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Created in God's image and likeness, every human being is a pilgrim in search of his/her heart, of his or her deepest being. And it is there that God encounters us, and from there also we can, in our turn, meet our brothers and sisters.

EDITORIAL

Jojo Joseph affirms that we, the baptized, People of God, are expected to become holy priests and to engage in spiritual sacrifices on the altar of our inner sanctuary or heart in order to attain communion with the in-dwelling Holy presence of God, beyond the veil of our imperfections. And Jojo Joseph has expounded this vocation of every baptized person beautifully in his article on the "**Common priesthood and Spiritual Sacrifices Within the Heart: A Roadmap to Holiness Through Sacred Scripture**".

Fr. Daniel Ihunnia's article seeks to harmonize the African sense of *Worship* with the Christian theology of the universal vocation to holiness. "In Africa, 'life is an endless act of worship'.ⁱ Indeed, from birth to death, this attitude to daily worship and the concept of personhood are pivotal. We could call this a *religious Sensorium* corresponding to what historical Romanticism saw as a natural human inclination to create an *inner sacred space* in the soul". "African culture sees *Worship* as a habit of existence". We invite our Readers to explore the partial results of his research on: "**Understanding the Concept of Worship in the African Cultural Context**" carefully, so that they will understand why it is that "in Africa, *Worship*, considered as a response to the spiritual world, could be formal or informal, spontaneous, collective or personal".ⁱⁱ

When the African man and woman, or any other human being of another culture, loses contact with the inner sacred space, he or she loses respect for the basic, fundamental values of the human being. **Fr. Francis Perry Azah** in "**Stopping Violence Against Women and Children: Evangelization in the 21st Century**" denounces the incidence of violence against women and children recorded in Ghana. Today, there is a general tendency to look, in a very passive way, at the different kinds of crime against humanity and especially those concerning violence against women and children. Fr. Francis raises the above urgent concerns and suggests ways we could minister to these vulnerable women and children as a faith community.

Today, to meet the challenges of Evangelization in the 21st Century appropriately, there is an urgent need to train religious and lay missionaries. In Africa, for instance, many Congregations put emphasis, in general, on the education of teachers, nurses, social workers and so the training of missiologists is often overlooked. Fortunately, we realize that the Church in Africa has opened Institutes for the Sciences of the Mission to train missiologists. We are happy to present a study conducted by **Domenico Arena**, OMI and **Didier Mupaya**, OMI, entitled: «**L'Institut africain des Sciences de la Mission – Une pierre dans la construction du futur**».

The Institute was founded by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 1994 and affiliated to the Urban Pontifical University in Rome.

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ⁱ GETUI M.N., "Worship Among the Hearing-Impaired in Nairobi" in, *Theological Methods and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*, Mary N. Getui (ed.), African Christian Series, Nairobi, Kenya 1998, 106-128.

ⁱⁱ Cf., MBITI J. S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heineman, London 1969, 58.

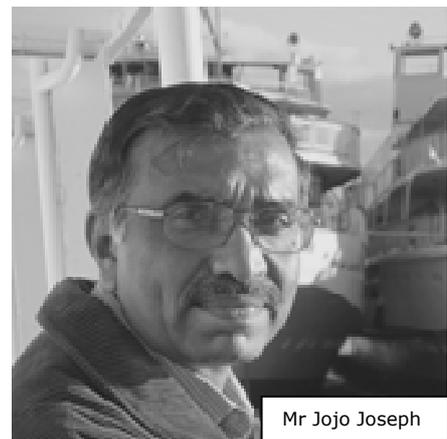
Jojo Joseph
**Common Priesthood and Spiritual Sacrifices Within
the Heart: A Roadmap to Holiness Through Sacred
Scripture**

Christ, High Priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father. The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be ... a holy priesthood" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1546).

1. Introduction

This article is addressed to those who may not be fully aware of their role in the common priesthood, and it is also a pointer to the sacred Scriptures for those who aspire to fulfil that role through the path of holiness.

Jesus referred to his body as the temple of God when he said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days". The Apostle Paul equates our body to the temple of God, by saying "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?". Further, the Apostle describes Jesus as the living cornerstone as well as High Priest of a Spiritual House or Temple, in which we are invited to become living stones as well as Holy Priests. When we reflect on the physical elements of the Israelite Temple which God prescribed in meticulous detail, such as: the outer sanctuary, inner sanctuary, altar, sacrifices, veil and the Holy of Holies. They provide meaningful spiritual insights pointing to the messianic age when we are supposed to worship God in Spirit and Truth. We are expected to become holy priests and to engage in offering spiritual sacrifices on the altar of our inner sanctuary or heart in order to attain communion with the in-dwelling Holy presence of God, beyond the veil of our imperfections.



2. The Levitical priesthood and sacrifice

2.1 For this study, it would be useful to look into the practice of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices. According to the temple practices of the Israelites, sacrifice was the means by which to obtain forgiveness of sins as well as to establish fellowship/communion with God. Holiness and cleanliness in contrast to impurity and an unholy nature in people are the major themes of the Book of Leviticus. This Book taught Israel how to walk in holiness and in constant communion with God, in keeping with the mandate to "be for me a kingdom of priests" (Ex 19:5-6). Leviticus emphasized holiness and progressive sanctification by daily access to God through the offering of sacrifices in the Temple. The Levitical Sacrificial System was designed by God with the intention of awakening consciousness to sin and uncleanness in the minds of the Israelites and of providing the means for obtaining the forgiveness of sins in order to enter into communion with God through repentance followed by practical remedial actions.

2.2 The Levitical sacrifices are divided into two categories. The first category is mandatory sacrifice offered in propitiation for sins and it includes Guilt or Trespass Offerings and Sin Offerings. Guilt Offerings were to obtain forgiveness for sins like the deprivation of the rights of others and the desecration of things which are holy. The Sin Offering was to obtain propitiation for sins committed unintentionally. These offerings were burnt outside the sanctuary or Tabernacle.

2.3 The second category, or the higher level, of sacrifice was not mandatory but voluntary, and included Peace Offerings, Grain Offerings and Burnt Offerings. These offerings were made by the Israelites as they grew and progressed in their sanctification and surrender to God. The Peace Offerings or fellowship offerings were meant for entering into fellowship with God and were made on occasions like thanksgiving for particular blessings, the ritual expression of vows and general thanksgiving. Grain Offerings expressed gratitude to God when blessed with the first fruits. Burnt Offerings were meant to express and reinforce one's total surrender, devotion and commitment to God. The voluntary offerings were most pleasing to God as sweet aroma and were burnt on the altar within the sanctuary. All the sacrificial acts were carried out by priests assisted by Levites, for their own sake as well as on behalf of those who brought the offerings to the Temple and also on behalf of the whole nation in propitiation for sins and for achieving fellowship and communion with God.

3. Transition from Temple Worship to Spiritual Worship in the Messianic Age

3.1. Typological studies suggest that the physical worship and sacrifices offered in the Old Testament period only prefigured the messianic age when people are expected to offer spiritual worship and spiritual sacrifices on the altar of their heart. The perfect and ideal manner of sacrifice for entry into the "Holy of Holies" or the most holy place has been disclosed and demonstrated by Jesus once for all.

- a) *Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it (Ex 25:8-9).*
- b) *Now, the first Covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In the first room were the lampstand and the table with the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Beyond the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place (Heb 9:1-3).*
- c) *When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry out their ministry. But only the High Priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifice being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They were only a matter of food and drink and various forms of ceremonial ablution — external regulations applying until the time of the new order (Heb 9:6-10).*
- d) *But when Christ came as High Priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption (Heb 9:11-12).*
- e) *It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary, made with human hands, that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.... But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb 9:23-24, 26).*

3.2 In the Messianic Age, all Christians are called to become saintly or in other words "living stones" and holy priests emulating Jesus Christ, our forerunner and the living cornerstone, in the spiritual house of God, and to offer spiritual sacrifices pleasing and acceptable to God. We are now eligible and have the right to enter the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, our forerunner, a High Priest for ever, has entered on our behalf.

- a) *As you come to him, the living Stone, — rejected by human beings but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For the Scripture says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (I Pet 2:4-6).*

- b) *Now to you, who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has also become the cornerstone (1 Pet 2:7).*
- c) *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9).*
- d) *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure, in the inner sanctuary beyond the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a High Priest forever in the order of Melchisedek (Heb 6:19-20).*
- e) *For it was fitting for us to have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens (Heb 7:26).*
- f) *Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the faith we profess (Heb 4:14).*
- g) *But He, having offered a single sacrifice for sins for all time, has taken his seat at the right hand of God (Heb 10:12).*
- h) *Yes, "it is He who will build the Temple of the LORD, and this will be his glory. He will sit and rule upon His throne. A priest will sit at his right, and there will be harmony between both". Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices (Zech 6:13).*
- i) *Consequently, you are ... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to be a holy temple in the Lord. In him you too are being built to become a spiritual sanctuary of God (Eph 2:19-22).*

4. Holiness and Communion with God through spiritual sacrifices or suffering

4.1 Jesus taught that we all have to be in communion with him and the Father, just as he is in communion with the Father (Jn 14:20, 23). Such communion with God is the ultimate goal and right of all people and it can be achieved through holiness and spiritual sacrifices. We are called to become holy priests emulating Jesus to access the real presence of God within the temple of our bodies. The life of Jesus is meant to be an encouragement for every man and woman who, though weak in the flesh, still aspires to holiness. Jesus shared our human nature and was tempted as we are, so as to be the forerunner and our model in all respects. As the pioneer of our salvation, he was made perfect through suffering under temptation.

- a) *In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered (Heb 2:10).*
- b) *Both the One who makes people holy and those who are made holy, belong to the same family. Therefore Jesus was not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises". And, "I will put my trust in him". And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me" (Heb 2:11-13).*
- c) *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of the one who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people (Heb 2:14-17).*
- d) *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Heb 2:18).*
- e) *"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb 4:14-16).*

5. Sacrificial life of Jesus: Bearing the pain of unjust suffering for doing good

5.1 The model of ideal life in the Spirit, comprised of holiness and sacrifice provided by Jesus in his physical body is so perfect, valid and practical that irrespective of the peculiar manner of violent reaction he faced from the authorities in power in his time, we can emulate him to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God in true and proper worship.

- a) *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship (Rom 12:1).*

5.2 We offer a sacrifice to God, when we decide to overcome all worldly temptations and to encounter suffering if necessary, for doing good and serving others, in tune with Jesus' ultimate commandment: to "Love your neighbour as yourself". True Christians who have assimilated Christ's message into their lives would volunteer to seek God's will and imitate him by bearing the burden the spiritually blind and unrighteous world has created and also to provide succour to those who bear the brunt of their ignorance and unrighteousness. Anyone who has learnt to repay evil with good and to bear the pain of unjust suffering for the sake of others with no ill will is conscious of God's will and has understood the concept of sacrifice, illuminated by the following verses.

- a) *It is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God (I Pet 2:19);*
- b) *"If you suffer for doing good and endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his footsteps" (I Pet 2:20-21);*
- c) *Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even should you suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened" (I Pet 3:13-14);*
- d) *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with good, because to this you were called so that you might inherit a blessing (I Pet 3:9);*
- e) *When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly (I Cor 4:12-13);*
- f) *"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God" (I Pet 4:1-2);*
- g) *"It is better, if it be God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.... For Christ also suffered for humanity's sins, the righteous One for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (I Pet 3:13-17-18);*
- h) *"But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (I Pet 4: 13);*
- i) *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Rom 8:18);*
- j) *"Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (I Pet 4: 19);*
- k) *"The High Priest offers the blood of animals in the Most Holy Place to expiate sin, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the City Gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Heb 13:11-13);*
- l) *Not only so, but we also glory in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom 5:3-5).*

6. Conflict between the physical self and the Spiritual Self

6.1 As human beings, we all have a combination of a worldly and a spiritual nature. Despite being endowed with the "Breath of Life" or the ability to discern and choose moral and righteous actions through our inner Spirit, our thoughts and actions are usually controlled by our worldly or physical self which is formed from the elements of the earth. We have inherited

our instincts from our ancestors starting with Adam and the passions we have developed during the course of our life in this world are deeply ingrained in our physical self through the genes which try to take precedence over our spiritual self by controlling our thoughts and actions. The actions prompted by our physical self often contradict the actions prompted by our spiritual Self. However we have absolute freedom and the right to be led by the Spirit of God. We remain sons/ daughters of the world when we are dictated to by our physical self or the molecules in our brain, but we become sons/daughters of light when we are guided by the Eternal Spirit who dwells within the temple of our bodies. The choice is ours.

- a) *Then the Lord God formed Man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Man became a living being (Gen 2:7).*
- b) *I notice this law at work: although I want to do good, evil is right there within me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me (Rom 7:21-23);*
- c) *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Gal 5:16-18);*
- d) *And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4);*
- e) *The minds of those who live according to the flesh are set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (Rom 8:5);*
- f) *Indeed, if the Spirit of God lives in you, you are not in the realm of the flesh but in the realm of the Spirit. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ (Rom 8:9).*
- g) *If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live (Rom 8:13).*

6.2 Even Jesus had to face the dilemma of opposing the laws at work within his body. Before embarking on his public ministry, Jesus, led by the Spirit, retreated into the desert (Mt 4:1) to fast, to pray and to seek the divine will. There, he listened to the voice of God, was tempted, but emerged with perfect clarity to begin his mission. He decided to go against the world in order to enlighten the unrighteous who were spiritually blind and to bring succour and justice to the poor and the marginalized, being crushed by the blind and the unrighteous (Lk 4:17-20). Today he implores us to follow him, detach ourselves from the temptations or evil ways of the world and enter the world boldly to transform and sanctify it, led by the indwelling Spirit, to the extent that we may even be hated, rejected and persecuted by the world (Mt 10:22) and treated like scum (I Cor 4:13). This is the way of sacrifice and the essence of Christian life. Some verses which indicate the conflict between the ways of the world and the ways of God, follow:

- a) *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life/possessions — is not from the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (I Jn 2:15-17);*
- b) *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (Jas 4:4);*
- c) *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom 12:2);*
- d) *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age (Tit 2:11-12);*
- e) *Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy (I Pet 1:14-16).*

6.3 How can we overcome the ways of the world and the unholy promptings of the flesh? We are called to enter the world boldly and to transform it into a vibrant Spiritual House of God in which we ourselves become a living stone or building block. The key to overcome the enticements of the external world and the passions ingrained in our physical self lies in disciplining the physical faculties of our body like the senses, mind and intellect through our innermost spiritual faculty. It involves sacrifice to overcome the world, as taught by Jesus.

a) *In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world (Jn 16:33).*

7. Spiritual metamorphosis through self-control and disciplining the body

7.1 Anyone who has attempted to follow the message of Jesus in real life will know that it involves extreme sacrifice and that unless we conform our mind to that of Christ (I Cor 2:16), or until Christ is formed in us (Gal 4:19), it is impossible to become perfect and holy as desired by God (I Pet 1:15). Hence all attempts to become holy can turn into a futile exercise, as long as it lacks the spiritual discipline required.

7.2 Strict discipline is required to control our worldly passions and desires that act as obstacles on our spiritual path. Those who have learned to control their passions and desires start to participate in the redemptive plan of Christ and to do practical work to uplift the marginalized sections and the spiritual uplift of all sections. Their path continues to be torturous due to various unfavourable reactions and outcomes sanctioned by the divine will. The following verses imply the need to discipline the senses and the body.

- a) *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one wins the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Every competitor in the Games undertakes rigorous training. They do it to win a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last for ever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. But I discipline my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (I Cor 9:24-27).*
- b) *But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have trained themselves to discern good from evil (Heb 5:14).*
- c) *Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless (Jas 1:26-27).*
- d) *We all stumble in many ways. If someone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man able to control the whole body as well. Now, if we put a bit into a horse's mouth so that it will obey us, we control its whole body as well. Look at ships too, although they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are still steered by a very small rudder wherever the helmsman wishes (Jas 3:2-12).*
- e) *May each one of you control his own body in holiness and honour (I Thess 4:4).*
- f) *In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted it to the point of shedding your blood ... the Lord corrects the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline (Heb 12:4-7).*
- g) *God disciplines us for our own good that we may share in his holiness. No correction seems pleasant at the time, but painful (Heb 12:10-11).*
- h) *Happy is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been acquitted, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (Jas 1:12).*
- i) *Say "No" to ungodliness and worldly greed, and live a self-disciplined, upright and godly life in this world (Tit 2:12).*
- j) *Everyone who has such a hope in Him must seek to be pure as He is pure (I Jn 3:3).*
- k) *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from selfish passions which wage war on the soul (I Pet 2:11).*

7.3 The result of the *metanoia* and the spiritual disciplining sought by Jesus in his followers is near to complete deliverance from sinful tendencies leading to perfection and holiness (Mt 5:48). Such an outcome is necessarily preceded by a Spirit-assisted expurgation of sinful traits from one's carnal self. It is expressed through diverse metaphors like "throw out the old yeast ... let us have unleavened bread" (I Cor 5:7-8), "put off the *old self* ... and put on the *new spiritual self*" (Eph 4:22-24, Col 3:9-10), "unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (Jn 12:24), crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires (Gal

5:24-25; 2:20) "becoming dead to sin ... so we will also share in his resurrection ... to the newness of life" (Rom 6:1-12; 8:17), and "being born-again" (Jn 3:3-7; I Jn 3:9; 5:18).

7.4 The above metaphors about inner transformation also expound the Paschal Mystery and its relevance in our day-to-day life. Those who follow the promptings of the Spirit have to become Christ-like and become willing to be slaughtered day-by-day (Rom 8:36, Acts 8:32) in their daily lives. In all their endeavours of life and livelihood, whatever they may be, they have to stand up for peace, justice, righteousness and the empowerment of the marginalized. They should also be willing to undergo suffering in order to participate in the redemptive plan of Christ by working towards the eradication of sinful tendencies in the world through the enlightenment of those who are spiritually ignorant. Those who follow Jesus will also have the mind-set of Abraham and Moses by praying and pleading for the unrighteous and the wicked world, despite unrighteousness and wickedness being their sworn enemies.

- a) *Then he (Abraham) said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?"... He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it" (Gen 18:30-32).*
- b) *Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God... Then the Lord relented and did not yet bring upon his people the disaster he had threatened (Ex 32:11-14).*

7.5 True followers of Christ will have to prove their mettle when facing injustice, harassment, exploitation, persecution and the unexpected twists and turns in life. Their reaction to turbulence in the day-to-day circumstances of life would be quite different from that of the sons of the world who might ignite passions, wreak havoc or suppress their passions due to sheer helplessness. Christ's followers would take advantage of adverse occasions to crucify any remnant passion such as, anger, hatred, selfishness and envy that are deeply ingrained in the self and also to bring about a change of heart in their antagonists. In other words, they would empty themselves and burn themselves like a candle in order to love and serve others as taught and demonstrated by Jesus.

8. Spiritual Priesthood and Living Sacrifice: Learning from Jesus

8.1 In the messianic age, each individual is called a temple of Holy Spirit (I Cor 6:19). God gives life to our mortal bodies by dwelling in us. He prefers to dwell in us, to walk with us and to interact with us, than to dwell in a house made by human hands as shown by the following verses.

- a) *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you (Rom 8:11).*
- b) *For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2 Cor 6:16).*
- c) *The Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?' (Acts 7:48-50).*
- d) *What house then, could you build for me, and what could you offer as my resting place?... The ones I look on with favour are those who are humble and contrite of heart, those who have fear of my word (Is 66:1-2).*

8.2 Those who have learnt to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice discern very clearly what is pleasing and what is unacceptable to God. They willingly bring to the altar of their spiritual heart, all the undesirable tendencies which are very dear to their worldly heart that need to be sacrificed and to be consumed and erased by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Those who are impelled by the Spirit discern and make right judgements and are constantly transformed by renewing the mind. They know how to convert every moment of their life into spiritual worship/sacrifice.

- a) *... Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but rather be transformed through the renewal of your mind. You must discern the will of God — his good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:1-2).*

8.3 In contrast to the mandatory guilt and sin offerings which were burnt outside the camp, the voluntary offerings like the peace, grain and burnt offerings offered on the brazen altar within the sanctuary were very pleasing and acceptable to God, as a sweet smelling savour or fragrant aroma. Christ submitted himself voluntarily to God as a sweet fragrance. Similarly, we are also called to be poured out like a drink offering or libation and to become a sweet fragrance. The smoke and the incense that ascend to heaven from the altar of sacrifice prefigure our intense feelings of contrition, thanksgiving and total submission to God's will.

- a) *But the flesh of the bull, its hide and its intestines, you shall burn outside the camp, for it is an offering to take away the sins of the priests (Ex 29:14).*
- b) *Then Aaron's sons are to burn all this on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is lying on the burning wood; it is a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord (Lev 3:5).*
- c) *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Eph 5:2).*
- d) *We are Christ's fragrance rising up to God, and perceived by those who are saved as well as by those who are lost (II Cor 2:15).*
- e) *As for me the time of sacrifice has arrived, and the moment of my departure is come (II Tim 4:6).*

8.4 When Jesus embarked on removing the spiritual ignorance and unrighteousness of the world around him, he was judged to be a blasphemous renegade and was sentenced to death by the authorities in power. Though sinless, symbolically he became the sacrificial lamb whose body was burnt outside the camp for the sins of the "assembly". Saints who follow Jesus and willingly offer their lives to lessen the sinful nature of the contemporary world will certainly have to bear the reproach and persecution of those whom they are trying to transform or emancipate.

- a) *... Take the bull to a place outside the camp and burn it... This is the sacrifice for the sin of the community (Lev 4:21).*
- b) *For this same reason Jesus also, that He might purify the people through His own blood, suffered his Passion outside the Gate (Heb 13:12).*
- c) *So, let us go to Him outside the sacred area, sharing His reproach (Heb 13:13).*
- d) *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake... Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and speak all kinds of evil against you because you are my followers. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way the people persecuted the prophets who lived before you (Mt 5:10-12).*

8.5 If we learn the secret of spiritual priesthood and sacrifice from Jesus, we can directly experience the presence of the indwelling Spirit and the rivers of living water in the depths of our heart, or the Holy of Holies, by gradually destroying or tearing down the veil of impurity and spiritual ignorance in our hearts. By overcoming or transcending our carnal nature, we can become sons of God and undergo the "Abba experience" like Jesus.

- a) *Because you are sons God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, who cries out, "Abba, Father". So, you are no longer slaves but children; and since you are children, God has also made you heirs (Gal 4:6-7).*
- b) *It is those who walk in the Spirit of God who are children of God. The Spirit ... you received brought about your adoption as children. And every time we cry, "Abba! Father!" the Spirit assures our spirit that we are children of God. Now if we are children, we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his suffering in order that we may also share in his glory (Rom 8:14-17). "If we live by the Spirit, let us be led by the Spirit" (Gal 5.25).*

8.6 The saintly or anointed ones who share in the priesthood and suffering of Jesus also share in his heirdom and glory. They transcend all religious laws (Gal 5:18) and access divine wisdom directly from God, obviating the need for any worldly teacher (I Jn 2:27; I Cor 2:12-14). They remain humble and obedient to the Law and rituals and to the chastisement enforced on them by the friendly or hostile authorities and environment. Others may not notice the spiritual worship and sacrifices offered in the depths of their hearts. Others however may notice the fruit of

such a life in the Spirit which includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23) and compassion for oppressors and persecutors.

9. Our Innermost Being or heart where God promises to meet us

9.1 Saint John Paul II taught us about our “most secret core” and our innermost “sanctuary” in which we are “alone with God” and capable of listening to his voice (Tyburski, Zbigniew. *Encyclicals of John Paul II: Foundations of Catholic Faith and Morality*, Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2011, p. 95). Saint Augustine experienced God in his innermost being:

“And so, admonished to return to myself, I entered into my innermost parts with you leading me. I was able to do so because you had become my helper. I entered and with my soul's eye, and disordered though it was, I discovered a changeless light superior to my soul's eye, superior to my very mind.... It was the light that had made me. Love knows this light, O Eternal Truth and True Love and Beloved Eternity.... You beat back the weakness of my gaze, powerfully blazing into me, and I tremble with love and dread (The Confessions of St Augustine; 7,10,16).

9.2 The following verses highlight various aspects of the inner sanctuary of the Israelite Temple conceived by God as a Most Holy place where he would meet his people, hear their voice and speak to them.

- a) *He prepared the inner sanctuary within the Temple to set the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord there (I Kings 6:19).*
- b) *The priests then brought the Ark of the LORD's Covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the Most Holy Place ... there was nothing in the Ark except for the two stone Tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the Lord made a Covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt (I Kings 8:6-9).*
- c) *Then he brought the Ark into the Tabernacle and hung the shielding curtain and shielded the Ark of the Covenant Law, as the LORD commanded him (Ex 40:21).*
- d) *Put the altar opposite the veil that protects the Ark of the Covenant Law — before the Mercy Seat that is over the Tablets of the Covenant Law ... from where I speak to you (Ex 30:6).*
- e) *Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come....This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the LORD” (Ex 30:7-10).*
- f) *Outside the veil that shields the Ark of the Covenant Law in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the Lord from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come (Lev 24:3).*
- g) *For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, before the Lord. There I will meet you and speak to you (Ex 29:42).*

9.3 The following verses highlight various aspects of the innermost sanctuary or heart of the human being in the messianic age.

- h) *Up to this very day, however often Moses is read, a veil remains over their understanding; but, for whoever turns to the Lord, the veil shall be removed (II Cor 3:15-16).*
- i) *“This is my covenant which I will make with the House of Israel after those days’, says the LORD. ‘I will put my law in their minds and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33).*
- j) *“Moreover, I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:25-27).*
- k) *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ... and that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Eph 3:16-19).*
- l) *The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts (Prov 20:27)*

- m) *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. He revealed his almighty power in Christ when he raised him from the dead (Eph 1:18-20).*
- n) *The Lord does not see as people see. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (I Sam 16:7).*
- o) *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Mt 5:8).*
- p) *He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him (I Cor 6:17)
For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (I Cor 3:17)*

10. The way to holiness through our Heart

10.1 The heart is the innermost sanctuary of the human body. When we transcend the stage of physical worship, we carry out the ultimate spiritual sacrifices and worship within our hearts. The process of purification, contemplation and illumination take place in the cave of our hearts as envisaged below, so that we can attain holiness and manifest the divine will in this world through oneness with the indwelling Spirit.

10.2 Heart – Altar for Purification and Ark for Inscribing the Law of God

- a) *Take the anointing oil and anoint the Tabernacle and everything in it and consecrate it and all its furniture; and it shall become holy. Then anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils and consecrate the altar; and the altar shall be most holy (Ex 40:9-10).*
- b) *The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out (Lev 6:12-13).*
- c) *David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering (I Chron 21:26).*
- d) *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water (Heb 10:22).*
- e) *Sacrifice and offering you did not desire — but my ears you have opened — burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, "Here I am, I have come — it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart" (Ps 40[39]:8).*
- f) *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise (Ps 52 [51]:18,19).*
- g) *The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live (Deut 30:6).*
- h) *No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code (Rom 2:29).*
- i) *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me (Ps 52[51]:9, 10-12).*
- j) *God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith (Acts 15:8-9).*
- k) *Draw close to God and he will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you doubters (Jas 4:8).*
- l) *Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my soul and search my heart (Ps 26[25]:2).*
- m) *A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart (Prov 21:2).*
- n) *My flesh and my heart waste away ... God is my portion forever (Ps 73[72]:26).*
- o) *Above all else, guard your heart, for therein is the source of life (Prov 4:23).*
- p) *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones (I Thess 3:13).*
- q) *For this is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts (Heb 8:10).*
- r) *My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end (Ps 119[118]:112).*

10.3 Heart — Chamber for Meditation and Contemplation

- a) *Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it (Josh 1:8).*
- b) *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord (Ps 19[18]:15).*
- c) *I will meditate on your precepts and concentrate on your ways (Ps 119[118]:15).*
- d) *Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart (Lk 2:19).*
- e) *On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night (Ps 63[62]:7).*
- f) *Tremble, but do not sin; when you are in bed, search your heart and be still. Offer the sacrifice commanded by the Law and put your trust in the Lord your God (Ps 4:5-6).*
- g) *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes (Ps 119[118]:97-99).*
- h) *The mouth of the virtuous tells of wisdom and his tongue speaks of what is right (Ps 37[36]:30).*
- i) *Words of wisdom will come from my mouth, the meditation of my heart will give you understanding (Ps 49[48]:4).*

10.4 Heart – Seat of Wisdom and Illumination

- a) *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple (Ps 119[118]:130).*
- b) *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you (Jn 14:26).*
- c) *The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you, but not to them (Mt 13:11).*
- d) *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him (I Jn 2:27).*
- e) *What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit (I Cor 2:12-14).*

11. Spiritual Temple and the underlying water of life envisioned by all prophets

Biblical history is entwined with fractals and we sense this through typological studies. The evolving field of fractal theology will shortly reveal that the Garden of Eden, the first and second Jewish Temples in Jerusalem as well as the millennial temple prophesied by Ezekiel are all typological symbols or fractals that represent or prefigure the human temples of God in the messianic age wherein the worldly heart is purified and consecrated to remove the veil of imperfections that separate the Holy of Holies. They all have something in common: underlying streams of living water which will unfailingly facilitate the growth of all kinds of fruit-bearing trees with evergreen leaves along its banks.

- a) *"Jesus stood up and proclaimed ... 'Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of him shall flow rivers of living water'.... He was referring to the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive" (Jn 7:38).*
- b) *Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.... A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters (Gen 2:8, 10).*
- c) *The man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the Temple and flowing eastwards.... The water flowed from the south side of the Temple, south of the altar.... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail (Ezek 47:1, 12).*
- d) *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city. On*

- each side of the river stood the trees of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding fruit every month. And the leaves of the trees are for healing the nations (Rev 22:1-2).*
- e) *For I will pour water upon the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon your race and my blessing upon your offspring (Is 44:3).*
 - f) *On that day a fountain shall well up for the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse themselves of sin and defilement (Zech 13:1).*
 - g) *I, the LORD your God, dwelling on Zion, my holy mountain.... On that day the mountains shall drip new wine, and the hills flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water and a fountain will spring from the LORD's House, and water the Valley of Shittim (Joel 4:17-18).*
 - h) *On that day living water will flow from Jerusalem.... The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name (Zech 14:8-9).*
 - i) *Whoever meditates on his law day and night is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever that person does prospers (Ps 1:2-3).*
 - j) *Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. That person will be like a tree planted by water that sends its roots towards the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes, its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit (Jer 17:7-8).*

12. Concluding remarks

12.1 The people, events, structures and statements in the Old Testament are generally understood to prefigure and symbolize the spiritual realities envisioned by God for the messianic age. The entire story of the Jewish, Christian and the remaining communities is shaped by God, with the events within history acting as fractals or symbols of future events. When the human body is presented as the temple of God, it indicates the indwelling presence of Holy Spirit, and expresses the potential of the human body to attain the perfect manifestation of the divine will in the world through communion with God as demonstrated by Jesus. The elements of the temple like the inner sanctuary, altar, sacrifices, veil and the Holy of Holies prefigure the vital being of the human body, especially the innermost faculties where spiritual worship and spiritual sacrifices are required to be carried out to attain communion with God. The temple also prefigures a Spiritual House consisting of transformed human beings who emulate Jesus and form a boundary-free community of worshippers in truth and Spirit, who seek and establish the divine will on the earth.

12.2 Jesus Christ has inaugurated the process of redemption and the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven by becoming the corner-stone or foundation stone of the Spiritual House being built by him. He expects all of us to become holy priests and to imitate his work spiritually, to participate in his redemptive plan and to become co-redeemers of humanity and co-creators of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. This has to be fulfilled by digesting and assimilating the essence of his teaching and by treading the path shown by him, and not by limiting our actions to acknowledging our faith in the blood Jesus poured out and by offering physical worship to him.

12.3 The real sacrifice of Jesus lies in the fact that he boldly took all the steps to discern and fulfil the divine will without pausing even for a moment, being well aware of adverse reactions such as antagonism, rejection and persecution. For the benefit of all humanity, he demonstrated the ultimate capability of the human body, or the "Temple of God", to manifest the divine will and holiness in its fullness through perfect communion with the Father. The technique for attaining this communion with the Father is what we have to learn from Jesus, and it is in fact the essence of all Scripture.

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Understanding the Concept of *Worship* in the African Cultural Context

INTRODUCTION

To root the Gospel properly in Africa constitutes a big challenge for the Church. Contextual theologizing, which received a great boost from the Second Vatican Council, remains a vital instrument for reading the signs of the times. It studies God's multiform but unique manifestation in particular cultures at given moments. This is a significant development because missionaries begin by being trained for particular contexts in order to judge and act rightly.

Summary

Today the African continent witnesses the emergence of new religious activities in forms of worship sessions and services. These new patterns tend to confuse authentic worship with magical and superstitious signals. From the earliest times of African religious experience, God the Supreme Deity has always been approached as mystery, in the sense of *Mysterium tremendum*. This article tries to dig into the original African traditional understanding of *Worship* as an exteriorization of a profound encounter with the Universal Divine. It encourages a missionary perspective that takes into account the nuances in African languages where words like "Worship" are hardly used in a restricted specific sense.

With the world converging into a single metropolitan village, not only are peoples' respective traditional identity suffocated by the prevailing anonymity but they gradually become extinct. Because of the growing militancy of atheism and indifferentism, new religious forms, that are largely liberalistic or fundamentalist in style, are also emerging, making contextual theologizing a missionary imperative in order to challenge the reckless premises sold as alternatives. Since theology tries to understand God through science and deeper reflection, the traditional resources could be reformulated to fit into the global realities of today. And as the scope of mission includes the integration of local principles on a wider social platform it could positively transform the way people view the world by safeguarding the value of tolerance.

Indeed, native wisdom underlies every human tradition and customs. In 1994, the First African Synod of Bishops solemnly proclaimed the Church in Africa as *Family of God*. The traditional notions of *Family, Worship, Initiation, Atonement, Burial Rites, etc.*, are naturally sustained by ancestral *Sapiential-Grace*. They also provide the common ground for

intercultural interaction. In Africa these values possess both distinct and enriching meaning. Sadly, they are often obscured by an elusive globalism that diminishes their unique contribution to the beauty of the human family. Local customs are the embodiment of self-identity which is a crucial question in today's society. In a world characterized by the fear of the *other*, rediscovering traditional beliefs and understanding their place in the global scene is an imperative for mission. Missionaries should build on, not disregard, such beliefs, especially those that do not contradict the Gospel. The concept of *Worship* in African culture is a good example.

THE QUESTION

Ordinarily *Worship* refers to forms of the liturgy, adoration, ritualism and praise. It is conceived of as a religious act carried out for the most part in a designated place with a sacred significance. In Africa however, more than a celebration, *Worship* touches on the collective self-identity. This does not posit linguistic relativism as an absolute principle of cultural disparity. But the very interpretation of such vital cultural elements can be of great importance for dialogue in mission. Indeed cultural values, like different languages, constitute universal qualities lived out differently. According to St Paul, "there are many different languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. But if I do not know the language being spoken, the person who uses it will be a foreigner to me and I will be a foreigner to him" (I Cor 14:10-11). Could *linguistic nuances* be harnessed to achieve a more comprehensive, effective evangelization?

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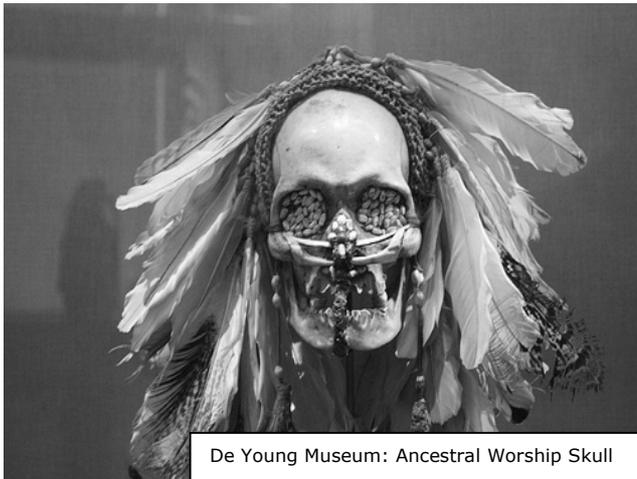
This article will try to construct an *interpretative encounter* of Christianity with the African culture. The connotative meaning of the African concept of *Worship* will be analyzed, using the eye of faith. The aim of initiating more discussion on such cultural factors is to encourage Gospel rooting. This perspective expands the theological significance of the *Contextual-motif* in integrating cultures into Christianity. *Worship* in the African cultural understanding is not limited to the sacraments or to handclapping, were that so, worshipers would be placed in a tempting corner. We shall see in subsequent paragraphs why this might constitute a temptation. While not embarking on distinguishing types of *Worship* such as to God *Latria* or to lesser spirits, we shall see why its African understanding is important, because beneath such notions lies the vital energy that sustains attitudes. Indeed, the history of religious manifestations shows that however pure a religion might be, it cannot pretend to be uninfluenced by its determinable and proximate cultural environment.

Although both Judaism and primitive Christianity were in certain important respects exclusivist and kept themselves apart from what other religious groups were doing, neither of them existed in a vacuum, isolated from the language, images and practices of the religions and culture around them. Thus, albeit often quite unconsciously, they could not help but be affected by their contemporaries and have the words and actions of their worship shaped by the society in which they lived.¹

WHICH AFRICAN CULTURE?

Talking about *African-culture* as homogenous may cause some objection since it is clear that the continent is very big and culturally diverse. With a population of over 840 million and 54 countries, any generalization would be unacceptable. According to Richard Dowden, the Arab-influenced Islamic North African regards him/herself as different and few would regard themselves as African. Africa's social systems, beliefs and cultural backgrounds are as diverse as its peoples and as disparate as its climatic zones.² Even their experience of the divine is characterized by huge differences. This poses a difficulty when discussing Africa because homogeneity in many respects is a far cry. However, an

African's daily life is suffused with *God-consciousness*. This consciousness makes *Religiosity* a substantial ingredient common to all.



De Young Museum: Ancestral Worship Skull

Instead of 'Culture' one might choose to talk about *African-spirituality* owing to the high level of religious sensitivity on the continent. But the same problem persists because African spirituality and culture subsist in each other. There is no African culture without African spirituality and *vice versa*. Thus, it is intrinsically impossible to identify a "pure" culture. Gerald A. Arbuckle has argued that every culture is *fragmented to some degree or other, internally contested and its borders permeable* and suggests that in some sense culture is a complex whole for which unity and harmony are

key principles.³ Actually, harmony is always the aim of African spirituality or culture predicated on the ontological demands of humanism and divinity. The *African-mother-earth* plays a divine tune and the tribal dancers dance with different steps.

WORSHIP IN CONTEXT

In Africa, *life is an endless act of worship*.⁴ Indeed, from birth to death, this attitude to daily worship and the concept of *personhood* are pivotal. We could call this a *religious Sensorium* corresponding to what historical Romanticism saw as a natural human inclination towards an *inner sacred space* in the soul. The Old Testament scripture is replete with the idea of *worship* in its diversified forms; true or false worship (Ex 20:2-6; Lev 20:1-5), the search for justice (Is 1; 17; 58; Hos 6:6), thanksgiving and adoration (Neh 9:5-6), music and praise (Ps 100[99]:1-5), and sometimes obedience and sacrifice (I Sam 15:22). Although the liturgical worship of Yahweh was

centred in the Temple, true worship was never limited to temples alone but happened everywhere especially in the attitude to neighbour and the poor.

We can also find this idea of *Worship* in many parts of the New Testament where the Greek verbs: *proskuneo* (Mk 5: 6), *Latreuo* (Rev 7:15) and *Sebomai* (Reverence) are variously utilized to designate *Worship* and sometimes mean "being religious" or "God-fearing" (Acts 13:49-50). The implication is that, *Worship* expresses man's response to the *Holy* as he or she apprehends it, as *homo-religiosus*. *Worship*, being the exteriorization of religiosity, involves a reciprocation of attitude and act, whereby the attitude prompts the act and the act fosters the attitude of worship.⁵ Before it acquired its actual meaning as man's response to the *Sacred*, the Anglo-Saxon world⁶ understood *Worship* as deriving from 'worth-ship' signifying value or honour. It later metamorphosed into devotional reverence offered to God. Accordingly, Christian *Worship* prioritizes Christ, calling for the living sacrifice of daily existence.⁷

But, in Africa, according to E.E. Uzukwu, *Worship* is a body language through which the experience of the universe is expressed. "Africans tune into the rhythm of life in the world bodily; the self in all its complexity is manifest bodily. Life in the world as a result explodes in dance and other appropriate gestures".⁸ *Worship*, seen as body language, is a pregnant concept because for the African, the *body* is not separate from *Personhood*; the *body* and the *self* are inseparable in relation to the universe. Hence *Worship* involves the whole person, emotions, sentiments, community, music, relationships, health and wealth. It is by worshipping that Africans express their self-identity authentically. However, the situation is that the Christian notion has dominated and sometimes restricted the African cultural conceptualization of *Worship*.

Both biblical and liturgical scholarship admits that Christian worship from the earliest times was dependent on the Jewish antecedents. But the subsequent Western development of gestures in worship directed by the Christian élite tended rather toward restriction and sublimation.⁹

WORSHIP AS HABIT

African culture sees *Worship* as a habit of existence. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that adoration is the first act of the virtue of religion and that the duty to offer God authentic worship concerns man both as an individual and as a social being.¹⁰ J.S. Mbiti, who has written extensively on African Religiosity, points out that in Africa, *Worship* performed as a response to the spiritual world could be formal or informal, spontaneous, collective or personal.¹¹ This implies that nobody can escape being spiritual at some time or another. The Second Vatican Council declared that;

The spiritual life, however, is not confined to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is assuredly called to pray with his brethren, but he must also enter into his room to pray to the Father in secret; indeed, according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, he should pray without ceasing.¹²

Worship understood as an on-going habit opens up the possibility of growth and development necessary for evangelization. It is the foundation of life and faith placed at the heart of African cultures. For the Gospel to gain a solid foundation in Africa, *worship* and living should not be separate. "Anything in these peoples' way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy, and, if possible, preserves intact. She sometimes even admits such things into the liturgy itself, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit".¹³

INNER PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP IN AFRICA

"Whatever way one looks at man in the sources of his interior dynamism, one always meets a problem and a tendency to integrate: with himself, with the world and society, with the absolute".¹⁴ The African notion of *Worship* is based on its traditional worldview wherein the entire human body tends toward the spiritual soul of the universe.¹⁵ It is integrated into the concept of existence shaped by tension and the quest for *wholeness*, *harmony* and *ultimate salvation*. The theologian cannot comprehend African spirituality unless he or she first understands the perennial interconnection of the

human being with the *Heavens*, the *Earth* and the *Underworld*. These realms form the unbreakable composite of reality open to the interior drives of human contemplation.

The refusal to impose a radical split between the human world and the spiritual world challenges the African theologian to propose patterns of worship that will integrate the whole world of the African.¹⁶

Salvation itself is conceived of as an ultimate destination in harmony with the ancestors. But this depends on the profound interaction of the three realities, *divine*, *human* and *cosmic*. They are *Conscious-energies* that mutually generate universal consistency and well-being. The general dynamism of the human soul revolves within this *ultimate integrative* interaction. *Worship* is the human being's practical response to the integrative force of this universal system. The African forefathers naturally captured this existential network and acted accordingly, through their customs and traditional practices. For them, *Worship* was a necessary recognition of the omnipresent *Divine*. They believed that human beings, although categorized hierarchically, were created to worship the *Supreme Being*. Indeed, traditional practices and rituals, including initiation rites, funerals, marriage, naming ceremonies, title-holding, etc., were conducted in answer to a sacred demand. *Worship* is therefore a major response to that inescapable yearning of the human soul. Two basic principles could be traced here: First, the African soul acknowledges the supremacy of the Divine Being which surpasses all things and secondly, through *Worship* and reverence, the African plays his/her part in maintaining the harmony of the universe.¹⁷ The principle operates in such a way that *Worship* becomes a natural human vocation.

A COMMUNICATIVE PHENOMENON

Worship is also expressed by gestures or attitudes of mutual communication. In this context E.E. Uzukwu described these as responses that express particular experiences of life in the universe that echo group identities.¹⁸ In Christianity liturgical acts, gestures and rituals are channels of *Divine Worship* made to God the Father, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. The human person in various forms engages in ceaseless creative communication with God. The African worldview considers the human person to be a perennial carrier of a sacred reality from which he or she cannot be separated; consequently he/she is inserted into this supreme bond that makes existence a progressive chain of balance. Therefore life is a sacred existential process nourished by communion with the *Supreme Being*. Interestingly this perception, which exists deep in the language of *Worship* in African cultures, David N. Power described as *intent* and *a way of being*.¹⁹

The use of language is governed by intent. Intent is not here understood as a clearly formulated intention. Rather, it is a human drive, a search for the sense of being and for meaning by which to live. It is the drive to look into reality and humanity's place within the complex of things. In using language therefore, there is the intent to express meaning, the intent to explore the meaning of things and of life, and the intent to communicate and to share meaning, so as to share life.²⁰

The belief that Africans are very religious could be justified by this view of *Worship*. Local expressions found in proverbs, music, dance, incantations, art, arts and crafts, are cultural manifestations imbued with the sense of *Worship*. They are phenomenological actions which transmit profound experiences of the Divinity. Through them the African people tell the story of their *God-encounter*, express the authenticity and security of their collective identity. They also communicate their very *Being* to others. Indeed, such cultural expressions are meaningful because they originate in, and point to, the *Divine*. Research into these questions has shown that African beliefs are equally the fruit of God's self-communication in context. The *Divine Logos* does not require documentation and papyri to become known and nor does the knowledge of God necessarily require archeology. Primarily the African reads the *Eternal Word* written on the tablets of Nature and those engraved on the communal soul. Hence, every space and every moment belongs to God, for He is *the King who sits in Heaven and the fringes of his clothing sweeps through the earth*.

THE CHALLENGE OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation became popular and programmatic because it emerged at its *Kairos*. Concentrated scholarship and liturgical innovation emerged that left "Africa" almost synonymous with the word, 'Inculturation'. Sadly, most of it tended to become patterns which disappeared with time. At present the concept is apparently over-flogged and lacks in ingenuity. In order to understand this point more clearly, we need to discover how to inculturate the current social landscape, in which time and space are compressed into simple gadgets and information crisscrosses like lightening? The phenomenon of human migration poses unforeseen social crises and is clear evidence of a changing world. However, the African notion of *Worship* could be placed in the context of God's self-revelation as Father who becomes the head of the human family. This self-revelation initiates a natural relationship of religious trust in the human soul.

"From ancient times down to the present, there has existed among diverse peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human life; at times, indeed, recognition can be found of a Supreme Divinity and of a Supreme Father too. Such a perception and such a recognition instill the lives of these peoples with a profound religious sense".²¹

Contextual Theology has the responsibility to initiate a healthy dialectic between the faith and cultures to ensure a less conflictual encounter. Hence, though cultures evolve, their inner principles generate dynamics which correspond to the seed of the Gospel. The sensibility of *God as Father* essentially replicates the inner principle of African communality. "Just because these principles are not easily observed does not mean that they do not exist.... The Gospel needs to engage in dialogue with these inner principles of action in order to bring about radical change or conversion".²² Consequently, new interpretative paradigms are needed in order to insert mission properly into the modern *Areopagus of contextuality*.

It seems fitting to suggest that scholars should re-connect contextual theologizing to *the creative interpretative act of tradition*.²³ In Tradition, a historical-contextual process of development has taken place. Christianity and the African culture both have perennial principles of a living tradition which provide a solid basis for contextual theologizing to build constructive intelligence. However, care should be taken to avoid the risks of mere adaptations and translations.

It is important to discover those paradigms of thought in a culture able to shape meaning, and find a way to synchronize them with Christian Tradition in order to ensure a genuine dialectic for authentic local theologizing.²⁴

What the Church needs to do today is to uncover the vital elements of African culture which are stamped on the African soul. Once the African heritage has been clearly understood, then it can be placed alongside the biblical and patristic Traditions, and progress will be possible. Our guide in the construction of an African theology must be, apart from African traditions, the Bible and the Fathers of the Church.²⁵

COMMUNAL HERMENEUTIC

In reality, the liturgical celebration should lead to true worship, implying the total offering of one's life (Rom 12:1). *Worship* is not something that just takes place in a church but more concretely in the world.²⁶ When the Eucharist is celebrated, its significance must become manifest in conduct. Hence, we can see the African sense of *Worship* as directly connected to the *Eucharistic logos*: life of communion. It is the 'daily bread' that sustains community since man does not live by bread alone (Dt 8:3; Mt 4:4). *Worship* becomes an attitude of love, justice and mutual relationship. The African, being essentially a communal person, accepts the Eucharistic Christ as the chief ancestor of the human family. Everyone becomes a brother or sister in this family. Pope Benedict stated that: "Beyond differences of origin or culture the great challenge facing us is to discern in the human person, loved by God, the basis of a communion that respects

and integrates the particular contribution of different cultures".²⁷ Let us consider some of these foundations of communion from two aspects: moral and ritual.

MORALITY

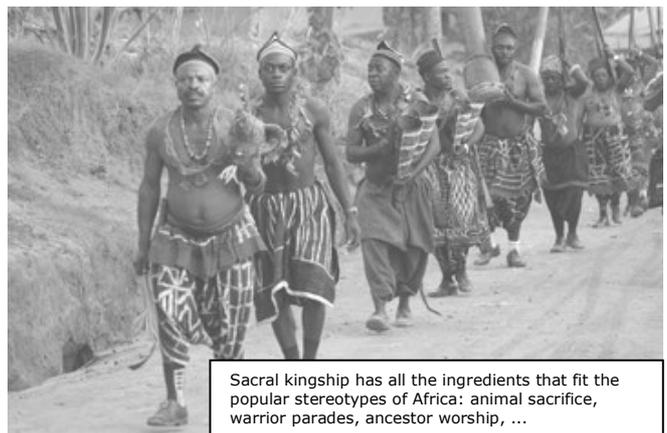
The African concept of *Worship* consists in fulfilling ethical responsibilities. Societal coherence hinges on this point because a fundamental attitude of discipline and respect is required. The African knows in his heart that God is everywhere, not only as a provider but also as a *Just Arbiter* who must be acknowledged and obeyed. Right or wrong affect the African universe in all their ramifications. Sin itself, understood in terms of taboos, offends the divinities and upsets the course of harmony. It is here that Bénézet Bujo of Zaire, a scholar of the *Ancestor Theology*, tended to underestimate a basic African anthropocentric promise. Although he agreed that God is not completely left out of the moral thinking of the African, he asserted that "the moral order is thus seen as a matter, not of the relationship between the human person and God, but of the relationship between human beings themselves."²⁸ However, a closer look at the African worldview shows that God is the ultimate reason and basis of any social ethic. J.S. Mbiti indicated that the African complex universe is composed of a "mystical order" governing it.²⁹

African people consider man to be at the center of the universe. Being in that position he tries to use the universe or derive some use from it in physical, mystical and supernatural ways... Even when there is no biological life in an object, African peoples attribute (mystical) life to it in order to establish a more direct relationship with the world around them.³⁰

The constant awareness of the *mystical order* generates a moral consciousness. Rather than obscuring it, scholarship should highlight this inner principle of African morality. In reality, the traditional religious mentality links God and the world in such a way that a mystical attribute is at the foundation of cultural beliefs. An authentic faith ... always involves a deep desire to change the world, to communicate healthy values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.³¹ To neglect the link between God and morality in Africa could represent a radical temptation. It could reduce *Worship* to a mere celebration devoid of commitment and responsibility. In that sense God can be worshipped inside a church without a corresponding lifestyle. Sometimes, people say "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Mk 12:17). It is hard to construe this view as able to balance genuine religiosity capable of transforming society.

RITUAL ASPECTS

Furthermore, in Africa, there are many signs and symbols that express communion. Through rituals, Africans communicate their beliefs. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, palm fronds, not candles, signify sacred places or objects. The Tabernacle could well be decorated with fresh palms instead of candles. The presentation of *kolanut* readily signals a welcome to visitors or strangers in a home just as everyone is welcome in the Church. The traditional wedding ceremony possesses every element of God's acceptance and the witness of the community. There is no reason why the sacrament cannot happen within the traditional setting. Among the Yoruba, the *Talking Drums* transmit important messages to the community and call people to a just life. It is symbolic to eat food together because it ensures communion in the family. Hence, food is not simply for nutrition or to appease hunger. The use of incantations and proverbs, especially by elders, points to rituals of *Worship* for the community. These facts evoke profound connections to the divine and unite people in communal consciousness.



Sacral kingship has all the ingredients that fit the popular stereotypes of Africa: animal sacrifice, warrior parades, ancestor worship, ...

The rituals from birth to death are carried out with a deep sense of sacredness and solemnity. There are rites of initiation, marriage, funerals, purification, hospitality and healing. Creation is also honoured in African ritual systems especially with animals, farmlands and harvests. In fact the list is unending. These ritual ceremonies sometimes involve sacred objects, words, music and dance. They help Africans to be at peace with the divine. People also set up small altars in their homes or offices besides those in public sacred places which concretize the *human-divine* relationship. Indeed, almost nothing else generates religious sentiment as readily as religious places do, essentially because they are regarded as *Sacred* or *Holy* and as space in which to experience the symbolic presence of God.³² Basically these characteristics embrace the African soul in a continuous religious contact that leaves no room for profanity or discrimination. Hence, whether it is about a crashed computer or a soccer match, in the market place or at school, *Worship* comes into play. Liturgically, nothing strengthens the African community more than these ritual customs. Christian mission needs to discover these values and find ways to profit from them.

CONCEPTUAL AMBIVALENCES

Unfortunately, ambiguity about the concept of *Worship* exists in Africa. Religion, although possessing tremendous influence, tends to slip easily into the complex currents of manipulation by charlatans conducting "worship" and services. The dominance of an imported understanding of *Worship* paves the way to an identity crisis made worse by the proliferation of mega church pastors. Abuse is rife, including the scramble for media dominance, ostentatious displays of miracles and prophesying. In such a situation *Worship* turns into a response to church founders and not to God. Here the African sense of *Worship* is distorted. True worship is neither a theatre nor a place to play cards with God. Neither is it an antidote to poverty. It is a pity to see how many people fall prey to deceptive eloquence in God's name.

Secondly, *Worship* in Africa could equally be used as a means of escape from the demands of faith. Some people ask for blessings in order to succeed in illegal or criminal businesses like drug trafficking. Sometimes highway robbers pray to God before embarking on robbery.³³ Afterwards they go back to 'worship' God by paying tithes and donating big sums of money to compromising preachers. These factors radically question the authenticity of what is perceived as *Worship*. They are contrary to the Gospel of Christ. Is moral complacency a sign of Christian freedom? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound (Rom. 6:1)?

SUGGESTIONS

Africa possesses a tremendous wealth of theology, *brewed in an African pot*.³⁴ Since the continent manifests profound spiritual energy, the treasures of its religious *inner-life* need more expression. Those who do theological research in Africa need to respectfully acknowledge and build on *the innate sense* of the peoples' beliefs as the best option to bring about a genuine encounter between Christianity and Africa's cultures.³⁵

- A. *Well-being* is in the DNA of the African's sense of *Worship*. This does not reduce African spirituality to a functionalistic identity. However, mission theology needs to assist Africans to re-invent the traditional notion of *Worship* in such a way that the search for *well-being* becomes holistic in order not end up in a sort of Religious *Miracle-Abracadabra*. In practice, mission needs to highlight the interpretative insights of languages by incorporating them in to the liturgy and catechesis. Language developmental programmes should also be encouraged. "A language is not merely a means of communication; it is also an expression of shared assumptions. Language transmits implicit values and behavioral models to all those who use it".³⁶
- B. To the African, the indissolubility of *Worship* and life come *de facto* naturally. This poses a big challenge because as we have seen, a distorted understanding generates serious inconsistency. Since God communicates to people in their respective contexts, the African traditional idea of *Worship* should be grafted onto Christian *Divine Worship*. The liturgy will thus be strengthened by traditional communal systems. And, for example, were Eucharistic celebrations to be carried out in ways familiar to the traditional sense of sharing, the faith would become more effective and deeply rooted.

CONCLUSION

Worship enables us to receive grace to cooperate with God in the eternal project of universal salvation. Although E.E. Uzukwu tended to concentrate on bodily gestures, he nonetheless pointed out

that African Christians see worship as a channel to display their deep experience of the mystery revealed in the Christian story. Hence, a healthy expression of the Incarnate human in African Christian worship should be the prerogative of inculturation.³⁷ It is also true that theological excellence is not a sign of sublime faith but this article has tried to harmonize the African sense of *Worship* with the Christian theology of the universal vocation to holiness. It is an *attitude* and a *language of life* which bond humanity with God. The African progenitors understood this bond well and it gave birth to their customs. Life was a prolonged rhythm of worship, a sacred liturgy, integrating the whole person into the process of an eternal command of love, justice and fairness. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar, "the Christian does not only meet Christ in the sacraments, he lives continuously by his commandment and his law".³⁸ This is what *Worship* signifies in African culture.

Notes

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- ² Cf., DOWDEN, R., *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*, Portobello Books, London 2009, 10.
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- ⁴ GETUI, M.N., "Worship Among the Hearing-Impaired in Nairobi" in, *Theological Methods and Aspects of Worship in African Christianity*, Mary N. Getui (ed.), African Christian Series Nairobi, Kenya 1998, 106-128.
- ⁵ Cf., DE GRAEVE, F., "Worship" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XIV, The Catholic University of America, Washington, 1967, 1030-1034.
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- ¹¹ Cf., MBITI, J.S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heineman, London 1969, 58.
- ¹² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n. 12, 4 December 1963.
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- ¹⁴ See ROSSANO, P., "The Religious Inclination" in *Religions: Fundamental Themes for a Dialogistic Understanding*, Editrice Ancora, Rome 1970, 27-43.
- ¹⁵ See UZUKWU, E.E., *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship, an African Orientation*, 6.
- ¹⁶ UZUKWU, E.E., *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship, an African Orientation*, 33.
- ¹⁷ See IADELUCA, ILARIA, "L'Africa, La Fede e il Respiro del Creato" in *Popolo e Missione*, 62, Roma, Italia, maggio 2014.
- ¹⁸ Cf., UZUKWU, E.E., *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship*, 4.
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- ²⁰ POWER, D.N., *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving*, 60.
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- ²² MAGESA, LAURENTI, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 2004, 151.
- ²³ Cf., DOTOLO, C., "Teologia dalla Tradizione: Note di Metodo", in *Urbaniana University Journal (Euntes Docete)*, Nova Series, LXVI/2 2013, Urbaniana University Press, Città del Vaticano, 119-131. (*Carmelo Dotolo presents the significance of Tradition as crucial for the configuration of theologies in relation to divine revelation*).
- ²⁴ Cf., SCHREITER R. J., *Constructing Local Theologies*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1985, 78.
- ²⁵ BUJO, B., *African Theology in Its Social Context*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, Oregon 2006, 68.
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- ²⁹ Cf., MBITI, J.S., *Introduction to African Religion*, Heinemann Educational Publishers, (Second Edition), Oxford 1991, 41.
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Rev. Fr. Francis Perry Azah
Stopping Violence Against Women and Children:
Evangelization in the 21st Century

Introduction

Everybody has the exclusive right "to live, exercise freedom, and be happy" irrespective of colour, gender, race, or creed. Each person is entitled to these basic and fundamental values as a human being. Any forceful act that goes against these values is considered a threat to life itself. Therefore, "violence against women and children" especially in Ghana falls within the focus of spiritual psychology and ethics. Prompted by the current incidence of violence against women and children, we are compelled to react by raising the following basic concerns and how best we can minister to these vulnerable women and children as a faith community.

"Violence against women (and children) is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace" (Kofi Annan, Former U.N. Secretary General).

The future of humanity passes by way of the family. That is why recently, the Catholic Church had an Extraordinary Synod on the Family. The Synodal fathers deliberated on how effective the Church can minister to families; and how families can be a place where every life can be nurtured and be evangelized, thereby carrying out the mission of Christ by making all members of every family, part of the household of God. Women and children are the vulnerable ones in every family configuration. They need to be protected for a peaceful co-existence and cohesion of every family.

Pope Francis adding his voice to the plight of women and children when he met the Bishops from Southern Africa who were on their "*ad limina*" visit declared that "declining birth rates, abortion, leaving the Catholic Church for "other groups who seem to promise something better", divorce and "violence against women and children" all "threaten the sanctity of marriage, the stability of life in the home and consequently the life of society as a whole".

As Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* pointed out, healthy families are vital for the well-being of all new persons who are born into the world. Only by receiving the love of their mother and father within families can children begin to discover who they are as persons. Each child is welcomed as a gift from God. In their mutual family relationships, brothers and sisters growing up together start to realize that they are called to give themselves to others. They also perceive that the members of their family are valued for who they are, not for what they are able to do or produce. Through Mom and Dad, discretely present, always ready to stoop down toward them in their need, children discover who God is — they learn to pray. Under their parents' gentle, guiding hand they slowly begin to grasp the difference between right and wrong. In the daily give-and-take of family life, children learn how to be sincere, responsible, generous — how to forget about themselves and bring joy to those around them.

Even a quick glance at family life reveals how humanity's future depends on the family in two fundamental ways. First, the family is where new members are born into society and where they acquire basic social virtues. On the destiny of the family hangs the fate of society itself. Second, the future of the Church depends on the family, a "Church in miniature (*Ecclesia domestica*)", where the faith is passed on from one generation to the next. So mankind's ultimate and transcendent destiny is also at stake.

The family is the primary unit of every society and culture and therefore its role to respect and protect all its members including women and children should never ever be underestimated. "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Mt 19:14). It is a challenge for each family to become what it is meant to be. There are many tasks that the family pursues to bring about the transformation of the culture of abuse meted out to women and children.

Violence is a Universal Issue

Violence is an affliction that threatens both local communities and the global community. Violence is a worldwide problem that is increasingly drawing the attention of citizens, states and the international community. Recent measures taken by the United Nations to address violence against women, including the adoption of the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (DEVAW) and the creation of a U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, demonstrate the growing global understanding that the international community recognizes that systemic violence constitutes a violation of women's human rights. DEVAW affirms that violence against women (and children) constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms (Gadzepko, 1999).

In his recently released book, entitled "Keeping Human Relationships Together: Self Guide to Healthy Living", Rev. Dr. Anthony O. Nwachukwu said, "relationship is all about two persons sacrificing parts of themselves to contribute in loving appreciation to their new life together-giving away of independent existence and simultaneously taking up the responsibility to fully share in all that life has to offer, either joyously or painfully. Relationship remains a shared identity of joy and sorrow, loss and gain. Freely, it embraces both the positive and negative qualities of each person or partner" (Nwachukwu, 2010, p. 29).

In a similar vein, suffering forms part of our human condition and yet there are many preventable or unnecessary sufferings which should not be tolerated in today's civilized and modern world. One of the preventable sufferings that many innocent people experience is violence which inhibits the social, cultural, and economic realization of human rights.

The threat to life by sudden, unpredictable violence as well as by more insidious, covert violence is a growing problem for rich and poor countries alike. Threats to personal security come from several sources: social and economic systems (deprivation, lack of access to resources, oppression), the state (physical torture, repression, police brutality, official neglect), other states (war, colonization), other groups of people (ethnic tension, hate crime, discrimination), and individuals and gangs (homicides, street violence, gang warfare, muggings). The focus of violence also takes several forms: against women (rape, domestic violence), against children (child abuse, neglect), against oppressed populations (hate crimes, genocide), and against self (suicide, substance abuse) (Van Soest, 1997, p. 10).

Violence is defined here as any act or situation that injures the health and well-being of others, including direct attacks on a person's physical or psychological integrity, as well as destructive actions that do not necessarily involve a direct relationship between the victim and the institution or person responsible for the harm (Salmi, 1993).

All societies have cultural systems consisting of institutions, beliefs, practices and symbols that reduce the autonomy of certain groups. While this discrimination is often based on ethnicity, seniority, race and generation as Oyewumi (2003) argues, my survey of the literature has not revealed any society in which men as a group are disadvantaged, relative to women as a group, as a result of specific cultural practices. To the contrary, in almost all societies there exist cultural prescriptions that result in women's disadvantage relative to men, and, often times, contribute to gender-based violence against women. According to one report, available global statistics indicate that one out of every three women in the world has experienced violence in an intimate relationship at some time in her life (WHO 1997; Collymore, 2000, UNIFEM 2003). While the use of violence as a means of maintaining control is not confined to gender relations, women and children are the most likely victims of the use of interpersonal and intimate violence. Many societies legitimize, or at least tolerate, behavior against women and children that would be punished, or at least considered punishable, if directed at a male family member, an employee, a co-worker or a neighbor. Male perpetrators of violence often feel justified in their behavior and even seek, and frequently receive, social



NO VIOLENCE

approval for the acts of violence they inflict on women (Abane, 2000). In light of this, a focus on gender-based violence and its relationship to culture or cultural prescriptions is critical.

The Nature of Violence Encountered in Ghana

In his book, "Keeping Human Relationships Together", Nwachukwu has this to say, "Life is basically relationship. Again relationship, like life, is of divine origin, ontologically linked to the family, society, others and especially to its source.... Parties in any level of relationship also need a personal covenant" (Nwachukwu, 2010, pp. 36-37). But most often the contrary is experienced by those in a relationship. Morgan also commenting on the nature of human beings said, "Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world. Thus society is actually constructed by activity that expresses meaning" (Morgan, 2006, p. 71).

Several institutionalized practices against women that are explicitly violent and which contribute to the general socio-cultural construction of womanhood, exist and are tied into women's productive and reproductive roles as wives and mothers in Ghanaian society. The practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), in which parts of the female sexual organ are removed, exists in some parts of Ghana. Some communities in the Volta Region of Ghana where I come from also practice a form of indentured labor or bondage, known as *Trokosi*, in which young females are sent to a shrine for a specified number of years to atone for the sins of some family members. During this period, the young woman is under the shrine priest's control and renders a variety of domestic and sexual services. Among several communities, a widow is subjected to the performance of a series of rites ranging from making symbolic gestures at the corpse, taking cold baths, seclusion, and strict dress and dietary codes, to more severe forms of violence such as having pepper thrust in her eyes as part of the practical demonstration of mourning for her departed husband. A man, on the other hand, is exempted from going through these rites as a widower.

An important arena for conflict and violence is the area of sexuality, including sex and family planning. Several studies across Africa reveal that men oppose the use of contraception because they fear it will weaken their control over their wives (Biddlecom and Fapohunda, 1998; Watkins *et al.*, 1997). Cultural attitudes about female chastity and male honor serve to justify various forms of violence against women, either to punish them for unchaste behavior, or to pre-empt it, by controlling them. These notions mirror attitudes to rape and about women and girls who have been raped. Men tend to blame women more than women do, and myths about rape are linked to cultural perceptions about women (and men) and their sexuality (Kelly, 1988).

The Possible Factors that Bring about Violence in Society

In expounding on human relationships, Nwachukwu noted that, "If every person were to be straightforward, open, truthful and honest, the world would have been better, morally shaped and ordered than it is today" (2010:2). Despite this notion many people are not measuring up to expectation, either in their actions or relationships.

The violence or punishment meted out to women in marital life is most often physical which involves beatings of the body (Ampofo & Prah, 1998, p. 22). Reasons given for perpetrating violence against women in Ghana vary from one ethnic group to the other and are as follows:

Disobedience or women stepping out of their defined roles (including refusing sex, coming home late, not washing his clothes, not preparing meals on time); Issues around infidelity and flirting (including dancing or talking with man's friend); Issues around money and maintenance (including refusing to pay debt, food shortages, refusing him money, asking him for money); Raising issues about his behavior (complaining about it, drunkenness, asking him to cut his beard, confronting him about lateness); Misplacing his things, not remembering messages; Rivalry (including man taking a new wife); 'Bad' behavior on the part of the woman (including gossiping or 'okro mouth', woman associating with bad friends, attending film shows without the man's knowledge, showing disrespect to man, not being submissive); Some men have the notion that women enjoy being beaten (sometimes linked with sexual arousal). (Ampofo & Prah, 2009, p. 23; Green, 1999, p. 33).

These violent attacks on women often occur in almost every area of their lives. It has

In relation to domestic violence against children, Turton stated we can no longer disregard the fact that children can be and are both physically and sexually abused by the very adults who are responsible for their care ... and in confronting that reality, it becomes necessary to move beyond the assumption that a simple reliance on adults to promote the well-being of children ... is an adequate approach to caring for children (Turton, 2001, p. 40)

In Ghana there are many forms of violence from which the Ghanaian child suffers. In the Ghanaian society, one of the ways that children are disciplined both at home and at school is the use of the cane. Beating the child unleashes hardship and psychological trauma on the child because of the harsh manner in which the cane is used. I witnessed, as the local manager to some Catholic Schools in parishes I worked in Ghana, situations where parents had to clash or quarrel with some teachers and even threaten to beat or do harm to the teachers because of the extremities of their disciplinary acts. There are times that a child could also be refused food by parents for some misdemeanor. Some parents or close relatives of some children even go to the extent of pouring hot water on their children for misbehaving. As children, Garfield (2005) rightly noted their age and immaturity often rendered them powerless, especially to the cultural and social conditions and practices reproduced by authoritative adults imposing their will (p. 81).

Other categories of children who are victims of violence and are to be mentioned here are step children and adopted children. My operational definition of step children is those children who usually are domiciled with parents or caretakers who are not their biological parents. In Ghana we have a lot of such children who may suffer from violence committed against them either by their step fathers or step mothers.

Among Ghanaians, inheritance is an important institution which is very much valued. Usually men have children with other women if it happens that their marriage with their first wives did not bear fruit. For any married partner (especially a woman) to be aware that a step child becomes the heir to the family property because she has no child with her husband can be disheartening.

This is especially so if such children are brought to stay with the married couple. In many cases the children suffer violence from the women through abuse, assault, battering, neglect and psychological trauma. There are also situations where adults who enter second marriages after divorce or death of a partner may bring with them children of their previous marriages and partners who are not comfortable with the children usually maltreat them.

Associated with domestic violence of children is the violence against domestic maids or "house helpers". In Ghana, as may be the case, there are times when civil workers seek the assistance of adolescent children especially girls between the ages of 12 and 15 who are not schooling due to economic difficulties, to assist them in household chores.

Augustine Ankomah has this statement about maids in Ghana: "Domestic maids often brought into the cities by middle-class families may in some instances be sexually abused by unscrupulous husbands, especially if there develops a marital discord or the maid becomes more and more beautiful as she grows up in the city" (p. 536).

It is however important that therapists, counselors, and pastoral caregivers (including families of victims of domestic violence) who assist and support children who are victims of domestic violence be aware that children who live with domestic violence have their own coping strategies and their own perspectives on what happens to them. Each child reacts as an individual. There is no one pattern of responses and no syndrome to sum up the impact of their experiences. It means that as users of services, children require interventions tailored to their levels of understanding, their age of development, their particular viewpoint, and their specific circumstances. There are dangers of adults making assumptions about children's needs, rather than basing policy and practice on evidence from child-centered research (Mullender *et al.*, 2002, p. 2).

Thomas Aquinas's Theology of Embodiment

One of the frameworks for understanding the impact of abuse is Thomas Aquinas's theological anthropology or, as expressed by Harak (1995), a theology of embodiment. Aquinas's understanding of the interplay of body and spirit can help us to consider the impact of bodily abuse on a person's soul. Aquinas pointed out that the "rational soul has no being apart from the being of the body" (as translated by Harak, 1995, p. 326). Without diverting into a discussion of Platonic and Augustinian philosophical and theological positions on the relationship between mind and

body, Aquinas's position advanced earlier thinking by positing that there is a unity between the mind and body whereby each has impact on the other. In modern psychological terms, he recognized in the 13th century the reality of psychosomatic interactions.

In a discussion that is profoundly pertinent to child abuse, Aquinas recognized that all of the soul's knowledge is based on the bodily senses (see St. Thomas Aquinas, Trans. 1968, Vol. 12, Question 84, articles 2, 7, and 8). Our experience and knowledge is received by the mind and soul through our senses of touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste. Those who have been physically and sexually abused have certainly had these senses assaulted and violated, and in many cases changed forever. In the words of so many clients, nothing will be the same.

In his *Summa Theologiae* (Trans. 1968), Aquinas treats at length the results of such assaults on the body when he presents his thinking on pain, sorrow, and sadness (Vols. 19, 20, and 21, Questions 22-48). His position can be somewhat summarized in the following statement: "We speak of pain of the body because the pain is in the body, perhaps because some injury has been suffered by the body. But the movement of pain is always in the soul, for as Augustine says, 'The body is not able to suffer pain unless the soul is suffering pain'. From such a perspective, given the unitive relation of the body and soul, physical and sexual abuse deforms the soul as it disfigures the body" (Harak, 1995, p. 328).

Closely linked in Aquinas's thinking on pain is his discussion of anxiety. "When Thomas speaks of anxiety he relates it to the sense of entrapment" (Harak, 1995, p. 328). When an exterior force causes sorrow and cannot be escaped, Aquinas (Trans. 1968) says "there is anxiety which so weighs on the spirit that there seems no escaping it; hence another Latin word for it is '*angustia*': rather literally, being in sore straits" (Vol. 20, Question 35, p. 107). He continues, "if the spirits are weighted down so badly that even the limbs are immobilized, we have torpor; something extreme to both elements of the characteristic effect of sorrow, since there is no taking flight.... The reason why special mention is made of torpor depriving one of speech is that, of all outward movement, the voice best expresses inward thought and feeling: not only in human beings, but in the other animals as well, as Aristotle says" (Vol. 20, Question 35, Article 8, p. 107).



In abusive situations, victims are often rendered silent and immobilized by their more powerful abusers. Harak (1995) points out that Aquinas speaks of a "dissociative character of victims of abuse" (p. 331). It is the nature of the passion of sorrow to flee or withdraw. In the words of Aquinas (Trans. 1968), "However, if the evil is so strong as to shut out all hope of escaping it, the interior movement of the soul in anguish is brought to a complete halt; it has nowhere to turn. Sometimes even external bodily movement is so affected that a person is struck senseless" (Vol.

20, Question 37, p. 127). In essence, Aquinas developed the position that "what we do suffer in the body affects the soul" (Harak, 1995, p. 326).

Making use of Aquinas's thought about the effect of the "other" upon the self, both body and soul, Harak (1995) points out that this is a "way we can understand the effect parents have on the formation of the child's character, and the profoundly disruptive effect that parental abuse would have on a child" (p. 327). Aquinas's perspective provides support to any consideration of how the body embodies the past, and how the anger of the parent is internalized by the child.

For Thomas, the body is the soul's way of existing in space and time, and so he states that "the forms which corporeal material receives, it holds not only while the body is actually acting as informed; [it holds them] even after direct activity on the forms has ceased". In those ways Thomas would be able to explain, based on his theological anthropology, how the physical effects of abuse, as material causality, can perdure through time, affecting the body and the soul long after the actual attacks by the agent-other had ceased (Harak, 1995, p. 328).

According to Harak (1995), Aquinas's theological anthropology can also offer hope for the abused person: The same capability that the victim of abuse had for internalizing the intention of the violator can work to the good, because the victim can internalize the intention of another for the victim to become well. The crucial difference is that such intent is in keeping with the original nature of the person: to will the good. Hence such an intention is not imposed, but more properly shared, and the dynamic between the self and the other is love (which is the goal and source of hope) (p. 333).

The Biblical and the Church's Perspective on Violence

When we turn to Biblical literature we see the first recorded act of violence from brother to brother. Chapter four of Genesis gives the account of how Cain perpetrated a violent act against his brother Abel. After he had committed violence against his brother, God exclaims: "What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother cries to me from the ground" (Gen 4:10). This teaches us that human violence attracts divine attention and punishment (Basbam & Lisberness eds., 1997, p. 2).

Another biblical incident of violence which is well known is the story of King David and Bathsheba. In this story we have another example of violent treatment of a woman who is made a widow in the course of King David's machinations. Though the story is not treated overtly as rape yet it is clear from the text that God shows displeasure with David's actions (2 Sam 11:1-6, 26-27). In the story, the prophet Nathan tells David that his (David's) action is compared to a murder. Bathsheba was so violated in the interaction with David that her victimization can be equated with slaughter as in 2 Sam. 12:1-6 (Basbam & Lisberness, eds., 1997, p. 6).

There is also in scripture the case of incestuous abuse of Amnon against his sister Tamar in the royal family of David as recorded in 2 Samuel 13 (Fortune, 2005, p. 9). A critical look at all these incidents of violence in Scripture, as Fortune (2005) noted, reveals that the Creator abhors violence and those who were perpetrators of such horrendous acts were penalized as a result.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Ghana continues to issue communiqué in condemning violence. They condemned certain social crimes such as pedophilia and all forms of abuses in the country. They continue to create awareness through the various parishes of what these abuses can have on society at large.

In connection with this quest for peace in society, the Ghana Catholic Bishops stated that, "we would like to stress that domestic violence too is to be deplored. We are, therefore, heartened that a bill is being debated in Parliament to deal effectively with this evil. We would like to point out that peace is equally incompatible with flagrant disrespect for women's and children's rights. The Creator made men and women equal. Through the marriage bond they were to form the family for mutual support and, where applicable, the upbringing of children. It is for this reason that husband and wife must love each other and have mutual respect. This is a state of affairs that cannot but result in domestic peace" (cf. 1 Pt 3:1-7). (A Communiqué issued by the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference at the end of their Annual Plenary Assembly held at Damongo from November 15 to 23, 2004).

What is the Christian teaching on violence? To answer this question the standpoint of Catholic theology which teaches that the Church is to continue the mission of Jesus Christ as narrated in the gospels will be noted. The Church in this sense is the continuation and the presence of Christ in the world and in history. She in no doubt continues the prophetic mission of Jesus her Master, whose words and actions are all for the good of men and women, in order to save, heal, liberate and assist them all (Tirimanna, 2006, p. 23).

In reference to two important documents of the Church, *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and *Populorum Progressio* (1967) written by Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI respectively, both of which focus on the fundamental obligation of defending basic human rights, Tirimanna (2006) cited these documents to state that: Human rights ... are at the very foundation of an authentic peace.

According to the Catholic social magisterium, the foundation of all human rights is *human dignity* that is to be found in every member of the family, by the fact of being a human being. We Christians believe that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-28), that all of us have the same breath of God (*ruah Yahweh* — Gen. 2:7), that each of us belonging to the human family has a special worth because of the very fact that

God Himself became one of us (*incarnation*), that all of us are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (*this is the blood shed for all!*), that all of us are sanctified continuously by the Holy Spirit. All these basic but essential tenets of our Christian faith make us conclude that every human being has a special dignity, irrespective of creed, caste, sex, race or religion, As such, all human beings have human rights, and where they are respected, there is bound to be a lasting and respectable peace (Tirimanna, 2006, p. 27).

The Church's stand against violence was also convincingly expressed by Pope John Paul II when in his visit to Ireland said, "I proclaim, with conviction of my faith in Christ and with an awareness of my mission, that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of man. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings" (Tirimanna, 2006, p. 49).

The Catholic Church's Magisterium in *The Documents of Vatican II: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Walter Abbott, ed., 1966), has also made the following clear statement against any form of crime meted out to the human person: "... whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on the body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator" (Article 27, par. 3).

Christianity was misused for centuries to somehow justify the abuse of wives and children by husbands and fathers. This assertion is easily documented. But does it tell the whole story? No. Christianity can serve as a valuable resource in a variety of ways to those suffering domestic violence.

We have the opportunity as clergy and lay leaders to provide helpful resources on domestic abuse through sermons, prayers, education and pastoral care.

One important function the church can serve is to tell the truth about women's experiences of abuse, to give a voice where there has been silence. For a battered woman in the pew to hear a prayer for all those living with abuse in the home breaks the silence. This may open the door for her to come forward seeking help. The same is true for a sermon addressing domestic violence or using it as an example. (See "Telling the Truth: Preaching About Domestic Violence," by John S. McClure and Nancy J. Ramsay).

Think about the biblical passages that Phyllis Tribble calls the "texts of terror" (the rape of Dinah or of Tamar, the rape and murder of the concubine in Judges 19, etc.). When preachers mention these, it can be seen — though the stories are vivid and painful — that our ancestors in the faith not only knew the experiences so many have today but also spoke about them in the context of faith.

Another valuable function of the church is support and inspiration. Whether in a public worship setting or a private pastoral care setting, we can offer the faith community's encouragement to those seeking to end violence in their families. And we can provide material support for shelters for battered women.

But we can also provide a word. For example, the Psalms give voice to the anguish and struggle that is common for battered women and their children. Psalm 31 — "Be gracious to me, O God, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief" — can be heard as the voice of an abused woman. Psalm 32 — "While I kept my silence, my body wasted away [...]. Then I acknowledged my sin to you [...] and you forgave the guilt" — can be read as the voice of an abuser.

The Catholic Church explicitly condemns all kind of violence — including domestic violence — in our societies. In another document titled *When I Call for Help: A pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) states unequivocally about violence that, "... we state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form — "physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal" — is sinful; often, it is a crime as well. We have

called for a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence. We acknowledge that violence has many forms, many causes, and many victims — men as well as women.

Interventions and Remedies of Violence

According to Nwachukwu, the first law of relationship in spiritual psychology is "Live and let others live" (2010, p. 110) He continued to say that, inasmuch as our stories and values are different, we cannot be expected to behave the same way in any particular relationship. This is what constitutes major obstacles in human relationships.

Violence is a social problem rather than just a personal one, which requires institutions to assist in addressing it. It thus requires that laws, policies and systems be employed to address the issues of violence on the national, regional and local levels in our country Ghana as part of a comprehensive strategic intervention.

One of the important ways to help reduce abuse in communities is through personal safety programs. These programs seek to reduce abuse by equipping potential victims (both males and females) with knowledge and skills to recognize and avoid sexually risky situations, and with strategies to physically and verbally resist sexual advances by offenders (Smallbone, Marshall, & Wortley, 2008, p. 137).

The counseling of victims of violence is one of the important intervention processes in violence against women and children. Following the work of Sandra L Brown in *Counseling Victims of Violence: A Hand Book for Helping Professionals* we can have three processes of counseling of victims, which include: (1) crisis intervention; (2) Short-term Counseling; and (3) Long-term Counseling (p. 119).

In crisis intervention, it is important for the counselor to be aware that many victims (be they couples or individuals) who seek counseling for "other" presenting problems are actually in violent relationships they have not disclosed. As Brown (2007) noted, one in four women has experienced domestic violence and for those seeking counseling the number is even higher. When clients (especially female clients) come to approach a counselor, the counselor should identify any violence in the client's past or current relationships. This will guide the kinds of assessments the counselor will choose to assist him/her in developing a treatment approach with the client (p 119). Confidentiality is very much expected from the counselor by letting the victim of violence know the information shared will not be disclosed to the abuser without her express permission.

In the short-term counseling, Brown (2007) noted that the most important goal is empowering victims to make their own choices. The nature of domestic violence, Brown (2007) noted, involves the abuse of power and control and thus victims must be helped to re-gain control over their lives. Counselors must be aware that it can be difficult for a person who has lived for years without power, control, or decision-making choices. Decision-making skills must be learned in an atmosphere of safety and unconditional acceptance, under the guidance of a counselor who gently but firmly refuses to make decisions for the victim. On the issue of long-term counseling, not all clients show resilience when removed from a violent relationship. While some clients are able to bounce back and heal fairly rapidly others do not heal well.

It is recommended that the government of Ghana should support the various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are making strenuous efforts to prevent domestic violence. These NGOs must be encouraged to establish pastoral counseling centers (especially in the rural areas) to enhance the safety of victims of violence. Some of the programs and services of these centers should include: offering safe, confidential housing for the victims and their children; counseling by telephone or in person; and information about specific social service resources and legal remedies available for victims in every region of the nation. Some batterers can even be offered counseling services through the safety center; otherwise they could be referred to a counselor who specializes in counseling batterers.

Any community's effort to find solutions to curb violence cannot be effective without finding the way to treat the perpetrators of the violence. As Smallbone *et al.* (2008) noted, in the general field of offender rehabilitation, treatment programs for sexual offenders have adopted the principles of effective offender treatment, meant mainly for sexual abuse offenders, and these include: *risks*, *needs* and *responsivity* (p.116). For this to take place there is the need for the establishments of Correctional or Rehabilitation Centers in all the

districts and regional headquarters of the country and these centers must be different from the prisons that we have.

Nwachukwu pointed out that the engines of healthy relationships are within each individual. Healings do not come by accidents or without reasons. This power of the individual to care for and cue him/herself primarily comes from his or her positive memories, energized by sound moral life and good works and not from remorsefulness. Therefore, the earlier individuals realize how important it is to lead good lives and how precious their lives are and the need to appreciate the lives of others, the better for healthy relationships (2010, p. 214).

On his part Morgan has this to say, "Our life is all one human whole, and if we are to have any real knowledge of it we must see it as such. If we cut it up it dies in the process. Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world. Thus, society is actually constructed by activity that expresses meaning" (2006, p. 38 & p. 71).

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in Ghana must be tasked to monitor the activities of those who are assiduously working towards minimizing or eradicating the problem of violence in Ghana. It will be very rewarding and advantageous for the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to also collaborate with the Ministry of Youth and Sports so that social norms theory may be incorporated into the educational syllabus of schools in the country.

The NGOs fighting against violence can, for example, campaign in encouraging men and women to wear printed dresses and ribbons which indicate protest against violence against women and children. There should be many resources made available for those who are interested to organize activities to prevent violence in the various communities in Ghana. It will be necessary for a month to be set aside as Domestic Violence Awareness Month which should be launched on a rotational basis annually from region to region. It will be a daunting task and yet we can start doing something because "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a step".

To conclude, I would like to state that, in every relationship, partners should not care who gets the credit but the benefits. Just as the whole parts of our body are different but work together to keep us alive, we also need to relate as human families and beings, and benefit from our socio-cultural diversities and enjoy the uniqueness of each other. This is the surest way human beings can relate with each other.

Conclusion

In order to recognize the dignity of each and every person, one must have a full respect for the inner and transcendent dimension of the human person, which is at the core of what it means to be a human being. Through the free exercise of conscience and moral decision making, human beings are able to transform themselves into living members of social life whose good will, charity and hope promote the dignity and well-being of every member of the human family.

It is through freedom of conscience that people are able to experience their utmost freedom, and thus pursue their most important relationship, their relationship with God. This utmost freedom, allows the individual to ascribe to a certain set of beliefs, accept or change one's religion and to practice their faith openly and in public to its fullest potential. It is the governments' responsibility to uphold and protect these inalienable rights: Since the state is not the author of any fundamental human right, it must respect that intimate and fundamental sanctuary of human freedom, the conscience, and to allow each conscience its fullest and highest expression in the free exercise of religious faith. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reaffirms the message that government, must assume the responsibility to guarantee and promote for such freedoms. Not only is it up to the government to defend freedoms but it is also the responsibility of individuals and their community to promote tolerance and acceptance and respect.

Thomas Hobbes, citing a popular Roman proverb by Plautus (184BC) noted that: "'Man is a wolf to man — *'homo homini lupus'* and to outweigh the other is felicity" (Leviathan, xiii. 2-9). These sentiments as raised by Hobbes compounded my interests to dig out the best ways to handle canker worms that attack the taproots of human relationships. Nobody doubts the reality of what Hobbes remarked judging from what is happening in our society, particularly in politics. We see it acted out in many relationships, even in religious circles also. The book therefore is encouraging individuals to embrace their differences as powerful tools to solidify their

relationships. We must always agree to disagree. Allowing third parties such as drugs, alcohol, and bad habits in our relationships is destructive because a devil cannot fight itself. Relationship is a precious jewel at the hands of those who understand and treasure the value. A shameless person or partner does not know when the other is hurt or offended (Nwachukwu, 2010, p. 111).

Van Soest stated in her book, *Global Crisis of Violence* that, "Violence breeds violence". Statistics from around the world indicate that violence against women in the home is a common problem in most countries, leading to the conclusion "that violence is part of the dynamics of many family situations, with women being murdered, assaulted, sexually abused, threatened, and humiliated within their own homes by [their male partners] ... and that this does not seem to be considered as unusual or uncommon behavior" (United Nations, 1989, p. 20) (Van Soest, 1997, p. 20).

Thomas Hobbes asserted that, only part of us is sane: only part of us loves pleasure and the longer day of happiness, wants to live to our nineties and die in peace, in a house that we built, that shall shelter those who come after us. The other half of us is nearly mad. It prefers the disagreeable to the agreeable, loves pain and its darker night despair, and wants to die in a catastrophe that will set back life to its beginnings and leave nothing of our house save its blackened foundations.

Violence in the home is one social issue that cuts across all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, gender, and age boundaries. Abuse and neglect can be found in all types of families and interpersonal relationships, transcending the life span. It is a dynamic and complex phenomenon that violates the very nature of human organization.... Abuse and neglect within the context of the family represents a breach of sacred function and purpose. Therefore, family mistreatment has devastating consequences. Repercussions span physical, mental, and behavioral health, academic achievement, economic success, and longevity. At the minimum, violence in the home impedes the quality of life for family members and, in extreme cases, can result in death (p. 3).

In the Ghanaian community, there are ways like proverbs, folktales and *Ananse* stories by which violence or a person's action which hurts or ruins the life of another is expressed. *Ananse* means spider in the Ghanaian language. In these various ways the Ghanaian expresses the dignity of and respect for the human person. I shall deal with some of the proverbs by which the Ghanaian portrays the dignity of and respect for humankind.

In his book *African Proverbs: A Guide to Conduct*, Dzobo (2006) writes among other proverbs the following: *Amegaxi be yele xa dem na ale ha, yele megbe kpom* meaning "The wolf stalks the sheep yet he is watching what is happening behind him". The proverb requests people to act cautiously and it is also a warning to people who want to ruin others for no just cause to be careful not to fall into the trap they set for others. Another proverb is *Zakpedalae wua norvia* which literally means: "It is the one who throws stones in the night that kills his/her brother/sister". The moral teaching is that the evil a man/woman does may hurt his/her own interest. The proverb also is meant to warn people to desist from committing violence or acting thoughtlessly. Another proverb goes like this: *Adela medaa tu galoa efe dzudzor O* meaning "having fired a gun, you cannot collect back its smoke". The moral lesson is that since there are certain things when done (e.g. if you abuse or hurt a person) cannot be undone, you must consider carefully the consequences of your action. In other words one must always judge the rightness of your behavior by its possible consequences before you act. All the above proverbs portray a way in which Ghanaians speak against violence or abuse or misconduct (Dzobo, 2006, pp. 9-10 & 67).

Gyekye (1996), another Ghanaian author, also noted that the African, and for that matter the Ghanaian, derived his moral values from the experiences of the people in living together, or trying to evolve a common and harmonious social life based on the people's own understanding of the nature of human society, human relations, human goals, and the meaning of human life (p. 57). What is morally good for the African is that which brings about human well-being.

An action, a habit, or a pattern of behavior is considered good only if it promotes human and social well-being. The good is thus identical to the welfare of the society, which is expected of course to include the welfare of the individual member of the society. Any list of moral values equated with the good in African societies will include kindness, compassion, generosity, hospitality, faithfulness, truthfulness, concern for others, and the action that bring peace, justice, dignity, respect, and happiness. These are all considered good (moral values)

because of their consequences for human well-being or social welfare. They are conducive to cooperative and harmonious living, having been fashioned out of the experiences of the people in living together in society (Gyekye, 1996, pp. 57-58)

The African thus sees him/herself as not living alone as an individual but in a *family* which I perceived as: a sacred "holding environment" of the long relational matrix that informs our sense of 'solid self' and our developmental process. The family is the foundation for our intimacy journey. It sets in motion the ongoing narrative from childhood to adulthood and there must always be a healthy relationship.

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"The first principal of non-violent action is that of non-cooperation with everything humiliating."

Mahatma Gandhi, *Gandhi On Non-Violence*

Domenico Arena, OMI – Didier Mupaya, OMI*
L'institut africain des sciences de la mission
Une pierre dans la construction du futur

Introduction

Par le décret 860/2004 du 10 avril 2014, la Congrégation pour l'Education Catholique a renouvelé, pour cinq autres années, l'agrégation de l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission (IASMI, en sigle) à la Faculté de Missiologie de l'Université Pontificale Urbanienne de Rome. C'est un geste d'encouragement à l'égard d'une initiative qui, à une époque où les esprits se tournaient prioritairement vers des intérêts séculiers, manifestait la volonté de penser la mission dans un pays comme la R.D. Congo, voire en Afrique en général.

En effet, c'était la dernière décennie du XX^{ème} siècle, et prévalaient des opinions pouvant refroidir les enthousiasmes en faveur d'un institut de missiologie, particulièrement en Afrique.¹ L'Encyclique *Redemptoris Missio (RM)* de Saint Jean-Paul II, publiée en 1991, venait précisément redonner de la pertinence à la mission, que l'auteur évoque comme une valeur absolue.² Et les Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée de la Province du Congo, s'inscrivant dans la perspective ouverte par l'encyclique et regardant plus loin vers l'avenir, avaient décidé, en 1994, de miser, de façon plutôt audacieuse, sur un Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission, une œuvre capable de promouvoir aussi bien l'esprit missionnaire que le savoir missiologique en contexte africain.

Notre intention dans ces lignes est de faire connaître cette véritable faculté de missiologie qui fonctionne à Kinshasa depuis 20 ans.³ Et pour ce faire, notre présentation qui se veut assez détaillée aborde tour à tour les points suivants: — Une rétrospective sur la genèse de l'IASMI: comment les choses se sont-elles passées?; — Les premiers pas de l'IASMI et ses cycles académiques. Et nous terminerons par les défis actuels que l'institut affronte sur le chemin de la construction du futur, pour la mission de l'Eglise au Congo, en Afrique et dans le monde.

Comment les choses se sont-elles passées ?

En 1982, au lendemain du cinquantenaire de leur présence en R.D. du Congo (1931-1981), les Oblats avaient déjà ouvert, avec leur scolasticat, un institut de théologie. Les deux institutions étaient placées sous le patronage de saint Eugène de Mazenod (1782-1861), le fondateur des Oblats. Elles devaient répondre au besoin de formation de la nouvelle génération d'Oblats congolais, dont les effectifs croissants représentaient une promesse d'avenir.

Mais ce besoin de formation était aussi commun à d'autres congrégations religieuses, qui ne tardèrent pas à y envoyer leurs candidats au sacerdoce. De ce fait, l'institut Sant Eugène de Mazenod (ISEM) répondait parfaitement aux besoins du milieu, pouvant accueillir immédiatement, en plus des Oblats, des candidats d'autres congrégations pour les études de théologie.⁴

Les dix premières années aboutirent à l'affiliation à l'Université Pontificale Urbanienne en 1992. Elles furent également des années de maturation et d'un certain développement. En fait, l'objectif de formation théologique des jeunes destinés au sacerdoce s'ouvre à la formation doctrinale pour les religieuses et religieux et plus largement aussi aux besoins missionnaires de l'Eglise en général.

Le colloque de lancement: «les nouveaux appels de la mission»

C'est ainsi que, deux ans après l'affiliation, l'ISEM organise, au mois de février 1994, un colloque international de forte signification missiologique sur le thème «Les nouveaux appels de la mission». A ce colloque participèrent plusieurs autorités ecclésiastiques dont le cardinal Frédéric Etsou, archevêque de Kinshasa, Mgr Faustino Muñoz Sanchez, nonce apostolique en R.D. Congo, Mgr Tharcisse Tshibangu, évêque de Mbuji-Mayi, le révérend père Marcello Zago, supérieur général des Oblats de Marie Immaculée, ancien secrétaire du Conseil Pontifical pour le Dialogue interreligieux.

De nombreux théologiens et chercheurs de renommée internationale s'alternèrent à la table des conférences.⁵

Ce colloque signa la naissance de l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission. Les actes du colloque, publiés dans le premier numéro de la Revue Africaine des Sciences de la Mission

(RASM) contiennent des contributions missiologiques de grande valeur, ainsi que les premières intuitions programmatrices de ce nouvel institut qui donnèrent aux uns et aux autres l'occasion d'en saisir l'importance et la pertinence.

Jalons et profil de fondation: «une pierre dans la construction du futur»

C'est tout d'abord le cardinal Etsou lui-même qui attira l'attention des participants sur la nécessité d'une institution à vocation missionnaire et missiologique en rappelant, dès le début de son discours d'ouverture, un projet d'institut Ad Gentes resté en veilleuse depuis 1988. Son intervention qui reste historique, balisa les pistes du programme pour l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission: «Un vieux rêve habitait mon prédécesseur au siège métropolitain de Kinshasa, feu le cardinal Joseph MALULA: celui de voir s'ouvrir un jour, dans l'Archidiocèse de Kinshasa, au coeur de l'Afrique, un haut lieu de recherche sur la mission. Ce désir, en effet, fut explicitement exprimé dans son allocution du 19 octobre 1988 à l'occasion du centenaire de la présence au Zaïre des missionnaires de Scheut. «Je voudrais, disait-il, demander à la Congrégation du Coeur Immaculé de Marie de nous aider à fonder, ici, à Kinshasa, un Institut de missiologie, *l'Institut Ad Gentes*, chargé de développer l'enracinement profond et durable de notre Eglise locale: une Eglise plus dynamique, une Eglise plus engagée, une Eglise plus missionnaire. L'Institut AD *Gentes* est appelé à soutenir et à promouvoir l'inculturation du message chrétien. Notre Institut de Missiologie assurera ainsi sur place la formation et la diffusion de l'information sur la nécessaire tâche d'inculturation».⁶

Y'avait-il dans le rêve du Cardinal Malula l'écho d'une recommandation du pape Jean-Paul II ? En effet, en visite au Zaïre (aujourd'hui R. D. Congo) en 1985, le pape avait encouragé l'Eglise locale à continuer à s'ouvrir à la mission ad gentes: «*Visez à être missionnaires a votre tour non seulement en ce pays où l'Evangile est encore attendu mais au-dehors, et en particulier en d'autres pays d'Afrique*».⁷

Quoi qu'il en soit, le propos du Cardinal Etsou fit savoir combien cette institution correspondait à une attente de l'Eglise locale. De sorte qu'on comprend mieux les sentiments prophétiques qui marquent la suite de son discours: «*C'est donc avec émotion et gratitude que je salue et apprécie l'initiative des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée d'organiser le présent Colloque International de Missiologie à l'occasion du lancement de l'Institut Africain de Missiologie en octobre prochain.... L'Institut Africain de Missiologie vient au bon moment et répond à un grand besoin pastoral de notre Eglise, à un moment crucial de son histoire et à un grand tournant de l'évangélisation des pays dits de mission.... Nul n'ignore que l'Eglise africaine prépare joyeusement les prochaines assises du Synode spécial des Evêques pour l'Afrique... Dans cette voie de recherche, l'Institut Africain de Missiologie, pensé et fondé par les Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée et ouvert à tous ceux qui veulent rechercher, étudier, réfléchir pour construire l'Eglise et définir sa mission, est une pierre dans la construction du futur. Nous lui souhaitons d'ores et déjà plein succès et nous espérons qu'il apportera un souffle nouveau à l'élan missionnaire dans sa phase actuelle de l'achèvement de l'œuvre missionnaire*».⁸

Outre la genèse ainsi rappelée, le discours du cardinal Etsou traçait un véritable programme pour l'institution en gestation. Le haut lieu de recherche devrait déchiffrer la nouvelle identité du missionnaire d'aujourd'hui; former à la mission dans le nouveau contexte ecclésial africain et répondre sur le plan théologique aux exigences de l'inculturation de l'Evangile, qui était un défi prioritaire de l'Eglise africaine après le Concile Vatican II.⁹

Une œuvre d'Eglise: «toutes les congrégations organisent ensemble»

En vérité, le Cardinal Etsou prévoyait cette institution comme une œuvre d'Eglise au service des prêtres, des personnes consacrées et des femmes et hommes laïcs. Il rêvait d'un lieu où les différents instituts religieux, forts de leur expérience missionnaire, pouvaient réfléchir sur la théologie et la pratique missionnaires pour rechercher ensemble les nouvelles modalités d'annonce du message chrétien pour le présent et l'avenir. Un point de ralliement où, «*autour des missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, toutes les congrégations organisent ensemble cet institut afin d'aider les Eglises locales à conserver l'élan missionnaire, caractéristique de l'Eglise africaine*» et pour transmettre ainsi «*aux générations à venir le souci de continuer la mission universelle vers tous les peuples*».¹⁰

... «autour des missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée, toutes les congrégations organisent ensemble cet institut afin d'aider les Eglises locales à conserver l'élan missionnaire, caractéristique de l'Eglise africaine» et pour transmettre ainsi «aux générations à venir le souci de continuer la mission universelle vers tous les peuples».¹⁰

Ce jour-là le deuxième cardinal de l'Eglise du Zaïre prit soin de préciser aussi les rapports de complémentarité que le nouvel institut devrait avantageusement développer avec d'autres institutions missiologiques déjà présentes en terre zaïroise. Il s'agissait de deux institutions qui s'étaient déjà fait remarquer à cause de leurs recherches et publications: le CERA (Centre d'Etudes des Religions Africaines, fondé en 1966) et le CEEBA (Centre d'Etudes Ethnologiques de Banningville/Bandundu) fondé en 1965. En synergie avec ces deux centres, le nouvel institut de Missiologie, était, selon le Cardinal, appelé à "traduire les

recherches faites en enseignement pour former de nouvelles générations de missionnaires qui pourront évangéliser notre continent avec savoir-faire et compétence».¹¹

Orientations et axes de recherche privilégiés

De ce discours inaugural de Mgr Etsou, vraiment inspiré et opportun, nous pouvons dégager trois orientations majeures que le nouvel institut était censé poursuivre. D'un côté, un souci de contextualisation, qui fut aussi celui du cardinal Malula, à savoir «que la mission de l'Eglise exprime bien le vrai visage d'une Eglise africaine et soit l'expression de la foi authentique des Africains». De l'autre cote le souci de l'universalité qui devait préparer tout étudiant, «sans exclure l'apport et les richesses des autres Eglises» à «annoncer l'Evangile à tous les hommes comme il se doit». Et tout cela dans le cadre d'une troisième orientation majeure qui préconisait un esprit de dialogue et de collaboration avec toutes les composantes de l'Eglise entière.¹²

Quant au nom à donner à l'institut naissant, l'insistance de Mgr Tharcisse Tshibangu eut le dessus sur les premières propositions. Sur proposition de ce prélat, qui est l'un des pionniers de la théologie africaine, plutôt qu'Institut de Théologie Missionnaire, la nouvelle institution fut nommée *Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission*.

On parvenait ainsi à envisager la création d'une véritable faculté de missiologie. Aux yeux des personnes averties, une telle institution pouvait combler une lacune dans l'ensemble des initiatives déjà prises par une Eglise en expansion qui entendait se prendre en charge dans tous les domaines de sa vie. En effet, dans toute l'Afrique francophone, et peut-être aussi anglophone, il n'existait pas encore un lieu de recherche et d'enseignement reconnu et complètement consacré à la missiologie en tant que science académique de la mission. Pourtant, c'est à la mission que, malgré tout, l'Afrique doit la naissance de sa chrétienté contemporaine.

Les premiers pas de l'IASMI et ses cycles académiques

Tout commença à se mettre en place pour permettre au nouveau-né d'exister et de se développer. Et voici en résumé ses premiers pas:

- En décembre 1994, la publication du premier numéro de la *Revue Africaine des Sciences de la Mission (RASM)*, une revue semestrielle qui a, à son actif, 29 parutions.
- La tenue trimestrielle, à partir de 1994, de la 'Chaire Cardinal Malula'. Il s'agit d'un cycle de conférences sur des thèmes qui ont trait à la mission. Ces conférences, animées par des éminents professeurs ont atteint le nombre de 44. Elles sont publiées au long des années dans la revue *RASM*.
- L'organisation, peu après, d'un Cycle de formation pour initier les missionnaires expatriés aux réalités culturelles, socioreligieuses et politiques du Congo et de l'Afrique. A celui-ci s'ajoutera en 2009 un autre Cycle semblable pour les missionnaires Congolaises et Congolais, appelés à servir d'autres Eglises. Les deux modules prennent au sérieux la tendance destinée à accroître le flux missionnaire allant de plus en plus vers un échange tous azimuts qui mette aussi les Eglises de nouvelle fondation en mesure de contribuer à la mission en communion avec les Eglises plus anciennes.

Mais l'objectif principal des promoteurs de l'IASMI, qui attendait encore d'être réalisé, était la mise en marche du deuxième cycle en sciences de la mission, c'est-à-dire d'une vraie faculté de missiologie octroyant aux étudiants le titre académique de spécialisation ou de licence.

La faculté de missiologie à proprement parler

Sur recommandation conjointe du Cardinal archevêque de Kinshasa et de l'Assemblée des Supérieurs Majeurs du Congo (ASUMA), des démarches officielles pour le lancement de la

faculté furent entamées immédiatement après le Colloque de 1994, auprès de l'Université Pontificale Urbanienne de Rome qui montrait sa disponibilité à suivre le projet en vue d'une agrégation de l'IASMI à sa faculté de missiologie.

Les procédures d'office entre l'IASMI et l'Urbaniana bénéficieront de l'appui décisif du père Zago, devenu dans l'entre-temps évêque et secrétaire de la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples. Au niveau local, l'ensemble de l'Institut saint Eugène de Mazenod joua un grand rôle sous l'impulsion du père Giovanni Santolini, OMI. Arrivé au Zaïre en 1987, le père Santolini mettait déjà ses compétences de gestionnaire au profit de l'Institut de Théologie Saint Eugène de Mazenod. Son apport dans le lancement de l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission se montra également déterminant pour la bonne suite des démarches entre Kinshasa et Rome. A sa mort accidentelle, le dimanche des rameaux (23 mars 1997), le dossier à fournir était déjà complètement constitué et déposé dans les bureaux des divers dicastères romains intéressés. Mais avec la mort de Mgr Zago en 2000, les démarches tombèrent en léthargie, de sorte qu'il fallut attendre l'encouragement, en août 2004, de Mgr Cavallotto, recteur de l'Université Urbanienne, venu à Kinshasa au premier Congrès panafricain de missiologie, pour lancer finalement les cycles proprement académiques de l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission.¹³

Ainsi, le 2 octobre 2004 eut lieu le commencement des cours du graduat unique et, en 2005-2006, ceux de première année de licence, suivis, en 2006-2007, par la deuxième année de licence. Au départ, les étudiants ne furent pas nombreux. Juste le minimum suffisant pour fonctionner. Mais la direction et les professeurs ne cessèrent d'y croire, tant les idéaux du nouvel institut demeuraient captivants à bien des égards.

Idéaux, programmes et contenus

En 1969 à Kampala, le pape Paul VI avait dit aux évêques africains: «*Vous êtes désormais vos propres missionnaires. Vous pouvez et vous devez avoir un christianisme africain*». Ces paroles mémorables éveillèrent, dans l'Église d'Afrique, une conscience plus vive de sa propre vocation missionnaire, à réaliser aussi bien sur ses propres terres que vers les horizons extérieurs. Pour l'Église d'Afrique, l'heure était venue de devenir, elle aussi, un protagoniste de la même mission de l'Église; l'heure de s'engager, avec son demi-milliard de chrétiens, en faveur des non-chrétiens pour leur annoncer la Bonne Nouvelle et leur faire rencontrer l'amour de Dieu contenu dans son Évangile (mission *ad gentes*); l'heure de consolider la foi du peuple chrétien d'Afrique (mission de *pastorale ordinaire*); l'heure de «sortir» vers ceux qui, séduits ou emportés par la vague de la sécularisation ambiante, perdaient la foi chrétienne (mission de *Nouvelle Évangélisation*). L'Institut de missiologie arrivait donc à point nommé pour soutenir la prise de conscience et contribuer à la recherche pour «évangélisation en profondeur» tant souhaitée notamment par le cardinal Malula ou par les évêques africains en général.¹⁴

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Dans cet esprit, un premier dépliant de 2004 définissait ainsi les objectifs de l'Institut: connaître et faire connaître les richesses de nos Églises d'Afrique; étudier la pertinence du mandat missionnaire en vue d'une évangélisation en profondeur; favoriser le dialogue avec les religions traditionnelles africaines, avec l'Islam et avec les frères d'autres dénominations chrétiennes à propos de l'impact de l'Évangile sur l'âme africaine; conduire une réflexion sur l'Afrique en Afrique.

Pour un pareil type de missiologie contextualisée et inculturée, les cours prévus par le programme étaient attrayants: une première année de graduat qui offre des cours de nature introductive et fondamentale (Bible, histoire, théologie, problématiques, méthodes et spiritualité de la mission), et deux ans de licence dont les cours sont répartis en trois axes.¹⁵

C'est en comptant sur cette plate-forme de planification, déjà suffisamment ébauchée et prête à former les missionnaires de l'avenir, que l'IASMI obtint avec joie et reconnaissance son agrégation à la Faculté de Missiologie de l'Université Pontificale Urbanienne, par le décret Prot. 860/2004 de la Congrégation pour l'Éducation Catholique, le 3 juin 2008, en la fête de saint Charles Lwanga et ses compagnons, les martyrs de l'Ouganda. C'est ainsi qu'*en communion avec l'Église universelle, l'IASMI entend maintenir une étroite collaboration avec l'Église locale au niveau de la formation missionnaire, comme on le déclarait sur le même dépliant.*

Situation actuelle, rayonnement et défis pour la «construction du futur»

L'ouverture des cycles académiques de l'IASMI en 2004 fut aussi l'occasion tout indiquée pour construire une nouvelle bibliothèque. Les travaux furent achevés en 2008. La nouvelle bibliothèque compte aujourd'hui 25.430 ouvrages et 150 périodiques enregistrés dans le fichier électronique. La Chaire Cardinal Malula, régulièrement tenue depuis 1994, a abordé des thèmes riches et variés. Certains ont suscité la publication d'ouvrages et d'études plus approfondies.¹⁶ Ces conférences font de l'IASMI un centre de rayonnement et de réflexion sur l'Eglise en Afrique hier, aujourd'hui et demain. La Revue Africaine des Sciences de la mission compte parmi les sources de référence de théologie africaine.

Dans la recherche missiologique, l'IASMI soigne la collaboration avec d'autres institutions, locales comme la Semaine Théologique de l'Université Catholique du Congo, la Chaire Jean-Paul II et les Semaines Cardinal Malula de l'Archidiocèse de Kinshasa; et internationales, avec en premier lieu, l'Université Pontificale Urbaniana. Il a participé aux célébrations du centenaire en 2010 de la Conférence missionnaire d'Edinburg, avec une contribution intitulée «*La communion missionnaire dans la perspective œcuménique*».¹⁷ Son personnel académique participe activement à l'Association Internationale des Missiologues Catholiques (AIMC).¹⁸

Les Cycles de formation des missionnaires qui arrivent et partent du Congo ont formé plus de 120 missionnaires destinés soit au Congo soit à d'autres Eglises. A cet égard il faut noter que la formation des missionnaires se termine par une célébration africaine d'envoi en mission, suivant un rituel spécial et inculturé et riche en couleur.

Quant aux défis, «*Depuis l'agrégation à la Faculté de Missiologie de la Pontificia Università Urbaniana, le 3 juin 2008, les premiers efforts de l'IASMI ont été d'augmenter le nombre des étudiants*».¹⁹ Aujourd'hui, vingt ans après le lancement et dix après l'ouverture des cycles académiques, l'Institut a formé 50 gradués et 15 licenciés en Sciences de la mission. La petite moyenne de 5 gradués et 3 licenciés par an montre bien les types de challenges que le jeune institut affronte. Les principaux sont de deux ordres: les effectifs qui demeurent faibles, et la participation active des autres congrégations religieuses encore attendue.

Aussi, la construction du futur de l'Institut nous semble-t-il exprimer quelques besoins, notamment:

1. Les effectifs. Pour augmenter les effectifs des étudiantes et étudiants, il est clair que, comme œuvre témoin du charisme oblat, l'IASMI nécessite de l'appui des autres provinces oblates d'Afrique et d'ailleurs, ainsi que de l'Association of Oblate Institute of Higher Learning (AOIHL) dont, avec l'Institut saint Eugène de Mazenod, il est membre.
2. La collaboration avec les autres congrégations missionnaires. L'IASMI a aussi besoin de bénéficier des formes de collaboration qui favorisent une plus grande implication des autres congrégations missionnaires, suivant les vœux des initiateurs, notamment la vision du Cardinal Etsou.
3. Les programmes des cours. Le caractère contextualisé et inculturé de l'Institut et de ses programmes requiert une plus large autonomie d'organisation, de programmation et de fonctionnement, pour mieux répondre aux exigences du milieu avec plus de flexibilité dans les programmes et dans leur gestion, pour favoriser une plus rapide adaptation aux exigences d'une société en rapide évolution.
4. La recherche. Le défi de présenter un nouveau visage de la mission, qui aille au-delà de l'histoire, pour contribuer à l'élaboration d'un nouveau concept, d'un nouveau paradigme de mission.
5. *Last, but not least*, le défi financier qui empêche plusieurs potentiels étudiants, surtout du clergé diocésain, de réaliser leur louable désir d'une licence en sciences de la mission. Comment leur fournir une aide en bourses d'étude? L'Institut continué de chercher une réponse efficace.

Conclusion

On le voit, l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission est là et ses cadres se démenent pour le faire apprécier dans sa vocation de «***Pierre dans la construction de l'avenir***» religieux et social de l'Afrique appelée par Benoît XVI à devenir davantage le poumon spirituel du monde (cf. *Africae Munus* 13). Le renouvellement de son agrégation, que cet article célèbre à sa façon, résonne à la fois comme une bénédiction et un encouragement à continuer de porter haut l'étendard de la mission de l'Eglise qui «*tire son origine de la mission du Fils et de la mission du Saint-Esprit, selon le dessein de Dieu le Père*» (cf. *Ad Gentes* 2).

End Notes

¹ A cette époque on pouvait se poser des questions comme les suivantes: «Y 'a-t-il vraiment besoin d'un institut de missiologie dans une Afrique qui est «en dérive» à bien des égards et qui ne parvient pas à décoller au niveau économique? Dans ce cas, ne serait-il pas mieux de créer des facultés de sciences économiques ou des instituts professionnels d'arts et métiers plutôt qu'un institut de missiologie? ». Ou bien: «Y 'a-t-il vraiment besoin d'un institut pareil, alors qu'en Afrique l'œuvre missionnaire est en cours et l'Évangile n'a pas encore pénétré en profondeur chez ses habitants surtout dans certains coins enclaves? Dans ce cas n'y aurait-il pas plus besoin de missionnaires de terrain que de missiologues érudits?».

² La mission s'imposait de plus en plus comme une composante indispensable et une activité incontournable de la vie de l'Église et de chaque chrétien. La mission, malgré tout, sortait à nouveau ses cartes de noblesse comme «**le premier service que l'Église peut rendre à tout homme et à l'humanité entière** » (RM 2); «**un devoir suprême**» (3); «**un engagement fondamental de tout le peuple de Dieu**» (32); «**le plus grand des défis pour l'Église**» (40); «**la manifestation du dessein de Dieu**» (41), devant avoir «**la première place** » dans la vie de l'Église et du chrétien (86). A cause de tout cela, elle était considérée même comme une source de renouvellement du tissu ecclésial et, progressivement, du monde, selon les mots de la même encyclique: «*En effet, la mission renouvelle l'Église, renforce la foi et l'identité chrétienne, donne un regain d'enthousiasme et des motivations nouvelles*»(2).

³ L'Institut se trouve dans la commune de Kintambo, un des quartiers les plus anciens dans la partie nord-ouest de Kinshasa, à quelques kilomètres seulement du centre-ville et du fleuve Congo. Cet institut, voulu et administré par les Oblats de la Province du Congo est, à notre connaissance, l'unique en Afrique.

⁴ Ainsi, au fil des années, l'Institut Saint Eugène de Mazonod (ISEM) s'est développé devenant un centre d'études théologiques important, accueillant quelque 300 étudiant(e)s d'une trentaine de nationalité, africaines, latino-américaines et autres, appartenant à une quarantaine de familles religieuses nationales et internationales.

⁵ Il s'agit de Tharcisse Tshibangu, Dosithée Atal Sa Angang, Marcello Zago, Walbert Bühlmann, Claude Geffré, Paul Serufuri Hakiza, François Kabasele Lumbala, Jacques Dupuis, René De Haes, Ilunga- Mayamba, Oscar Bimwenyi Kweshi, Léon de Saint Moulin, Fabio Ciardi, David N. Power, René Luneau, Giovanni Santolini, Jean Masamba ma Mpolo, Viviane Tsangu, Norbert Mikanza Mobyem, Hermann Hochegger, Joseph Ibongo Gilungula, Antoinette Bwanga, Godefroid Kä Mana, Jean-Baptiste Malenge Kalunzu, Nzuzi Bibaki, Paolo Archiati et d'autres. Cf. «Les nouveaux appels de la mission», Actes du Colloque International de Missiologie Kinshasa 20-26 février 1994, in RASM, 1,1994.

⁶ Allocution de Son Eminence le Cardinal Frédéric Etsou", in *Ibid.*, p, 7.

⁷ Félicien MWANAMA Galumbulula, « L'héritage missionnaire de Mgr Godefroy Mukeng'a Kalond aux Frères Serviteurs et Sœurs Servantes du Fils de Dieu», in Alphonse NGINDU Mushete — Jean-Bosco MATAND Bulembat (dir.), *Mission et croissance. Orthodoxie et orthopraxis d'un évêque africain, Mélanges offerts à S.E. Mgr Godefroy Mukeng'a Kalond à l'occasion de ses 50 ans de vie sacerdotale et de ses 80 ans d'âge*, Ed. Médiaspaul, Kinshasa, 2013, p. 305.

⁸ Allocution ..., p. 7 et 12.

⁹ Par ailleurs, aux yeux du prélat, tout cela exigeait de pratiquer une théologie capable de traduire Dieu et son salut dans un langage intelligible aux cœurs des Africains; de préciser le plus clairement possible les défis théologiques, culturels et sociaux lancés à cette époque par les peuples africains; d'orienter les recherches sur la signification du mandat missionnaire du Christ et sur les prérogatives de la mission qui doit continuer en Afrique aujourd'hui.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Cf. *Ibidem*. A noter que ces trois orientations seront reprises, d'une façon ou d'une autre, dans les trois axes du programme de formation de l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la Mission: axes qui inspirent aussi les recherches de la *Revue Africaine des Sciences de la Mission*.

¹³ Ce congrès avait, à plusieurs reprises, évoqué la nécessité d'une "Ecole pratique de Hautes Etudes de la Mission". Cf. A. NGINDU Mushete, «Défis de la mission et voies des recherches théologiques en Afrique», in *L'avenir de l'activité missionnaire Ad Gentes. Perspectives pour le XXI^{ème} siècle. Actes du Congrès International de Missiologie «Tertio Millenio*», Edites par Mgr Tharcisse Tshibangu, Ed. Médiaspaul, Kinshasa, 2005, p. 436.

¹⁴ «Le cardinal Joseph-Albert Malula, un missionnaire «ad intra» à rayonnement «ad gentes». Une lecture de son épiscopat à la lumière de l'encyclique *Redemptoris Missio*, par Césarine Masiala», *RASM*, n. 28,2010, p. 23.

¹⁵ Les voici dans l'ordre: **Mission et théologie**, avec référence spéciale aux développements de la théologie africaine; **Religions et cultures**, avec un intérêt spécial pour l'étude des grandes religions (notamment de la Religion Traditionnelle Africaine et l'Islam) et de sciences anthropologiques; **Foi et société**, avec une attention spéciale aux phénomènes sociaux de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui.

¹⁶ Ex. André KABASELE Mukenge, «Lire la Bible aujourd'hui: risques, défis et enjeux», 25^{ème} Chaire Cardinal Malula du 7-8 décembre 2002 publié dans *RASM*, n. 16, 2002. Cette conférence fut à la base d'un autre article (cf. IDEM, «Lire la Bible dans le contexte africain. Approche et perspectives», in LEMAIRE A. (éd.), *Congress Volume*. Leiden, Brill, 2004, p. 401-418) et même d'un ouvrage (cf. IDEM, *Lire la Bible dans une société en crise*, Kinshasa, Médiaspaul, 2007.

¹⁷ Cf. *RASM*, N° 29,2010, p. 9-53.

¹⁸ En 2008, l'IASMI a contribué, avec deux conférences, à la Conférence Internationale de Missiologie en préparation au Second Synode Africain (Yaoundé). Cf. Joseph NDI-OKALLA, *Le deuxième synode africain face aux défis socio-économiques et éthiques du continent. Documents de travail*, Editions Karthala, Paris, 2009, pp. 61-92 ; 93-102.

¹⁹ *Bref rapport des activités de l'Institut Africain des Sciences de la mission de 2008 à 2012*.

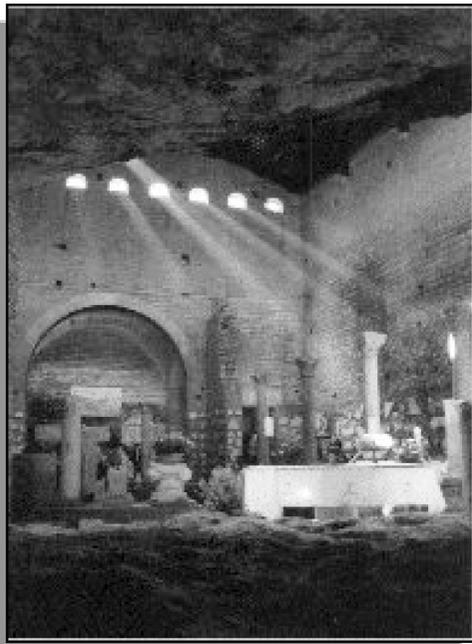
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Seminar on the 50th Years of the Pact of the Catacombs

Saturday, 14th of November 2015,

Aula Magna of the Urban Pontifical University (*Urbaniana*), Rome

from 9 a.m to 5 p.m.



This year the Church is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II which was a milestone in the recent history of the Catholic Church. Inspired by what was going on and what was said during in the Council, already towards its end 40 bishops from all over the world signed a pact in the Catacombs of Domitilla, and known as the Pact of the Catacombs. With this pact, the bishops promised to journey with the poor to be a poor Church that serves the poor by living a simple life style and withdrawing symbols of power. In this same line Pope Francis through his words and examples puts this option for the marginalized as the core of the life and teaching of the Church. In the spirit of Vatican II, the Pact of the Catacombs could be very inspirational for the whole Church and in a particular way for the religious, for whom the Church dedicates a special year in 2015, to implement the option for the poor.

To mark this celebration of 50th year of this almost unknown yet very powerful document of the Pact of the Catacombs, we: Union of Superiors Generals of the female and male religious congregations (USG/UISG), the Service of Documentation and Studies on Global Mission (SEDOS), The Divine Word Missionaries (SVD), and the Pontifical University of Urbaniana, have been organizing a lot of activities since November 2014 like pilgrimage and the way of the cross to the Catacombs of Domitilla. To close these activities we organize a seminar with the theme: "A poor Church serving the Poor - The Pact of the Catacombs and its' Impact Today".

