Juliano define collaboration as the “identification, release and union of the gifts of all baptized persons”.¹¹

Ministry

Ministry is from the Greek word *diakoneo*, meaning “to serve” or *douleuo*, meaning “to serve as a slave”. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* defines ministry as “carrying forth Christ's mission in the world”, indicating that it is “conferred on each Christian in baptism”. Simply put, the word “ministry” can be equated to mean

⁸Ibid

⁹Ibid

¹⁰Austin Echema, *Priests and Laity Collaboration in the Postmodern Church*, Owerri, Assumpta Press, 2011, 25

¹¹Loughlan Sofield and Carrol Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*, Notre Dame, Ave Maria

the work that the church does in the world. The church uses the word Minister as someone doing “ministry”. This includes priests, deacons, women religious, brothers and lay professionals (by this we talk of youth ministers and in some contexts campus ministers).

Collaborative Ministry

Collaborative ministry essentially means, working together in the context of Christian ministry. For Echema, Collaborative Ministry “refers to the collaboration between the clergy, religious and laity in the work of evangelization”.¹² However, this is more than that. It involves Clergy with other clergy, clergy and lay people, churchgoers and non-churchgoers, ecumenically, inter-faith or interreligious dialogue etc. According to Wangbu, “Collaborative ministry is an ecclesial activity. Collaborative ministry begins from a fundamental desire to work together because we are called by the Lord to be a company of disciples, not isolated individuals”.¹³

Collaborative Ministry, grows through a mutual process of conversion and formation; it brings together into partnership people who, through baptism and confirmation, as well as ordination and marriage, have different vocations, gifts and offices within the church. It does not blur the distinctiveness of each vocation or gift. Rather it enables the identity of each to be seen and expressed more fully”.¹⁴ It is thus a “mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by the

¹²Echema, *Priests and Laity*, 26.

¹³John K. Wangbu, *Culture of Collaboration*, Enugu, Snaap Press, 2008, ix.

¹⁴Ibid

ordained, religious and lay people in the church. It requires exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources to achieve common goals”.¹⁵

Skills in Collaboration Ministry

In Collaborative Ministry, there is much emphasis on partnership and working together in the mission and also in the secular government. It is not an easy task. When done together there is energy and synergy which enable one to achieve something one could never do alone. When it does not work, it becomes a nightmare that one may well wish one had never got into. It requires some skills. We will focus on particular skills – such as facilitation, reflecting, vision-building, teamwork/clarify of role, good leadership supervision diversity skills, conflict resolution and evaluation techniques.

Facilitation skills

Lao Tzu says “Good Facilitation means doing less and being more”. The word facilitate originates from the Latin *Facilis*, (literally to make an action or process) easy or easier. In French when we say *facile*, it simply means easy. Facilitation is very necessary in group discussion, conferences, seminars... We often talk of facilitators.¹⁶ Discussions are likely to be central in collaborative ministry groups and can encourage participation effectively.¹⁷ Facilitators at times dominate a lot and must avoid that. Developing facilitation skills is an ongoing and never ending

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Most of us have been in groups facilitated by people who make us feel inadequate, foolish, bored or who bring out the naughty child in us.

¹⁷ Sally Nash, Jo Pimlott, Paul Nash, Skills for Collaborative Ministry, London,

process. Some people appear to facilitate effortlessly. Others seem to facilitate out of their personality but I believe it is crucial to understand and develop our skills, however charismatic (or not) we may be, so that we can grow ourselves and assist others in developing their skills and abilities.¹⁸

Facilitators are a resource to the Collaborative ministry. Effective facilitators can be inspired from two models: first of all, biblically from the role of the Holy Spirit is the great facilitator. The Johannine description of the Spirit as Paraclete – 'one who comes alongside'¹⁹ – is particularly apt. In addition to this, the Spirit speaks (1 Timothy 4:1), opens understanding (1 Corinthians 2:12), leads into truth (1 John 2:27). The Spirit's role in the new birth of believers (Acts 2) points us to another metaphor – that of midwife. In Plato's Dialogue *Theaetetus* Socrates is portrayed as a midwife. The young *Theaetetus* admits that he has thought about the problem of defining knowledge many times before and suffers from his lack of an adequate solution. Socrates says, '*These are the pangs of labour, my dear Theaetetus; you have something within you which you are bringing forth*'. Socrates thus facilitates the birth of wisdom in others by applying his inductive method of dialoguing with students. The importance of 'being alongside' echoes the image of Spirit-as-paraclete. the term midwife in English is derived from 'with-woman', emphasizing the helping and supportive.²⁰

SPCK, 2011, 40.

¹⁸The apostle Paul appears to go to great lengths to persevere in becoming all he can be for the sake of the gospel. He speaks of the rigours of training and toughening himself with discipline (1 Cor 9:25-27) and emphasizes the importance of pressing on with perseverance (Philippians 3:15).

¹⁹William Edwy Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1985, 208.

²⁰Nash Paul, *Skills for Collaborative Ministry*, 44.

Reflecting skills

At a particular time, there is need to stop, think over and analyse. Reflecting helps in brainstorming on what is currently being done, why it is being done and how well it could be done (*story of monks and tying of a cat*). Reflection is one of our basic mental processes which is “most often used where there is not an obvious solution or material is ill-structured or uncertain”.²¹ Reflecting is useful for a range of purposes including “learning from experience, making decisions, exploring problems, developing theory or practice principles, justifying decisions to stakeholders, integrating values into practice, self-development or team-building”. Collaborating Ministry needs Reflective skills in a number of ways as Nash would suggest:

It gives a framework to explore personal experiences within a larger setting. It provides tools to examine practice and processes as a team Reflecting before, during and after collaboration gives opportunities to maximize learning. Theological reflection gives a Christian framework to ask questions of ministry. It may save us from hasty, knee-jerk or other inappropriate reactions. It gives a process for processing problems, worries, personal and corporate dilemmas, etc. that might otherwise not be processed. It aids professional, ministerial and spiritual formation.²³

²¹Jennifer A. Moon, Reflection in Learning and Professional Development. London, Kogan Page, 2000, 10.

²²Nash Paul, Skills for Collaborative Ministry, 47-48.

²³Ibid, 61

Vision-building skills

Vision has been defined as “the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom”²⁴ or hopefully with imagination and wisdom! Malphurs believes that: “Vision is crucial to any ministry. Ministry without a vision is like a surgeon without a scalpel, a cowboy who has lost his horse, a carpenter with a broken hammer. To attempt ministry without a clear well articulated vision is to invite a stillbirth”²⁵. Statements like this suggest that vision-building is essential. Paraphrasing Proverbs 29:18 we can say that “where there is no vision, the people perish”. On this note, “many good projects, whether at the diocesan, parish or community level, flounder or fail due to the absence of an articulated vision which clearly defines the direction for the group. It is vitally important that a vision be clear, mission oriented and mutually agreed upon by those who will be affected by it”.²⁶

In true Collaborative Ministry we “build vision together rather than assuming that the leader has the vision that others should follow, the classic model in many leadership books, both Christian and secular”.²⁷ This entails that vision statements work best when they are inclusive, can be owned by all and are outward-looking.²⁸ After setting the vision, one question is essential: whose vision is it? In some cases, a few elite groups gather and define visions within their personal comfort zones. However, “if the goal is collaboration, then everyone who is potentially affected needs to be involved from the very beginning”²⁹. Yes, where there is no

²⁴New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005.

²⁵Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999, 17.

²⁶Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*, 72.

²⁷Nash Paul, *Skills for Collaborative Ministry*, 63.

²⁸Once a vision has been agreed there is a need for a way of achieving the vision to be identified that includes specific goals and objectives to achieve them. Objectives tend to be most effective when developed using the SMART formula – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.

²⁹Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*, 73.

vision, the people perish. In the same vein, “where the people affected by the vision are not involved in formulating it, the predicted outcome is apathy”.³⁰ There is need to work together in teams.

Teamwork and clarity of role skills

Collaboration itself entails teamwork. Macchia, talking about teams present the following: Teams are very difficult to create. They are tougher to motivate. They are impossible to predict. They can be challenging to lead. They can inspire greatness and they can embody pettiness. They can gel quickly and they can splinter apart overnight. They are filled with people who are unique in their backgrounds, hurts, needs, joys, desires, gifts, aspirations, and call. To get a diverse group of people working on the same page is the on-going priority and challenge for leaders.³¹

In collaborative ministry shared values are important, even where there are differences in personality, preferred approaches and theological perspectives.

One thing that facilitates teamwork in Collaborative Ministry is the clarity of roles in the team. At times roles are assigned on basis of particular state of life or a specific sex or tribal affiliation. For example: Father will lead the prayers (because he is a priest), Mrs Faustina will take the minutes because she is a woman, Sr Ukpong will manage the kitchen because she is from Calabar and they are good cooks, etc. In assigning roles in teams the appropriate question is “who has the gifts to best perform this particular ministry?”³²

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*. Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2005, 17

³² Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*, 77

Good Leadership / Supervision Skills

Coaching is very necessary in collaborative ministry. Different traditions or people use a variety of words for supervision or something they use as a substitute and we may have a spiritual director, soul friend, mentor, life coach or friend/peer that we meet with regularly to reflect.³³ The role of supervision should be done by a competent group leader. In effect, “unless ministers have a degree of competency in the skills demanded by a more relational form of ministry, even the best designed process will not enable collaboration”³⁴. When there is good leadership in collaborative ministry, there is Good supervision which can be transformative and enhances good communication among members. Good leadership makes a difference to how we do our jobs or roles, how we feel about them and our ability to sustain ourselves in them.

In proposing a leadership model for group leadership, the rolodex³⁵ method serves as a basic model. Sofield proposes a rolodex of six cards giving the functions of the leader: 1) To create a climate of safety; 2) To encourage interaction among the members; 3) To adhere to the task established by the group; 4) to direct the group toward the purpose; 5) To intervene when the dynamics prevent group progress; 6) To evaluate the progress of the group.³⁶

In collaboration, the group leader too is called to manage conflict. True enough, “conflict is a fact of life. Throughout our lives we face different kinds of conflict, and our response to these

³³Nash Paul, *Skills for Collaborative Ministry*, 93

³⁴Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*, 83

³⁵A rolodex serves as a quick reference for locating important data such as telephone numbers or addresses. The device consists of a series of file cards of information placed on a rotating shaft. A particular address, for example, is quickly located by merely rotating the files to the desired card.

³⁶Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*, 84

³⁷Nash Paul, *Skills for Collaborative Ministry*, 108.

situations will vary depending on our personality, upbringing, situation, mood and various other factors”.³⁷ Whenever we are working with others we will inevitably encounter some kind of conflict.³⁸ In any ministry setting, conflict resolution skills form an essential part of the toolkit required. Many different types of conflict arise in Collaborative Ministry contexts. Collaborative Ministry without any conflict is probably a miracle!³⁹

Challenges and Obstacles to Collaborative Ministry

Collaborative ministry is a major challenge in our society and Church today. David Robertson, honestly says that “it would be dishonest to ignore the fact that there are some challenges specific to Collaborative Ministry”.⁴⁰ The first thing is that it does not accommodate “superstar ministries” and some people find it impossibly difficult. Many challenges can be regarded as either problems or opportunities. Collaborative Ministry raises issues that different churches may regard as positive, negative, or even neutral, but they will need attention. Even the Holy Apostles had the challenge of collaboration in their ministry and they sought to resolve it.

Exposing the challenges will foster the willingness to develop better skills for Collaborative Ministry.

Poor Leadership: Giving God his Right Place in Collaboration

In some cases, people will want to emulate the role of a pyramidal leadership. When the leader who is to coordinate and facilitate begins to rule and direct then he becomes the focus. However, the

³⁸Neil Thompson, *People Problems: A Toolkit of Techniques*. London, Kogan Page, 2006, 5

³⁹Nash Paul. *Skills for Collaborative Ministry*, 155.

⁴⁰David Robertson, *Collaborative Ministry, what it is, how it works and why*, Createspace, Parbar Publishing, 179.

focus should be on Jesus. “When the focus is on God, the teams tend to mimic family relationships or friendships rather than secular work department”,⁴¹. In collaborative ministry, we must beware of leaders who “lord it over” or those who are extremely laissez-faire. Leadership is a very serious challenge to Collaborative Ministry. Poor leaders on the one hand are autocratic and take the decisions alone and on the other hand, they can be laissez-faire, unable to take decisions when necessary.

It is true that leaders cannot accomplish much without power, and organisations cannot accomplish much without powerful leaders. However, when the leader abuses power or uses it for personal gains, it hinders Collaborative ministry.

Fear of Getting Moaned at

It is worth mentioning that if you want to get the greatest criticisms, jeering or moaning, become a leader. When there is a pyramidal leader, it is very easy to have one person on whom to put our blame. He may become used to it and it will mean nothing to him. When we engage in Collaborative Ministry “moaning is redirected towards a large number of people (team leaders in particular)”.⁴²

This can come as a shock to those who are on the receiving end of the moaning for the first time, and it can lead to serious doubt, along the lines of 'so-and-so has just moaned at me; my efforts must be poor quality; this never used to happen when talented people were in charge; I am useless and Collaborative Ministry does not work to manage moaning it is not difficult “it just takes love, courage and a bit of back-up”’.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid 180

⁴² Ibid 182

⁴³ Ibid

Destructive Competitiveness and Parochialism

Sofield and Juliano will prefer to talk of obstacles rather than challenges. To this effect, he identifies challenges in two broad areas : Attitudes and behaviours⁴⁴ .

Obstacles to collaborative ministry

Attitudes

- Competitiveness
- Parochialism
- Arrogance
- Burnout

Behaviours

- Hostility
- Unwillingness to deal with conflict
- Unwillingness to deal with loss
- Learned helplessness
- Failure to share faith
- Lack of commitment or training
- Failure to integrate sexuality

We will treat two of them from the attitudes section

Destructive Competitiveness

While competition can stimulate a person to explore new expressions of creativity and to unfold new avenues of growth and human potential, however, “some people develop a destructive competition that blinds them to the gifts of others or interferes with their freedom to unite their gifts with others in ministry”⁴⁵. The challenge that arises here is mostly when overly competitive individuals are asked to participate collaboratively as Christians in ministry: “ this over- competitive attitude is the antithesis of

⁴⁴Sofield and Juliano, Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines, 26

⁴⁵Ibid

collaboration...wherever an overly competitive attitude dominates, whether at the individual, parish, congregation or diocesan level, attempts at collaboration will be virtually impossible”.⁴⁶

Parochialism

Parochialism is the state of mind, whereby one focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context. More generally, it consists of being narrow in scope. It may, particularly when used pejoratively, be contrasted to universalism.⁴⁷ This is also characterised by narrowness in thinking. It is a major challenge in collaborative ministry because “it often leads to an attitude of exclusive concern for one group with a corresponding apathy toward anyone not of that group”.⁴⁸ It limits visions to “my parish”, “our school or hospital”, or “my diocese”. Parochial vision is contrary to effective Collaborative Ministry which is inclusive.

Parochialism affects religious congregations: “As congregations experience a decrease in vocations, the continuance of institutional commitments can become a primary concern and preoccupation. Religious congregations are being challenged to respond to the mission and needs of the larger church rather than limiting their mission to maintaining community apostolates”.

Conclusion

The aim of our work has been to expound on some skills and challenges in Collaborative Ministry. Right from the introduction we have shown that man by his very nature is a being-with- others.

⁴⁶Ibid 28

⁴⁷<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parochialism>. The term originates from the idea of a parish (Late Latin: *parochia*), one of the smaller divisions within many Christian churches such as the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican churches.

⁴⁸Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills*

In our day to to day relationship, it is clear that no one can be an island, we must collaborate with others. Collaboration thus becomes the watchword in different strata of life events.

Collaboration has become a very important theme in any job or business and nowadays, the church insists on collaboration in ministry. This is so surprising that even with the greatest inventions in machines and technology, people see that at least there is need for some joint effort by members of a team to work together collaboratively. In advanced societies, one can sit in one's house and order for practically everything one needs. One can sit in front one's computer and go to school and obtain certification. One can even go to the hospital and robots will be serving medication. That is advanced artificial intelligence. However, it is noted that loneliness leads many into depression and even taking away of their lives. Technology therefore has seen interaction as necessary and we see this in the creation of social media interactions like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc (They should not which should not replace interpersonal face-to-face relationships).

Having defined the terms necessary for the smooth flow of the essay, we have shown through the challenges that collaboration is not easy. Just like one playing a game of chess, Sudoku or other games beginning from the simple level, intermediate level and then attain the expert level, so Collaborative Ministry is a gradual transformative process. It is so challenging that we need to acquire some skills to have a step by step attainment of expertise. The skills are not developed in one day. Basic skills of collaboration are similar to skills of communication, in that they are generally best absorbed by younger children who can build on their skills as they grow. The saying goes that "Rome was not built in a day". This entails skills can be acquired gradually. Bound by common mission, collaboration involves a commitment on the part of all to

work together. The members have their individual challenges which affects the group functioning. Teachers can train their students in the skills of collaboration so they will be able to accomplish group tasks, not just in the classroom but also in work settings, social settings and other aspects of life.