

**The Church in Africa as an Agent of Social Transformation through  
Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Light of the Second African Synod**

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of St Michael's College  
and the Pastoral Department of Toronto School of Theology  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the proposals of the Second African Synod on reconciliation, justice and peace. It addresses these challenges in the socio-political, economic and cultural dimensions of African society, proposed by the Second African Synod as central to the present mission of African Christianity. The thesis presents a historical study of the three challenges highlighted in the synod document, and demonstrates how to implement and translate the recommendations of the synod in a concrete pastoral plan in the African setting. This research contends that the Church, while remaining the salt of the earth and light of the world, should engage the various societal structures and institutions, and so help Africa to become a reconciled society where the fruits of justice and peace shall be harvested in abundance. This research demonstrates the possibility of realizing the aspirations of the Second African Synod by employing the common elements that were used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which helped foster reconciliation and peace in that country. This study concludes by arguing that, given the varying and peculiar social contexts of most African countries, African Christianity has a major role to play as an instrument of reconciliation, justice and peace in transforming the continent of Africa.

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# Chapter 1 General Introduction

## 1.1 Description of the Research Field

It is impossible to accept that in evangelisation one could or should ignore the importance of the problems so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and peace in the world. How then are we to understand the coming of God's kingdom as Reconciliation, Justice and Peace?<sup>1</sup>

The Second African Synod took place in Rome on 4-25 October, 2009 with focus on the problems challenging the African social context. Africa is a large and complex reality, with diverse cultures, geography and history. The synod fathers, assembled from this wide diversity, had a felt sense of shared context: the same continent, shared history of various colonialisms, similar racial origins and religious worldview. The synod document is thus a gathering of general statements drawn from various contexts, without being specifically directed to any one of them. With this in mind, determining what the synod document means in a particular context is the challenge of the local church. However, the synod document, vague as it may be, still provides guidelines for the local church in Africa.

However, the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa was an opportunity to reflect on and find, in the light of the spirit, the ways and means for a fruitful Christian witness in the world of politics and economics in Africa. It is believed that the good functioning of these two areas depends to a large extent on the ability of Africans to be reconciled and re-establish peace and justice among themselves. This goal is particularly urgent because at present, the situation concerning reconciliation, justice and peace in

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 68 (Vatican Web site, September 14, 1995), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa_en.html) (accessed April 13, 2013).

countries of Africa can be described as worrying in some cases, and disastrous in others.<sup>2</sup>

According to Prof. Joy Ugwu:

In the last thirty years alone more than thirty wars have been fought in Africa, with the attendant loss of human lives and resources, destruction of infrastructure and displacement of persons. The potential for massacre and genocide is always threatening. This situation spread across the continent from the horn of Africa to Central Africa, from Southern Africa to the great lakes region and down to West Africa.<sup>3</sup>

She continues: “How can we make the strategic shift from militarization and arms race to demilitarization and socio-economic and political transformation?”<sup>4</sup> The current situation in Africa confirms the relevance of the theme of the Second Synod for Africa because it addressed the socio-political and economic challenges facing the continent. The theme for the Second African Synod continues to build on the message of the First African Synod, as Emmanuel Orobator notes:

The movement from the First African Synod in 1994 to the Second African Synod in 2009 traces the trajectory of a steadily maturing theology of the nature and the mission of the Church in Africa. The continuity between both synods reflects the vitality of theological reflection in Africa and its implication for the self-understanding of the community called Church. While the earlier synod identified this community as the family of God, the later synod assigned it a new mission, namely to work toward reconciliation, justice and peace.<sup>5</sup>

African Christianity has become increasingly aware of her social mission led by the spirit of Vatican II and the challenging political, economic, cultural and religious dimensions of the social questions facing Africa. African Christians appreciate the poignancy of the

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<sup>2</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006: “You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:13-14). no.52.[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20060627\\_ii-assembly-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20060627_ii-assembly-africa_en.html) (accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Joy Ugwu, “The Church as Agent of Reconciliation and Social Transformation,” in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, 13 (2001), 71.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, ed. *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod* (MaryKnoll N.Y: Orbis books, 2011), 1.

mission of the Church, as embodied in the theme of the second synod, because the theme touches the core of Africa's contemporary socio-economic, cultural, religious and political predicaments.

On a continent synonymous with deep crises and strife, "church as family" is an image that was employed again in the Second African Synod, having already been accepted at the First African Synod. It represents an opportunity for attaining the reconciliation, justice and peace of God's reign that seem to have eluded Africa. The use of this imagery again in the Second Synod of Africa clearly shows how the first synod is strongly linked to the second. The Church<sup>6</sup> experiences growth and expansion in her understanding and service to the world by building on traditions and legacies. The first synod itself was intended to be an occasion of hope and revitalization, at a moment when events seemed to be tempting Africa to discouragement and despair.

There was a clear transition from the first to the second synod. Two contrasting events in Africa marked the period of the first synod. On one hand, South Africa was witnessing the end of apartheid and the election of its first non-racial government; on the other hand, the genocide in Rwanda was approaching close to 800,000 deaths. These two events of hope for change and of conflict mirrored the history of Africa then, and still reflect the complex nature of Africa's social context.

In addition, the African continent is facing myriad problems, including high levels of poverty, human rights abuses, and disregard for human dignity. Reconciliation, justice and peace define clear imperatives of ecclesial renewal and social transformation.<sup>7</sup> The several

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<sup>6</sup> In this thesis, the term "Church" will refer to the Catholic Church as described in *Lumen Gentium*. Cf. LG (1964), Nos. 73-76. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (accessed September 18, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> See Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, ed. *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, 1.

wars on the continent underscore the need for reconciliation, justice and peace. This is evident in Africa's troubled areas, such as in northern Uganda, the Jos region of Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Darfur and the Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions. Yet moments of hope are evident in efforts to build a new society founded on genuine reconciliation through post-conflict reconstruction in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia. Therefore, the Second African Synod was timely, responding to the needs of those African countries which are emerging from conflict or still experiencing conflict.<sup>8</sup>

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the Church desires to serve society in proclaiming the gospel from a new vantage point, that of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Second African Synod seriously examined issues ranging from the challenges to family, to resource exploitation, trade imbalance, debt, climate change, the role of women in Africa, conflicts, poor governance, migration, corruption, HIV/AIDS and other health challenges and insufficient media coverage of the 'real' Africa, with all its light and shadow.

There were two written outcomes from the Second Synod of Africa: 1) the public message to the people of God which offered an overview of the issues and themes of the synod; 2) the 57 propositions, which were specific recommendations offered to Pope Benedict XVI for his consideration as he prepared a Post-Synodal Exhortation. The message and propositions support the Church's advocacy for more just, responsible and fair relations with Africa on every level.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Elias Omondi Opongo, "A New Call for a Vigilant and Engaged Church," in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod* edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2011), 75.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Rocco Puopolo, "Proposition of the Synod African Bishops: A Selection and Introduction," *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, Vol.20, no.2 (2010),

Pope Benedict XVI, in choosing the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace, wanted African Christians to explore a basis for greater optimism. Africa, though wretched and devastated materially, still has the required potential and resources, if properly harnessed to be “the great hope of the Church.”<sup>11</sup> The Church in Africa could set the pace and give a new paradigm of reconciliation to the world.<sup>12</sup> The synod identified conflict and strife as being at the heart of what has gone wrong, noting that what wounds African society comes from the human heart (Mt 15:18-19).<sup>13</sup> Imperatively, reconciliation becomes a way toward resolving this puzzle. It invites the Church, the family of God, to embark on an apostolic mission to build a culture of communion and life. The synod hoped that the mission of communion rooted in the Christian virtues of reconciliation, justice, peace and mercy would restore wholeness to the communities, and heal wounded hearts that have suffered for so long.<sup>14</sup>

Reconciliation, justice and peace are broad concepts that formed the central theme of the second synod. In this light, these key theological concepts need to be elaborated further using African theological frameworks through an analysis of African social context.

“Reconciliation” presupposes in its simplest understanding that something has gone wrong, or something is not right somewhere, and needs to be put in order. Reconciliation is

presented in the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* to simply mean:

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32[http://secure.pdcnet.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/peacejustice/content/peacejustice\\_2010\\_0020\\_0002\\_0032\\_0042](http://secure.pdcnet.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/peacejustice/content/peacejustice_2010_0020_0002_0032_0042)(accessed April 15 2013).

<sup>11</sup>See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Saa Dade Ennin, The Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, “the African Reconciliation Project”: *The Role of Missionary Institutes*. [http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc\\_view/1669-the-second-special-synod-of-bishops-for-africa-and-the-african-reconciliation-project](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc_view/1669-the-second-special-synod-of-bishops-for-africa-and-the-african-reconciliation-project)(accessed November 9, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009: “*You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world*” (Mt 5:13-14) no. 11. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20090319\\_instrlabor-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20090319_instrlabor-africa_en.html) (accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> See Paul Saa Dade Ennin, *The Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops* [http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc\\_view/1669-the-second-special-synod-of-bishops-for-africa-and-the-african-reconciliation-project](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc_view/1669-the-second-special-synod-of-bishops-for-africa-and-the-african-reconciliation-project) (accessed November 9, 2014).

An agreement, a consensus or the resolution of a problem or dispute; on the other hand, it refers to the elimination of animosity or end to violence. This however does not necessarily include re-establishment of peace in hearts. What is important is to re-establish a normal relationship, resume communication and go beyond the dispute. From this vantage point, reconciliation has a pragmatic character; it is a language of learning to live with others, in pluralistic society, and to manage conflicts peacefully.<sup>15</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI describes it further as “restoration of relationships between people through the settlement of differences and removal of obstacles to their relationships in their experience of God’s love.”<sup>16</sup> The two descriptions of reconciliation in the synod document emphasized restoration of relationships, which does not necessarily include an experience of peace. In this context, it is a path toward achieving true peace. Peace is achieved when the human heart experiences healing from past wounds, presupposing that peace proceeded from the heart where the memory was purified of past wounds and wrongs. This is basically the work of forgiveness when it is offered and accepted, noting equally the subtle difference between reconciliation and forgiveness.<sup>17</sup>

The synod fathers, in considering ways of dealing with the synod’s concern for reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa, focused on some established societal structures which could provide the platform for further evangelization to foster these goals. These structures were the major areas of apostolate: the Church, health institutions, educational institutions, formation programmes and the means of social communication. There were further discussions on the available spiritual resources that would facilitate and sustain the Church’s mission in those areas.

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<sup>15</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no. 68.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.20 (Vatican Web site November 11, 2011), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html) (accessed April 15, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no. 70.

Finally, while considering the pastoral application of the propositions of the Second Synod of Africa, one can see the example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)<sup>18</sup> of South Africa as a practical model of how reconciliation could be worked out in a typical African fashion. This example, as I will explain further in chapter four, is not meant to be appropriated or copied for other African context but to learn from it. According to Graeme Simpson, “the most important aspect of South Africa’s transformation from authoritarianism to a constitutional democracy was that it happened, not by revolution or force of arms, but through dialogue and an eventual negotiated settlement.”<sup>19</sup> This shows that “dialogue” and “negotiated settlement” were the underlying principles that girded the TRC, being an important lesson for African Christians because it discourages violence and promotes peaceful negotiations. The TRC, by integrating Christian values such as “truth,” “healing” and “forgiveness” in the reconciliation process, offers a model to African Christians of a path to fostering reconciliation, justice and peace in society. Megan Shore points clearly to the positive role that religious leadership and language can play in contemporary conflicts as what is remarkable in case of the South African TRC.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, for an effective and sustained process of reconciliation, justice and peace to emerge on African soil, African Christianity will have to understand the crucial role of her mission in society. Africa, like the West, is becoming increasingly more secular in nature; hence the need for the church to be more proactive and engaging with government and other non-religious agencies on the path of reconciliation, justice and peace. The South African

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<sup>18</sup> In this thesis, the term TRC refers to Truth and Reconciliation Commission .Here TRC will constantly feature in reference to the above.

<sup>19</sup> Graeme Simpson, *A Brief Evaluation of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Some lessons for Societies in Transition* (Oct. 1998) <http://www.csvr.org.za/index.php/publications/1724-a-brief-evaluation-of-south-africas-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-some-lessons-for-societies-in-transition.html>. (accessed September 15, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Megan Shore, *Religious and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (England: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), ix.

TRC has given reason to believe that collaborative method can help to implement the synod's proposals in Africa's social context. However, I feel obliged to ask this question: Why has the example of the TRC of South Africa not worked in other contexts? The point of our reflection could be the Rwandan truth commission versus the Rwandan genocide.

## **1.2 Thesis Statement**

The central theme of this thesis is that, despite the socio-political and economic problems and challenges that threaten the continent of Africa, the Church remains 'salt and light,' and can be a model and instrument of reconciliation, justice and peace. In the spirit of the Second African Synod, the thesis will demonstrate theological and practical steps toward addressing the problems and challenges which African social context poses to the realization of God's kingdom in Africa.

## **1.3 Methodology**

This thesis will be expository in approach, with an in-depth analysis of current realities and lived experiences in African society and Church, as articulated in the synodal and post-synodal documents of the Second Synod of Africa. I shall consider the major theological theme and its message to verify its significance and appropriateness toward the overall purpose of the study. I shall demonstrate the TRC as a workable African model of reconciliation, showing that the message of the Second Synod of Africa can be a lesson for Africa. I will do so by drawing out the common elements which can ground reconciliation in African society. Even though this thesis will not be comparative in nature, drawing from the example of South Africa will assist in demonstrating the possibility of inculturated approaches to reconciliation, as the successes and limitations of the TRC show.

The materials for this analysis will be the Synodal and Post-Synodal documents of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. These include "*Lineamenta of*

*the Second African Synod*<sup>21</sup>, “*Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod*”<sup>22</sup>, “*Africae Munus of Pope Benedict XVI*”<sup>23</sup>, “*The Synod’s Message to the People of God*”<sup>24</sup> and the “*List of Final Propositions of the Second African Synod*”<sup>25</sup>. These will constitute my primary sources. I will also rely heavily on magisterial sources, especially those documents relating to the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. I will draw extensively from the reflections and commentaries of some authors who have written on the Second Synod of Africa. The contributions and insights of some African theologians on reconciliation, justice and peace in the African social context will also be helpful and relevant in my analysis. Finally, I will also refer to books and articles that discuss the South African TRC, as well as other truth and reconciliation commissions in Africa.

This research is significant, because by looking at the project of the Second Synod of Africa and the efforts of the South African TRC, I will demonstrate how the contributions of religion, especially the Christian religion, can play a significant role toward responding to the problems and challenges which the African social context poses toward realising God’s kingdom in Africa. It will also show how the overall efforts of Christianity will bring about a much-needed social transformation in the African continent.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, 2006*, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20060627\\_ii-assembly-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20060627_ii-assembly-africa_en.html).(accessed November 17, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace, 2009*, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20090319\\_instrlabor-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20090319_instrlabor-africa_en.html).(accessed November 17, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html).(accessed November 17, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Synod of Bishops II, *Message to the People of God of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops* [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20091023\\_message-synod\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091023_message-synod_en.html)(accessed November 17, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Synod Episcoporum II, Finalis Propositionum, “Coetus Specialis Pro Africa,” The church in Africa in service to reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” (Mt 5:13, 14) [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20091023\\_elenco-prop-finali\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091023_elenco-prop-finali_en.html)(accessed November 17, 2013).

The thesis will examine the existential question of why the Church cannot remain mute in the face of the current crises facing the African continent, but continue to exercise her prophetic role and be the “voice of the voiceless,” as Pope John Paul II wisely articulated<sup>26</sup>

#### **1.4 Procedure**

The balance of the thesis will be divided into four chapters. These are preceded by this general introduction, chapter one, which presents an overview of the task of this thesis. This task is to present a thematic study of the documents of the Second African Synod, and some proposals on how to appropriate the message in the African social context, drawing from local practices for reconciliation such as the South African TRC.

In chapter two, I will discuss the theme and message of the Second African Synod, starting with an examination of some of the questions and issues that were highlighted in the First African Synod which have not been fully implemented. I will then carefully examine the scope and context of the terms reconciliation, justice and peace, to determine the range of their application in the synodal and post-synodal documents. I shall also explore the ecclesiological images (Church as family of God, and as salt and light of the world) used in describing the kind of Church in Second Synod of Africa which has this central mission of reconciliation. I will highlight how these images help the Church in understanding, as she seeks to accomplish her mission of reconciliation, justice and peace among the faithful and in African society.

Chapter three will historicize the challenges of reconciliation in the African social context. It will focus more specifically on the major challenges and problems confronting

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<sup>26</sup> See John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa*, no.70.

Africa's socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural life. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Second African Synod reveals some of these current situations as both complex and new ways, because of the current instability of many African countries. These will require new approaches and strategies. In addition, the *Lineamenta* of the Second African Synod expressed quite succinctly "that the synod fathers will have to confront the complex and not always favourable current situation in Africa, using the tool of light and Christian charity."<sup>27</sup> This chapter shall focus on these challenges from two major perspectives, namely: 1) how they affect the ministry of the Church; 2) how they affect people's lives in their society.

In chapter four, I shall examine the structures and institutions in place that will translate the African synodal proposals into pastoral actions. These structures and institutions shall provide the channel through which reconciliation, justice and peace will be experienced in African society. Furthermore, I shall consider the spiritual resources available that will aid in accomplishing and sustaining the work of reconciliation, justice and peace in African society.

Chapter five will demonstrate how to implement the proposals and recommendations of the Second African Synod by using local resources, as clearly set forth by the TRC. I will give a brief synopsis of the TRC, noting strongly the role and function religion assumed in nation rebuilding in South Africa. The TRC, in collaboration with religious agencies, employed the tool of "truth-telling" in fostering justice and reconciliation. This reveals the efficacy of collaboration between religion and government agencies in national rebuilding. I will further highlight elements which appear to be common ground for reconciliation, justice and peace to take place. The use of South Africa as a case study gives credence to African

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<sup>27</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, Preface.

initiatives for reconciliation and the need for a “theology of reconciliation” in Africa. As

Megan Shore argues:

The way the TRC sought to unite South Africa was through *Ubuntu*, an approach to reconciliation that recognises a sense of duty that respects mutuality of humanity and the moral order. Forgiveness and reconciliation coupled with *Ubuntu* raised recognition of mutual humanity and expanded the moral community by insisting that, if one is damaged, then the entire community is damaged. The way to heal this was to work towards reconciliation through justice, and *Ubuntu* became the facilitator.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, I will build on the entire discussion and draw its pastoral implications for the grassroots practice of reconciliation, justice and peace for local churches and dioceses.

The general evaluation and conclusion will present the goals and process which informed this research. I will present a summary of the salient themes that captured the significance of this research: how reconciliation, justice and peace satisfy what is currently needed in African Church and society.

Lastly, this thesis will reiterate the clarion call for all hands to be on deck for reconciliation, justice and peace, to be achieved as great fruit of God’s kingdom.

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<sup>28</sup> See Megan Shore, *Religious and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 27.

## **Chapter 2 The Message of the Second African Synod on Reconciliation Justice and Peace**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This study opens with a wide-ranging discussion on the theme and message of the Second African Synod, starting with an examination of some of the questions and issues that were highlighted in the First African Synod which have not been fully implemented. I will also carefully examine the scope and context of the terms reconciliation, justice and peace, to determine the range of their application in the synodal and post-synodal documents. I shall then explore the ecclesiological images (Church as family of God, and as salt and light of the world) used in describing the kind of Church in Second Synod of Africa which has this central mission of reconciliation. I shall then proceed to highlight how these images help the Church in herself understanding as she seeks to accomplish her mission of reconciliation, justice and peace among the faithful and in African society.

### **2.2 From the First African Synod to the Second African Synod**

The First African Synod, which took place in Rome from 10 April to 8 May, was the first significant effort made by the universal church to focus on the challenges of the African continent. The movement from the First African Synod to the Second African Synod is very important for the life of the church in Africa, especially as it exposes how new contexts have emerged in Africa between the two synods, and how these affect and pose fresh challenges to the emerging trend in African Christianity. Orobator expressed this movement vividly in his remark:

A synod marks a pivotal event in the life of the church; in theological terms it represents a *kairos* for the church, an opportune moment to take stock of its history and experience, to assess its context and challenges, and to rekindle its hope and aspirations. As such, a synod involves a process that brings the past, present and

future realities of the church into sharper focus. More importantly, it is a communal event that takes the form of conversation.<sup>29</sup>

Undoubtedly, records show that African society between the periods ranging from 1994 to 2009 witnessed both positive and negative events in the socio-political, economic and cultural life of African society. The process, conditions and the historical background that warranted the First African Synod provide a powerful insight in tracing the movement from the first to the Second African Synod.

The First Synod of Africa reflected on the theme “*The Church in Africa and her Evangelising Mission towards the year 2000: ‘you shall be my witnesses’ (Acts 1:8),*” and was presented in the lineamenta in two major sections. Following a brief history of evangelization in Africa, the first part identified and analysed five different tasks of evangelization in Africa, namely: proclamation of the good news of salvation, inculturation, dialogue, justice and peace, and the means of social communications.<sup>30</sup> These issues were prioritized as urgent at the time the synod was convoked, against a background of a predominantly pessimistic worldview of Africa, and against a background of peculiarly challenging, deplorable and unfavourable situations of the continent for the evangelising mission of the church in the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it was also described as a synod of resurrection and hope and it was expected to mark a turning point in the history of the continent.<sup>31</sup> *The Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* identified several facets of this new African reality. It is clear that the continent and its church are not yet out of the woods, but they can still rejoice in their achievement and positive performance in

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<sup>29</sup> See Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, ed., *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Justin S. Ukpong, “A Critical Review of the Lineamenta,” in *African Synod Documents, Reflections and Perspectives*, edited by Maura Browne (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996), 32.

<sup>31</sup> Cardinal Turkson, “*Key Note Address the Second Synod of Bishops for Africa: A New Pentecost for the Church in Africa,*” Maputo, Mozambique, (June 10 2010), 1. <http://www.speroforum.com/a/34041/Cardinal-Turks-Address-to-African-Synod#> (accessed March 17, 2014).

governance, improved well-being of peoples and growth in the church. Recently, the G8 summit held in Italy described Africa as the second emerging world market, after China. It was thus labelled a “continent of opportunities.”<sup>32</sup> However, apart from signs of socio-political and economic improvements, socio-religious improvements were also evident in the continent. The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* provides an account of these, namely the remarkable increase in Africa of the number of Catholics, priests, and consecrated persons, as well as the growing number of African missionaries. These improvements were also seen in the vitality of African liturgies and living ecclesial communities; in the creation and restructuring of the dioceses and ecclesiastical territories; in the growing role of the church in promoting the continent’s development, especially in education and health sectors; in the struggle for the emergence of constituted states throughout the African continent, despite her weaknesses; and in the great credibility which the church continues to enjoy among the African peoples.<sup>33</sup>

These notwithstanding, there are still some disturbing concerns that undermine some of the prospects of the First African Synod. These are wide-spread deterioration of the standard of living; insufficient means for education of the young; lack of elementary health and social services, leading to persistence of endemic diseases; the spread of AIDS; and the heavy burden of international debt. Worse still, there are gross signs of African continental dependence on the rich countries, to which she is more vulnerable than other continents.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.6.

<sup>34</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.8.

Further analysis of the African situation from the First African Synod, regarding its success and what seems like apparent failure raises two important questions for further consideration. First, does this suggest the need for a second synod? Second, does this demonstrate the fact that *Ecclesia in African* has not been fully implemented? However, without dismissing or disputing the facts, it does not seem to undermine the relevance of the Second African Synod, since from 1994-2009 some changes were evident. The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* notes that:

Since the last synodal assembly, held in 1994, African society has undergone a significant change. Generally speaking, some basic, human problems still exist. However, there are signs which call for a thorough examination of questions already highlighted 15 years ago in the religious, political, economic, and cultural spheres.<sup>35</sup>

It is in light of these that we shall have a better grasp of the need and purpose of the Second African Synod. The synodal document further explains that “the present synodal assembly is then to be considered in the continuing dynamic of the preceding one.”<sup>36</sup> Most African pastors felt the need for further discussion on the problems already treated at the preceding synod which was taken up in “*Ecclesia in Africa*.”<sup>37</sup> The *Africae Munus* builds on the theme of the First African Synod which focused on the “Church as the Family of God.” It describes the family as the place of belonging, dialogue and solidarity. The Second African Synod places special emphasis on the theological themes that are integral to the family of God: personal reconciliation, building a just social order and promoting peace through living out the beatitudes.<sup>38</sup> *Africae Munus* further notes that the family is the place that cultivates

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<sup>35</sup>See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. no.14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Aniede Okure, *Africae Munus: Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, in AFJN 20(Oct-Dec 2011).

the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation.<sup>39</sup> That the concept of the Church as family of God was used extensively in the *Africae Munus* reminds us of the link between the two African Synods, demonstrating also how the Second African Synod does not revoke the fruits of the first. On the contrary, account should be taken of them for the implementation of evangelization in Africa.<sup>40</sup>

Even though the First Synod of Africa did not entirely lift the African continent from its litany of woes and suffering, as had been expected by many Africans, the Second African Synod offers new hope hence safeguarding the continent from relapse into the darkness of despair and hopelessness. In this regard, Phil Lawler remarked that, contrary to expectations, most African prelates in the synod would dwell on the woes of their people; instead a note of hope and challenge were offered to African Catholics.<sup>41</sup> These make the Second African Synod relevant and timely, as the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* clearly point to:

The topic of the Second African Synod continues the great theme of the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops and envisages an evaluation of the accomplishments everywhere, with obvious preference for what has taken place within the church. Since the last synodal meeting, however, the situation in African has changed considerably. This new reality requires a thorough study in view of a renewed evangelisation effort, which calls for a more in-depth analysis of specific topics important for the present and future of the Catholic Church on the great African continent.<sup>42</sup>

The Second African Synod had reconciliation, justice and peace as its major themes, but also focused on the following five topics:

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<sup>39</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.43.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Kuuia Baawobr, “*Africae Munus and What is at Stake for Mission in the Church-Family of God in Africa*” (Lusaka Zambia: 11 July 2012),1. [http://www.mafrone.org/conference\\_africae\\_munus\\_richard\\_baawobr\\_lusaka\\_zambia\\_11july2012.pdf](http://www.mafrone.org/conference_africae_munus_richard_baawobr_lusaka_zambia_11july2012.pdf) (accessed February 12, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Phil Lawler, “African Catholicism Comes of Age,” *The Synod Message*, Oct 26, 2009. <http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=352>(accessed February 14, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, preface.

- i. The theology of the church, interreligious dialogue, and the challenge of reconciliation justice and peace.
- ii. The mission of the church in the public sphere.
- iii. Ecclesial leadership and gender justice in the church and society.
- iv. Integrity of the earth—ecology, natural resources, poverty and the church.
- v. The theological and ethical issues of HIV/AIDS.<sup>43</sup>

These topics also relate in some ways to the tasks yet to be accomplished from the Second African Synod, as pointed to in the *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod*, especially in the following areas: the family; the dignity of women; prophetic mission; communication and the new technologies of information and communication; self-sufficiency.<sup>44</sup>

I believe in time the Second African Synod may be judged by these criteria, but the time is not yet ripe for any conclusions to be made because the Second African Synod is still on the way to achieving its goals and target.

## **2.3 Major Themes and Message of the Second African Synod**

### **2.3.1 Reconciliation**

Since the time of Constantine, the Church has tended to focus on the sacramental and personal aspect of reconciliation, and generally neglected the political and social dimensions. Fortunately, in recent years this has started to change. Christian theologians, ethicists and biblical scholars have started to address old questions in new ways and the political relevance of reconciliation has become both a demanding challenge and an exciting opportunity for theology.<sup>45</sup>

The shift of emphasis in reconciliation can be helpful in understanding the emerging African Christianity presently struggling with her identity in a continent torn by socio-political,

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<sup>43</sup>See Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, ed., *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, v-vi.

<sup>44</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.20.

<sup>45</sup> David Tombs and Joseph Liechty, eds., *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Direction in Theology* (England: Ash gate Publishing Limited, 2006), xiii.

economic and cultural problems. It is as relevant a theme for the African social context as for the global context. J.W. De Gruchy observes that “in a world torn apart by conflict in so many places, reconciliation is a theme that demands constant consideration in ways that relate to the context in we live.”<sup>46</sup>

Since it is a dynamic concept, reconciliation requires a holistic approach: biblical, personal, social and political perspectives.<sup>47</sup>

The biblical basis of reconciliation shows how the word “*Katalasso/katallage*” was conceptually used in St Paul’s writings. For example, of the six instances of the use of the verb “*Katalasso*” in Paul’s epistles, five of them refer to the divine /human relationship (1 Cor. 7.11) and only one to an interpersonal human relationship.<sup>48</sup> This indicates that reconciliation is essentially God’s initiative through Christ. The root of the word *Katalasso/katallage* signifies a change or an exchange, and is used by classical Greek authors in a metaphorical sense for exchanging enmity, wrath and war for friendship, love and peace. In a similar but slightly different way, the Greek word *Katalasso* translated as reconciliation or reconcile means “to exchange,” and this in turn is derived from *Katallage* meaning “the other.” These words thus carry with them the sense of exchanging places with “the other,” and therefore being in solidarity with, rather than against, “the other.” Literally speaking, it refers primarily to the manner in which God relates with us, the human “other,” and in turn our relationship to “the other,” whether understood in terms of an individual person or groups

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<sup>46</sup> John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>47</sup> Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The Theology of Reconciliation* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 15.

of people. It involves a process of overcoming alienation through identification and solidarity with the other, thus making peace and restoring relationships.<sup>49</sup>

The writings of St Paul provide the key to understanding Christian reconciliation using the images of “death,” “cross” and “blood” that are rooted in the three different theological dimensions of Christian reconciliation: Christological, ecclesiological and cosmic. In light of the above, reconciliation becomes more of spirituality or a mode of being, rather than being a mere strategy.<sup>50</sup> The sacred scripture offers a holistic view of this in its four dimensional approach: reconciliation with God, with self, with neighbours and with human community and nature.<sup>51</sup> Reconciliation with neighbours is taken as a pre-requisite for reconciliation with God: “leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:24).

The personal and interpersonal aspect of reconciliation, irrespective of cultural context or national identities, has God as the sole author. It consists of how the self relates to God, the author of our being. Personal reconciliation most likely points to the sacramental reconciliation of Christ, administered through the Church. As Onyema Anozie notes, “the sacrament of reconciliation prepares and opens one for divine encounter with Jesus Christ, especially in the Eucharist.”<sup>52</sup> Sacramental reconciliation makes sin an integral part of it, and can be viewed as a form of break from God or neighbour, and so provides the platform for sacramental reconciliation. Since it is an interior action manifested outwardly, it moves the entire person to conversion. Pope John Paul II therefore remarks that reconciliation is

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<sup>49</sup> See John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Social Changing Order* (Mary knoll N.Y: Orbis books, 1989), 48.

<sup>51</sup> Richard N. Rwiza, “Opportunities for Reconciliation in Africa,” in *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace*, edited by Agbonkhiamghe E. Orobator (Nairobi: Paulines, 2013), 32.

<sup>52</sup> Onyema Anozie, “Some Pertinent Ethical-Moral and Pastoral Issues in Reconciliation in Africa: A Way forward,” in *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace*, edited by Agbonkhiamghe E. Orobator (Nairobi: Paulines, 2013), 48.

necessary because there has been a break of sin from which derive all other forms of break within man and about him. The efficacy of reconciliation requires that sin be rejected from its deepest roots.<sup>53</sup>

The assumption that personal reconciliation provides the foundation for the experience or practice of social, political, national or communal reconciliation is key to engaging the wider African context.

Social reconciliation is a bit more complex, considering that the modality of its practice can be problematic and quite challenging. The African church has to work out a notion of reconciliation that will suit the place it has been proposed. In this context, it could mean “walking together,” derived from the Latin word *conciliare*, meaning “to come together” or “to assemble.”<sup>54</sup> Being aware of “what reconciliation is not,” can be very helpful because it is neither a hasty peace nor a managed process but has to deal with root causes of conflicts if it is to be considered genuine.<sup>55</sup>

In the understanding of the synod fathers, reconciliation is not merely religious but has a pre-political overtone, as well being a pre-political reality, and hence of immense importance to politics. It presupposes that “if the very power of reconciliation is not created in people’s hearts, political commitment to peace lacks an inner premise.”<sup>56</sup> However, according to Pope Benedict XVI, this path has to be pursued through a courageous and honest act so that victims could have the right to truth and justice.<sup>57</sup> Pope John Paul II

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<sup>53</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today*, no. 4 (Vatican Web site, December 12, 1984), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_02121984\\_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia_en.html). (accessed April 18, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> See Richard N. Rwiza, “Opportunities for Reconciliation in Africa,” in *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace*, edited by Agbonkhiameghe E. Orobator, 31.

<sup>55</sup> See Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Social Changing Order*, 25-26.

<sup>56</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.19.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* no.21.

described it thus: “there can be no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness.”<sup>58</sup>

### 2.3.2 Justice

The word ‘justice’ is derived from the Latin word *jus*, meaning right or law. It is one of the most important moral and political concepts. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the just person as one who typically “does what is morally right” and disposed “to giving everyone his or her due,” offering the word “fair” as a synonym.

Philosophers have gone beyond the etymology and dictionary definition to consider, for example, the nature of justice as both a moral virtue of character, and a desirable quality of a political society. This applies to ethical and social decision making.<sup>59</sup> It proceeds from the individual person, manifesting itself in human interaction in society, and giving society its proper statue and structure. Within this context, we assume that justice makes society truly human.

These classical definitions offer us an invaluable insight in the course of this research, as the synod council and African theologians applied it to various concrete situations in Africa. However, Peter Henriot defines justice as “the concrete situation in which societal structures reinforce the relationships of charity that enable the fullness of life of individual in community.”<sup>60</sup> The synod document did not give a precise definition of justice or its

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<sup>58</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the celebration of the world day of peace “No Peace without Justice –No Justice without Forgiveness,”* no.15 (Vatican Website, December 11, 2002), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20011211\\_xxxv-world-day-for-peace\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20011211_xxxv-world-day-for-peace_en.html) (accessed February 20, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> James Fieser, “Western Theory of Justice,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer Reviewed Academic Resource.* <http://www.iep.utm.edu/justwest/> (accessed February 20, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Peter Henriot, “Justice as a Consequence of Love,” in *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace* edited by Agbonkhiamghe E. Orobator (Nairobi: Paulines, 2003), 62.

requirements but describes problems and acts of injustice.<sup>61</sup> The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* describes justice in concrete terms, especially within the context of lived experiences of the socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural life of African society.<sup>62</sup> The synod fathers pointed to the sacred scriptures as the point of departure for attaining an authentic justice in society. With the sacred text as its foundation, this accounts for the neglected transcendent dimension of the concept of justice in modern society. Referring to the Old and New Testaments, it is evident that the term “justice” has more to do with relations to be restored, rather than something to be given out (as an object). Justice *par excellence* is that which the “church as family of God” feels duty-bound to promote. It culminates in reconciliation, of which peace is a sign. It is rooted in God, and revealed in the basic human relationship.<sup>63</sup>

The Synod of Bishops’ document, “*Justice in the World*,” clearly presents justice as being integral to evangelization.<sup>64</sup> This idea was taken up again in the Second African Synod, as an important tool for evangelisation. However, note that the transforming power of justice becomes truly active when it is associated with charity. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI posits a strong link between love and charity, stating that:

Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is mine to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is theirs, what is due to them by reason of their being or acting. I cannot give what is mine to

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<sup>61</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, nos.56-59.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.no.56.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Bere, *The Concept of Justice in the Second Synod for Africa*, Abidjan: Vatican Radio.[http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2010/08/18/the\\_concept\\_of\\_justice/\\_in\\_the\\_second\\_synod\\_for\\_africa/en3-416222](http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2010/08/18/the_concept_of_justice/_in_the_second_synod_for_africa/en3-416222) (accessed February 25, 2014).

<sup>64</sup> See Peter Henriot, “Justice as a Consequence of Love,” in *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace* edited by Agbonkhiameghe E. Orobator, 64.

the other without first giving them what pertains to them in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them.<sup>65</sup>

The practice of this can be quite challenging in Africa's social context since what seems to be charity most times, as exhibited by the corrupt African politicians, is obviously not, in that it lacks justice.

Finally, account should be taken of the concept of justice that will suit Africa's social context. It should not be separated from its socio-political, economic and cultural concrete African experience. Hence, Pope Benedict XVI advised that the task of inculturation, which was strongly recommended in the First African Synod, be taken seriously in all we do.<sup>66</sup>

Peter Henriot suggests that the theme of justice for Africa might be more substantial, more relevant, and more applicable if the traditional African customs were given critical reflection, with the aim of implementing a truly African justice linked to reconciliation and peace.<sup>67</sup>

Desmond Tutu equally supports the traditional African justice which is essentially restorative. He argues that Western-style justice, which is too impersonal, is not compatible with traditional African jurisprudence. The African view of justice is aimed at healing of breaches, redressing of imbalances and restoring broken relationships. It seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, hence re-integrating them into the community.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, no.6 (Vatican Web site, June 29, 2009), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/)

Documents/hf\_ben-xvi\_enc\_20090629\_caritas-in-veritate\_en.html (accessed April 12, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, nos.36-38.

<sup>67</sup> See Peter Henriot, "Justice as a Consequence of Love," in *Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace* edited by Agbonkhiameghe E. Orobator, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Luc Huyse & Mark Salter, eds., *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Stockholm 2008),5. <http://dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/25262/1/Traditional/Justice/and/Reconciliation/after/Violent/Conflict.pdf?1> (accessed May 30, 2013).

### 2.3.3 Peace

In all historical periods, Scholars and politicians have always proclaimed the ideal of a harmonious and peaceful social order, without being able to explain exactly what peace is or how it could be gained.<sup>69</sup>

In examining peaceful societies, there is a need to understand what is meant by peace.<sup>70</sup> An understanding that does not give recourse to “violence,” “conflict,” or “war” (at a national or international level) seems to me a major challenge towards defining “peace,” or having a “concept of peace.” It is an aberration to simply define peace as the absence of war, violence or conflict, although commonly conceived this way, Wiberg notes that “it does not focus on its core meaning and will not lead to a sustainable peace building in the society.”<sup>71</sup>

In examining some traditional definitions of peace in the academic field of peace studies, I shall focus on the notions of negative peace and positive peace, as popularised by Johan Galtung.<sup>72</sup> Traditional concepts of peace in peace studies were motivated by a desire to counteract the growing threat of nuclear war, and hence saw the study of war and its causation as a means to ensure international peace. Therefore, the study of war became the key to its prevention or abolition. In the 1950s and 60s, peace research started to develop two concepts of peace: negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace was viewed as the absence of organised violence between major human groups. This later evolved to the

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<sup>69</sup> Alfred Bonisch, “Elements of the Modern Concept of Peace,” *Journal of Peace Research*, no.2 (1981).165. <http://www.jstor.org/myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/424208>(accessed February 28, 2014).

<sup>70</sup>Graham Kemp & Douglas P. Fry, eds., *Keeping the Peace: Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Societies around the World* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

absence of “direct violence.”<sup>73</sup> Positive peace was conceived as a pattern of cooperation and integration between societies or nations, and later evolved as the absence of “structural violence”<sup>74</sup> In reality, the idea of peace-violence opposition is misleading because:

The existence of peace does not count on the partial or total abolition of violence and war. There is peace amidst great violence; there is violence associated with the fight for peace. In the same way, it is unrealistic to believe that the more likely peace, the less likely violence, and vice versa. In fact, both phenomena can increase or decrease simultaneously, or can be present at the same time and place.<sup>75</sup>

In this context, to conceive of peace and violence as co-existing has practical consequences. Reflecting on peace and violence as forms of behaviour, rather than states, to determine whether particular forms of behaviour are violent or peaceful is more helpful.<sup>76</sup> This is because the conception of peace as simply “states” disconnects a peaceful or violent society from the individuals whose actions or inactions produce those effects in society.

Following this, the concept of peace has to do with behaviours (actions or abstentions) leading to the process of self-actualisation and development of people’s full potential. Its full meaning relies on its consequences in terms of human growth and fulfillment. The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* points vividly to this idea that peace emanates from the heart of the human person primarily: “Peace, in effect, is not primarily the fruit of structures nor does it take place outside of persons. It is primarily born from within, in the interior of individuals and communities.”<sup>77</sup> The preamble of the

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<sup>73</sup> “Direct violence” here means the type of aggression that corresponds to wars and other sorts of personal, visible confrontation. Direct violence produces an effect in the mind or body of a person that affects his or her potential somatic and mental realization. It is physical, observable and the provoking agent is discernible (Galtung 1975:111)

<sup>74</sup> “Structural violence” is built into the political, economic and cultural structures and has the same ability to harm but operates at a slower pace. It is related to social inequity and injustice. Structural violence is somehow invisible, although its effects are not. It is not necessarily physical, yet its material effects are tangible. (Galtung 1985:145).

<sup>75</sup> See Graham Kemp & Douglas P. Fry, eds., *Keeping the Peace: Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Societies around the World*, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>77</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.47.

UNESCO constitution, in its analysis of how to build a culture of peace in society, observes that, “a peace based exclusively on political and economic arrangement of the governments would not be a peace which could secure unanimous, lasting and secure support of the peoples of the world, and that peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind (UNESCO, 1989:51).”<sup>78</sup> The UNESCO handbook therefore outlines the basic required principles for a culture of peace to evolve in society:

A culture of peace consists of values, attitudes and modes of behaviour based on non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights and freedom of all people... In a culture of peace power comes not from the barrel of a gun, but from participation, dialogue and cooperation. A culture of peace is a complex concept that is evolving and growing through practice.<sup>79</sup>

The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* notes that “violence” and “peace” are, to a large extent, cultural issues that call for a recreation of a culture of peace, which should be built into the political and economic fabrics of society.<sup>80</sup> Pope John Paul II, in *Pacem et Terris*, commented strongly on the need to build a culture of peace from a more fundamental stance:

In the end, peace is not essentially about structures but about people. Certain structures and mechanisms of peace – judicial, political, economic are of course necessary and do exist, but they have been derived from nothing other than accumulated wisdom and experience of innumerable gestures of peace made by men and women throughout history who kept hope and have not given in to discouragement... Gestures of peace create a tradition and a culture of peace.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Joseph De Rivera, Assessing the Basis for a Culture of Peace in Contemporary, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 5, (2004), 532. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4149612> (accessed 2 March, 2014).

<sup>79</sup> cf. Handbook of UNESCO and A Culture of Peace: Promoting a Global Movement (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2005), 16-17.

<sup>80</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.76.

<sup>81</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace: “Pacem in Terris,”* no.9 (Vatican Website, December 17, 2003),

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20021217\\_xxxvi-world-day-for-peace\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20021217_xxxvi-world-day-for-peace_en.html) (accessed March 12, 2014).

Realising this entails a holistic approach to peace, one capable of addressing societal conflicts at various levels or dimensions. The notion of “peace building” provides the holistic approach needed in a violent or conflictual situation. “Peace building” attempts to address not only the resolution of conflict, but how to build a culture that includes the prevention of conflict that leads to war, humane intervention during conflict, and, perhaps most importantly, the rebuilding of a just society and a lasting peace after conflict.”<sup>82</sup> This is very important, since for a sustained culture of peace to exist in a particular society, as suggested in the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*, that culture must be focused on “prevention,” “intervention” and “rebuilding,” as these are essential elements of peace building. With the personal and societal aspects of peace established, peace is no longer primarily human but a divine gift of God through his son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This means that peace does not entirely depend on human effort, but relies on the human openness and willingness to share this gift within ourselves, among ourselves and within society. In the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*, the synod fathers remarked that “Peace requires a ministry of the word: Christ, the prince of peace, who is our peace (cf. Eph: 2:14). This word of God is given to us through the church”<sup>83</sup>

From this vantage point, it is clear that since peace was first given to the church through the apostles, it is then the primary task of the church to initiate and foster peace in society. The synod fathers therefore urge African Christians to be instruments of peace within African society. In fostering peace in society, attention should be given to the four

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<sup>82</sup> Robert Schreiter, “*The Future of Catholic Peace building: Closing Remarks at the Conference on the future of Catholic Peace building*” University of Notre Dame, April 15, 2008, 2. <http://cpn.nd.edu/assets/14687/schreiternd.pdf>(accessed March 18, 2014).

<sup>83</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.76.

pillars of peace, identified by Pope John XXIII as essential conditions for peace in four precise requirements of the human spirit: truth, justice, love and freedom.”<sup>84</sup>

## **2.4 Ecclesiological Images in the Synod and Post Synodal Documents**

### **2.4.1 The Church as the Family of God**

This is the most adequate and most predominantly-used ecclesiological image in the first and second synods of Africa, designating the identity and mission of the church in Africa’s social context. This is clearly explained in the *Propositions of the First African Synod*.

Precisely, proposition 8 enunciates the duties and responsibilities of the church as family, and proposition 9 designates the structure that will enable the church as family to realise its goals and full potential.<sup>85</sup> The *Ecclesia in Africa* further observed that the church family of God should avoid all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism: placing emphasis on reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups, favouring solidarity and the sharing of personnel and resources among churches irrespective of ethnic background.<sup>86</sup> This imagery points to communion as the basic nature and identity of the Church.<sup>87</sup> The Second African Synod, in re-adopting this image, builds on the theme of the First African Synod and provides the structure through which African Christianity engages the Africa’s social context.

The scriptural basis of this imagery, strongly rooted in Christ’s incarnation, makes him inseparably united with our humanity. (Eph 2:11-22; 3:15-21). Therefore, in Christ,

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<sup>84</sup> Cited John Paul II, *Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace*, no.3.

<sup>85</sup> Synod of Bishops, *Propositions nos. 8&9, African Synod Documents, Reflections and Perspectives*, edited by Maura Browne, 14.

<sup>86</sup> See John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 63.

<sup>87</sup> See Cardinal Turkson, “Key Note Address the Second Synod of Bishops for Africa: A New Pentecost for the Church in Africa,” 1.

believers are essentially God's children with equal rights and dignity (Jn 1:12-13).<sup>88</sup> The use of this imagery for African social context makes it appropriate for describing African Christianity. This is further explained in the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*, which points to the African sense of fellowship as a value which transcends family, tribe or ethnicity, and is deeply grounded in the African way of life despite the alarming situation of conflicts in the continent. Hence, using this imagery African tradition, permeated by the gospel, can more easily identify with African Christianity. Family members, who draw strength and nourishment from Christ through the Eucharist, are sealed into one bond in Christ, thus making Africans brothers and sisters.<sup>89</sup> It expresses and preserves necessary values to include care for others, solidarity, dialogue, trust, acceptance and warmth, all of which manifest among members of a family. Accordingly, this ecclesiological model in its encounter with anthropologies, cultures and politics should lead to this theological reality: the church-family of God, adopting what is positive and compatible in traditional African cultures and anthropologies, and correcting all that is incompatible with it. In this sense, the church in Africa provides an example of how the universal church, guided also by a clear sense of her identity as a family of God, can engage the modern and post-modern cultures of the rest of the world as she carries out her mission.<sup>90</sup>

However, the church-family of God should not be conceived as a replica of a typical African extended family system. E.E. Uzukwu clarified this assumption, noting clearly that:

The idea of church as family should however, not be construed to mean that the African experience will set the terms for the construction of this new family of God

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<sup>88</sup> Teresa Okure, "The Church Family of God," in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod* edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, 19-20.

<sup>89</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, nos. 38-40.

<sup>90</sup> See Cardinal Turkson, "Key Note Address the Second Synod of Bishops for Africa: A New Pentecost for the Church in Africa," 2.

on the contrary, one already notices this tendency in the synod message to the people of God when it links the notion of family with the spirit paternity” of its priest. The metaphor must be stripped of all the characteristics of patriarchal dominance. The novelty of the gospel must predominate.<sup>91</sup>

Teresa Okure shares this opinion, while suggesting that the internal, structural relationships found in the present Catholic Church need to be challenged and courageously addressed Christologically, from the Gospel perspective.<sup>92</sup>

Overall, the church-family of God in Africa envisaged and adopted by the Second African Synod is one that has a firm scriptural foundation and compatible with the magisterium of the church. It has to be contextual, drawing from African traditional heritage. Most importantly, it has to be nourished and sustained by Christ himself, as its ultimate founder.

#### **2.4.2 You are the Salt of the Earth**

Are the churches in Africa seen as salt and light? That is, do they give taste to the food of life? Do they give flavour/meaning to the lives of Africans Christians? How do they impact the life of African peoples? As salt, do they preserve life, enriching the culture and tradition of the people, or have they become tasteless? If so are people aware? What do the people do about it? Hang onto their church? Abandon it? Seek to inform it?<sup>93</sup>

These are some of the pressing questions around the image of the “Church as Salt of the Earth,” which seeks to assess the performance of the church in Africa. The basis of our assessment will be the scriptural understanding of the defining characteristics of the followers of Christ, as depicted in the gospel.<sup>94</sup> “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has

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<sup>91</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Mary Knoll, N.Y: Orbis books, 1996), 67-68.

<sup>92</sup> See Teresa Okure, “The Church Family of God,” in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod* edited by Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, 19.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Ogbonna, “The Church in Africa: Salt of the Earth?” *The Church as Salt and Light: Path to an African Ecclesiology of Abundant Life* edited by Stan Chu Ilo & Joseph Ogbonna (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 65.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot (Mt 5:13-16).

By describing the individual Christian—and by extension, the entire people of God—as salt, Jesus meant that Christians and the Church must be an example of purity: holding high the standards of life, such as honesty, conscientiousness, morality and diligence in work. She must be conscientious in speech, in conduct and even in thought. In the ancient world, salt was the commonest of all preservatives, used to keep things from going bad and rotten.<sup>95</sup> The Christian as the salt of the earth must keep the earth from corruption, as the biblical scholar William Barclay explains: “The Christian must be the cleansing antiseptic in any society in which he happens to be the person who by his presence defeats corruption and makes it easier for others to be good.”<sup>96</sup>

The question could be, then: does the present ugly situation facing the Africa’s social context be a sign of ineffectiveness of African Christianity? On this very account however, the synod fathers in the *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* proposed that the lives of the saints and blessed could be models for African Christians, because their lives illustrate the effectiveness of authentic Christian witness in the life of societies, because society could not remain indifferent to their actions.<sup>97</sup> However, by referring to these African

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<sup>95</sup> Joseph Ogbonna, “The Church in Africa: Salt of the Earth?” *The Church as Salt and Light: Path to an African Ecclesiology of Abundant Life*, 65.

<sup>96</sup> William Barclay, *The Daily Study of Bible: The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 1 Chapters 1-10*(Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2001), 118.

<sup>97</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.37.

saints and blessed, the document points out that African Christians can live saintly lives and are called to live as such, following the example of their elder brothers and sisters.<sup>98</sup>

### 2.4.3 You are the Light of the World

The images of salt and light used by Jesus are rich in meaning, and complement each other.<sup>99</sup> The metaphor of light is often used in the Bible. Jews spoke of Jerusalem as light to the Gentiles. But Jerusalem does not produce its own light. It is God who lights the lamp of Israel. Moreover, Jerusalem cannot hide its light.<sup>100</sup>

The Second African Synod that described African Christianity using the image of light seems to pose some relevant questions. Can African Christianity be a light in a continent that is wallowing in socio-political, economic and cultural problems? Is the church in Africa not affected by these problems? If they are affected by it, in what particular ways can the continent experience light through African Christianity?

The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* issues a universal mandate to African Christians to engage the socio-political, economic and cultural context of Africa by identifying themselves as the light of the world.<sup>101</sup> At present, African Christianity seems to be found wanting on this path because, as George Kinoti rightly observed:

Christianity is growing faster in Africa than on any other continent, at the same time the people are rapidly becoming poor and the moral and the social fabrics of society are disintegrating. Christianity is not making a significant difference to African nations. Why should this be so? The main reason is that we...failed to apply the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. no.36.

<sup>99</sup> John Paul II, *Message of the Holy Father to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of the 17<sup>th</sup> World Youth day in the Salt and Light* (Toronto: Novalis, 2002), 9.

<sup>100</sup> T.V Philip, *Salt and Light*. <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1528>(accessed March 29, 2014).

<sup>101</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.38.

<sup>101</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.38.

gospel to the whole life and limited it to spiritual life only. (“The Shifting Contexts of Sin,” in Ryan, *Structures, Seeds*, 15.)<sup>102</sup>

Surprisingly, African Christianity still conceives the material well-being of her people in terms of “prayers” and “hope in miracles,” without proper engagement of the societal structures which could foster social justice and material well-being of the people. This is an invitation urging the African Christians to move beyond the institutional confines of the Church, and to cast her light in the continent for all to see. This means bearing public witness in the political, social and cultural life of the wider society.<sup>103</sup>

African Christianity is expected to embrace the mandate of being the light, because Africa, having emerged from darkness following the advent of Christianity, is on the verge of relapse, if she fails to reflect that light of Christ on the distressed African social context.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter offered a broad examination and insight into the key words and concepts that were reoccurring in the synodal and post-synodal documents of the Second African Synod. Understanding the dynamism of these concepts with depth is key to this research work.

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<sup>102</sup> See Joseph Ogbonna, “The Church in Africa: Salt of the Earth?” *The Church as Salt and Light: Path to an African Ecclesiology of Abundant Life*, 69.

<sup>103</sup> See T.V. Philips, *salt and light*.

## **Chapter 3 The Second African Synod and the Challenges of African Social Context**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Until recent times, the great mandate of Christ has remained the central focus of the church's mission in the world. A desire to build on this has inspired African theologians in present times to develop a new way of doing theology, based on individual context. This could benefit Africa most, as a continent with unique problems and challenges. With the primary aim of moving the continent ahead, the Second African Synod of Bishops reflected on some of the issues militating against further evangelisation of the continent, from the unique context of Africa in its socio-political, economic and cultural dimensions. The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* describes these issues as urgent, because they are tied to the suffering of the African people, and the dehumanising and oppressive situation which persists on the continent. It points further to a range of conflicts and problems which are central to the challenges to evangelization in Africa today. These challenges are unique and contextual, because life in African is relational, and bound together in a fundamentally community perspective.<sup>104</sup>

#### **3.1.1 Political Dimension of Africa's Social Context**

Addressing the political concerns of present-day Africa goes back to insights from pre-colonial times. For example:

Despite decades of conflicts, death and tragedy, coverage of issues in Africa has often been often ignored, oversimplified, or excessively focused on limited aspects. Deeper analysis, background and context have often been lacking. So despite what seems like

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<sup>104</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.10.

constant images of starving children in families, news of billions of aid to Africa from generous donor countries, the background, context, and analysis is often missing.<sup>105</sup>

Admittedly, European contact with Africa that shaped her cultural identity interfered with and distorted Africa's Indigenous political system. This problem was compounded with the creation of artificial borders by the European powers, as noted in the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*.

However, the synod document glossed over the negative impact of African-European contact, stating that "It would be overly simplistic to attribute the cause of this failure in Africa's political life to the multi- ethnic composition of states of the artificial borders from the colonial times."<sup>106</sup> Undermining this meant that ethnicism, a major principle of division in Africa, has not been properly addressed. Records show that in the 1870s, European nations were bickering over themselves about the spoils of Africa. To prevent further conflict among themselves, they convened a conference at Berlin (1884-1885) to lay down rules on how they would partition Africa. Therefore, it is not incorrect to say that most African states emerged out of European greed and selfishness.<sup>107</sup> The result is persistent social tensions which impede social progress, and give rise to political disturbances and armed conflict.<sup>108</sup>

For example, Angola has witnessed approximately 500,000 people killed since 1989, along with an estimated 3 million refugees. It is also torn apart due to poor resource control and management. As noted above, the root causes of these problems include political corruption, a lack of respect for the rule of law and human rights violations. If political

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<sup>105</sup> Anup Shah, *Conflicts in Africa-Introduction, Global Issues: Social, Political, Economic, and Environmental Issues that Affect All* (May 12, 2010). <http://www.globalissues.org/article/84/conflicts-in-africa-introduction>(accessed March 29, 2014).

<sup>106</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.11.

<sup>107</sup> See Anup Shar, *Conflicts in Africa-Introduction, Global Issues: Social, Political, Economic, and Environmental Issues that Affect All*.

<sup>108</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.12.

corruption in Africa is a by-product of Western colonialism, then it is not difficult to see how ethnicism (a product of the creation of artificial boundaries) contributed to corruption. The long-term effects of the artificial boundaries finally left Africa with many different ethnic groups within nations that did not reflect, nor have (in such a short time) the ability to accommodate, or provide for, the cultural and ethnic diversity. Since freedom from imperial powers was (and is still) not a smooth transition, the natural struggle to rebuild is proving difficult.<sup>109</sup> Richard Robbins observed that:

We must remember that European agreements that carved up Africa into states paid little attention to cultural and ethnic boundaries and ethnic groups had little opportunity or need to form political alliances or accommodations under repressive colonial rule... Think of countries like Canada, which has been trying for hundreds of years with mixed success to accommodate only two linguistic groups—English and French—and you get an idea of the problems of African states with far greater cultural linguistic divisions.<sup>110</sup>

Even though the synod documents, especially the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*, were able to name the socio-political context of the continent, little was done in addressing them. The high-level corruption<sup>111</sup> in Africa makes justice and peace quite relevant.

The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* dealt with corruption more extensively, presenting it as the root cause of suffering in Africa. The document also underlines ways of curbing its spread, concluding that freedom from corruption can guarantee a reconciled, just and peaceful Church and society.<sup>112</sup> Since the fight against

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<sup>109</sup> See Anup Shar, *Conflicts in Africa-Introduction, Global Issues: Social, Political, Economic, and Environmental Issues that Affect All* .

<sup>110</sup> Richard H. Robbins, *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism* (New York: Allyn and Bacon Press, 2002), 302.

<sup>111</sup> The notion of “Corruption” does not designate one particular act hence includes the following elements or acts; unfairness, greed, bribery, fraud, embezzlement of public funds, misuse of authority and power, rigging of elections, tax evasion, and nepotism in employed. It could mean one of these or collectively.(Kidombo, the faces of corruption in Kenya, 3. in the scourge of corruption by Gabriel Mmassi 227,cited in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* edited by E.O Orobator.

<sup>112</sup> Gabriel Mmassi, “The Scourge of Corruption: The Need for Transparency and Accountability,” in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, edited by Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, 226-27.

corruption in Africa can be quite challenging, good governance marked by the formation of a political class which aims at recovering the best ancestral traditions in Africa and integrating them with the principles for the good governance of modern societies will be helpful.<sup>113</sup>

Megesa explains this further: “In traditional Africa there is generally no specific political structure that is distinct from the social and religious structures of the society.”<sup>114</sup> Hence, exercising authority in matters of politics and religion enhances the individual’s credibility among his people.<sup>115</sup> The aim of integrating religion with democratic principles of governance in modern African society is to strengthen the moral and belief system which will reduce corruption while enhancing moral consciousness, transparency and accountability. The efficacy of this rests on the fact that in Africa, religion unites the living and the living-dead,<sup>116</sup> hence one is not only accountable to the living, but also the living-dead. In realising this ideal, *Africae Munus* urges the Church in Africa to partner with the civil authorities toward achieving a common goal.<sup>117</sup>

Surprisingly, the synod document did not offer an in-depth analysis of how colonialism sowed the seed of political corruption in Africa and destabilized the African states. Overall, the synod has not addressed the issue of corruption sufficiently in Africa.

Similarly, there is clearly another oversight in the synod documents over the recent Chinese economic interest in Africa. This new concern could be another source of political corruption embroiling the continent. Available records show that in the first three quarters of

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<sup>113</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no 11.

<sup>114</sup> Laurenti Megasa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1997), 245.

<sup>115</sup> See Gabriel Mmassi, “The Scourge of Corruption: The Need for Transparency and Accountability,” in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: The Second African Synod*, edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, 232.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.230.

<sup>117</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.80.

2007 alone, trade between China and Africa was just over \$50 billion, a 42% increase in just one year. Upwards of 750,000 Chinese people have recently lived or worked in Africa. Chinese companies have reportedly received half of the new public works contracts in Africa in recent years.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless the rise of China has brought some attention to the social consequences of unconditioned wealth. China has shown a willingness to spend foreign currency reserves in ways often spurned by the West, such as buying oil from a pariah regime in Sudan, supporting Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, building roads in Gabon and developing mines in Zambia. China's activities raise serious questions about how human rights will be enforced in an era when states can obtain what they need—financing, arms, markets for their goods—without subjecting themselves to the conditions that Western governments attach to engagement and aid.<sup>119</sup> A statement by Sierra Leone's ambassador to China confirms this attitude:

We like Chinese investment because we have one meeting, we discuss what they want to do, and then they do it... there are no benchmarks and preconditions, no environmental impact assessment. If a G8 country had offered to rebuild the stadium, we'd still be having meetings about it.<sup>120</sup>

Another important consideration is that deals concluded with China provide more opportunities for leaders to enrich themselves, than do deals with the West. These play out in two distinct ways:

First, China does not require recipient countries to implement the kinds of anti-corruption measures that many Western governments and institutions require. For China, the project is paramount; what the recipients of its trade or aid do with the money is not the primary concern. Second, China does not appear to monitor whether individual leaders have inappropriately enriched themselves with funds from a

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<sup>118</sup>Patrick J.Kennan, "Curse or Cure-China, Africa, and the Effects of Unconditional Wealth," *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, 27, no. 1 Article 4, (2009):85. <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent/article/context> (accessed June 23, 2014).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.86.

<sup>120</sup>Lindsey Hilsum, "The Chinese are Coming," in *new statesman* (July 4, 2005),18.

Chinese project. China's approach not only provides potentially corrupt leaders more opportunities to enrich themselves, it also does not hold accountable those leaders who do so.<sup>121</sup>

Chinese foreign-business policy (non-interference, a clean division between business affairs and other affairs, unconditioned wealth) appeals to most African leaders, but has brought the bane of corruption among many African states. It leads to human right abuse, which most often fuels conflicts, violence and wars.

Beyond responding to challenges not sufficiently addressed in the synod documents, there is still room for further considerations. One possible action to be taken would be to initiate a spirituality deemed to be helpful in situations of ethnic conflicts, violence and corruption.

To this end, I will argue from Volf's idea of "self-donation," in his book titled *Exclusion and Embrace*, wherein he makes a case for reconciliation. He believes that the identity of persons and how they relate to the other ought to be determined by the model God has given humanity in the cross of Jesus Christ. He argues that the work of reconciliation ought to be centred on the theme of "self-donation."<sup>122</sup> In other words, "at the heart of the cross is Christ's example of not letting the other remain an enemy, and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in."<sup>123</sup> He contends that the beginning of any conflict is the act of exclusion which occurs because of one's unwillingness to depart from one's own culture.<sup>124</sup> Hence, African Christianity as an agent of social reconciliation and transformation should encourage people (both Christians and non-Christians) to choose to make space for

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<sup>121</sup> See Patrick J.Kennan, "Curse or Cure-China, Africa, and the Effects of Unconditional Wealth,97.

<sup>122</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 22-23.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 49.

the other to enter in, but modelled on the gospel of Christ, who calls us to have one foot within our culture while also having the other outside of it. In this fashion, we can reach a way to embrace the identity of self, while understanding that the identity to be connected to for the sake of belonging—the other—can be made.<sup>125</sup>

Similarly, Pope John Paul II's teaching on the humanity and sacredness of every human person introduces us to Emmanuel Levinas "philosophy of the face," and its implications for relationships both human and divine. On page 210 of "*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*," the Holy Father writes: "I cannot dwell here on contemporary thinkers, but I must mention at least one name, Emmanuel Levinas, who represents a particular school of contemporary personalism and of the philosophy of dialogue." Terry Veiling continues to unveil Levinas' thought in his article "*Levinas and the Other Side of Theology*," stating that the "cornerstone of Levinas' thought is the ethical responsibility for 'the Other.' For Him, the Other, is in the first place the other human being who calls forth ethical responsibility, yet the Other is also the 'Most High.'"<sup>126</sup> Hence:

As we behold other human beings there is revelation from beyond made manifest in "the Other." We not only recall the words: "I am hungry, naked, thirsty, weak, human, made in the image and likeness of God." We see hear and tangibly encounter them in "the Other." ... who looks into our face and declares from earth and on high: "do not kill me," "do justice to me," "give mercy to me," "what have you done to me." This is theology as incarnational or sacramental encounter with "the Other," who is my neighbor, my kin, and my Lord.<sup>127</sup>

In summary, this conclusion can be drawn from Levinas: 1) "I see another's face. This is not my body but someone other than me. This is a human being, with rights and privileges like mine. I should love my neighbor as myself. This one who is 'Other' stands in

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> James J. Pinto, *Face to Face: Reflection on the Theology of the Face*.1 <http://www.priestsforlife.org/articles/2821-face-to-face-reflections-on-the-theology-of-the-face> (accessed June 23, 2014).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 3.

judgment of me. He is interrogating me, questioning me. He is calling upon me to respond.”

2) “I see my own face. He is of my own kind and makeup. We are all made of one blood.” 3)

“I see the Face of God. Man is made in the image and likeness of God. This is Jesus in a ‘distressing disguise.’”<sup>128</sup>

The spiritualities of Volf’s “self-donation” and Levinas’ “philosophy of the face” complement each other. While Volf emphasizes the need for the victims to welcome or embrace their offenders, Levinas reminds us of our ethical responsibility not to unleash any evil on the other (neighbours). These two perspectives of acting toward the other, modelled on the teachings of Christ, can be appropriated for Africa’s social context, especially among those African countries with protracted history of wars, violence and conflicts. It is fashionable, because the pursuit of perfect justice in these contexts can be problematic and quite challenging. Given this situation, the grace of love fulfils and transcends the requirements of justice.

### **3.1.2 Socio-economic Dimension of Africa’s Social Context**

All African countries can be said to have achieved political independence, but it is doubtful if the same holds true in the economic debate.

Africa’s economy relies heavily on the West and China for her economic survival. It is a worrisome situation, which appears to have been atop the agenda of the Second Synod of Africa. The high level of economic instability raging over the continent in the past few decades has plunged Africa into an abyss of poverty and misery.<sup>129</sup>The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* exposed the factors that warranted these ugly conditions

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<sup>128</sup>See James J.Pinto, *Face to Face: Reflection on the Theology of the Face*, 1.

<sup>129</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.24.

in Africa, and tagged it to the malfunctioning of the state institutions that have failed to provide for the people.<sup>130</sup> The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* went beyond Africa's current situation to reflect on the long and sad history of exploitation at the hands of others, a situation that did not end with decolonization.<sup>131</sup> Judging from historical and social analysis of Africa's social context, signs of economic weakness were evident prior to the European intention to colonise Africa.

This was because European colonisation continued the havoc wreaked on the indigenous African economy through African slavery. Walter Rooney argues that the slave trade fundamentally altered African economies, which discouraged state building, and encouraged slave raiding. It also encouraged the capture of slaves for sale, and discouraged the capture of land and civilization of citizenry for purposes of taxation.<sup>132</sup> Rooney therefore notes:

To achieve economic development, one essential condition is to make the maximum use of the country's labour and natural resources. Usually, that demands peaceful conditions, but there have been times in history when social groups have grown stronger by raiding their neighbours for women, cattle, and goods, because they then use the booty from the raids for the benefits of the community. Slaving in Africa did not even have that redeeming value. Captives were shipped outside instead of being utilized within any given African community for creating wealth from nature.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.25.

<sup>131</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.14.

<sup>132</sup> Warren C. Whatley & Rob Gillezeau, "The Fundamental Impact of Slave Trade on African Economies," [http://www.history.upenn.edu/economichistoryforum/docs/whatley\\_10.pdf](http://www.history.upenn.edu/economichistoryforum/docs/whatley_10.pdf) (accessed March 29, 2014).

<sup>133</sup> Walter Rooney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, translated by Joaquin Arriola (London and Tanzanian publishing house, Dar-Es-Salaam, 1973), 151. [http://www.blackherbals.com/walter\\_rodney.pdf](http://www.blackherbals.com/walter_rodney.pdf) (accessed March 27, 2014).

Slave trading resulted in loss of African population, thereby destabilizing the economic base of Africa in agriculture and industry. This is highly relevant to the issue of socio-economic development.<sup>134</sup>

Empirical data show that between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries more than 13 million slaves were captured in Africa and transported across the Atlantic. 77 percent of these slaves (10.1 million) were produced along the west and west-central coasts of Africa during the 184 years between 1701 and 1885.<sup>135</sup> According to Patrick Manning, the total effect of slave trading in Africa by 1850 would have been twice of what it was by then supposing that slave trade did not take place.<sup>136</sup>

The synod documents seem to have offered a mere social analysis of Africa's economic problems, but without naming the context properly. The questions that need to be asked are: 1) prior to slave trade and colonialism, did Africans engage in any form of business like buying and selling? 2) Were the principles that governed these still the same, or replaced with Western economic principles? 3) Is it possible that the African continent may be suffering from some kind of economic alienation? 4) What measures can be taken or put in place to help Africa play a major role in the current global market economy (globalization)?

These questions invite Africans to re-focus on Africa's social-economic context through the African lens. This is because "one needs to know at what point the rain began to beat him so as to know at what point it stopped," as one African proverb has it. It is even more worrying in realising that Africa is rich in human and natural resources, yet she is

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 151-154.

<sup>135</sup> See Warren C. Whatley & Rob Gillezeau, "*The Fundamental Impact of Slave Trade on African Economies*," 2.

<sup>136</sup> Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African life* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 171.

worst-hit by hunger, starvation, armed conflicts, instability, displacement and abject poverty.<sup>137</sup> The synod document confirms that “Africa’s immense resources are in direct contrast to the misery of the poor.”<sup>138</sup>

A mathematical proof and social analysis can create a more vivid picture of the African economic situation. In sub-Saharan Africa, unfortunately there were 227 million people living on less than \$1 a day in 1990, 313 million in 2001, and an expected 340 million in 2015.<sup>139</sup> In other words, half of Africa’s 880 million people live on less than \$1 a day. According to Martin Meredith, the entire economic output is no more than \$420 billion, just 1.3% of the world’s gross domestic product. Its share of world trade has declined to half of what it was in 1980, amounting only to about 1.6%, while its share of global investment is less than 1%. Africa is the only region where per capita investment and savings have declined since 1970.<sup>140</sup> Of the 32 poorest countries in the world in the 2009 human development index, 30 are in sub-Saharan Africa, and the five countries with the lowest levels of human development (except for Afghanistan) in the 2009 ranking are in Africa: Niger, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone. While there are significant signs of economic and social progress in countries like Botswana, Tanzania, Senegal, Namibia and Ghana, there is general decline in most parts of Africa.

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<sup>137</sup> Mark Reckless, “Africa and the Reality of Capitalism,” *Journal of Socialistic Standard*, Vol.110, no.1323(April 2014), [http://www.worldsocialism.org/articles/africa\\_and\\_the\\_reality.php](http://www.worldsocialism.org/articles/africa_and_the_reality.php)(accessed April 19, 2014).

<sup>138</sup>See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.15.

<sup>139</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 315, [http://www.amazon.ca/The-World-Is-Flat-Twenty-first/dp/0374292884#reader\\_0374292884](http://www.amazon.ca/The-World-Is-Flat-Twenty-first/dp/0374292884#reader_0374292884) (accessed May 28, 2014).

<sup>140</sup> Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa from the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 682, [http://books.google.ca/books?id=5mz\\_AgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.ca/books?id=5mz_AgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) (accessed May 30, 2014).

It is tragic that many African residents do not have access to basic necessities of life such as water, electricity, education, health care services and even food.<sup>141</sup> This present situation worsens as Africa is helplessly dragged into global free trade, championed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Africa's natural resources are further exposed to deeper exploitation by international capitalism, which exacerbates the woes of the already impoverished African working class, showing that the objective conditions of African socio-economic formations do not favour capitalism or the global market economy.

Capitalist development has tended to reinforce the exploitative dependence that enables underdevelopment to persist. The truth of the matter remains that Africa will never witness any meaningful development under capital accumulation and market profit-seeking, which breed dissention, division, greed, selfishness, tribalism, ethnic chauvinism and the like.<sup>142</sup> Ilo observed further that, "in terms of African development and economic growth, the attempt at integrating Africa into the global economy will continue to be a failure. Neo-liberal globalization has brought destruction to Africa."<sup>143</sup>

For example, in the 1980s the World Bank and the IMF set up structural adjustments programs (SAP) that imposed conditions on how post-colonial states could conduct their domestic affairs. These conditions effectively arrested any genuine development efforts among the majority of peoples throughout the world, especially in Africa.<sup>144</sup> In the light of

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<sup>141</sup>Stan Chu Ilo, "Africae Munus and the Challenges of a Transformative Missional Theological Praxis in Africa's Social Context," *SAGE*, nos.131 – 166 (2014), 31-32.

<sup>142</sup>See Mark Reckless, "Africa and the Reality of Capitalism," Vol.110, no.1323.

<sup>143</sup>Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of Catholic Social Ethics* (Oregon: Pickwick Publication, 2011),75.

<sup>144</sup> Abayomi Azikiwe, ed., "Global Economic Crises and its Impact on Africa," (March 27, 2009), [http://www.workers.org/2009/world/africa\\_0402/](http://www.workers.org/2009/world/africa_0402/)(accessed March 26, 2014).

the foregoing, John A. Tasha advocated for an economic vision for Africa that excludes Western interference, contending that:

Although Africa has the potential to be the richest continent on earth, its present and future, like its past, remain the object of international manipulation, exploitation and ridicule. The solution to Africa's development dilemma thus lies squarely with Africans themselves. External partners can only supplement the efforts of the Africans; they cannot replace the initiatives of the African peoples and their leaders. Africa's capacity to address its own problems was clearly demonstrated during the liberation struggles, when African leaders and peoples committed themselves and resolved to fight foreign domination in all forms including the dismantling of the racist apartheid regime of South Africa. The same determination and resolve should be marshaled to effectively respond to the cotemporary challenges of globalization, marginalization, and exclusion.<sup>145</sup>

Africa cannot breathe under the heavy suffocation of Western principles and ideologies; this is an issue that was carefully articulated in the synod document, the *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod*.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, a critical examination of Africa's involvement in the global market economy reveals its lack of foundation in Africa. As Ilo also pointed out, "it does not take into consideration the local needs; it neglects the dynamic character of cultural traditions; it lacks a sense of history and is insensitive to the sufferings and poverty that suffocate the lives of millions of Africans. It is to say the least, mercenary-motivated."<sup>147</sup> In the *Africae Munus*, Pope Benedict XVI and the synod fathers unequivocally invite the church to be agents of social transformation, by fighting unjust structures and looking inwards for strength:

The church must speak out against the unjust order that prevents the peoples of Africa from consolidating their economies and from developing according to their cultural characteristics. Every people may be the principal agent of its own economic and

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<sup>145</sup> Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of Catholic Social Ethics* (Nairobi: Paulines, 2013), 192. see also John A. Tasha, "Reminiscences and Personal Reflections: Development Initiatives for Africa" in *Africa's Development Thinking since Independence* edited by Eddy Maloka (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2002), 16

<sup>146</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.26.

<sup>147</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of Catholic Social Ethics*, 173.

social progress and may help to bring about the universal common good as an active and responsible member of the human family.<sup>148</sup>

Uzukwu confirms this point by suggesting that the starting point for the Church in Africa to pursue the path of reconstructing Africa is “self-reliance,” so as to convincingly play the mediatory role in the reconciliation of peoples. He further stresses that the Church in Africa must demonstrate its ability to stand on its own, and to challenge the very structures of dependency that are the bane of life in the continent.<sup>149</sup>

### 3.1.3 Socio-cultural Dimension of Africa’s Social Context

Until recent times, Africa experienced a wide range of cultural crises due to Western influence, an issue of major concern in the Second African Synod. The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* expressed great concern at the alarming rate of poverty on African soil, noting that the three elements (land, labour, capital) that make production possible do not seem to be lacking *a priori* in Africa.<sup>150</sup> Despite this, “poverty in Africa is shocking and sinful; the social condition of the continent is perplexing; and the human suffering is not only unacceptable, but also inexcusable and contrary to abundant life which Africans believe could be found through any authentic religious experience.”<sup>151</sup>

The great puzzle behind this ugly situation has been identifying what could be responsible for the huge experience of poverty in Africa. However, it is not disconnected from the high-level corruption that has eaten deeply into the very fabric of African nations. This much is clear: poverty breeds corruption, which makes both the people and society weak and vulnerable.

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<sup>148</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.79.

<sup>149</sup> Elochukwu E.Uzukwu, *A listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 87-88.

<sup>150</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.19.

<sup>151</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, “Africae Munus and the Challenges of a Transformative Missional Theological Praxis in Africa’s Social Context,” 120.

Pope Benedict XVI looked beyond the current crises in search of the root causes of these cultural dilemmas that have kept Africa under the pains of untold misery, poverty and corruption. He acknowledged that “Europe exported not only faith in Christ, but also all of the vices of the old continent.”<sup>152</sup> Between 1885 and 1960 (post-independence Africa), Africa experienced cultural conflicts and confusion that forever changed the face of the continent. Resistance and defeat were both part of the struggle coming from indigenous Africans. Africa then developed, as it was forced to cooperate with foreign forces. In some instances, this struggle led to cultural confusion and at other times cultural integration, which resulted in adopting all the behaviours from the cultural forces, in this case the colonial one.<sup>153</sup> Uzukwu offers a vivid description of the cultural struggle between the Africans and the Europeans:

The colonial ideology is that of domination and exploitation of the colonized, intended to drive maximum profit from minimum investment. To realise this objective, the colonizers went ahead to deny the being of the colonised, their person, their culture, their world view. In its place was installed the person, the culture, and the universe of the colonizer for the realization of the interest of the latter. The successful implementation of this ideology alienated the colonized.<sup>154</sup>

The social norm characterizing pre-colonial Africa was crushed under Western colonization. Local cultures were simply diluted and transformed into a new cultural norm that became confusing for many Africans.<sup>155</sup> This cultural dilemma manifested itself in many areas of African cultural life. The documents of the Second African Synod expressed in depth these areas of cultural crises. The extent of this damage on African cultural life cannot be over simplified realising that:

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<sup>152</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.20.

<sup>153</sup> Sylla Keba, *Defining Corruption in the Cultural Context of Sub Saharan Africa*, University of Akron Ohio, 5, <http://www.ameppa.org/upload/Corruption/Cultural/Context/Sub-SaharanAfrica/Sylla/.pdf>.(accessed March 25, 2014).

<sup>154</sup> See Elochukwu E.Uzukwu, *A listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 29.

<sup>155</sup> See Sylla Keba, *Defining Corruption in the Cultural Context of Sub Saharan Africa*, 6.

African cultural heritage, passed on from generation to generation, has been a source of guidance for communities in times of peace, uncertainty, birth, life and death. At its best it has been the basis for identity, respect and self-confidence. It has enabled us to live in harmony with our physical, social and spiritual environment. It provides our foundation for leadership, problem-solving, decision making and hope for future.<sup>156</sup>

Although the synod documents are assertive on how globalization in recent times has contributed immensely to Africa's cultural predicament, it did not undermine the need for responsible actions by Africans. There is a need for Africans to selectively choose from whatever is offered from the outside, particularly options involving violence, consumerism and moral corruption.<sup>157</sup> The position that blames Africa's present predicament entirely on slavery, colonization and neo liberal globalization<sup>158</sup> makes Africa not simply blameless but helpless. This is not useful for Africa in addressing their socio-cultural context. There is a need to resort to African agency in reconstructing the contoured face of Africa, by mining the interior cultural forces within African continent and the stimulation of human and cultural development, all without minimising the historical forces that have stunted Africa's growth. This places responsibility for the continent's development on the shoulders of Africa's governments and peoples. It seeks a more problematizing the African condition that looks at the interior circumstances and cultural factors that have stymied growth and political integration in Africa.<sup>159</sup> The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* suggests that being grounded in culture will facilitate integral development of individual and communities, while safeguarding the values proper to Africa: respect for elders, respect for women as

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<sup>156</sup> Chiku Malunga, "Learning leadership from African Cultures: A Personal Perspectives," *Praxis Note* no.25 (September 2006),3 [http://www.vipp.es/biblioteca/DC\\_067.pdf](http://www.vipp.es/biblioteca/DC_067.pdf).(accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>157</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.20.

<sup>158</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of Catholic Social Ethics*,106.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*107-08.

mothers, a culture of solidarity, mutual aid, hospitality, unity, a respect for life, honesty, and truth. All of these values are threatened by the arrival of people from other continents, and the spread of the phenomenon of globalization.<sup>160</sup> There can be no economic or technological development without cultural roots.<sup>161</sup>

The synod fathers also called on African Christianity to draw attention to some of the false beliefs and practices from African cultures that pose serious threats and tend to tear apart African society. These include witchcraft, abuse and victimization of women in matters of inheritance and the rights of widowhood, sexual mutilation and forced marriages.<sup>162</sup> These issues impede the rights of the human person in society, and must be addressed.

### **3.2 Understanding the Social Context—A Theological Analysis**

A critical study of Africa's social context takes account of its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times and experiences. Historical analysis demonstrates how African-European contact affected Africa negatively, hence contributing to its current societal ills and distress.

There are many social questions seeking answers. Several historians of Africa have observed that after surveying the developed areas of the continent in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and those within Europe at the same date, the difference between the two was in no way to Africa's discredit.<sup>163</sup> For example, when the Dutch visited the city of Benin they described it thusly:

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<sup>160</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.30.

<sup>161</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.23.

<sup>162</sup> Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no. 32.

<sup>163</sup> Walter Rooney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, translated by Joaquin Arriola, 111.

The town seems to be very great. When you go into it, you go into a great broad street, not paved, which seems to be seven or eight times broader than the Warmoes street in Amsterdam...the king's palace is a collection of buildings which is enclosed with walls. There are numerous apartments for the prince minister and fine galleries...the houses are close to one another, arranged in good order.<sup>164</sup>

This description shows that Africans were capable of being organized, focused and orderly before the European invasion of Africa.

The overall outlook of the African way of life is one based on community.

Maintenance of societal order and community goods is paramount, taking precedence over the individual. According to Walter Rooney:

Before the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the predominant principle of social relation was that of family and kinship associated with communalism. Every member of an African society has his position defined in terms of relatives on his mother's side and on his father's side...these things were crucial to daily existence of a member of an African society because land( the major means of production) was owned by the group...similarly, the labour that worked on the land was generally recruited on family basis... this can be contrasted with capitalism where money buys labour... the resultant crops and other goods were distributed on the basis of kinship ties.<sup>165</sup>

This idea was promoted by Julius Nyerere among the Tanzanians, with what he called "African socialism," or *Ujamma*.<sup>166</sup> It focused mainly on rural development of the Tanzanian society. This community set-up encouraged people to live and work on a cooperative basis in organised villages. The idea was to extend traditional values and responsibilities around kinship to Tanzania as a whole.<sup>167</sup> So we find that in Africa humanity is primarily defined in

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.56.

<sup>166</sup> *Ujamma* is a Kiswahili word meaning family hood or togetherness. Its objective is to build a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities; in which all can live in peace with their neighbour without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited, or exploiting and in which all have a gradually increasing basic level of material welfare before any individual lives in luxury(Julius Nyerere 1968:340).

<sup>167</sup> Julius Nyerere, *Socialism in Africa*, translated by Ayanda Madyibi.  
<http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nyerere/biography.htm>(Accessed March 18, 2014).

terms of belonging, serving one's own, and kinship. Hence, it is not enough to be a human being—one must share a sense of community.<sup>168</sup>

The missionary activities of the west a century ago commenced in Africa without adequate knowledge and proper understanding of Africa's social context. Its negative effects were such that Africa's most valued cultural heritage was either ill-promoted or not promoted, and most times tagged as un-Christian and hence destroyed. The assumption was that anything African was barbaric and therefore opposed to the Christian evangelisation of Africa. E.E Uzukwu expressed his opinion on this as follows: "When the white men came, they asked us to abrogate the codes of abomination and taboos. They said that they had brought peace based on different ideas."<sup>169</sup> These ideas bred and promoted cultural alienation, an element that was introduced into Africa with the coming of the European missionaries and traders. For example:

At the dawn of the colonization of southern Nigeria, the Onitsha-Igbo wanted to protect their economic, cultural and religious interests and negotiate on terms of equality with missionaries and their British trading partners (west African company), whose trading terms and trade monopoly were against the best interest of Onitsha-Igbo community. At a meeting organised between the Onitsha chiefs and Bishop Adjai Crowder, the head of the church missionary society mission, the chiefs made their interest and objectives clear: the missionaries should change their style or quit bag and baggage; missionary preaching was doing harm to traditional practices and loyalties; they should stop introducing an alien lifestyle, such giving T-shirts to their members, because it was creating a social dichotomy.<sup>170</sup>

Even though the Europeans did not find a paradise when they arrived in Africa, they did however find functioning societies in which people lived reasonably prosperous and happy lives. One wonders whether the Europeans in Africa have really made an effort to understand and preserve the African traditional religion (known as ATR), or whether they

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<sup>168</sup> Gwinyai H. Muzokewa, *The Origins and Development of African Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis books, 1985), 17.

<sup>169</sup> See Elochukwu E.Uzukwu, *A listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 33.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.39.

have been more concerned with furthering European political and economic interest than helping the people of Africa.<sup>171</sup> It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the missionaries adopted an attitude of a blanket condemnation of African culture in all its aspects. African converts were required to turn their back on the whole of their tradition and the whole of their culture. Only then was it considered that the Christian faith had truly taken root in their souls.<sup>172</sup> Benedict XVI strongly opposed this idea in his message on how missionaries should evangelize:

Evangelization involves a sincere dialogue that seeks to understand the reasons and feelings of others. Indeed the heart of another person can only be approached in freedom, love and in dialogue... this requires taking into account the hopes, sufferings and concrete situations of those with whom one is in dialogue. Precisely, in this way, people of good will open their hearts more freely to share their spiritual and religious experiences in all sincerity.... the church severely prohibits forcing people to embrace the faith, or leading or enticing them by improper techniques.<sup>173</sup>

In light of this, to effectively evangelise there is a need for missionaries to first of all identify with the people's way of life. From the outset, Africa was perceived through a lens which led to extensive bias, and prejudice against anything African. Among other things, understanding Africa's social context entails a non-judgemental appreciation of her fundamental identity to engage her from the perspective of religion, politics, economics and culture.<sup>174</sup>

At present, the African continent is distressed but not depressed. Ilo argues on this, drawing attention to the two faces of Africa's social context, one of hope and another of despair, and even describing it further as homelessness. This condition is one that can be

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<sup>171</sup> Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in Social Context* (Mary knoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1992), 43-44.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.45.

<sup>173</sup> Benedict XVI, *Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith*, no.8 (Vatican Web site, February 07, 2012), <http://faithbenedictxvi.blogspot.ca/2012/02/address-of-his-holiness-benedict-xvi-to.html> (accessed March 7, 2014).

<sup>174</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of Catholic Social Ethics*, 110.

interpreted through a historical and cultural analysis. The historical factors, however, created the political structures of African nations and continue to influence the African economy, social integration and social dislocation in most African countries, whereas the cultural crises touch on identity, world view, status, gender equality, family life and traditions and the common good.

These issues make it explicit that Africa suffers from deep cultural and historical crises, which are expressed in widespread misery and ethical confusion.<sup>175</sup> Given the present signs and poor state of affairs that have engrossed the Africa social context, Joseph G. Healey argues that it is presumptuous to conclude that Africa has little or nothing to offer to people in Western countries or other parts of the world. African people have many special human and spiritual values, insights, and experiences. In particular, the values and wisdom of African proverbs, saying, stories, and cultural symbols can respond effectively to contemporary concerns of people everywhere. The African experience can speak profoundly to the burning questions of the meaning of life, suffering, peace and human relationships.<sup>176</sup> Looking beyond the obvious and current crises in Africa is a key to a better understanding of the African social context, since it provides a more in-depth analysis of African social reality.

In the midst of all these crises and challenges facing Africa's social context, we still have reasons to thank God for the dynamism and vitality of African Christian communities and churches. The rapid growth of the people of God in Africa, the uniqueness of the African experience of Christian life through worship, the uniqueness of African liturgy, bible reading and community life, speak volumes of the quality of confidence and hope among African

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.114.

<sup>176</sup> Joseph G Healey & Donald F. Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis books, 1996), 14.

Christians.<sup>177</sup> All these portray Africa as being neither helpless nor hopeless. Orobator makes a valid claim for African theology as way to make sense of the African reality, in the light of Christian faith and revelation.

Thus as thousands of Africans daily embrace the Christian faith, they come with their joys and sorrow, their hopes and despair, seeking to make sense of them in the light of faith. Theology neither ignores nor undermines this faith expectation.” It addresses it, aiming to point out the relevance of the Christian message to the experience of African Christians. Such a theology will necessarily be contextual. It does not float above human reality; rather, it is rooted firmly in it.<sup>178</sup>

The scriptural text of the exodus event of the people of Israel can be applied to the African situation in a sense. The exile and enslavement of God’s chosen race was never a sign of divine abandonment, but a period of preparation for a deeper faith experience and knowledge of the true God. African people cannot be excluded from the scheme of things, similarly to the Israelite experience. Though social problems and human suffering persist, the African people are able to experience God’s redeeming love and care.

Since the present African story is one of poverty, Gustavo Gutierrez argues that the scandalous condition of the poor anywhere is condemned in the scripture where God is presented as one who is on the side of the poor, lifting them from their misery to enjoy the dignity and fullness of life.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, African theology, which proceeds from Christian theology of incarnation but developed within an African context, can be appropriated for Africa, because it addresses Africa’s social context. This helps African Christians to engage with the situation in finding answers to the root cause of their problems. It asks relevant questions that are specific to the African experience. Therefore, the understanding of Africa’s

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<sup>177</sup> Benezet Bujo & Juvenal Ilunga Muya, *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers* (Limuru: Paulines, 2006), 265.

<sup>178</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “Contextual Theological Methodologies,” in *African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations*, edited by Diane S. Stinton (London: SPCK, 2010), 7.

<sup>179</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 291-92.

social context should focus on issues beyond the present African predicament to the African way of life. Given this situation, and as Orobator pointed out, Africa needs a theology that will be rooted firmly in her cultural roots.

I propose that a community- and family-focused theology will help to recapture the family system of African life, in agreement with the synod proposal. However, African Christianity is being lived in a challenging social context, which is a necessary foundation for transformative theology to thrive. The basis of hope for these is rooted in their cultural and religious traditions as well as the Christian faith: that the future will be better because it is in the hand of the Son of God, who is the Lord of history.<sup>180</sup>

### 3.3 Conclusion

Having examined the three major areas of Africa's social context, I have highlighted slavery and European colonialism as basic and underlying factors behind Africa's predicament in the socio-political, economic and cultural context. Pope Paul VI articulated the effect of colonialism that gave birth to this social dilemma in his encyclical:

The conflict between generations leads to a tragic dilemma: either to preserve traditional belief and structures and reject social progress; or to embrace foreign technology and foreign culture, and reject ancestral traditions with their wealth of humanism. The sad fact is that we often see the old moral, spiritual and religious values give way without finding any place in the new scheme of things.<sup>181</sup>

I have also noted some major crises confronting the continent in these different contexts, suggesting that African Christianity could offer practical ways of helping Africa emerge from her present social dilemma, through reconciliation, justice and peace. Africa should admit the various roles they played in bringing about what has gone wrong, and

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<sup>180</sup>See Stan Chu Ilo, "Africae Munus and the Challenges of a Transformative Missional Theological Praxis in Africa's Social Context," 131.

<sup>181</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, no.10 (Vatican Web site, March 26, 1967), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html)(accessed, March 14, 2014).

should be responsible for their actions. Another major factor which seems to be having a negative effect across Africa's social context is globalization, an issue of great concern in the Second African Synod. The *Africae Munus* refers to the truth of globalization as a process that has the unity of the human family, and its development toward what is good, as its fundamental ethical criterion. Therefore, the need for a sustained commitment to promote a person-based and community-oriented cultural process of worldwide integration that is open to transcendence.<sup>182</sup> The international globalization of economy and culture is one that is faceless, neither focusing on the person nor the community, and hence making Africa susceptible to foreign domination and manipulation without any meaningful or sustained pattern of growth and development.

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<sup>182</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.86.

## Chapter 4 The Structures and Pastoral Proposals of the Second African Synod for Reconciliation, Justice and Peace

### 4.1 Introduction

Every human society is structured with various institutions which are perceived as agencies for social change and development in the human society. The *Africae Munus* refers to these as major areas of apostolate. The document notes that the Lord has entrusted the church with a specific mission, and has therefore provided her with means of accomplishing it.

The church's mission in Africa has to proceed through a certain way, using certain channels that link the church to the wider society. Due to the enormity of this task, the Lord provides the church with spiritual energy and resources that enable her to accomplish her goals and mission. In light of this, the synod fathers have to consider appropriate ways of implementing the programs and pastoral proposals. These demand that they discern what structures and infrastructures may be necessary for effective action. This should be at all levels: parish, diocesan and national.

There is a need to underline that structures, even the best ones, depend for their effectiveness on those who use them or make them function.<sup>183</sup> The pursuit of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa has to be fostered in and through the following institutions: the formation programs, health, education and means of social communication, as they are considered primary and basic in every human society.

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<sup>183</sup> Hyacinth Thiandoum, *Relation Ante Disceptationem-the Gospel, Inculturation and Dialogue*, no.7. [https://www.ewtn.com/new\\_evangelization/africa/synod/relatio.htm](https://www.ewtn.com/new_evangelization/africa/synod/relatio.htm) (accessed March 23, 2014).

### 4.1.1 The Church's Instruments for Reconciliation, Justice and Peace

### 4.1.2 The Formation Programmes

In considering what programmes are suitable for the future of African Christianity, especially in engaging African society, pastoral initiatives should be designed to suit Africa as well as engender genuine transformation in light of the essence of the Christian message. The success of this project requires, first of all, to understand how well the faith has been communicated, while it remains the product of serious and diligent research.<sup>184</sup> According to the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*, this effort ensures that the formation of lay Christians is sufficiently adequate to guarantee that they are capable of facing their daily tasks in cultural, social, economic and political settings. In effect, this will develop their sense of duty in service to the common good.<sup>185</sup> Formation aims at making good catechists, and hence each catechist needs a profound formation if he or she is to consistently bring freshness, creativity and strength to their teaching.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, the objective of forming lay Christians, Mroso notes, is to “provide the church with mature, responsible, competent people who are capable of confirming, encouraging and motivating their fellow Christians”<sup>187</sup> This approach requires an integral formation that will foster a more just and prosperous society. Following this, the *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* points to:

Formation in such areas as rights, customs, peace and development, civic and electoral instruction, reconciliation and good governance, literacy, the prevention of illnesses and promotion of moral social behaviour and many other subjects have been

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<sup>184</sup> Agapit J.Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelisation: A Theologico-Pastoral Study of the Orientation of John Paul II* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1995), 217.

<sup>185</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.60.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. no.99.

<sup>187</sup> See Agapit J.Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelisation: A Theologico-Pastoral Study of the Orientation of John Paul II*, 99.

aimed at preparing the sons and daughters of the countries of Africa to become totally involved and responsible in public affairs.<sup>188</sup>

One of the resilient points, especially in the synod documents, is that programme formation should be geared towards preparing lay Christians to be more actively involved in politics. The sole aim, according to the *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod*, is “to contribute effectively to an authentic, dynamic rebirth of Africa.”<sup>189</sup> They also have the duty to set up the instruments of formation, which the laity need to ensure their temporal commitments will be inspired by the Gospel and the church’s social doctrine.<sup>190</sup> Prior to the Second Vatican Council, Christian participation in politics was weak because it was perceived to be dirty and unfit for Christians.<sup>191</sup> According to Raphael D. Nwankwor, “the Church’s prophetic role of denouncing evil is needed in the political career which is better done from within...the more positive approach is that Christians should be the instrument for the transforming of politics from authority over the people to service for the people and imbue it with Christian principles.”<sup>192</sup> Therefore, Christians must be conscious of their specific and proper role in the political community (LG,30). Their religion must inspire their activities as citizens, and as politicians.<sup>193</sup> For example, during preparation for the Nigerian general election of 1983, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) issued a strong statement of encouragement to all Catholics faithful, saying that the sacred

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<sup>188</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.128.

<sup>189</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.66.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> G.Grisez, *The Way of the Lord: Christian Moral Principles, Vol.2* (Chicago: Franciscan Press, 1983),873.

<sup>192</sup> Raphael D. Nwankwor, *Religious Pluralism in Nigeria and the Christian Response* (Roma: Domenici-Pecheux, 1989), 336.

<sup>193</sup> Paulinus Ezeokafor, *The Church’s Social Teaching on Justice and it’s Relevance to Nigeria: Thesis ad Doctoratum in Sacra Theologica Partia Edita* (Romae, 1996), 149.

task of providing in a large scale, food and other social amenities for the masses can be achieved through active political participation by Christians.<sup>194</sup>

The major idea of the formation program, as proposed by the Second African Synod, is mainly to educate African Christians especially the younger generation, on how to form consciences capable of fostering reconciliation, justice and peace, and hence helping to create a more just African society.<sup>195</sup>

#### **4.1.3 The Health Institutions and Hospitals**

Good health is not merely necessary, but indispensable toward the building of a strong and healthy African society that will be politically, economically and culturally viable.

The Church has always sought to embody our Lord's concern for the sick. Consequently, she has continued to provide health care services to people and communities<sup>196</sup> in their effort to further the healing ministry of Jesus Christ.<sup>197</sup> The synod fathers stressed the need for the Church to be resolutely engaged in the fight against infirmities, disease and great pandemics, and following the footsteps of Christ:

The church has always been concerned with health. She follows the example of Christ himself who proclaimed the word and health of the sick, and gave his disciples the same authority "heal every disease and every infirmity" (Mt 10:1; cf. 14:35; Mk 1:32,

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<sup>194</sup> *Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, Nigerian Elections, 1983* (Ibadan: W.Girardet Press (W.A) co., 1983), 4.

<sup>195</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.129.

<sup>196</sup> *National conference of the American Catholic Bishops, Health and health care* (United States Catholic Conference Publishing Services, Washington D.C, 1981), 5.

<sup>197</sup> The gospel accounts show Jesus special concern for the sick. In his ministry Christ cured and healed many of them as is evident in bible but a few examples suffice here: he cured a man with leprosy ( Mt 8:1-4;Mk 1:40-42); he gave sight to the two blind men(Mt 20:29-34;Mk 10:46-52);he enabled the dumb man to speak( Lk 11:14). He cured the woman who had suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years( Mt 9:20-22;Mk 5:25-34)in all, the gospels are replete with examples of how the lord cured every kind of disease and ailment(Mt 9:35)

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus cured all who were afflicted, thereby fulfilling what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah: it was our infirmities he bore, our sufferings he endured(Mt 8:16-17). Jesus healing mission was inclusive, for he came that they might have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10).

34, 6:13, 55). Through her health care institutions the church continues to show this same concern for the sick and for all who suffer.<sup>198</sup>

Realising these goals depend on some other conditions being fulfilled. The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* points to the need for qualified and competent persons capable of meeting today's challenges and offering high calibre service accessible to all, despite ethnic and religious barriers.<sup>199</sup> It is pertinent to note that:

The Catholic health care ministry above all seeks to contribute to common good. The church knows fully well that common good is realised when economic, political, social conditions ensure protection of fundamental rights of all individuals and enable them to fulfil their common purpose and reach their common goals. The church is convinced that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction as to race, religion, political belief, or economic or social situation.<sup>200</sup>

In this way the Church helps incredibly in the building of a strong African society based on reconciliation, justice and peace, in agreement with the mind of the synod fathers. Pope Benedict XVI therefore urges health workers and others involved in the hospital apostolate to follow the example of our Lord, noting that Jesus is the son of God, who makes his father's love present across boundaries and barriers. He encouraged health workers to approach this ministry with faith making Christ present among the sick irrespective of their condition and in this way suffering could assume a Christian value, not a cause.<sup>201</sup> African Christianity must learn to act without social barriers if reconciliation, justice and peace should remain relevant in her social context.<sup>202</sup> This integrated approach of evangelization is

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<sup>198</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.139.

<sup>199</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.131.

<sup>200</sup> *World Health Organization Basic Documents, 35ed.*, Geneva 1985, 2 see also the United Nations and Human Rights (1984), UN Publication Sales no.E.84.1.6, 103.

<sup>201</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message for The Twenty First World Day of the Sick*, no.2 (Vatican Web site, January 02, 2013), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/sick/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20130102\\_world-day-of-the-sick-2013\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/sick/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20130102_world-day-of-the-sick-2013_en.html)(accessed March 24, 2014).

<sup>202</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.140.

one that is appropriate and should be encouraged among health care workers hence correcting the old style that focused on the physical alone.

In addition, the *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* also offered hints on how African Christianity can help health institutions build a society which respects the dignity and sacredness of human life.<sup>203</sup> This is especially challenging for Africa in the face of cultural globalization. Unethical practices such as abortion and mercy killing, which violate the sacredness of human life and the teachings of the Catholic Church, are matters of grave concern. Pope Paul VI remarks that the Church holds in high esteem those doctors and nurses who exercise their duties in accordance with the ethics of their profession and demands of their Christian vocation.<sup>204</sup>

Today the health care system ought to confront the wide range of economic, technological, social and moral challenges of our time. The responses of Catholic health care institutions and services to these challenges are to be guided by normative principles that inform the church's healing ministry, which is in its essence pro-life.<sup>205</sup>

#### **4.1.4 Educational Institutions**

The Western missionaries in Africa used education as a means of evangelisation<sup>206</sup> in all African countries, noting that the natives were unlettered prior to that era. This strategy has been promoted and encouraged by the Second Vatican Council as a veritable tool for evangelization:

Education is in a special way, the concern of the church...the church as mother is under an obligation, therefore to provide its children an education by virtue of which

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<sup>203</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.123.

<sup>204</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Human Vitae* no.27 (Vatican Web site, July 25, 1968). [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae_en.html)(accessed May 17,2014).

<sup>205</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2211(English Edition, London,1994),453.

<sup>206</sup> See Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in Social Context*, 267.

their whole lives may be inspired by the spirit of Christ. At the same time it will offer its assistance to all peoples for the promotion of a well-balanced perfection of the human personality, for the good of the society in this world and for the development of a world more worthy of man.<sup>207</sup>

The Church acknowledges that the greatest effect of education is certainly more than mere acquisition of useful skills or competence. It covers the moral, religious, social, professional and cultural grounds, extending to every aspect of life and the development of the whole human person.<sup>208</sup> Education vigorously pursues the development of that which respects the dignity and uniqueness of each human person. The Second Vatican Council insists that “all men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal.” (GE, 8&9) With this in mind, Western education did not meet the standard set by the council fathers, as African cultural identity was not respected. Hosffman Ospino makes this clear: “To deny the cultural identity of a person or a group by ignoring, denigrating, or seeking to eliminate it is sinful. Why? Because to deny someone’s culture is to deny this person’s humanity; to affirm someone’s culture is to affirm this person’s humanity—both with its potential and its limitations.”<sup>209</sup>

The havoc wreaked by the Western style of education left Africans half-baked (neither truly African nor European). The synod fathers hence encouraged African Christianity to train personnel to study important theological and social questions for the benefit of society. These people shall be charged with the duty of developing an African

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<sup>207</sup> See Paulinus Ezeokafor, *The church’s Social Teaching on Justice and Its Relevance to Nigeria*, 149.

<sup>208</sup> F. Ellah, “Should the Government Be Sorely Responsible for All Educational Development?” in *Shalom*, 1, no.3 (July 1983), 184

<sup>209</sup> Hosffman Ospino, “*Foundations for an Intercultural Philosophy of Christian Education, Religious Education*,” (2009),104:3, 303-314 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00344080902881363>(accessed March 21, 2014).

theology to facilitate the task of promoting the work of inculturation<sup>210</sup> with the intention of helping African Christians appropriate the message of the gospel, as promulgated by the magisterium in a truly African spirit. Mroso rightly observes that:

Genuine African theological reflection will be a product of the Africans themselves. Just as in the past foreign missionaries Christianized Africa, it remains today the task of Africans to Africanise Christianity. This Africanisation of Christianity is an exigency of fidelity in a society in search for a new equilibrium between fidelity to its heritage and the true promotion of the person.<sup>211</sup>

The documents of the second synod brought to light that education deepens the cultural awareness of an individual, and hence the *Congregation for the Catholic Education* insists that:

The specific mission of the school, then, is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living. Consequently, the catholic school is aware of the important element in the educative process as it helps the pupil towards his conscious choice of living a responsible and coherent way of life.<sup>212</sup>

Therefore, for a sustained transmission of culture in African society, more attention should be given to the young, as they constitute the future leaders. The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* (No.133) and the *Africae Munus* (No.134) agree that education prepares society for the future, with the young occupying a primacy of position. Through education, as a matter of obligation a nation brings up its young to mature, responsible adults, in keeping with their eternal destiny.<sup>213</sup> The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* outlines measures to be taken to build a strong Africa for the future, beyond educating the young. These entail focusing adequate attention on higher studies—the synod fathers

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<sup>210</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.136.

<sup>211</sup> See Agapit J.Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelisation: A Theologico-Pastoral Study of the Orientation of John Paul II*, 218.

<sup>212</sup> *Congregation for the Catholic Education: The Catholic School*, Boston: Daughters of St Paul, (March, 1977), no. 49.

<sup>213</sup> *Association of Catholic Professionals, Responsibility for and Right to Education in Nigeria* (Sululere: Miral Printing Press, 1978), 1.

propose that universities ought to fulfil their vocation of *universitas* by being the examples of the integrating force which brings about a unity in diversity, and by academic research at the highest level. This includes sciences being in dialogue with the word of God, and as sources of an authentic peace for those in love with truth, both human and divine.<sup>214</sup> In expressing that optimism, the synod fathers believe that:

Africa's universities and academic institutions can make an effective, workable response to the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace by proposing what is taught on the fundamental rights of the human person, introducing the general public to a sense of the law of their country, holding conferences to discuss the questions of corruption, poverty and injustice and undertaking serious studies on the culture of justice and peace in urban and rural settings as to transform them.<sup>215</sup>

Students are therefore obliged to use information acquired and skills developed to transform our society into a more humane and democratic community. This means that students should not be content with the status quo as long as human suffering persists in the society.<sup>216</sup>

#### **4.1.5 Means of Social Communication**

The essence of any social communication aims at making the people involved, or their situation, better. It can be realised through truth-telling—the basis of responsible reporting. The role of mass media in keeping their audience informed is a noble service.<sup>217</sup> As early as *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “the church had insisted that our century is characterised by the mass media and the first proclamation; catechesis or the further deepening of the faith cannot

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<sup>214</sup>See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.135.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.no.136.

<sup>216</sup> John V.Moeser, “Educating the Whole Person,” *Religion and Intellectual Life*, Vol. 2, no.1 (1984), 84-89. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ehost/detail/AN=ATLA0000945925>.( accessed April 15, 2014).

<sup>217</sup> Constance Bansikiza, *Consolidating Unity and Peace in Africa* (Limuru: Amecea Gaba Publications, 2004), 95.

do without these means.”<sup>218</sup> Renato Sesana pointed vividly to the influence of social media in Africa, by citing the role and negative influence of modern mass media in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which created a climate of hysteria that unleashed the massacre of Tutsi.<sup>219</sup>

On this note, the Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* saw the modern media not only as a means of communication, but also a body to be evangelized.<sup>220</sup> The misuse of mass media can be multi-dimensional, involving diverse domains of activity and interaction including economic, political, socio-cultural, ethical, environmental, technological and in the personal domain. It is useful to present the emphatic teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the expectations of humanity on communication as a benchmark:

Every communication must comply with certain essential requirements and these are sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness. Good intentions and a clear conscience do not thereby make a communication sound and reliable. A communication must state the truth. It must accurately reflect the situation with all its implications. The moral worth and validity of any communication does not lie solely in its theme or intellectual content. The way in which it is presented, the way in which it spoken or treated, and even the audience for which it is designed—all the factors must be taken into account.<sup>221</sup>

This is because the Church is basically concerned with communicating truth and life to the world. It follows that one of the very important tasks to be undertaken by the Church in Africa is that the use of social media for evangelisation should itself be evangelised.<sup>222</sup> This is because improper use of social media would result in creating disunity and disharmony

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<sup>218</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 45 (Vatican Web site December 08, 1975), [http://www.vatican.edu/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.edu/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html) (accessed April 2, 2014).

<sup>219</sup> Renato Kizito Sesana, “Mass Media and the Shaping of the Modern African Cultures,” in *The African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* edited by Maura Browne (N.Y: Orbis books, 1996), 188.

<sup>220</sup> See John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa*, no.124.

<sup>221</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Inter-Mirifica*, no.11 (Vatican Web site, 1963), [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19631204\\_inter-mirifica\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html) (accessed April 28, 2014).

<sup>222</sup> Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa And Her Evangelising Mission Towards The Year2000*, 1990: “You Shall be My Witness” (Acts 1; 8) Vatican City: no.30.

between individuals and nations.<sup>223</sup> These clearly suggest that the Second African Synod faces a twofold challenge: 1) There is a need to appreciate the use of modern means of communication in proclamation of the gospel in Africa. 2) There is also a need to evangelise the world of information technology and communication, toward enhancing its positive use in and on behalf of society.

The Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Social Communications*, in highlighting the relevance of social media notes that, "these media if properly utilised can be of great service to mankind, since they greatly contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the kingdom of God."<sup>224</sup> The Church acknowledges that, "... a judicious use of advertising can stimulate developing countries to improve their standard of living."<sup>225</sup> The Church in Africa has come of age, and if she has to communicate the gospel in the contemporary culture, new and urgent questions must be faced. All efforts at evangelization must confront problems of indifference to matters of religion, relativism and individualism.<sup>226</sup> It is against this backdrop that the Church in Africa must devise new ways and create fresh awareness to engage the modern African society that is always in search of the authentic truth.

This is because, "in Africa inadequate use of the media in the Church's pastoral and missionary activities is particularly evident. Catholic media have not been able to keep up with the pace of demographic growth, the progress of technology and the fast changing

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<sup>223</sup> See Constance Bansikiza, *Consolidating Unity and Peace in Africa*, 97.

<sup>224</sup> See Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Inter-Mirifica*, no.2.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. no.61.

<sup>226</sup> See Agapit J.Mroso, *The Church in Africa and the New Evangelisation: A Theologico-Pastoral Study of the Orientation of John Paul II*, 228.

culture.”<sup>227</sup> The Church in Africa is being called to use social media to influence the lives of believers and unbelievers in such a way that the fruits of the kingdom will be more rooted in society.<sup>228</sup> It urges African Christianity to be truly inclusive in her use of social media, so as to benefit from the full participation of believers who desire to share the message of Christ and the values of human dignity which his teaching promotes.<sup>229</sup> This can be implemented through the use of the Catholic newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting stations; however these can reach only a small part of the audience. The real game is played in the commercial media; hence the large presence of Catholic lay professionals is the key to influencing our modern culture. This strategy should focus on younger African Christians who wish to translate their faith into the language of the mass media, allowing them to be more actively and productively involved in the industry. The hope is that these young African journalists will rediscover and revalue the richness of traditional African communication, as well as the communicative force of the gospel and of the Christian and wider African society.<sup>230</sup>

Therefore:

By rediscovering how Africans communicate, the church will reach the poor, the marginalised, the ordinary worker and housewife. Such communication will be based on the spoken word language of daily life and the communicator will be in empathy with the listeners. The old one way communication model from top to bottom from bishop to priest to religious to faithful- should be replaced by dialogue in the particular functions, responsibilities, duties, rights of each member are taken into proper consideration.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> See Renato Kizito Sesana, “Mass Media and the Shaping of the Modern African Cultures,” in *The African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* edited by Maura Browne, 189.

<sup>228</sup> Trina L. Daniel, *Social Media: A Post Modern Necessity for Churches and Leaders*. 1. <http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/pdf/dialogue/SocialMediaAPostmodernNecessityforChurchesandLeaders.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2014).

<sup>229</sup> Benedict XVI, 47<sup>th</sup> World Communication Day, Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization (Vatican Web site, May 12, 2013), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20130124\\_47th-world-communications-day\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20130124_47th-world-communications-day_en.html)(accessed April 20, 2014).

<sup>230</sup> See Renato Kizito Sesana, “Mass Media and the Shaping of the Modern African Cultures” in *The African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* edited by Maura Browne, 191.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* 196.

The negative impact of the use of modern devices in communication should be not overlooked. In this regard, Pope Benedict XVI writes: “the ambiguity that is proper of the technologies of information can be corrected by the vision of a person and the common good that reflects truly universal values.”<sup>232</sup>

Presently, and despite the huge drawbacks confronting the poor global south, Africa has embraced modern communication technologies as a life-line that facilitates faster and more efficient communication. This greatly reflects the vitality of African Christianity as part of the good news that needs to be transmitted through the media that are now at her disposal, to inspire the universal church.<sup>233</sup>

However, strong caution needs to be maintained in using Western-style social media. This is because it promotes, as it were, a spirit of consumerism, individualism, materialism and competition; these may hinder the progress of reconciliation, justice and peace, the primary goal of the Second African Synod.<sup>234</sup> I suggest strongly then that the use of modern media should focus primarily on the socio- cultural context of Africa, bearing in mind that the gospel is preached in and through the culture. This implies that the means of communicating the Good News should not isolate itself from the traditional culture and values of Africa, which also include a human and face-to-face traditional approach.

Dominica Dipio writes:

In line with Jesus’ traditional approach to communication, we need to renew and activate our human communication as the starting point. It is easy in our fast-paced world, to de-emphasise this aspect of physical, face to face communication that foreground the human person. The correspondence between speaking and listening,

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<sup>232</sup>See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.144.

<sup>233</sup>Dominica Dipio, *The Communication Needs of the Catholic Church in Africa*, 2 (September 2013). <http://www.pccs.va/index.php/en/news2/contributi/item/1684-the-communication-needs-of-the-catholic-church-in-africa>(accessed April 22, 2014).

<sup>234</sup>See Renato Kizito Sesana, “Mass Media and the Shaping of the Modern African Cultures,” in *The African Synod Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* edited by Maura Browne, 191.

eye contacts and ears unplugged by gadgets so that one is present to the other in the act of communication remain qualitative aspects of communication.<sup>235</sup>

The integration of African traditional values with modern means of communication is normative for the growth and sustenance of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa, as proposed in the Second African Synod.

## **4.2 The Spiritual Resources Available for the Transformation of the African Church and Society**

The majority of responses from the episcopal conferences emphasized this point clearly: that union with Christ in baptism, which makes the people children of God, is a sure support to ecclesial communities in their work. They nourish their relationship to Christ in hearing the word of God, breaking the Eucharistic bread and frequenting the sacrament of reconciliation (cf. Acts 2:42).<sup>236</sup> This is a solid approach from which the Church prepares and energizes herself in engaging the wider African society.

### **4.2.1 Jesus Christ, the Word of God**

The life of Christ, especially in his public ministry, is a perfect model not just for African Christians, but for all Africans if we are to pursue vigorously the task of reconciling the African continent through justice and peace. Insofar as the achievement of this onerous task depends on maintaining the proper relationships at every level in African society, the synod fathers therefore urge African Christians to examine and imitate Christ's relationship with the people of his time.

The starting point of this imitation of Christ by Africans is a call for serious faith in Christ, who is present and active in the lives of Christians. His presence makes it possible for

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<sup>235</sup>See Dipio, *The Communication Needs of the Catholic Church in Africa*.1.

<sup>236</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.75.

them to live in solidarity, sharing with the poor, the sick, orphans and widows, all of whom are identified with Christ (cf. Mt 25) as they transmit his love, his goodness and his compassion.<sup>237</sup> According to Ilo, “The experience of poverty and suffering among many ordinary people in Africa is similar to the social conditions of many people during time of Jesus.”<sup>238</sup>

Since the people of African are inflicted with all kinds of problems and social unrest, including spiritual ones, the life of Christ and faith in his word make the way for future evangelization and material well-being of the people of Africa. Accordingly, evangelization is integral and demands an immersion in the social conditions of the people who receive the good news. This draws directly both from the words of the Lord and his deeds. The command to love our neighbours becomes a call to be directly involved in concrete acts of love.<sup>239</sup> My principal question may be framed as follows: how can the word of God be effective as transformative power that speaks to the wounded heart of an African Christian in particular? It requires the acknowledgement of the centrality of the word in the scripture and Africa. The word is the active and creative power through which God created the universe (Gen 1), and communicated his will through the prophets (Heb1:1).<sup>240</sup>

Jesus Christ, the word of God, is the active and dynamic force that enables the Church to act in a specific way in African society, and therefore the synod fathers urge African Christians to be in the forefront in promoting reconciliation, justice and peace.<sup>241</sup> The

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid.no.76.

<sup>238</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of the Catholic Social Ethics*, 199-200.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>240</sup> See Paul Bere, “The Word of God as Transformative Power in Reconciling African Christians,” in *Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, 48-9.

<sup>241</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no.78.

accomplishment of this difficult task requires Christians to keep their focus on Christ, who is the model and reference point.<sup>242</sup> Drawing concretely from the life of Christ will enhance stability in the various sectors and dimensions of African society, because the word of God is stable.

The synod fathers recommend that sacrifices be made by African Christians for the effective transformation of African society. As Pope Benedict XVI notes, “his death on the cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him.”<sup>243</sup> The Church therefore acknowledges and confesses Jesus Christ, the son of the living God (Mt 16:16), because in Him the Father reconciles all things to himself. (Col 2:9).<sup>244</sup> We find here a clear affirmation that Christ is the ultimate reconciler and peace-maker in the continent of Africa.

#### **4.2.2 The Eucharist as the Source and Sign of Unity and Communion**

The most effective means for building a reconciled, just and peaceful society is a life of profound communion with God and with others... The table of the Lord gathers men and women of different origins, cultures, races, languages and ethnic groups... In the Eucharist Christ, they become blood relations and thus true brothers and sisters... This bond of fraternity is stronger than that of human families and that of tribes.<sup>245</sup>

In being a primary source and sign of unity and communion, the Eucharist provides a platform for addressing the challenges confronting the socio-political, economic and cultural context of African society. Multi-ethnic and cultural diversity have become issues of major concern, which have drawn Africans into conflicts of various kinds and capacities. The

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.77.

<sup>243</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no.12 (Vatican Web site, December 25, 2005), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html)(accessed April 28, 2014).

<sup>244</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*,no.6 (Vatican Web site, 1990), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_07121990\\_redemptoris-missio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html)(accessed March 18, 2014).

<sup>245</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*,no.152.

*Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* makes an important remark that, “the Eucharist is the sacrament of love. Since love itself abides here, there is no room for hatred, vengeance and injustice.”<sup>246</sup> In this way, the institution of the holy Eucharist becomes a reference point providing a spiritual resource to help Africans to overcome all the dehumanising factors which are present in society. Human sin, which nurtures evil, conflicts and division in the human society, is redeemed by God’s Son (cf. Heb 7:27; 1 Jn 2:2; 4:10) in the paschal mystery, where we achieve deliverance from all evil that leads to death.<sup>247</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI exhorts African Christians to make the Eucharistic presence felt in society by means of celebrating the Eucharist in accordance with the established norm of the Church, encouraging the faithful toward a more active participation in the Eucharistic adoration of the Lord, both individually and in community. Along these lines, a continental Eucharistic congress could be celebrated. These efforts would bolster the Christian morale to testify to the fundamental values of communion in every African society.<sup>248</sup> The Eucharist directs the community towards the future and the final coming of Christ. This expectation allows us to enter into a dynamic which stirs and breathes hope into the progression of time.<sup>249</sup> In this very sense, the Eucharist, which is infused with the message of hope, aligns well with the Second African Synod, which is also “a summons to hope addressed to Africa.”<sup>250</sup> The achievement of hope for Africa oftentimes entails “a bloody struggle for life

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<sup>246</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, nos.81-82.

<sup>247</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritas*, no.9 (Vatican Web site, February 22, 2007), [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20070222\\_sacramentum-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html)(accessed May 20, 2014).

<sup>248</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.153.

<sup>249</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.35.

<sup>250</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.172.

and survival”<sup>251</sup> as a path to reconciliation, justice and peace, all of which Africa is in dire need of. From this perspective, it is Eucharist that makes the Church properly speak the sign and instrument of God’s love, which transforms the world.<sup>252</sup>

### 4.2.3 Reconciliation, the Sacrament of the Church

Reconciliation<sup>253</sup> primarily is a gift from God, whose workings alone take place in the innermost depths of our heart. This special gift was granted to Church after Peter’s great profession of faith and our Lord’s promise to him (Mt 16: 18-20).”

Ever since, the Catholic Church has increasingly identified herself with the primary duty of reconciling her members in a sacramental form for the attainment of a greater spirituality that will enhance a more effective approach to engaging the wider African society in the ministry of reconciliation. The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* clearly specifies this responsibility. Hence:

Faithful to her ministry of reconciling humanity to God and each person to the other, the church serves her sons and daughters by providing the sacrament of penance, reconciliation and forgiveness. Through the habitual practice of this sacrament, Christians bear witness to the fact that they are acquiring the skill of examining their actions in life and experiencing the mercy and the goodness of God in their state of sin and misery.<sup>254</sup>

The process of reconciliation means that we are called into faith and invited to touch the wounds of Christ. In that faith we rediscover our own humanity, expressed most poignantly in that reaching out in trust. By restoring trust, we restore the ability to live in

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<sup>251</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Lineamenta, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2006, no.36.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.35.

<sup>253</sup> *Reconciliation* in this context means a sacrament of the Catholic Church exercised in and through the ministry of the Church. This clarification is made to differentiate it from the broad or general sense it was frequently used in the second synod document.

<sup>254</sup> See Synod of Bishops II, *Instrumentum Laboris, Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Africa: The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*, 2009, no. 86.

human society.<sup>255</sup> It is proper to recall that “each sacramental act is interpersonal and communal in which the covenant relationship with God and each other is either established as in baptism or renewed, as in the Eucharist, or worked out in the world of material relationships, as in the sacrament of penance.”<sup>256</sup>

It is easily observable that the sacrament of penance mends the broken bonds between individuals and God, and restores bonds with society. This is possible because sacramental reconciliation trains our hearts and our spirits to live in unity of spirit, sympathy and love, with a tender heart and a humble mind (1 Pet 3:8).<sup>257</sup> In light of this, the synod fathers focused on the great need for individual sacramental confession for the faithful stating, “I encourage all the Church’s faithful, clergy, consecrated and laity, to restore to its true place in the sacrament of reconciliation in its two-fold dimension personal and communitarian.”<sup>258</sup>

Hence, sacramental reconciliation establishes the basis and sets the pace for other forms of reconciliation in the Church. Pope John Paul II *Post Synodal Document on Reconciliation and Penance* explains:

This sacrament in itself certainly does not contain all possible ideas of conversion and reconciliation. The church has recognised and used many and varying forms of penance. Some are liturgical or Para-liturgical and includes the penitential act in the mass, services of atonement and pilgrimages; others are of an ascetical character, such as fasting. But of all such acts none is more significant, or divinely efficacious or more lofty and at the same time easily accessible as a rite than the sacrament of penance.<sup>259</sup>

This thought was properly acknowledged in the *Africae Munus* because these liturgical or para-liturgical acts express in themselves the ecclesial character of the Church.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>256</sup> See De Gruchy.J.W., *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*, 96.

<sup>257</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no. 155.

<sup>258</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.156.

<sup>259</sup> See John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliation and Penance*, no.28.

These should be viewed as preparatory for proper reception of the sacrament of penance, and not necessarily a replacement.<sup>260</sup>

The synod fathers stressed that sacramental confession is not limited to the healing of wounds of division, sin and hatred, but over and above reminds the Church in Africa that she bears within herself the same wound and pain of Christ.<sup>261</sup> In realising this noble dream, in conformity with the synod fathers Pope Benedict XVI proposes an annual national day or week of reconciliation for each country, particularly during Advent or Lent. The hope is that the idea would provide the platform needed to help the symposium of Episcopal of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) organise a continent-wide year of reconciliation wherein all the African faithful would request special forgiveness from God for evils and injuries mutually inflicted in Africa, and for reconciliation of persons and groups who have been hurt in the Church and in the whole of society.<sup>262</sup> In this way, reconciliation, justice and peace become not just a path to transformation of Africa, but also a special gift of the Holy Spirit to Africa.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The synod fathers proposed the use of some existing structures and institutions of society as channels of communicating reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa. Their merits rest on how to effectively use them in accordance with the Church's norms and traditions. In other words, God speaks to the people of Africa when these societal structures are fully used for the purpose of common good. With their focus on the Church and society, the synod fathers envisaged these institutions as tools to promote both human development

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<sup>260</sup>See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.156.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., no 155.

<sup>262</sup> See Benedict XVI, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, no.157.

and social progress in African society, while at the same time promoting evangelization that would make God's kingdom present in African society.

## Chapter 5 Practical Approaches to Realising the Pastoral Goals for Reconciliation—Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa

### 5.1 Introduction

The second synod of bishops for Africa has come and gone, but its implementation is still underway. This last chapter suggests practical approaches toward realising the synod's dreams in Africa through reconciliation and justice. It identifies and analyses strategic mechanisms used in conflictual situations in Africa, focusing specifically on the example of the TRC of South Africa. This choice demonstrates how reconciliation could be realised in a typical African fashion. Nonetheless, the synod made some general guidelines for specific contexts in which reconciliation is the key to addressing the problems of Africa, but applying them in specific contexts is a big challenge which needs to be further explored.

Being sensitive to specific contexts in evangelization, as the South African TRC shows, agrees with Pope Paul VI's statement on evangelization that, "evangelization cannot be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social"<sup>263</sup> His remarks on the *modus operandi* of evangelization in the modern culture is very important because the northern church has for a while looked upon the rest of the world as needing salvation and civilization. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, evangelization of the world was carried out through northern models, including cultural forms, patterns and processes.<sup>264</sup> But with the conclusion of that council, inculturation became a household word, especially among African theologians. It is

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<sup>263</sup> See Paul VI, *Post Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no.29.

<sup>264</sup> Anne Nasimuyu-Wasike, "Africa and The North: Dialogue of Solidarity," in *Africa The kairos of a Synod: Sedos Symposium on Africa*, edited by Walter Von Holzen and Sean Fagan, SM (Rome: SEDOS, April-May 1994), 135.

then legitimate to talk about African Christianity, Asian Christianity and Latin American Christianity.<sup>265</sup>

Implementing the synod proposals issues an invitation to African Christianity to incarnate the gospel by using local resources compatible with both Christian faith and African culture. This implies that the African Church be left free to discuss among themselves first, to develop their own unique identity and destiny. Re-iterating the statement of Pope Benedict XVI in the final *Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God*, he emphatically noted that, “Africa is not helpless. Our destiny is still in our hands. All she is asking for is the space to breathe and thrive.”<sup>266</sup>

African confidence and optimism found expression with the South African TRC, which points to the beauty of integrating some Christian and African cultural values on the path toward realising reconciliation and peace in South Africa.

## **5.2 African Initiative for Reconciliation**

Records show that Africa has the fastest-growing Christian population in the world, demonstrating a vigorous theological tradition in Africa.<sup>267</sup> Particularly, the emerging reconciliation paradigm in contemporary African theology is a sign of great hope. It addresses the existential needs of post-conflict societies throughout the continent, parrying the frequent charge levied against African theology of being removed from African social

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<sup>265</sup>See Anne Nasimuyu-Wasike, “Africa and The North: Dialogue of Solidarity” in *Africa The kairos of a Synod: Sedos Symposium on Africa*, 135.

<sup>266</sup> See Synod of Bishops, *Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God*, no.42.

<sup>267</sup> From a Population of 10 million in 1900, the African Christian Population in 2005 approached 400 million and was growing at unprecedented rate of 2.36% per year. cf. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Global Christianity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford, 2007), 5-17.

reality.<sup>268</sup> The cultural and religious values of reconciliation are deeply rooted in the African family system, which is community-based.

This cultural pattern is rich in various kinds of reconciliation practices in Africa. For example, Uganda has many reconciliation rituals among the people of Acholi. One of them is *mato oput*, which literally means drinking bitter juice from the roots of the oput tree.<sup>269</sup> *Mato oput*<sup>270</sup> is a reconciliation ritual between clans, following killings by a member or members of one clan of people in the other. This ritual concludes with a successful peace negotiation between the two clans. There are three main features to be noted: 1) It is communal, with an individual offense assumed as community responsibility and the emerging conflict communally addressed. 2) It is aimed at reconciling the living with the dead, as they are still part of the human community. 3) It is also restorative, aimed at rebuilding broken relationships and re-establishing families split by war and conflicts.<sup>271</sup>

Other examples abound where similar practices and rituals have been used in settling disputes or conflicts in Africa by various communities. These are purely African initiatives that are geared towards reconciliation. As Megesa pointed out, African countries have for a long time been subjected to external solutions to their problems that do not address the real problems of the continent. He reiterates that emphasis should be on strengthening of

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<sup>268</sup> Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees and Poverty* (Nairobi: Paulines, 2005), 30.

<sup>269</sup> Thomas Harlacher, Francis Xavier Okot, et al., *Traditional Ways of Coping in Acholi* (Kampala: Intersoft Business Services, 2006), 76.

<sup>270</sup> The practice of *mato oput* is predicated on full acceptance of one's responsibility for the crime that has been committed or the breaking of a taboo. In its practice, redemption is possible, but only through this voluntary admission of wrongdoing, the acceptance of responsibility. Similar principles apply in reconciliation rites that are performed in neighbouring regions of Uganda. Mozambique, as the case study demonstrates, acknowledgement of guilt by the offender is a crucial element in the Gamba spirit scenes. The reconciliation ceremonies of Sierra Leone TRC were oriented explicitly toward the perpetrators accepting their wrong doing. Cf. Luc Huyse & Mark Salter, *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict; Learning from African Experiences*. 12. <http://dSPACE.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/25262/1/Traditional/Justice/Reconciliation/Violent/Conflict.pdf> (accessed May 3, 2014).

<sup>271</sup> Elias O. Opongo, "Between Violence, Reconciliation Rituals and Justice in Northern Uganda: The Church in Africa and the Challenge of Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Practicing Reconciliation, Doing Justice and Building Peace," in *Practising Reconciliation, Doing Justice, Building Peace*, edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Nairobi: Paulines publications Africa, 2013), 26.

relationships based on respect, justice and tolerance.<sup>272</sup> African conflicts are complex and require well-thought-out and contextualised solutions.<sup>273</sup>

The TRC of South African is a common example that resonates with us easily, showing Africans' ability to initiate and sustain reconciliation projects. This noble event began and concluded under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, but he has nevertheless spearheaded at different times other reconciliation processes in South Africa. His reception of the 1984 Nobel Prize, his TRC leadership, and his influential writings distinguish him as the most famous proponent of reconciliation theology in the world today. His conception of reconciliation as interdependence is intimately bound up with the African concept of *Ubuntu*<sup>274</sup>, the principle that "a person depends on other people to be a person."<sup>275</sup> This understanding preserves an element of inculturation, building directly from a traditional African worldview that speaks of recovering the "primordial harmony" of God's creation.<sup>276</sup> Tutu also sees reconciliation as retaining a liberative dimension. For him, black consciousness and black theology had to affirm blackness as a part of God's creation and

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<sup>272</sup> See Elias O. Opongo, "Between Violence, Reconciliation Rituals, and Justice in Northern Uganda: The Church in Africa and the Challenges of Post-Conflict Reconstruction," in *Practising Reconciliation, Doing Justice, Building Peace*, edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, 26.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.27., See also Laurenti Megasa, *Africa's Struggle for Self Definition during a Time of Globalisation*, Sedos Mission (August-September, 1999) [http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/megasa\\_1.htm](http://sedosmission.org/old/eng/megasa_1.htm).

<sup>274</sup> *Ubuntu* is also commonly referred to as African humanism. As Gaylord (2004) points out there is a history of humanistic thinking among African leaders commonly linked with the decolonization process and African socialism. This can be traced back through Kaundas talk of "African humanism" in Zambia, Nyerere's introduction of Ujamma" in Tanzania and Nkruruma's concept of conscientism" in the newly independent Ghana. These concepts all attempt to link spiritual and democratic values with the needs of economic development. African humanism should not be seen through a Western philosophical lens, but as an indigenous process, even an ar, related to our humanity and the way our humanness is attained through engagement with wider community. It has also come to be associated with the idea of *Ubuntu* ethics which because of its emphasis on the individual and the community differs from the dominant Western ethical paradigm that is rooted in the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter. Cf. John Hailey, *Ubuntu: A literature Review, A paper prepared for the Tutu foundation*, London: (Nov 2008) [http://www.tutufoundationuk.org/documents/UbuntuLiteratureReview\\_JH\\_Dec08.pdf](http://www.tutufoundationuk.org/documents/UbuntuLiteratureReview_JH_Dec08.pdf).(accessed June 3,2014).

<sup>275</sup> Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu; Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997),150.

<sup>276</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 264.

restore dignity to the African person before genuine inter-racial reconciliation could be possible in South Africa.<sup>277</sup>

They are several other examples of grassroots efforts at post-conflict Christian reconciliation, especially in central Africa. These examples share a theo-centric vision, which traces the roots of reconciliation to God's transformation of the human heart. A holistic picture of Christian ministry avoids the dichotomies of Western secularism, and a "resurrection imagination" looks to the formation of Christian communities of peace. Though led by Catholics, their programs transcend confessional or diocesan boundaries, resulting more from local activism than episcopal fiats.<sup>278</sup>

These conform well to Paride Taban's<sup>279</sup> ministry in Kuron village, in which he offers a holistic model of Christian ministry with a full array of economic and social services. It includes homes, Schools, dispensaries, wells, agricultural fields, a hostel, reconciliation and retreat centers, and separate centers for adult and religious education. This reflects Taban's three-step vision of reconciliation. Peaceful coexistence first depends on food security, addressing the fundamental question of "I am hungry" through improving farming methods.<sup>280</sup> Second, the people must be educated, including adults who lost the opportunity for schooling during the long war years. The final step is the non-violent witness of Kuron

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<sup>277</sup> See Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu; Theology of Desmond Tutu*, 137.

<sup>278</sup> J.J. Carney, "Roads to Reconciliation: An emerging paradigm of African theology," *Modern Theology*, 26, no.4 (September 2010), 9 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2010.01632.x/pdf> (accessed May 22, 2014).

<sup>279</sup> Catholic Bishop Paride Taban grew up in southern Sudan and remained there through most of the half-century of warfare which ended with the granting of regional autonomy to South Sudan in 2005.<sup>58</sup> He founded Kuron Village (also known as Holy Trinity Peace Village) in 1997 around a contested bridge that had served as a locus for cattle-raiding and intra-ethnic conflict. Located in southeastern Sudan near the Ethiopian border, Kuron Village has grown to include over 80 families from eight different ethnic groups. Christians, Muslims, and adherents of traditional religion reside together in relative peace, and rival tribes often meet in the village to resolve disputes. Cf. The website for Taban's Kuron/Holy Trinity Peace Village: <http://www.kuronvillage.net/> (accessed 22 April, 2014).

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Holy Trinity Peace Village-Kuron, Making a Dream Become True [http://www.kuronvillage.net/exec\\_summary.htm](http://www.kuronvillage.net/exec_summary.htm) (accessed 22 April, 2014).

Village itself, creating an “oasis of peace” that demonstrates to surrounding villages that people can “live in harmony among themselves despite their diverse ethnic backgrounds.”<sup>281</sup>

These few references support the claim that over the years Africa has made several efforts toward initiating reconciliation processes from a purely local standpoint and grassroots level, and that these have proved themselves to be workable.

### **5.3 The Formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

Abundant examples of how other countries have chosen to deal with human right abuses committed by former regimes can be found in the aftermath of the fall of the Nazi regime in the 40s and in the transition periods accompanying the waves of democratization in the 1970s (mainly Latin America) and in the 1980s and early 90s (mainly eastern Europe). Besides the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals of the early post-world war II era, there were fewer than fifteen truth commissions as of 1994. But these precedents offered warnings more than guidance for South Africa. Nuremberg, for instance, dispensed harsh retribution to the top echelon of Nazis but permitted ordinary Germans to live in denial. In Chile and Argentina, the army and the police made general confessions in exchange for blanket amnesties that allowed individual assassins and torturers to evade personal responsibility. All of these cases ignored the victims and made it possible for the truth about past atrocities to remain largely hidden.<sup>282</sup>

The formation of the South African TRC differed substantially from all preceding truth and reconciliation commissions both in style, approaches and processes that informed its formation. It began with the ‘unbanning’ of the liberation movements and opposition political parties in 1990 by President F.W. de Klerk, the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, and the lifting of the state of emergency in South Africa. These paved the way for a negotiated peace settlement between the apartheid regime and its counterpart in opposition that put to rest the evil regime that had thrived for more than 300 years. The negotiations

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Lyn S.Graybill, *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 1.

resulted in the establishment of a date for the country's first democratic elections, and for an interim constitution to be enacted.<sup>283</sup>

From the beginning, South Africans sought to learn from past mistakes and develop a different kind of truth commission.<sup>284</sup> Hence, "there is no prototype that can be automatically used in South Africa."<sup>285</sup> There were two major conferences held in Cape Town in 1994.<sup>286</sup> The reports arising from these conferences were widely discussed, and workshops and meetings were held around the country to debate the issues that had been raised. This democratic approach to the formation of the TRC differed sharply from other truth commissions around the world, which had been shaped by executive decrees rather than by a representative parliament.<sup>287</sup> South Africa was the first example of a process which officially encouraged public debate and inputs on the goals, make-up and procedures of a truth commission.<sup>288</sup>

This was largely the outcome of various compromises that had been hammered out between the African National Congress (ANC) and National Party (NP) in the transitional period leading to the adoption of an interim constitution in 1993, with input from twenty-six

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<sup>283</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission South Africa (TRC)," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/607421/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Commission-South-Africa-TRC>, last Updated 1-3-2014 (accessed, April 29, 2014).

<sup>284</sup> Lyn S.Graybill, *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model*,1.

<sup>285</sup> Alex Boraine& Janet Levy, eds., *The Healing of a Nation* (Justice in Transition Publishers, 1995), 27 <http://www.abebooks.com/9780620189248/Healing-Nation-Boraine-Alex-Levy-062018924X/plp> (accessed April, 29 2014).

<sup>286</sup> Justice in Transition: "Dealing with Past" was held in February 1994 "The South African Conference on Truth and Reconciliation" was held in July 1994.

<sup>287</sup> John Stremlau, *A House No Longer Divided, Progress and Prospects for Democratic Peace in South Africa* (New York: Carnegie corporation of New York, 1997), 21. [http://www.amazon.ca/house-no-longer-divided/dp/B000LBSJHY/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=booksUT1398371014&sr=1-3](http://www.amazon.ca/house-no-longer-divided/dp/B000LBSJHY/ref=sr_1_3?s=booksUT1398371014&sr=1-3) (accessed April 29 2014).

<sup>288</sup> Priscilla B. Harney, "Fifteen Truth Commissions: A Comparative Study 1974-1994," *Human Rights Quarterly*, John Hopkins University Press, Vol. 16, no.4 (November 1994), 639. <http://chrr.info/file/Fifteen/Truth/Commissions.pdf>(accessed April 29 2014).

political parties.<sup>289</sup>To this end, it has been perceived as one of the best models of truth

commissions; according to Charles Manga Fombad:

It operated in what can only be described as probably the greatest transition of the twentieth century. The overall historical context, the transition from apartheid to a full-fledged democracy, needs to be noted. For almost 350 years, the majority of South Africans had been excluded from participating in the political and economic life of the country.<sup>290</sup>

Following the adoption of the interim constitution, the justice minister Dullar Omar introduced legislation to parliament in May 1994 that ultimately became The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, empowering the truth and reconciliation commission. The parliamentary standing committee on justice, composed of members from all political parties, held public hearings and gathering recommendations from individuals, major groups and political parties, as this would form the legislative draft. This standing committee was chaired by Johnny de Lange. The committee met daily during March, 1995 to debate the submissions and draft the legislation. The bill was passed by parliament on May 17, 1995, nearly a year after it was first presented. Concluding the debate in parliament, De Lange argued: “what makes this piece of legislation so unique is that it is really a patchwork of all the view points of the country.”<sup>291</sup> The bill was regarded as “the most sensitive, technically complex, controversial and important legislation” ever to be passed in parliament.<sup>292</sup> More

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<sup>289</sup> The final constitution was adopted by the constitutional assembly in 1996.

<sup>290</sup> The system of apartheid was institutionalised as official policy in 1948 and remained in place until 1992. Under this system, South Africans were placed into racial categories: African, coloured, Indian or white and segregated from one another in all spheres of life and activity. Non whites were denied basic political rights, freedom of movement and assembly, and access to decent education and health care. Forced removal of common place, with non white South Africans being driven from their homes and forced to relocate to rural African homelands, shanty towns outside cities with little or no warning. Any dissent was hardly punished and it is estimated that more 200,000 people were arrested between 1960-1992, the majority of whom were tortured. Cf. Charles Manga Fombad, *Prospects for Peace Building through Truth Commissions in Africa in the Quest for Peace in Africa* edited by Alfred G Nhema, 216.

<sup>291</sup> Antjie Krog, “Country of My Skull and the White South African Signature,” *South African Studies*, Vol.27, no.4, (2000), 10. [http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/docentianglo/materiali\\_oboe\\_lm/they\\_never\\_wept.pdf](http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/docentianglo/materiali_oboe_lm/they_never_wept.pdf) (accessed April 18, 2014).

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.9.

time was spent on the bill than any other legislation that first post-apartheid parliament considered.<sup>293</sup>

The legislation was next sent to the senate, where certain points were debated while paying particular attention to blanket amnesty, among other important issues. Although amnesty had been agreed in the interim constitution, the procedure was left open. Andre du Toit remarked:

South African case encompasses both a criminal regime and regime of criminals. What is then the role of a truth commission in this context? Apartheid was a criminal regime in which everyone could become a collaborator and or victim, directly or indirectly and sometimes both. Meanwhile South African truth commission focuses on gross violations of human rights such as murder and torture.<sup>294</sup>

Finally, the bill found its way to the department of justice and The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act was signed into law in July, 1995, by President Nelson Mandela. But as Liebenberg and Abebe Zegeye point out, “the process reflects to a certain degree party political compromises and not so much the will of the people.”<sup>295</sup>

The next step was the search for commissioners. The legislation required the selection of seventeen commissioners, men and women of great character and repute who were highly regarded in the community. The selection options available were: 1) The president could come up with his own shortlist and discuss it with his cabinet. 2) The president, in union with his cabinet members, could jointly compile a list. 3) Nominees could be suggested by non-governmental organizations, churches and parties, and interviewed in public by a

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<sup>293</sup> Hugo Van Der Merwe, Polly Dewhirst and Brandon Hamber, *Non Governmental Organisations and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Impact Assessment*, Vol.26, no. 1 (1999),55-79, Published online February 2007, DoI:10.1080/02589349908705070 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/>(accessed 13 April, 2014).

<sup>294</sup> Andre du Toit, cited in Henry J. Steiner, *Truth Commissions: A Comparative Assessment: An Interdisciplinary Discussion held at Harvard Law School* (May 1996), *Cambridge Massachusetts* (Harvard Law School Human Rights Program, 1997), 47 <http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/TruthCommissionsComparativeAssessment.pdf>(accessed April 10, 2014).

<sup>295</sup> Liebenberg, Ian, Zegeye Abebe, “Pathway to Democracy? The Case of The South African Truth and Reconciliation Process,” *Routledge, Part of the Taylor & Francis Group*, Vol. 4, no.3 (October 1998), 551. [http://www.academia.edu/5314969/Pathway\\_to\\_Democracy\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_the\\_South\\_African\\_Truth\\_and\\_Reconciliation\\_Process](http://www.academia.edu/5314969/Pathway_to_Democracy_The_Case_of_the_South_African_Truth_and_Reconciliation_Process)(accessed April 10, 2014).

selection panel, with the president and the cabinet choosing from a shortlist. The last option won popular acclamation, and was chosen in the interest of promoting democracy and improved transparency.<sup>296</sup>

A multi-racial selection panel that included a representative from every major political party, two ecumenical church leaders, a trade unionist and two human rights lawyers then picked 45 individuals out of some 299 nominees for public interviews.<sup>297</sup> A shortlist of 25 individuals was sent to President Mandela, and the public was invited to submit questions to the shortlisted nominees, further winning credibility for the selection process.<sup>298</sup> It was expected that the selected commissioners would work in one of the three committees of the TRC that were put in place:

The committee on the human rights violations, the amnesty committee and the committee on reparation and rehabilitation. The committee on human rights violations held public hearings where people could testify about these abuses; the amnesty committee considered applications for amnesty; and the committee on reparation and rehabilitations for the victims of human rights violations.<sup>299</sup>

On November 29, 1995, President Mandela, in consultation with his bi-partisan cabinet, made the final selection, and choosing the people they considered to be of high moral integrity, impartial and committed to human rights. They could not be high-profile members of political parties, nor could they be people who intended to apply for amnesty. Mandela later revealed that he had not personally approved of all the commissioners, but had

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<sup>296</sup> Lyn S.Graybill, *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model*, 3.

<sup>297</sup> Chaired by Mandelas Legal Adviser, Fink Haysom, The Panel included jody kollapen(lawyers for human rights attorney), jayendra Naidoo( National Economic Development and Labour Council [NEDLAC] head),Baleka Kgositsile(ANC Member of Parliament[MP]),Harriet Ngubane(IFP MP), Rossier de Ville(FF Senator),Bishop Peter Storey(Methodist Bishop), Ray Radue (NP Senator), and Brigalia Bam(South Africa Council of Churches[SACC] General Secretary).

<sup>298</sup> Brian Frost, *Struggling to Forgive: Nelson Mandela and South Africa's Search for Reconciliation* (Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 143. <http://www.amazon.com/Struggling-Forgive-Mandela-Africas-Reconciliation/dp/0002740028>.(accessed April 17, 2014).

<sup>299</sup>The Human Rights Violations Hearing of the South Africa TRC: a Bridge Between Individual Narratives of Suffering and a Contextualizing Master-Story of Reconciliation, Cf. Annelies Verdoolaege, Ghent University, Belgium, August 2002. <http://cas1.elis.ugent.be/avrug/trc.htm>.(accessed April 19, 2014).

to appoint them in the interest of national unity.<sup>300</sup> Following this selection procedure,

Dorothy Shea made a satisfied remark, saying:

[T]he selection of commissioners proved to be highly visible political exercise, the effects of which would influence virtually every aspect of the TRCs work. Aside from serving the largely symbolic function of leading the commission and setting the tone for the overall process, those who would be selected as commissioners would be tasked with directing the more nuts and bolts work of TRCs three committees (on Human Rights Violations, Reparation and Rehabilitation and Amnesty) as well as the investigation unit.<sup>301</sup>

A wide-ranging group of people were eventually chosen as commissioners.<sup>302</sup> The appointees were reasonably representative of the broad, political, ethnic and cultural spectrum in South Africa.<sup>303</sup> The TRC held its first meeting only a day after the appointments of the commissioners were officially announced in the Government Gazette on December 15, 1995, appropriately on the public holiday called the day of reconciliation<sup>304</sup> with specific objectives and mandate.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Dorothy Shea, *Are Truth Commissions Just a Fad? Indicators and Implications from the South Africa TRC*, Guess Scholars, US. Institute of Peace (May 1999), 13. <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/8075> (accessed April 16, 2014).

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.13.

<sup>302</sup> The original commissioners included Seven Blacks: Chair Desmond Tutu, Dumisa Ntsebeza, Bongani Finca, Mapule Ramashala, Hlengiwe Mkhize, Sisi Khampepe, and Khoza Mgojo; two coloureds (people of mixed race); Denzil Potgieter and Glenda Wildschut; two Indians: Fazel Randara and Yasmin Sooka; and six white Afrikaaners, Wynand Malan and Chris deJager, along with English speakers Alex Boraine, Mary Burton, Wendy Orr, and Richard Lyster, Khosa Mgojo and Denzil Potgieter not having been nominated, interviewed or shortlisted but were appointed by the president and the cabinet to make the TRC more representative of the general population, including representing KwaZulu-Natal and Coloureds respectively “in violation of an otherwise transparent and accountable process,” as noted by Sarkin. cf. Jeremy Sarkin, “The Development of a Human Rights Culture in South Africa” *Human Right Quarterly*, Vol. 20, no. 3 (August 1998) 628-665, 665. [https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth/type=summary/journals/human\\_rights\\_quarterly/v020/20.3sarkin.html](https://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth/type=summary/journals/human_rights_quarterly/v020/20.3sarkin.html) (accessed April 20, 2014).

<sup>303</sup> James R. Cochrane, John W. De Gruchy, Stephen Martin, eds., *Facing The Truth: South African Faith Communities and the Truth & Reconciliation Commission* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>304</sup> The public holiday had originally been called Dingaans day in celebration of the Afrikaner victory at blood river over the Zulus, and later had been called the day of the covenant to emphasize the Afrikaner belief that it was God who had given the Afrikaner the victory. Cf. Lyn S. Graybill, *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Miracle or Model*, 9.

<sup>305</sup> Establishing as complete a picture as possible of the crimes, nature and extent of gross violations of human rights which were committed during the period from 1 march 1960 to the cut off date 1990), including the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations, as well as the perspectives of the victims and the motives and perspectives of the persons responsible for the commission of violations, by conducting investigations and holding hearings; facilitating the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective and comply with requirements of this Act. Cf. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*. Vol.1. South Africa: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998. 55.

## 5.4 The Role and Function of Christianity in the South African Reconciliation Project

Within the field of conflict resolution, most notably international conflict resolution, there is much skepticism about the role of religion in promoting peace and respect in responding to conflict. It is often assumed that religion fuels rather than resolves conflict. As a result of this assumption, there is a tendency to exclude religion as a force for peace-building.<sup>306</sup>

Megan Shore argues that religion can be a valuable resource in conflict resolution, by examining South Africa's TRC and its use of Christian practices to demonstrate how religion, even though it has been complicit in bringing about violence, can also assist in creating peace.<sup>307</sup>

Recently, religion has become a huge source of ethnic division, further complicating the complexities that are usually associated with any multi ethno-cultural community. The involvement of religion in conflict resolution becomes a veritable tool that proposes an alternative, in that it incorporates religious thought, symbols and rituals into the conflict-resolution mechanism. This approach, Shore argues, cannot be harnessed by political realist or secularist conflict resolution practices. Conflict resolution nourished by religion has four assets: 1) It provides the power to understand “the ambivalence of the sacred,” in that it understands the different aspects that religion can bring about—violence and intolerance on the one hand, peace and tolerance on the other. 2) It can access the strong ethical norms that religious traditions offer, to influence actions of its adherents. 3) It is possible to access the

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<sup>306</sup> Andrew G Suderman, review of Megan Shore, *Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, (Burlington: VT: Ashgate, 2009), 1.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

religious network of communication. 4) It can help war-torn countries transition to democracy and sustainable peace because of the strong role played within civil society.<sup>308</sup>

These assets outlined by Shore make Christianity a powerful force to reckon with, within the political framework of the TRC. Stephen Martins remarks:

It is the same forces that shaped South African society had also shaped the structures of churches. However, though the churches had alternately opposed, legitimated, and suffered under apartheid, but in their own self-examination, had also developed an approach to reconciliation that influenced in profound ways the TRC's own sense of mission.<sup>309</sup>

This does not overlook the growing tension that arises with the social question of whether or not religion should play a major role in the reconciliation process of South Africa. This is because, prior to the commencement of the work of the TRC, South Africa as a newly declared democratic state had already allied itself with other liberal democracies, all of which were formally secular and generally suspicious of the involvement of religion in politics. Furthermore, due to economic pressures on South Africa to integrate into the global market, South Africa found herself being encouraged by the West to become a liberal, secular state.

<sup>310</sup> In fact, most leaders, including Tutu, agreed that the new South Africa would be a secular state.<sup>311</sup> Although the South African government had adopted a secular interim constitution in 1993, and a secular permanent constitution in 1996, Shore argues that South

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Stephen William Martin, "Civil Sacrament and Social Imaginaries in Transition: The Case of the South African Churches and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Political Theology*, Vol.12, no. 3 (June 2011), 363-395, doi:10.1558/poth.v!2i3.363 [http://web.ebscohost.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?\(accessed July 10, 2013\)](http://web.ebscohost.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?(accessed July 10, 2013)).

<sup>310</sup> Ebrahim Moosa, "Tension in Legal and Religious Values in the 1996 South Africa Constitution," in *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk: Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture* edited by Mahmood Mamdani (New York: St Martin Press, 2000), 121-35.

<sup>311</sup> Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd, eds., *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000), 125.

Africa was never a secular society based on the available record (1996 census) which showed that some 87 percent of South Africa's entire population were Christians.<sup>312</sup>

Referring to the overall mandate of the TRC as stipulated in the commission's report, one wonders if such reconciliation goals could be achieved without an immense contribution of Christianity permeating the entire process. From the shaping of the mandate to the functioning of the TRC process itself, people were involved in South Africa's TRC who adhered to, or were associated with, the Christian tradition.<sup>313</sup> Faith communities, including the dominant Christian community, played an integral role in both contributing to and challenging apartheid, which resulted in a moral obligation to be involved in the transition.<sup>314</sup> The Christian framework under which the TRC was widely accepted by South Africans underscored the importance of Christianity in that country. Although it is true that a perverted form of the Calvinist religion had sanctified apartheid, it is equally true that all the resistance movements were influenced by Christian theology. A prophetic Christianity endured during the apartheid era and, when most other organisations were banned, the church alone remained a legal voice of protest. Thus it is not surprising that in the post-apartheid period, the teachings on the Church survived, making a 'pardon model' possible.<sup>315</sup>

Although the TRC followed a political process, Shore demonstrates how religion served as a national ritual, providing safety and sacred space wherever ceremonial movements and verbal expressions of Christian sentiments took place. This was especially

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<sup>312</sup> See Megan Shore, *Religious and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 60.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. 61.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>315</sup> Lyn S.Graybill, "Punishment, and Amnesia: Three African Post Conflict Methods," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.25,no.6, 1117-1130, (2004),1118.

true in the Human Rights Violations Committee (HRVC).<sup>316</sup> The integration of these Christian elements and practices in the TRC proceedings helped in easing one of the greatest challenges South Africa's TRC met. This sprang from the challenges of forgiveness and mutual acceptance of victims of the human right abuse and their perpetrators. This is an area in which Christianity played a vital role, mediating and transforming the state-styled type of forgiveness (political) into personal forgiveness. For example, John Inazu argues that the shared narrative that makes political forgiveness possible was also facilitated by non-state norms and institutions. In this sense, the explicitly Christian context of the South African TRC suggests a reason to explore whether Christian influences are integral to the possibility of political forgiveness.<sup>317</sup> Tutu argued in favour of Christian agency to achieving political forgiveness noting that:

Theology helped us in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to recognise that we inhabit a moral universe that good and evil are real and that they matter. They are not just things of indifference. This is a moral universe which means that, despite all the evidence that seems to the contrary, there is no way that evil and injustice and oppression and lies can have the last word.(1999, 76).<sup>318</sup>

That Christianity played a substantial role in framing the forgiveness that facilitated transitional justice in South Africa does not mean that the capacity to forgive is limited to those who adhere to a Christian narrative. However, one wonders whether political forgiveness (as the aggregation of individual acts of personal forgiveness) is practical outside

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<sup>316</sup>See Megan Shore, *Religious and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 211.

<sup>317</sup>John D. Inazu, *No Future Without (Personal) Forgiveness: Re-examining the Role of Forgiveness in Transitional Justice*.10 HUM.RTS.REV309 (2009), 23. [http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2740amp;context=faculty\\_scholarship](http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2740amp;context=faculty_scholarship)(accessed April 12, 2014).

<sup>318</sup> *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*. Vol.1, 1999, 76.

of a Christian narrative.<sup>319</sup> Nevertheless, Mandela's show of personal forgiveness did not undermine the platform for the Christian narrative provided by the TRC during the hearings, but in a complementary sense, provided a conducive atmosphere that facilitated a smoother exercise of the reconciliation process.

Christianity asserts the primacy of love over violence even in the face of the apparent loss of community. Jones compares this to the time of Hitler's rise to power, observing:

In one sense, Bonhoeffer thought the violence of Nazi Germany was so pervasive that forgiveness perhaps could no longer be effective. He knew that forgiveness could be effective when grounded in the disciplines of Christian community, but the virtual collapse of such communities perhaps also meant the virtual collapse of forgiveness in the community. (1995, 26).<sup>320</sup> Jones suggests that "Bonhoeffer knew that such a claim would abandon the heart of the Christian gospel, conceding that violence and death are more powerful and determinative than God's gracious forgiveness" (1995, 26).<sup>321</sup> If Jones and Bonhoeffer are right that the Christian hope of forgiveness can never grant ontological victory to the forces of violence, then the Christian narrative as used by the TRC might offer the most resilient account of forgiveness in the face of mass atrocities witnessed during the apartheid regime of South Africa.<sup>322</sup> The kind of personal forgiveness experienced in the Christian shared narrative led most victims of the human right abuses (and sometimes their perpetrators) into finding collective meaning for their multiple acts of personal forgiveness. This made political forgiveness possible in South Africa.

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<sup>319</sup> John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Peace Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 118.

<sup>320</sup> Gregory L. Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 26.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>322</sup> See John D. Inazu, *No Future Without (Personal) Forgiveness: Re-examining the Role of Forgiveness in Transitional Justice*, 25.

## 5.5 Truth and Truth-telling as Basic Tools for Reconciliation

Apartheid ruptured the moral order in South Africa by systematically oppressing the black population. It created two classes of people: the real upper class for the whites and the lower class for the native blacks, with separate laws governing each group. This political set-up effectively denied the blacks all active and equal roles in the moral and political decision-making process in South Africa. According to the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation act 34 of 1995*, the TRC was supposed to provide a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights democracy and peaceful co-existence for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex.<sup>323</sup>

According to Priscilla Hayner:

The most straightforward reason to set up a truth commission is that of sanctioned fact finding: to establish an accurate record on a country's past and thus help to provide a fair record of a country's history and its governments much disputed acts. And in the case of the TRC, truth, was supposed to lead to reconciliation, as the motto of the TRC suggested- truth, the road to reconciliation.<sup>324</sup>

In establishing an accurate record of abuses and gross human rights violations through a fact-finding body, the TRC of South Africa had to use the technique of using “truth and truth-telling” to uncover the numerous atrocities committed during the apartheid regime. This is quite challenging because the complexity of truth is a central one linking the problematic demands of justice and hopes for reconciliation. It is also the arena in which parties' competing versions of history and politics of memory play themselves out.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 1995, Act 95-34* (26 July 1995) [www.doj.gov.za/trc/legalact9534.htm](http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/legalact9534.htm) (accessed April 19, 2014).

<sup>324</sup> See Priscilla B. Harney, “Fifteen Truth Commissions: A Comparative Study 1974-1994,” 607.

<sup>325</sup> Kevin Avruch & Beatrice Vejarano, *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Review of Essay and Annotated Bibliography*, 37. <http://center.theparentscircle.org/images/081f9dcc9a0545158d0ac427da4980ef.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2014).

The TRC pursued the path of reconciliation by clarifying the dynamic nature of truth with a view to creating a version that suits the social context of South Africa.

The beauty of this was evident at the South African TRC, where “narrative” or “personal” truth that emerged, especially through “victims” and “perpetrators” public testimony, sought to ensure that individual acts of oppression and oppressed individuals cannot be forgotten. As Henderson and others argued, this is a kind of insurance against collective amnesia—after the truth and reconciliation commission, no one in South Africa will claim ignorance of what really happened,<sup>326</sup> hence helping to prevent a similar occurrence in the future. Robert Rotberg also argues in favour of this, remarking that societies must understand at the deepest possible levels what occurred and why, in order to come fully to terms with their brutal pasts. It must be done with precise details and utmost honesty to the extent it is humanly and situationally possible.<sup>327</sup> That is to say, there is need to acknowledge what happened by confessing them. Theodore Jennings then contends that “in telling the truth, the words we use here in public serve as a barrier against the practice of deceit, hypocrisy, and self-deception by which we hide ourselves from God, from our neighbour, from ourselves”<sup>328</sup>

For example, reference can be made to the human rights violations hearings, whereby the victims of human right abuses were allowed to come forward and publicly re-enact a carefully selected catalogue of abuses. In amnesty hearings, the perpetrators of human right violations could be granted amnesty according to certain criteria, one of which was telling

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>327</sup> Robert Rotberg & Dennis Thompson, eds., *Truth versus Justice: Morality of Truth Commission* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>328</sup> Theodore W Jennings Jr., *The Liturgy of Liberation the Confession and Forgiveness of Sins* (Nashville: Abingdon press, 1988), 66.

the “whole” truth.<sup>329</sup> According to Alex Boraine (the vice-chairperson of South Africa’s TRC), the need for saying the whole truth was to facilitate the healing process of both the victims and perpetrators of the human right abuses.<sup>330</sup> This idea proved effective in the South African context not simply by enhancing a balance of power through the empowerment of the powerless and helpless victims, but also in creating a new vision for the new South African society founded on love and mutual trust, which was needed for the future survival of South Africa. This agrees with James Cone’s statement that “telling one another, about memories, stories and experiences is the only way in which ideological gulfs between people; groups and communities may be bridged and done away with”<sup>331</sup>

## 5.6 Forgiveness and Healing as Requirements for Genuine Reconciliation and Peace

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has powerfully made out a case for forgiveness even where there have been gross violations of human rights, communal and government-inspired violence, political oppression and racial discrimination. In such situations, there is, he warns no future without forgiveness, by forgiving the victim may succeed in opening the door for the other person to begin and may well also enable the wrongdoer to put closure on the psychological effects of the wrongdoing.<sup>332</sup>

The TRC of South Africa demonstrated both the value of taking a pragmatic approach to forgiveness and also the drawbacks. One has to realise that reconciliation and peace as societal goals require the elements of truth and justice as preconditions. However, in some given contexts and circumstances, the demands or requirements of truth and justice, if sought to their logical conclusion, could be a hindrance toward actualising reconciliation. The outcome is holding in tension on the one side “reconciliation and peace,” and on the other

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<sup>329</sup>Thomas Blom Hansen & Finn Stepputat eds., *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Post Colonial State* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 152.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>331</sup> James H. Cone, *God of the oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 103-104.

<sup>332</sup> Stephen Cherry, “For a Critical Appraisal of Forgiveness and Reconciliation in South Africa as a Result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics: New Studies in Christian Ethics* edited by Anthony Bash (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2007), 107.

side “truth and justice.” This situation makes the requirement of forgiveness indispensable especially in transitional societies.

Tutu emphasized the element of forgiveness in the work of the commission, even though many who forgave were not actually reconciled to their perpetrators, who showed neither repentance nor remorse. The commission somehow justified these attitudes, insisting that forgiveness is more in the nature of a pardon and less from the person who receives forgiveness.<sup>333</sup> The question confronting this approach to forgiveness is whether it will guarantee the healing that is equally required for a genuine reconciliation for peace to emerge. Ideally, Tutu believed that perpetrators would repent of their sins and victims would offer forgiveness, leading to reconciliation between individuals and ultimately the nation at large. They found a justification for the model in Christian theology, which teaches God’s children to forgive their enemies and to reintegrate the sinner back into the family of God<sup>334</sup>

The restorative possibility of forgiveness is limited when it is unaccompanied by repentance. It is only when forgiveness and repentance come together that reconciliation is possible. This is not to say that forgiveness requires either repentance or reconciliation. Shiver fails to recognise this distinction when he asserts that forgiveness is interdependent with repentance and that, “absent the latter, the former remains incomplete, conditional, in a posture of waiting.”<sup>335</sup> This is not to justify that unreciprocated forgiveness is the ideal. The failure of widespread repentance among South African whites to match widespread forgiveness among South African blacks constrained political possibilities. However, the aggregated acts of personal forgiveness across a political community can bring about a

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<sup>333</sup> Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics: New Studies in Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109.

<sup>334</sup> H. Russel Botman & Robin Peterson, eds., *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation* (Cape town: Human & Rousseau, 1996), 79-95.

<sup>335</sup> Donald Shiver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 210.

measure of stability that prevents widespread violence, as witnessed in the case of South Africa.<sup>336</sup>

Despite the limitations of the commission's effort to realise genuine reconciliation due to their restricted definition of forgiveness, Tutu cited many examples of people who have forgiven their former oppressors, usually after an apology; as a result they are no longer merely victims but have discovered peace, freedom and restoration. This was implemented within the context of the Christian theological framework. That Tutu and Boraine's Christian commitment led the commission to promote forms of forgiveness and a transition to a more just society is praiseworthy.<sup>337</sup>

In addition to the Christian basis for supporting forgiveness over punishment, the traditional African notion of *Ubuntu* is also a legitimate source. Even though there is no precise definition for *Ubuntu*, it connotes humaneness, caring and community. It conveys that an environment of right relationships is one in which people are able to recognise that their humanity is inextricably bound up in others' humanity. A person who lives in *Ubuntu*, according to Tutu, is more willing to make excuses for others.<sup>338</sup> Tutu finds in *Ubuntu* the justification for promoting reconciliation, or as he put it, prioritising the restorative over the retributive. His creative fusion of Christian forgiveness with the African notion of *Ubuntu* was a great insight that expressed co-existence of Christian values with traditional elements. In this context, restorative justice has been valued for its ability to incorporate local practices and grassroots methods of social recovery, reintegration, and reconciliation.<sup>339</sup> John Mbiti

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> See Anthony Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics: New Studies in Christian Ethics*, 109-110.

<sup>338</sup> Louis Kretzshmar & Luke lungile plato, eds., *Archbishop Tutu: Prophetic Witness in South Africa* (Cape town: Human and Rousseau, 1996), 104.

<sup>339</sup> Jennifer J. Llewellyn & Daniel Philpot, *Restorative Justice, Reconciliation, and Peace Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 182.

confirms that *Ubuntu*'s emphasis on community is a belief widely shared by all Africans; "what happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am because we are, and since we are I am.'"<sup>340</sup> *Ubuntu*'s understanding of the indivisibility of humanity creates capacity for forgiveness among Africans.

In a human society that is founded on *Ubuntu*, individual duty precedes individual rights. In South Africa, for instance, people were asked to surrender their rights and face up to the duties that *Ubuntu* required. The individual right to prosecute was superseded by societies' right to live in peace.<sup>341</sup> *Ubuntu* meant in the real sense that all who were part of the apartheid system, in whatever capacity, were victims and therefore in need of healing, which proceeds from forgiveness being offered and accepted. This offers a great lesson for those concerned in building community cohesion, because the spirit of *Ubuntu* plays the role of healing of breaches, redressing imbalances and restoring broken relations. It helps communities avoid destroying themselves in their search for retribution and punishment of the perpetrators. Tutu argues that the emphasis should be on rehabilitation of both the victim and perpetrator, and their speedy reintegration into the community.<sup>342</sup>

Finally, Tutu's vision of Christian forgiveness and *Ubuntu* are compatible, serving as a reminder of each individual person's crucial role in bringing about the healing and restoration of society, so as to achieve social progress and human development.

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<sup>340</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 108-109.

<sup>341</sup> Yvonne Mpokgoro, "Ubuntu and the Law in Africa," in *African Politics since 1994*, edited by Tom Lodge (Cape town: David Philip, 1999), 52.

<sup>342</sup> Hailer, *Ubuntu: A Literature Review: a Paper Prepared for the Tut Foundation*, [http://www.tutufoundationuk.org/documents/UbuntuLiteratureReview\\_JH\\_Dec08.pdf](http://www.tutufoundationuk.org/documents/UbuntuLiteratureReview_JH_Dec08.pdf), 14-15.

## **5.7 Pastoral Implications for Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa through the Instrumentality of the Church in Africa**

Reconciliation, justice and peace are important themes in Christian theology. This agrees with the pastoral plans of the Church, whose goal in Africa in the spirit of the Second African Synod is to bring about reconciliation, justice and peace. The Christian theology of reconciliation and peace-building is rooted in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose incarnation reconciled us to God. Jesus Christ entrusted this ministry to us his disciples, and we are expected to bear witness to it through our lives (2 Cor 5:17-20) and his Church. The pastoral approach of advocating for reconciliation as a Christian method of peacemaking is a mandate from Jesus Christ and not merely an option for the Church.

Usually, we think that the primary duty of the Church is to foster reconciliation between God and human persons, hence dissipating our energy in sharpening concepts to facilitate this kind of reconciliation. In the African social context, the people cannot be reconciled to God prior to their reconciliation with one another. “God will not forgive our sins unless we have forgiven those who sinned against us (Mt.5:23-25; Mt 18:23-35; 16:12-15 and Jn 4:20).” In situations of conflict, it becomes the Church’s primary responsibility to move for reconciliation between the conflicting parties, thus creating the space required for the aggrieved (people) to be reconciled to their God. Neglecting this duty means that the Church is shirking from her responsibility of not recognising the social aspect of spiritual reconciliation, and its obligation to be a peace-maker between people.<sup>343</sup>

The Church fulfils her role as agent of social reconciliation by recognising first of all her own vulnerability and brokenness resulting from sin and division and therefore the need

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<sup>343</sup> Church Leadership for Reconciliation and Restorative Justice <http://www.peaceunits.org/documents/CHURCH-LEADERSHIP-FOR-RECONCILIATION-AND-RESTORATIVE-JUSTICE.pdf>.(accessed May 27,2014).

for the revitalization of sacrament of confession in the Church. J.J. Carney remarks that the first step to be taken in sacramental confession is contrition for sin, which entails being honest with one's own failings.<sup>344</sup> This demands that African society should make effort to recognise that the attitude of self-justification or righteousness is inconsistent with reconciliation. But, in the ecumenical sense, Ilo writes: "African churches cannot be agents of reconciliation if they have divisions based on denomination, ethnicity, sex, rank, social status, or caste. The Church should lead the wider African society in doing this by showing herself to be a reconciled community working for reconciliation of God's people."<sup>345</sup> John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation remarks:

In intimate connection with Christ mission, one can therefore sum up the church's mission, rich and complex as it is, as being her central task of reconciling people: with God, with themselves, with neighbour, with the whole of creation; and this in a permanent manner since as I said in another occasion the church is also by her nature always reconciling.<sup>346</sup>

In any conflict situation, typically every group involved tend to think of themselves as wholly innocent and others as wholly at fault.<sup>347</sup> Miroslav Volf takes the stand that no one is innocent in such settings:

Especially after conflicts have been going on for some time, each party sees itself as the victim and perceives its rival as the perpetrator, and has good reasons for reading the situation in this way. As a consequence, each can see itself as engaged in the struggle for liberation and the pursuit of justice, and thus the Christian faith ends up providing primarily legitimation for the struggle. Reconciliation is not even attempted—at least not until "our" side has won.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> See J.J. Carney, "Roads to Reconciliation: An emerging paradigm of African theology," 4.

<sup>345</sup> Stan Chu Ilo, *The Second African Synod and the Challenge of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa's Social Context: A Missional Theological Praxis for Transformation Part 2. Missiology: An International Review*, XL, no. 3 (July 2012), 250.

<sup>346</sup> See John Paul II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliation and Penance*, no.8.

<sup>347</sup> Galen Peterson, "Proclaiming the Prince of Peace: Missiological Implications of Biblical Reconciliation," 8. <http://www.remnant.net/Reconciliation.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2014).

<sup>348</sup> Miroslav Volf, "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation," *Interpretation*, Vol.2, no. 54(April 2000), 163.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is often cited as taking the side of victims (Matt 25:31-46; Luke 14:12-14). Yet, Jesus also confronted those who perceived themselves as being victimized (Matt 7 1-5; 18:15-35; Luke 19:1-10; John 5:1-14). He never classified people into separate groups where some needed repentance and others were so virtuous that they are exempt. Their sins might be different, but they are equally in need of repentance.<sup>349</sup> This is a huge pastoral challenge for African Christianity, as they are called to envision the secular society as an extension of Christ's body and that the pain of conflicts, sin and division is felt by all. From this vantage point, God creates for himself a single unified people, borne out of the need for the conversion of heart.

African Christianity must develop a transformative praxis where by the Church and her leaders are immersed in the life of the community, so that they experience the joys and pains of the people. They also must fully identify with the people at the deepest level, where our human fragility meets with divine transformative graces. In this way, Christians become one with those who are victims of injustice and those who suffer from the absence of an order of peace and righteousness.<sup>350</sup>

Reconciliation, justice and peace also summon the African Church to develop a missional theological praxis for social transformation in Africa. Such a theology should engage these very issues of reconciliation, justice and peace. This is consistent with the observation of the Eastern African bishops, who pointed out in their synod recommendations

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<sup>349</sup>See Galen Peterson, "*Proclaiming the Prince of Peace: Missiological Implications of Biblical Reconciliation*", 8.

<sup>350</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *Africae Munus and the Challenges of a Transformative Missional Theological Praxis in Africa's Social Context*, 126-27.

that, “what are needed in African Christianity are solutions that are very practical, very concrete and very realizable.”<sup>351</sup>

The problems of African Christianity are not merely the result of an absence of solutions, but the lack of will to apply the solutions to the problems. There is also sometimes the inability to critically and creatively engage the root causes of the myriad problems confronting African societies today.<sup>352</sup> Africa needs a theology of reconciliation to provide this missional praxis for real social transformation. It should draw naturally from the experience of the Church in Africa and the Christians in their struggle to make sense of the present complexities of Africa’s social context, confronting honestly and directly the sources of division and conflicts within the churches and the wider society. The task is to draw African Christians to personal, cultural and ecclesial conversion, whereby Christ is the source, goal and the norm for building relationship in a diverse society like Africa’s.<sup>353</sup> The approach will no longer be a theology that proceeds from above (in a human sense), but one that will focus on the everyday life experiences of the common Africa people. According to Andrew Walls, “we need to look at Africa today, in order to understand Christianity”<sup>354</sup> The shift of paradigm that is being advocated for in this African theology of reconciliation has important implications in the pastoral ministry of the Church in Africa.

Finally, there seems to be a new emerging phase of African theology of reconciliation which should be encouraged. It argues that another possible world is realizable in Africa

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<sup>351</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *The Second African Synod and the Challenges of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa’s Social Context: A Missional Theological Praxis for Transformation-Part 1*, 196. See also John L. Allen, “Synod for Africa Opens to High Hopes, But Realism,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 2009. <http://ncronline.org/news/Vatican/synod-africa-opens-high-hopes-realism>.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *Africae Munus and the Challenges of a Transformative Missional Theological Praxis in Africa’s Social Context*, 124.

<sup>354</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *The Second African Synod and the Challenge of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in Africa’s Social Context: A Missional Theological Praxis for Transformation-Part 1*, 197.

through the agency of African Christianity. It is a theology of hope that is rooted in a missional cultural hermeneutics.<sup>355</sup> It flourishes by reconstruction and transformation of African society and human destiny outside of the determinism of the crises and African present social conditions. On the contrary, it is an open theology which constantly admits of new data as it immerses itself in the living faith expressions of people.<sup>356</sup>

From the foregoing, the following conclusions can be drawn which can be helpful for African local churches for pastoral reasons and plans: 1) That forgiveness, repentance and mercy are essential to living the new covenant as God's reconciled family; 2) That Christ is both the source and model of forgiveness; 3) That Christians are called to pardon always.<sup>357</sup>

Forgiveness is not just optimism for peace or something to be applied at the end of any reconciliatory process, but its value is to be seen when it accompanies the process of reconciliation. The successful South African TRC reconciliation process cited *Ubuntu*, and assigned the role of forgiveness to a much higher priority in the entire process.<sup>358</sup> The elevation of forgiveness to the heart of reconciliation is necessary to the realization of the biblical model. It conforms to God's message that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8) and this is an example for us to follow. Forgiveness-based reconciliation is a gospel-centred transformation that leads to the healing of relationships and societies from inside out, yet without neglecting the issues of social justice.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid. 198.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Stan Chu Ilo, *Toward an African Theology of Reconciliation: A Missiological Reflection on the Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod*, *The Heythrop Journal* (2012), 1005-1025) 1013.

<sup>358</sup> Janez Juhant & Bojan Zalec, eds., *Reconciliation: The Way of Healing and Growth* (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2012), 254-6. The five *Ubuntu* stages are 1) Acknowledging guilt. 2) Repentance. 3) Seeking and receiving forgiveness. 4) Making reparations. 5) Commitment to preserve reconciliation.

<sup>359</sup> See Miroslav Volf, *The Social Meaning of Reconciliation*, 24.

## 5.8 Conclusion

In choosing the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace, the Second African Synod invites African Christianity to be more actively involved in the civil society, and to take the leading role in the search for solutions for African problems and challenges. This is because:

Christians do not live in a community of their own; they share the same society with everyone else. This is why it is in the interest of Christians to participate in activities which seek to transform earthly society...Christian participation in social activism hinges on the contention that in their participation, Christians can have a chance to influence the direction of events in society.<sup>360</sup>

This model of reconciliation, as demonstrated by the South African TRC, shows that African Christianity has come of age, and can tackle its own problems while looking for solutions from within. The TRC's use of local resources like *Ubuntu*, and the integration of these with Christian principles and values (such as forgiveness, truth, confession, healing and repentance) were highly remarkable and laudable.

Since every conflict situation is always an implicit invitation to dialogue, Wansoma remarks that dialogue with civil and political institutions creates the avenue for the Church to proclaim the redemptive mission of Christ.<sup>361</sup> The Church acknowledges that dialogue is one of the basic tools of modern-day evangelization, and which can be implemented in the African social context. The TRC's exemplary approach shows that religion and the civil state can collaborate to resolve conflicts in the civil society.

However, the use of the South African TRC as a model for reconciliation does not in any way suggest that it can be exported to other African countries as a finished agenda but could be a lesson for other African countries. David Moore, paraphrasing Mahmood

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<sup>360</sup> Nehemiah Nyaundi, "The Phenomenon of Violence in Eastern Africa," in *African Theology Comes of Age* edited by Laurenti Magesa (Limuru: Paulines Publication Africa, 2010), 127.

<sup>361</sup> Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, "Reconciliation, Justice and Peace in the Light of Catholic Theological Ethics in Africa and in the World Church," in *Practising Reconciliation, Doing justice, Building peace*, edited by Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, 14.

Mamdani, notes that South Africa was an exceptional case, because the TRC was the fruit of a political compromise whose terms both made possible the commission and its limits of operation.<sup>362</sup>

These conclusions can be drawn: 1) There is need for each African country to pay particular attention to their own specific context and circumstance. 2) African countries should learn to integrate cultural values with Christian values and principles. 3) Christianity still has a major role to play in any conflict situation in Africa. 4) There is still a need for collaboration between religion and civil society.

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<sup>362</sup> David Moore, *Inappropriate Export? Society-wide traumas*. <http://www.dandc.eu/en/contributors/david-moore>.

## General Evaluation and Conclusion

While in continuity with the first African Synod of 1994 and its theme of evangelization, the particular focus of the second synod was the *ad extra* dimension of the church's mission, its prophetic role in society. This is clearly indicated in its title: The church in Africa in the service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace... the synod, thus strongly endorsed the key affirmation of the 1971 synod on justice in the world that the promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace is not optional and extra, rather an integral dimension of church's evangelizing mission.<sup>363</sup>

It would be misleading to presume that the Second African Synod was meant to provide the answer for all of Africa's political, economic and social ills. On the contrary, it was rather concerned with how the Church in Africa might become a more authentic and effective agent of transformation. In other words, the Second African Synod among other things is also a profound appreciation of the beauty of God's work in Africa through his Church. The *Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod* concentrates on the way the message of the Gospel can transform culture or civil society. It invites the Church in Africa not to withdraw into itself, but calls upon it to play a prophetic role in the social and political life of the continent, given that the transformation of civil society is paramount in achieving the Church's mission or task. The evils affecting the Africa's social context, the synod asserts, are mainly the product of "human decisions and activities by people who have no regard for common good and this often through a tragic complicity and criminal conspiracy of local leaders and foreign interests."<sup>364</sup> The appropriate response to such evils, however, is not despair but ever greater and more concerted effort and commitment from the church family of God to those deprived of freedom and peace, those violated in their dignity as

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<sup>363</sup> Michael McCabe, *key Challenges for the International Missionary Institutes in Africa Today in the Light of the Second Synod for Africa*, 2010,(150-158).153. [http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc\\_view/1793-key-challenges-for-international-missionary-institutes-in-africa-today-in-the-light-of-the-second-\(accessed June 26, 2014\)](http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles-2/doc_view/1793-key-challenges-for-international-missionary-institutes-in-africa-today-in-the-light-of-the-second-(accessed%20June%2026,%202014)).

<sup>364</sup> See Synod of Bishops, *Message to the People of God of the Second Special Assembly for Africa Synod of Bishops*, no.5.

human beings, and those who suffer poverty, disease, injustice, wars, violence and forced migration.<sup>365</sup>

To meet these challenges, the African Church must begin by putting its own house in order, through reclaiming its identity as a sign of reconciliation, justice and peace in its own sphere, but the Church's lack of unity is a great challenge for her failure to be true to her calling as God's family, and also as agent of social transformation in society.<sup>366</sup>

This research work examines how politics, economics and culture have contributed to the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace in Africa's social context. In response to these challenges, the synod fathers offered a profound social analysis of Africa's social context, capping it with certain proposals and recommendations. This is an area in which their effort and approach lacked some of the depth needed to trigger the required positive change. For example, it is hoped that the proposals for meeting the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace will not simply be a compilation of citations from papal documents, but should be able to draw extensively from answers that could be found from the heart of mother Africa in her emerging and exciting Christian consciousness. The *Lineamenta of the Second African Synod* was meant to stimulate discussion at the grassroots level, and to generate serious discussions which should have drawn from quantitative data taken from the concrete social condition of African Catholics. Surprisingly, some symposia and dialogue sessions among African theologians from 2006-2008 in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Tanzania were not seriously reflected in the documents.<sup>367</sup> There is also a lack of deeper engagement with the causes of conflicts and tension in Africa and

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<sup>365</sup> See McCabe, *Key Challenges for the International Missionary Institutes in African Today in the Light of the Second Synod for Africa*, 153.

<sup>366</sup> See Synod of Bishops, *Message to the People of God of the Second Special Assembly for Africa Synod of Bishops*, no. 15.

<sup>367</sup> See Stan Chu Ilo, *Towards An African Theology of Reconciliation: A Missional Reflection on the Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod*, 1006.

paths to be followed in addressing them.<sup>368</sup> There seems to be no serious input made by African theologians, laity, African social scientists or peace activists. On the contrary, the document is filled with proof texting from magisterial sources to analyse generalised and stereotyped conclusions about Africa.<sup>369</sup> A huge continent such as Africa, with 53 countries, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and with vast cultural differences, would require a dynamic or flexible approach that would be sensitive to the many contexts of the continent. This could be highly misleading, especially for those of us (Africans) who stayed at home or were not part of the synod.

Given this situation, the African Church and people must address the challenges of reconciliation, justice and peace, relating these challenges to ethnic and racial conflicts in churches and wider society, corruption, poverty and injustice. At the same time, Africans should exude immense hope and courage; they possess, as it were, immense religious capacity, which helps to shape their vision of a better tomorrow. This intrinsic religiosity has found a new momentum through the resurgence of Christianity in Africa. Proclaiming the gospel today in Africa is no longer the primary emphasis; it is about how to tap into the faith expressions to transform both African Christians and African society in critical, healthy and creative ways.

This is why this research work shows how this could be done through reconciliation, working for social justice and peace. The social transformation which African Christianity seeks is one that will enable the Africans to reap the fruit of abundant life preached by Jesus Christ, while helping to remove the obstacles to these rich harvests of joy and blessings. The

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<sup>368</sup>See Maura Browne, *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, 63.

<sup>369</sup>See Stan Chu Ilo, *Towards An African Theology of Reconciliation: A Missional Reflection on the Instrumentum Laboris of the Second African Synod*, 1006.

initiative and capability to pursue this task are not essentially beyond Africa—the work of the TRC of South Africa demonstrated this feat. Its example challenges the African bishops to exercise their ministry with the spirit of transparency and accountability, as they are called to lead by example. In addition, they have to play a prophetic role to equip Christians to bear authentic and credible witness to the faith through loving service of reconciliation, justice and peace. For example, the influence of Christianity in the South African TRC process relied so much on the high moral integrity and the prophetic roles played by some of her leaders, especially Archbishop Tutu. There has been substantial effort by the universal church on African predicaments, helping the continent's peoples to take their destiny into their own hands.

This research is an effort to generate theological conversation on the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace. It calls for more efforts from African theologians, scholars and ordinary people to become more conscious of African destiny in general, by fulfilling our Christian vocations through responsible human actions in Africa.

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