

# Research, Teaching and Practice of Catholic Social Teaching on the African Continent through Communicating Faith in the Diversity of Cultures

*Obiora Ike*

*Sozialprinzipien dürfen gemäß der Enzyklika Mater et magistra von Papst Johannes XXIII. nicht nur verkündet, sondern es muss gehandelt werden. Bei der Verteidigung der Menschenwürde und dem Streben nach Gerechtigkeit lässt sich eine Verbindung zwischen afrikanischer Weisheit und katholischer Soziallehre herstellen. Weltweite politische Veränderungen, technischer Fortschritt und Industrialisierung, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Verflechtungen sowie ökologische Probleme erfordern Wertorientierung. Die katholische Soziallehre von Leo XIII. bis Benedikt XVI. breitet sich in Afrika nur langsam aus. Glaubensvermittlung kann nur gewaltfrei durch einen Dialog der Kulturen erfolgen, wobei vorbildliches Handeln mehr zählt als Lehre. Voraussetzung für die Teilnahme aller am Gemeinwesen ist die Gleichheit vor dem Gesetz, ein eng begrenztes Recht auf Widerstand, Patriotismus verstanden als die Liebe zur eigenen Herkunft und zum eigenen Land, der Wille einen eigenen Beitrag zu leisten und sich in Interessengruppen zusammenzuschließen. Die christliche Botschaft der Umkehr weist einen Weg zu Solidarität, Gerechtigkeit und Frieden.*

## **1. Catholic Social Thought at the Centre Stage of Intellectual Discourse**

The background of this paper seeks to gravitate to the Catholic intellectual and socio-ethical tradition towards the center stage of discourse at a time when humanity faces fundamental questions of life and death. This urgent and dramatic situation refers to the apparent lack of meaning and the disorientation of values; of wars and the absence of peace; the growing abuse of the environment and the scandal of poverty in the midst of plenty. There is abundant evidence to show that whereas some people in some parts of our world are saturated with the advances made in technical, social, economic and political sophistication and have become ever more complex, some other parts of the world are still

wallowing in horrendous superstition, physical and mental poverty, ignorance, curable diseases and lack of access equivalent to a bazaar of deprivation of all sorts.

For those who aim at humanity integrated in justice, equality, dignity, freedom, peace and progress, there is a belief that faith compels them to action. This in effect means to stand up with prophetic courage, armed with ethical, intellectual, rational, moral and spiritual strength to give hope, serve those in need, pursue peace, defend the life, dignity and rights of all people and maintain a fundamental option for the poor who are the most vulnerable in society. Pope John XXIII wrote in his Social Encyclical '*Mater et Magistra*' that the "Church owes the world the duty not only of preaching the Gospel and pronouncing Social Doctrines, but also of Social Action" (33).

Pope John XXIII far back in 1963 understood the challenge facing humanity and the Church. In the Encyclical Letter '*Mater et Magistra*' he writes: "Though the Church's first care must be for souls, how she can sanctify them and make them share in the gifts of heaven, she concerns herself too with the exigencies of man's daily life, with his livelihood and education, and his general welfare and prosperity" (3).

## **2. The Human Person is Central in Creation and History**

The starting point of every reflection on the Catholic Social tradition, indeed on every Christian ethical foundation, is the teaching about the centrality of the human person in creation and in history. There shall be no fundamental human rights, no human dignity, no universal declarations on human rights and duties if the central position of the human person, as a unique being in entire creation is denied. Indeed, the focus of most African cosmological and philosophical traditions, alongside the other traditions of mankind at various times and places, is the location of the unique identity of the human being as an image of God. Biblical records authenticate the substance of the human being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26).

Thomas Aquinas, the great scholastic of the middle ages, upon whose thought patterns and philosophical traditions the Aristotelian pagan philosophy of Greek antiquity seemed liberated, made the pedestal of Western Christian-philosophical and theological interpretation in schools, the dominant vehicle for the re-interpretation of human ex-

perience and history with his teaching on the human person, the trinity and on Natural Law. He thus established for the Western rational scholastics, the model upon which cultural, sociological, philosophical, technological and scientific rationality relied upon until recently.

Thomas Aquinas' authorship of speculative works was in humble recognition that persons called to be responsible agents working within the institutions of the '*Ecclesia*' and '*Societas*' must lead by responding to the world around us with rational approach. Thomas Aquinas settled for the simple theory that "Grace builds on Nature"; that "God helps those who help themselves"; and that "there is a fundamental link between faith and reason, theology and real life founded on sound reason, natural law, common sense and the socio-ethical principles known as morality which is the knowledge and distinction of the good from the evil which is known and personally revealed and incarnate in each human rational soul".

Today, globalization has become a new buzzword uniting people across borders. On the other hand, its negative consequences are glaringly epitomes of this scholastic drive for a bridge between faith and reason, theology and life. One might state without fear of contradiction that humanity's attempt at healing the wounds and tackling the challenges posed upon mankind by horrendous poverty, ignorance, diseases, senseless wars, injustices and conflicts, the lack of good governance, dictatorships, unfair trade, preventable violence and inhumanity experienced in virtually all continents during his time, but even more so, in contemporary times has always been to defend the dignity of the human person.

### **3. I am Because We Are – the Challenge for Humanity**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century was ushered in by Pope John Paul II with an Encyclical Letter titled '*Tertio millennio Adveniente*' (1994) which gave an optimistic view of human history, founded on God as mystery of the world. For over 2000 years, the emergence of 'The Word became flesh' (John 1:14) on the Areopagus of human history has impacted on theological teaching, cultural space and intellectual traditions. This had become the rallying moment or at some times the reason for conflicts for peoples of all ages and times, thus a new phase of human history had dawned with the phenomenon of the birth of Christ. The Encyclical Letter created hope and direction at a time when much of mankind in view

of modern tendencies, materialism and its advances, the cult of mediocrity and relativism was evidently lost to its belief and its technological advances, yet unsure of its future, identity, mission and teleology.

This is the origin and background of the recently acclaimed and very credible and relevant Encyclical Letter '*Caritas in veritate*' of Pope Benedict XVI in June 2009. It is also a challenge of universal appeal for even in the deeply rich but yet unknown world of African cosmology and cosmo vision, as found in the Omenala tradition of 'Igbology', the inherent wisdom thought is: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am"; it is understood in the wisdom of "*Onye anwuna ma ibe ya efula*", "*Egbe bere Ugo bere*" (Cf. Mbiti, J., *African Religions and Philosophy*; Ike, O. F., *Understanding Africa*, 2001). Such thoughts are also deeply embedded in the biblical scripts as exemplified in the life and teachings of the "Incarnate Word" himself, Jesus Christ, who came "that all may have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

This social-theological and ethical-philosophical mission which was inspired by common wisdom has been inherited from the natural family, the ancestors, the inherent traditions and cultures which form the heritage of mankind in each race, time and place; it was driven by the passion for justice (Amos 5:24); shaped by Catholic intellectual and Social Thought (Social Teaching as found in the encyclicals, the writings of the Fathers, the contemporary events of society and the biblical foundations); and is lived out in the daily excruciating and practical reality of the people of God on mission, at each era and in each place or clime.

Rising from the 1971 World Synod of Bishops, convoked under Pope Paul VI, the Fathers of the Synod concluded in their Statement that "action for justice and peace and participation in the transformation of the world remained a fundamental and constitutive element in the preaching of the Gospel". This is the setting for the mission and identity of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition which finds its "Sitz im Leben" (context) in the interventions, the Catholic Church makes since the time of the Apostles at each age and circumstance, "to respond to the signs of the time and translate them in the light of the Gospel" (Gaudium et Spes 4). Such is carried out through the sharing of faith and strong hope in witness to what the good Lord has done and continues to do for humankind in and through the Church. It is the practice of theory, the influence of ideas on history and the action of working

for peace and justice, freedom and reconciliation in order to restore the image of God in all humanity.

#### **4. We owe ourselves Some Reckoning**

From the aforesaid, we do really owe ourselves some reckoning as humanity enters a key stage in human history with its apparent claims of civilisation. We are witness to the manifold positive achievements that humanity was able to make in the past hundred years in the areas of sciences, art, technology, humanities, literature, economy, political and social life, spacecraft, medicine, agriculture, education, information and communication technology. The list is endless. The concept of 'space' and 'time' which in ancient philosophy was beyond thought and speculation, has received practical solutions by virtue of recent developments in science and technology. Consequently, distances previously believed to be 'beyond space' and issues thought to be 'beyond time' have been conquered, at least in the sphere of the phenomena. Mankind is able to master the external universe. But can mankind also show goodwill and acceptance of the universal and basic principle that all human beings are fundamentally equal with dignity, freedom and integrity?; that truth exists and that all are able to know and reach this truth, despite the attempts at relativism?; that faith and tolerance are virtues possible for human beings within the multiplicity and diversity of cultures?; and that imbued with an immortal soul, given freely by a supreme Being who is generous, kind, almighty and the universal judge of all creation and that all human beings have rights and duties imposed upon them by their conscience and would obtain salvation in their circumstances? These are questions which repeat themselves even as the project of intercultural dialogue considers the principles of 'coherent pluralism' as basis for being human in an interdependent world.

#### **5. Globalisation and the Challenge of Catholic Social Thought**

The achievements of mankind in our times have led to a greater integration of people, economic exchanges, cultural influences and technological advances, leading to the present understanding that the whole world has become a 'global village'. It is presumed to be a world for all, even though only a privileged few have the key to the door of this global village. Others must wait outside, treated as aliens, without rights and basic human dignity. This is the reality, increasingly so understood and practised. What does this mean for the African people

and cultures, for humanity at large, both in the northern and southern hemispheres, and especially for vulnerable groups and the poor everywhere? This is the challenge to the project of a world for everybody which has several defining characteristics on the political, economic, cultural, environmental and technological levels:

**a) The political climate** which shows that the winds of change (perestroika) triggered off in the late 1980's with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its effects blowing through countries of Eastern Europe, was not an exercise in isolation. What people have experienced within the past few years in the winds of change blowing worldwide including parts of Africa since the so called Arab Spring has surprised all. We have witnessed the arrogance of power disappear and the hegemony of dominant minorities transferring powers to the will of the people, albeit, through people's sheer determination often without guns in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Syria to mention just a few. In very remote villages of Africa, Yugoslavia, Asia and Latin America, these winds have come to blow with potentials for radical changes at all levels of human endeavour. It has brought with it some instability in systems and assumptions previously held as sacrosanct. Military dictatorships and monarchies have changed into democratic governments. Political configurations have been broken up, sometimes peacefully, often by violence, of some states into smaller nations and countries (e.g. Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Czech, Slovakia). The Southern Sudan remains the greatest enigma after 42 years of war between native black Africans and immigrant Arab Sudanese. Countries like Rwanda and Burundi lost over 800,000 people in communal clashes in 1994, caused to some extent, by the inability to break away peacefully from Belgian colonial structures imposed on various African people binding them to political configurations that took no cognisance of cultural originality, social expressions and authenticity. On the other hand, there is development of the merging of some groups of nations and interest groups into unions, such as the European Union and the African Union for the purposes of regional integration for peaceful existence, market linkages, political strategies and collaboration for mutual benefit. The recent phenomenon in Nigeria, four decades after Biafra and the emergence of Boko Haram, a fanatical Islamic sect with terror tendencies recalls Biafra. Thus the search for a workable constitution that guarantees national integrity, regional autonomy, a measure of true federalism as the

only realistic solution to the Boko Haram jihadists and the unity in diversity.

**b) Economic realities** include cross-border trade on goods and services, capital flows and financial investments. Today, almost two trillion dollars move around the world every day, seeking not the best production but the best return on speculation. Of the hundred largest economic entities in the world, fifty of them are trans-national corporations (Cf. "The Rough Road to Globalization", a CAFOD paper, December 2000). This is contrasted with the fact that poverty is on the increase all over the world, not just in the developing countries, but also, for countries until now regarded as wealthy, highly industrialised and developed. Rising poverty is followed by a rise in homelessness, hunger and by lack of jobs especially of the youth. Poverty has assumed not only the forms of physical deprivation but has become worse in its spiritual manifestations as found in loneliness, emptiness, meaninglessness and escape from reality. Many people abandon their homes in forced or induced migrations, searching for a better state of life. They find instead in their new countries of migration, much of legal barriers, non-acceptance, prejudices and xenophobia that they are often cut between their desire for their original homes despite its problems, and the challenges of their new migrant addresses with its unfulfilled hopes, disappointments and exile spirit.

**c) Cultural influences** are obvious in the "westernisation" of popular culture in music, clothes, lifestyles, art, theatre, songs, technology, language, values and orientation. Today, the single largest export industry for the United States of America is not aircrafts, auto mobiles, computers, but entertainment – found in Hollywood films and television programmes. The globalisation of films has eroded the originality of self-determination for simple people in their cultural milieu, making the American dream and way of life a measure for civilisation worldwide. Money has become a world formula, a new value and the mighty author of all things. This culture exposes many flaws and weaknesses. It is often based on a materialistic conception of the world, devoid of any spiritual meaning, thus the meaninglessness of the present time. Individualism is on the increase, leading to a "global crisis of values". There is an apparent lack of ethical and cultural ingredients determining the global social and economic systems in the formulation of policies that guide people

and nations while businesses carry on as usual, negating and neglecting people's traditional ways of life, their history, indigenous rationality, social development and cultural values. On this, we could go on and on.

**d) Environmental issues** emerge showing defects in the recognized control mechanisms adopted among various societies, particularly by dominant Western nations. Consumption patterns have increased. Specifically, one has to observe the horrendous waste of non-renewable resources; the dramatic and excessive burden on the environment's capacity to absorb pollution. People consume more instead of becoming persons with integrity. Furthermore, there is the debatable matter of population growth in agricultural regions of the developing world. This is a source of strength but could threaten the already delicate balance of resources in these regions. According to Daniel Lynch of Notre Dame University, Indiana: "There is no technology to support 12 billion people at the current aggregate consumption rate; and there is no vision of a planetary ecosystem in equilibrium with this level of industrial metabolism". Environmental issues have assumed in the context of Igbo land, West Africa, the albatross of development. Agricultural lands are used for housing, marketing or business without proper spaces for development, parks and human ecology. Waterways find their own pathways, thus, the growing erosions and gully, the unplanned cities and mega cities often overpopulated but without access and the reduction in the quality of life for our people.

**e) Technological advances** and industrialisation have left their consequences on modern societies and systems which include the rapidly growing utilization of electronic communications (internet, informatics, gsm telephones, telematics, e-mail) and the increasing ease of transportation. We live in an information age, a "borderless age" and a very fast age. With its many advantages, the explosion in scientific and technical knowledge and the availability of knowledge, capital and manpower shudders the imagination and questions the sustainability of the human family, for it makes it easier for people to manufacture bombs in their sleeping rooms or in private libraries by just opening the relevant pages on the Google search engine of their personal computers. If this is conceivable, then we are living in a dream. Yet it does seem in the present circumstances that industrialisation will continue unabated worldwide.



It is desirable. But can we have industrialisation based on some values? It has been said that sustainability demands of an integral vision of the universe which respects the integrity of creation. If this is not done, it does seem that what we are building worldwide may not work without a strong value orientation. For this worldwide building it needs a strong value orientation. And this is the crux of the matter.

## **6. Catholic Social Teaching in Africa through Research Teaching and Practice**

Catholic Social Teaching refers to a set of socio-philosophical and ethical-theological truths about man and human affairs, systematically developed over the last one hundred years, integral and multi-disciplinary in nature, with a Christian conception of the universe and determined to establish a true basis for the truth about man and society, their origin, destiny and moral grounding. The foundations for Catholic Social Teaching rest on some principles tested and applied across cultures and beyond time and place. These include teachings on the common good, subsidiarity, solidarity, personality, human rights and human dignity.

The Encyclical Letters of the Magisterium focused the attention of the teaching office of the Church to social and practical issues facing mankind. Pope Leo XIII kick-started this style of reflection in 1891 with his Letter titled '*Rerum Novarum*'. It x-rayed the injustices imposed by the ruling classes and property owners upon the working classes, the labourers and the poor of the late nineteenth century. His writings appealed for justice and fairness, the establishment of a just wage and the legitimacy of the state to guarantee equity and protect the working classes. This intervention unveiled the powerful potential of the teaching office of the Church to speak out, not only on matters of faith and morals, but also on the '*Ordo Socialis*' (social order).

Other encyclicals that followed carried equal dynamism, with great impact on world development and history. Some of these include: '*Quadragesimo Anno*' with its principle of subsidiarity; '*Pacem in Terris*' with its teaching that peace is universal and humanity was indivisible; '*Mater et Magistra*' insisted that the human person is the origin, aim and central subject within history for every social development; '*Populorum Progressio*' which described development as another name for peace;

'*Laborem Exercens*' expanded the concept of human work to mean every human activity calling for the overcoming of a communist ideology that thought of work as a tool in the objective sense, instead of its proper understanding of work in the subjective sense.

Thus John Paul II makes the human person, his rights and dignity central in every discussion around the theme of human work; '*Sollicitudo rei Socialis*' elevated the Church's social concern and her justification to intervene in human and international affairs; '*Centesimus Annus*' marked the hundred years of the Social Teaching of the Church and took a balanced scorecard of the various teaching positions of the Church on themes around the environment, war, peace, the social order, family, communism, capitalism, work, women, human rights, life and a just international order.

In year 2009, Pope Benedict XVI wrote his very celebrated document '*Caritas in veritate*' which emphasises truth as an act of charity. It also develops the virtue of love as a dimension of truth beyond the selfish limiting claims of a world that lives in self-deceit and wallowing illusion filled with the vice of materialism, hedonism, primitive accumulation of wealth, the lack of virtue in business relations with its consequence of the division of mankind into those who have and the majority who have not.

Until recently, knowledge of the Christian social principles studied under systematic theological guidelines as enunciated through the Encyclicals was a rare study in African universities or even centres of Christian learning. The teaching, research and study including practice of the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching rested more on traditions of moral and cultural values, less from teachings obtained from theological studies. One fact is certain which is that Christianity in most African countries came within the last one hundred years to many parts of the continent. The Christian message at the same time with the colonial incursion on the continent was not essentially clear enough. Furthermore, Catholic Social Teaching in itself is new, just about 110 years, since the first encyclical of Pope Leo XIII in 1891. Even in Europe, only the hard word of such teachers which started in the mid 1950's such as Joseph Cardinal Höffner, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, Lothar Roos, Anton Rauscher, Manfred Spieker to mention a few, made the popularisation of this systematic school of thought noticeable. In Africa therefore, even in current times, only a few institutions offer the Catholic Social

tradition as a teaching course in the universities. The few universities on the Continent include the Catholic Institute of West Africa at Port Harcourt; the Catholic University of Younde in Cameroun; the Catholic University of East Africa, Nairobi Kenya and the Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, which is Africa's largest centre for the training of priestly candidates. These institutions offer various philosophical and theological subjects of its largely clerical students. One institution however, which is specifically established for the research, training and spread of the knowledge of the social teaching of the church and its application in private and public lives of the political and socio-economic class, the laity, men and women of various persuasions and the cultures of the continent, is the Catholic Institute for Development Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) founded at Enugu in 1986. One may simply say that at the moment, the knowledge and spread of the social teaching is at a very slow and low tempo.

### **7. Communicating Faith in the Diversity of Cultures as an Expression of Catholic Social Teaching in Africa**

Some conditions have to be fulfilled to communicate faith within the diversity of cultures. The prejudices until now received and perceived attitudes of one people or group against another must give way for a "*dialogue of cultures and civilisations*" to emerge. This does not compromise the truth but it makes the truth a vessel in the service of charity. The opposite, which is a "clash of cultures" does no one good and deepens the world view of intolerance. The clash of cultures promotes the fight for dominance and does not give room for intercultural dialogue which is the basis for peace and progress in the world of today. The condition for achieving this starting point towards a communication of faith is tolerance, mutual respect and the assumption that no one has the monopoly of the truth. After several centuries of inter human contacts, it is sad to witness how wars are carried out in the name of religion and martyrs are made to die for their beliefs even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One lesson that humanity must learn is that we cannot communicate faith from the point of view of violence or in the name of fighting for one's 'God', 'Chukwu' or 'Allah'. The missionary superiority model of the past and the top down method of a group who knows it all, have all the answers and are better than the others must allow a meeting point of rational dialogue to take place. The Christian principle of the "incarnation" is that the "Word became Flesh and lived among us". It

is a humble but honest example of how faith, carried out in dialogue, brings the divine near to the people.

The essence of 'Emmanuel' is the principle of God communicating with humankind in understandable language and manner known today as "down to earth". This is the basis of tolerance, much needed in communicating faith in the diversity of cultures. Yet, in the last five years, over 10,000 people have been killed in Nigeria in clashes that have cultural social, political and religious bias as its cause. The tragedy of it all is that these clashes have nothing to do with the wisdom thoughts of these people, but is linked to the newly imported ideological differences from other countries, both in the West and in the Islamic countries which continues to trigger off the conflicts in which Nigeria currently goes through. One would even assert that if Nigerians lived according to their original and indigenous beliefs and practices, communicating faith would be much more a matter of life than of doctrine and orthopraxis instead of orthodoxy. Nigerians like many African people believe that "actions speak louder than words".

### **8. Nigeria and the Challenge of Inter-Religious Dialogue**

Taking Nigeria as a model, this is a country of over 160 million people, speaking 350 languages amidst 400 ethnic tribes and ethnic groups. Britain forced the various nationalities into one state for its colonial purposes, a historical error that has continued to replicate itself elsewhere. With its many blessings, much of which is found in its human potentials, cultures, religions and mineral resources, Nigeria is a country that is thorn between hopes and hopelessness, possibility and limitations, yet with a potential to rise above the given and transcend. In the context of Nigeria, faith is communicated more through a convincing lifestyle than through preaching. In this society, orthopraxis is more cherished than orthodoxy. In one Nigerian family, one finds a Christian, a Muslim, a traditional worshipper and liberal thinkers, all living harmoniously in one family. The Nigerian context is a situation where tolerance and acceptance of the other is basic, not because of what one believes on the level of faith, but on how this faith is lived out in real life. The proverb: "*Onye na chi ya*" which means "Each with his or her own destiny" made any ideological fight on whose god is superior a principle of life. There was never a war over religion. Nigerian traditional values which are indeed African values show the importance of integrating cultural values into real life through pedagogy of practice

which is lived faith than just a theoretical didactic method. The global outlook has shown a tendency to ideological socio-technological and economic paradigms which is a Western contribution to development. African values are non-ideological; they are life, thus the Igbo saying that "*Ezi Okwu bu ndu*", literally meaning that "Truth is life".

Africa's traditional value systems provide a basis for a dialogue of life, not just a superiority of ideas, making communal living together possible. Through its communal philosophy which is the principle of the family, the large family and the clan consciousness made sure that all had a place and "*no one is an island*". It encourages consensus building instead of individualism, promotes social responsibility, entrepreneurship, justice and fair play. "*Egbe belu Ugo belu*", which means co-existence, became a key principle of life: "let the Kite perch and let the Eagle perch".

To conclude, communicating faith in the diversity of cultures is possible based on the African context where humanity's most authentic and distinctive features nurture a cultural soil which makes a fruitful and constructive dialogue. In this context, religion and its beliefs is not the point of departure. What counts is life and people's behaviour. As in the letter of James in the New Testament, the African would say to the theme under discussion concerning communicating faith in the diversity of cultures: "Show me your faith and I will show you my works. For faith without works is dead".

## **9. Practical Applications of the Social Teaching of the Church to the Relationship between Faith and Life**

### *a) All Citizens are entitled to contribute actively to the Common Good of the State*

A government is not possible without the civil society, the private sector and the citizenry. These must play a proper role of self-determination. I recall minding the right to vote and the honorary collaboration in self-government, but also the right of criticism and control. Community services are another area that appear relevant as citizens could identify with the state and society in a voluntary manner. "We must be ready to donate a large part of our work without remuneration simply because we consider it meaningful and relevant, if not even commanded" (Oswald von Nell-Breuning).

*b) All Citizens Have a Legal Claim to Equity before the Law*

In the Basic Constitutional Law of Nigeria, it says: "No one may be disadvantaged or preferred because of sex, descent, race, language, homeland and origin, faith or religious and political views" (Nigerian constitution 3, 1). As the second Vatican Council teaches, three different forms of apartheid can be distinguished, namely, discrimination against a person because of his or her "race or color, condition of life, or religion" (Nigerian constitution 5, Declaration on Relation to Non-Christian Religions). Every form of apartheid violates the right and dignity of man. The Christian will therefore not limit himself or herself to protesting against a particular kind of apartheid, e.g. racial apartheid, as if religious apartheid were less evil. The Christian rejects all apartheid. He or she is also convinced that the overcoming of apartheid is an essential presupposition of peace within the state and among states.

*c) The Right to Resistance*

Even if, as it says in the Epistle of Romans, governmental authority "is instituted by God" (Rom 13:1), it still bears the inadequacy of all earthly things. With more or less reasons, one will have one thing or the other to criticize in all laws and in all governmental measures. But more frightening is the fact that states and governments, as experience teaches, can exhibit not only this or that deficiency, but can also degenerate in a criminal way. Here it is usually not a question today, as it was antiquity, of an individual tyrant, but of movements or parties that spread terror at home and abroad. The "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" of April 5, 1986, branded with sharp words the "violence exercised by the powerful against the poor, arbitrary action by the police, and any form of violence established as a system of government".

As the original bearer of governmental authority, the people are entitled to the right of resistance with respect to the state. The above-mentioned instruction rejects, however, the "systematic recourse to violence" as a "destructive illusion" since it not infrequently "opens the way to new forms of servitude". The "myth of revolution" surrenders to the illusion that "the abolition of an evil situation is in itself sufficient to create a more human society," whereas in reality this myth fosters "the setting up of totalitarian regimes". The thesis that sees "in the class struggle the structural dynamism of social life" is also rejected as erroneous. An armed struggle can only be justified in "an extreme case", when it is "a last resort to put an end to an obvious and prolonged tyranny

which is gravely damaging the fundamental rights of individuals and the common good". Nevertheless, a "very rigorous analysis of the situation" is necessary whereby one must consider that "passive resistance" is a way more conformable to moral principles and having fewer prospects for success".

*d) Love of One's Fatherland (Patriotism)*

In many countries of the world, love of one's fatherland or motherland has fallen into disrepute because of the past history of nations. In recent decades, it was almost tabooed to speak of the fatherland for example in Germany. Criticizing of one's fatherland took the place of love of one's fatherland. At the most, one still spoke of preservation of the countryside and protection of monuments, if the fatherland was not simply rejected as a "system of the ruling-classes". Yet, it is a healthy practice to love and defend the fatherland and motherland as our language, color and identity come from him or her.

Franz Rudolf Bornewasser, bishop of Treves, wrote the last pastoral letter on love of one's fatherland on March 15, 1947. There he said: "It is not open to man whether he wishes to love his fatherland or not. Love of one's fatherland is not a weighing of advantage, but a religious obligation. Neither is love of one's fatherland mere feeling, but a virtue of the will, a free, conscious self-surrender to the land of one's Fathers. Love of one's fatherland means rejoicing at the flowering of one's fatherland, suffering at its suffering, and always praying for its well-being. But love of one's fatherland also means deep pain at the blemishes that soil the image we bear of it in our hearts. Love of one's fatherland further means faithfulness. Whoever breaks faith is a traitor. True faithfulness proves itself when suffering and need come upon one's fatherland. Would it not be sad if, in times of need, one was to begin to calculate whether one could not live better if one were to separate oneself from one's fatherland? To abandon one's fatherland for purely egotistical reasons in flight before the required sacrifice contradicts the spirit of Christianity values faithfulness and willingness to sacrifice more highly than material goods".

It seems to me that the time has come to reflect again on the Christian message about the relation of man to his people, to his fatherland, motherland, to his or her state. According to the Christian understanding, love for one's fatherland is grounded in reverent dedication to those to whom we owe our origin: God, our parents, and the land of our fa-

thers, the land where our cradle stood and to which we were bound by destiny through a common homeland, a common descent, a common history, a common culture, and a common language. "Before man is thrown into the world, he is laid in the cradle of the home," says the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962).

Homelessness is a loss of identity. If "fatherland" disappears from linguistic usage, other important things in life are also lost. The Christian does not have a broken relation to his or her fatherland. The Second Vatican Council summons Christians to "a generous and loyal devotion to their country" (65). It exhorts the faithful, in loyalty to their country, to serve the common good (Vatican II, Decree on the Laity, Number 14).

The people of God of the Old Testament loved their homeland and the city of Jerusalem. In Psalm 137, it says: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion... If I forget you, O Jerusalem. Let my right hand wither!" (Psalm 137,1-5). Jesus loved his people also. As he saw before him the disaster that would come upon the city of Jerusalem, "he wept over it" (Luke 19:4). Christian love of one's fatherland is not a mere feeling, nor an unctuous patriotism, nor a sentimental nationalism, and even less chauvinism. It is embedded in the love for all men and all people. For the limitation of being human to one's own race, one's own people, one's own nation, or one's own class leads to brutality. Love of one's fatherland is, as the Second Vatican Council says, "without any being narrow-minded," open to "the whole human family, united by different the ties which bind together races, people and nations" (Gaudium et Spes 75).

#### *e) Willingness to Sacrifice*

Without the citizens' willingness to sacrifice, the common good cannot be realized. The tight social intertwinement and the development of social and political relations since the beginning of the industrial age have greatly increased the financial needs of the state. The amount of taxes and duties, their anonymity, the complicated process of balancing costs, and not least the spread of that attitude which is usually called "minimum morality" (Grenzmoral) have weakened the consciousness of being morally obligated to pay taxes and social security contributions. The Second Vatican Council calls tax evasion "fraud" (Gaudium et Spes 36). If the citizens consider the tax laws to be in need of improvement, the solution does not lie in tax evasion, but in tax reform to be striven for in a democratic way.



#### *f) Obligation to form Civil Society Associations*

Gladly we notice in Nigeria the rising number of registrations at the Corporate Affairs Commission of civil society, economic and public associations for the common good. Numerous interest groups have been formed, i.e. organized associations that conjoin the parallel economic interests of their members and seek to exercise influence and pressure on public opinion, the political parties, the chambers of parliament, the government, and the administration of public affairs and justice as well as on opposed interest groups in order to obtain their interests. The formation of organized associations does correspond to our understanding of society and state. And it is also to be recognized that, in a certain respect, interest groups are the expression of the need for protection against the ever expanding power of the state. Nevertheless, Catholic Social Teaching places the common good of the state above the special interests of associations. It appeals to the sense of responsibility of the associations and their functionaries to recognize the primacy of the common good in their programs and praxis in spite of the fully justified advocacy of their own interests.

### **10. Conclusion**

Permit me to conclude this presentation with a statement that it is a truly Christian challenge and a fundamental option in a corrupt society like ours to respond to the "signs of the times in the light of the Gospel". The demands of modern society and the challenges of the present situation faced worldwide humanity with no other viable option than to seek a life that is just and integral, following in the footsteps of the teacher and master himself, Jesus Christ of Nazareth who urged his followers "to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (Mathew 5). This is not the time for the option of lethargy and apathy. It is rather the time to promote the common human heritage which is to be people of faith and reason. John the Baptist in the desert, repeating the citation of Isaiah, made it clear that there is a call to positive action of conversion '*metanoia*' for the committed and convinced citizen of our time, country and era. We are challenged to become "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare yet the ways of the Lord, make his path straight (Mathew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3). It is this ability to give voice, to enlighten the ignorant, to teach the love of God and neighbor by example and by communicating faith in the diversity of cultures that has made this conference a new beginning (especially for the oppressed peoples of Africa), for humanity at large

and for the sustainable peace and justice which all people earnestly yearn for.

Thus, universal values of solidarity are expressed, as blessed Pope John Paul II stated in his World day Message of Peace in 2001, that "the value of peace is the primary objective of every society; the value of life itself as the most sacred and inviolable earthly reality, for it is not possible to invoke peace and despise life; the value of education which enables regard for one's own identity with an understanding of others and respect for diversity; the values of forgiveness and reconciliation necessary for building bridges over the barriers caused by non-communication and misunderstandings, thereby, nurturing the path which leads to peace."