

Pastoral Study of the Youth and New Evangelization in Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study examines the youth and New Evangelization in Nigeria. The youth represent the future of human society and therefore constitute a critical component of its population in the present and subsequent climes. The findings of this paper reveal, inter alia, that many young people today face realities which are characterized by negativity, fluidity and anxiety because they believe that the proven morals and tested models of the adult generations have lost their appeals. This global trend is a source of worry for the society and the Holy Mother Church. The energies of the youth have been exploited and channeled to wrong sides of life and their potentials thus eclipsed or truncated in many instances. The consequence is that only very few of the youth in more circles than one are exceptionally distinguished on positive notes. Many of them with diminishing faith profile are leaving the Church and Christ's gospel values in conscious disaffiliation process. However, there is still hope as steps are being taken by various sane institutions to save the youth from societal havoc and self-harm. One of such schemes is found in the gains of New Evangelization. The Church in Nigeria has the teeming youth who should be pastorally cared for in the missionary project of re-evangelization. The task is enormous but not impossible. This work offers some recommendations that could

facilitate in achieving the bountiful results of New Evangelization in Nigeria, the local context of our study. The theologico-pastoral method employed in this work is "Shepherding method" as developed by Seward Hiltner (1909-84) which advocates the pastoral care of the flock inspired in Johannine Christology of John 10:10. The Library research method and participant observation were also used as relevant texts on the subject matter were studied and the researcher's active participation in youth ministry in the country in the wake of New Evangelization was informative too respectively. The conclusion drawn was based on the entire work.

Key words: Pastoral Theology, The Youth, New Evangelization, Catholic Church, Nigeria.

Introduction

The youth represent the future of humanity. This reality is charged on one side with hope since on them rests the building of the civilization of the future. However, on the other side, in more contemporary societies than one, the youth are faced with anxiety, riddled with frustration and a future that promises them little or nothing. Ugwu (1995: 37) agrees with the indubitable truth that, " A society that does not take account of the next generation and gives them no access to influence and power is preparing the way for its own collapse. It may be called suicidal". The Church in Nigeria is aware that its renewal and dynamism depend largely on the youth. Therefore, in order to equip the youth for future mission, the Church tries not only to evangelize the youth today but also to make them evangelizers in the light of the contemporary currency of New Evangelization. This is the main task of this work, namely: to do a pastoral study of the youth and New Evangelization in Nigeria. We shall proceed with the explication of the key terms in the next section. To this we now turn.

Explication of Key Terms

We identify “youth” and “New Evangelization” as the key words in our theoretical study that need explication. This will help one to comprehend the referent values of the concepts as applied in the paper. We begin with the understanding of the *idea* of the youth.

The Youth

The youth make up the most vibrant, energetic and important sector of the society. However, what makes up the youth is divergent in the thoughts of many and as a consequence eludes any single encompassing definition. Our approach in the conceptualization of the youth is therefore largely descriptive. This is because it carries the shades of meanings and dimensions that are chronological, demographic, biological, psychological, political or even cultural.

Brief summaries of Nkom’s (1999:36) study of these dimensions are presented as follows: the first is the chronological or demographic dimension. In this sense, the youth are defined as those belonging to the age bracket of 15 to 30 years. A more liberal interpretation sees the youth as anybody who is 15 and above but below 40 (that is in other words, 15 – 39 years). Demographically speaking, therefore, we are dealing with a very large chunk of the population, a vital segment of the society on whom lies the growth of the population in all its ramifications. Related to this second dimension is the biological. The youth are the essential part of the population that is most biologically endowed with physical strength, agility, vibrancy and freshness. The economy of any country cannot be run in all its spheres without the youth. It is the energy, vitality and productivity of the youth that move and sustain the economy. The third is the psychological disposition of the youth. Being at the prime of life, the youth are adventurous, courageous, daring, innovative, willing to experiment, receptive to all new ideas, forward-looking and radical. It is at this stage of life that people tend to dream big dreams, embrace all kinds of fantasies and set up tall ambitions for the future. Very often and without

proper guidance, frustration easily sets in when these grand agenda begin to clash with hard realities of the world. The fourth is the political. The youth are under the authority of the older generation whether in the family, school, or the wider society. They are expected to be obedient and submissive to authority and often without a say. This area has brought agitations from the youth who want to participate in the governance of the church, civil or traditional institutions. So, they want to be seen and heard in the society. The Fifth is the cultural dimension which places the youth in the category of people either undergoing training and therefore yet to assume adult responsibilities such as marriage, supporting an independent family or young people in the early stages of their entry into careers and assumption of adult tasks.

The term *youth* is defined in *The Dictionary of Sociology and Related Sciences* as a “person from the age of adolescence to full maturity” (Fairchild, 1977). For Okwulehie (1989:98), the youth describes “...those young boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 35 years. They include students who are in secondary or tertiary levels of education... those with little or no access to education but who are learning or have learned a vocational job: those employed or unemployed.

In a poetic, beautiful description of Agbese (1994:10), the youth is: “Mankind’s morning, the blossoming of its flowers; the dew on the blade of its grass. Youth is beauty, Youth is innocence. Youth is mankind at its unspoilt best... Youth is the torch that guides mankind in its journey through the tunnel of life from one generation to the other. Youth is the link between today and tomorrow.

In the view of Gotan (1999:25), the youth can also be said to be “A period of complex change, of rapid physical change and development, intellectual change and awakening, mental alertness and a search for the truth and meaning of life, a change from childhood and a feeling of growing up with all the assumptions of what it means to grow”. The youth do not only drive the economy in the temporal order, but as drivers of salvation economy in the spiritual order are very important agents of evangelization. The

prospects of New Evangelization are critically linked with the youth who are at once the evangelized and the evangelizers. Having explicated the term “youth” at some length, let us explain “New Evangelization”.

New Evangelization

Evangelization is derived from the Greek word *euangelion* which means “Good News”. This is gospelization found at the very nature of the Church which “exists in order to evangelize” (Pope Paul VI, 1975, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (EN) 14). Evangelization is the special goal of all missionary activity as the Church obeys the missionary mandate which says: “Go therefore make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you” (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). The scope of Evangelization is therefore the whole world and at all times; hence we must preach Christ “in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). And as Paul would say: “woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16). In mission, the Holy Mother Church reveals its deepest and truest identity (Pope Paul VI, 1975, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15).

The Second Vatican Council convoked by Pope John XXIII was guided by the Holy Spirit towards the renewal of the entire Church. Therefore, the origin of New Evangelization can be traced back to this Ecumenical Council (1962-65). Pope Paul VI (1975) in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* implicitly wrote about New Evangelization thus: “For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new. The purpose of evangelization is precisely an interior change (EN, 18). This Pastor of the Universal Church wanted to “provide a new stimulus which would introduce the Church, now more thoroughly imbued with the strength and power of Pentecost, into a new and more fruitful Era of Evangelization (EN 2). The aim of New Evangelization is to “make all things new” in Christ (Revelation 21:5; Galatians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

This missionary enterprise of New Evangelization was furthered by Pope John Paul II who on pastoral visit to Nigeria in 1982 called on the Church in Nigeria to embark on a “New Era of Evangelization”. While on pastoral visit in Port-au-Prince, the Island of Haiti on May 9, 1983, this Vicar of Christ mentioned three definite characteristics of New Evangelization with an invitation to all thus: “Look to the future with commitment to a New Evangelization, one that is new in its ardor, new in its methods and new in its expression” (*Address to Latin American Bishops*, cited by Cotter, 2013: 1-2).

On these triple features of New Evangelization, Amissah (2003) said:

The new ardor is the new zeal which is Holy Spirit-inspired and forms the basis of the Spirituality of New Evangelization. This underpins the importance of “life in the spirit seminar for the whole Church geared towards personal prayer life of the agents and the fresh in-feeling of the Holy Spirit for a powerful and fruitful kerygmatic experience based on the Bible.

The new method is actually New Evangelization based largely on the Word of God. Catholic Christians are to imbibe the spirituality of praying and studying the Word of God so that it touches and transforms their lives.

New expressions offer new strategies for adequate training of the lay faithful as agents of New Evangelization through emerging new Schools of Evangelization, families, youth organizations, parish cells, Basic Christian Communities and even inculturation in order to equip and mobilize them for conquering the world for Christ.

Proper catechesis, personal renewal in holiness and inculturation are critical methods of New Evangelization. The Church in Nigeria has many Christian Communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures. Today, Nigeria has 56 Catholic Dioceses and 9 Ecclesiastical Provinces. They are fervent in their faith and in Christian living. They bear witness to the gospel

in their surroundings and have a sense of commitment to the universal mission. The Holy Mother Church in its historical descriptions is at once pilgrim and militant. Various catholic youth organizations exist in the country. They include:

- Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON)
- Catholic Young Men Organization (CYMO)
- Catholic Young Women Organization (CYWO)
- Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students (NFCS)
- National Association of Catholic Corpers (NACC)
- Young Catholic Students of Nigeria (YCSN)

These bodies are under the shepherding leadership of Diocesan Bishops in the Dioceses and the watchful pastoral eye of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) at the National level. These organizations have Chaplains at the various levels of Church administration – parish, Chaplaincy, deanery, diocese, province and national. In Nsukka Diocese under Bishop Godfrey Igwebuike Onah, for example, the youth have constant meetings, retreats, Nsukka Diocesan Youth Week where the youth gather at the feet of the Bishop, a replica of the World Youth Day event with the Holy Father. The other Archbishops and Bishops across the country have a lot of pastoral ministries for the youth.

In Nigeria, the Church carries out its saving mission in the dimensions of *Missio ad Gentes* (primary evangelization), Pastoral Care and New Evangelization. New Evangelization has other names; namely: New Era of Evangelization and Re-Evangelization.

The Youth and New Evangelization in Nigeria

The social context of Nigeria makes the relevance of Re-evangelization of the youth a pastoral necessity. The Nigeria youth are confronted in these contemporary times with puzzles and riddles whose confrontations and challenges have left many of them victims of despair, depression, frustrations and disease. Some of the youth who were baptized in the Christian faith have left the Church, discarded the values of the

gospel and lost the living sense of the once cherished ecclesial communion. Many Nigerian youth have the disturbances of moral crises. They have embraced the profane and jettisoned the sacred both of Moral Awareness and of Religion to the most unfortunate levels that some of them have succumbed, on frequent notes, to suicide by harmful substances like the pesticide snipper, hanging, jumping into the river or from skyscrapers. With most frivolous or surmountable reasons such failing examinations, friendship crisis like a rebuff from a boy/ girlfriend, poverty, health challenges and family issues, among others, some have lost the most precious and sacred human life to suicidal execution.

These “fallen Christians” constitute one of the greatest problems for the Church in more Dioceses than one. They experience in their lives a radical transformation brought about by indifference to religion, materialism, secularism and the philosophy of consumerism. Some youth have lost the true sense of vital traditions of piety and the real meaning of Christian Response to the challenges of secularization and confusion brought about by atheistic, technological advancements and the negative values advertised daily in the social media. The scandal of divided Christianity and the divergent teachings have dealt with many Nigerian youth especially in the areas of sex identity, orientations and expressions. As the Catholic Church condemns same sex marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, transgenderism and other manifestations of gender identity disorder and sexual deviation, some ecclesial bodies and sects are pushing for legislations in their favour. The Catholic youth’s “shopping” of churches from one protestant church to Pentecostal circles and farther away into sects of newly formed make re-evangelization a pastoral choice with vivid validity.

The average population of the Nigerian youth has negative prejudices from the social media as they succumb to the cultural value erosions from the internet, music, mobile phones and pornography. Some youth in Nigeria have found themselves as destructive agents in the bloody hands of bad politicians who use them as thugs, bandits, riggers and non-

state body guards. In the field of sports, matches played over the weekend whether Nigerian Premier League but more of African Cup, World Cup, European League, and such tournaments of global relevance sever many youth from Church activities including Sunday Holy Masses and Benediction. One of the affairs that tend to destroy the youth in Nigeria is Materialism which makes them to proliferate baby factories, commercialize churches, engage in armed robbery, yahoo-boys business, 419-Advanced fee fraud, ritual killing, prostitution, lottery/NaijaBet, Big brothers Naija, kidnapping and extreme violence. The erroneous idea of love and friendship has many young people in Nigeria to fall into the abyss of retrogression as they migrated from the so-called affections to the domain of disease infections and hydra-headed afflictions. In the traditional angle, many youth are used to function neo-paganism through violent masquerade administration and obnoxious cultural practices, for instances. The Christian youth should be shepherded with good attention against the backdrop of Fulanization-Islamization agenda in Nigeria in all its guises and shades.

Therefore, the youth have to be equipped and prepared by attracting them to the *side of the Church* through humanization schemes in order to divinize them. They must be made to feel at home in the Church in truth and charity. *We must catch them young. We must love them and they must feel the love as true.* The youth, in this light, have to be involved in the pastoral affairs, allowing them to collaborate very closely with the adult members in the planning, execution and evaluation of pastoral activities. The infrastructures of interactive forums have to be provided so that they could have nurture in the faith and guided towards spiritual growth, different vocations and self-actualization. The pastoral zeal and heroic life of witness should be shining examples found among the adults. Any tinge of scandal or bad example from adults may grossly distort the frail, innocent disposition of the young. Pope Saint John Paul II (1992:8) warns:

Often the world of the young is a “problem” in the Church community itself...and if the church community is slow for a variety of reasons to initiate and sustain an up-to-date and courageous pastoral care for the young people, they risk being left to themselves, at the mercy of their psychological frailty, dissatisfied and critical of world of adults who, in failing to live the faith in a consistent and mature fashion, do not appear to them as credible models.

We conclude by saying that even though the future mission belongs to the youth, they should begin today to plan, practice and participate in the work of New Evangelization. This is because “**Nemo dat quod non habet**” (*No one gives what he/she has not*) and in the words of Aristotle, “one becomes a brick layer by laying bricks”. Let us see what the theological perspectives shall inform us in the next section.

Theological Perspectives

Our discussion here will be from three approaches; namely: the scripture, the magisterium and theological opinions.

The Scripture

The Scripture is replete with instances where the ministerial training given the young or the circumstances of exposure they were made to experience formed the basis of their future mission.

The First book of Samuel shows how Samuel ministered to Yahweh in the presence of Eli. From Eli, the young Samuel learnt about priestly function and was by that token equipped for his future mission (1 Samuel 2:18-26, 3:1-4:1). In the case of David, because he was keeping the flock of his father, Jesse where he encountered lions and bears, he was prepared by that exposure to become a great warrior. Contrary to expectation, he was courageous to fight Goliath and even defeated him and used the sword of Goliath to cut off his head (1 Samuel 17:34-40, 48-51). And from the

Shepherding of the flock as a youth, David took on the big role of shepherding Israel as king for 40 years, which were 7 years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. He was thirty years old, a youth, when he became king (2 Samuel 5:4, 1 Kings 2:11). God called Jeremiah to Prophecy as a youth and Jeremiah said "Lord, I do not know how to be speak; I am a teenager". But God knew him from his mother's womb and consecrated him. However, God encouraged going to the work by reaching out for his hands and putting his words in Jeremiah's mouth. (Jeremiah 1: 1-10). We must expose the young to the experiences that would help them become credible agents of New Evangelization.

In the New Testament, we see Christ and his apostles. He not only drew these future missionaries close to himself and wrote his message on their hearts but that he exposed them to missionary hazards and joys (Matthew 10: 1-16, Luke 10: 1-20). Paul also exposed Timothy whom he called "dear child of mine" (2 Timothy 1:2) to the demands and realities of evangelization when the latter was still young. In the words of Saint Paul: "Do not let people disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity. Make use of the time until I arrive by reading to the people, preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 4:12-13). Peter taught the Catechesis for the young as a necessity thus: "Simply proclaim the Lord Christ Holy in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). In Nigeria, we have young people and adults who ask about the faith in Christ; these could be Christians, Muslims or practitioners of African Traditional Religion. These are target audience of *missio ad gentes* component of New Evangelization.

The Magisterium

The Holy Mother Church in carrying out her salvific mission of Christ pays particular attention to the young and harps emphasis on their roles as evangelizing agents. On this note, Pope John Paul II (1999:46) wrote

that “In a great many countries of the world, they represent half of entire population. Simply from this aspect the youth make up an exceptional potential and a great challenge for the future of the Church. The youth must not simply be considered as an object of pastoral concerns for the Church: in fact, young people are and ought to be encouraged to be active on behalf of the Church as leading characters in evangelization and participants in the renewal of society”. Therefore, “the pastoral care of the youth must clearly be part of the overall pastoral plan of dioceses and parishes, so that young people will be enabled to discover very early on the value of the gift of self, an essential means for the person to reach maturity (Pope John Paul II, 1995, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 93).

On June 28, 2010, at Vespers on the eve of the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, Pope Benedict XVI established The Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization (Latin: *Pontificium Consilium de Nova Evangelizatione*) as a dicastery of the Roman Curia to carry on the task of New Evangelization. The Holy Father said that “the process of secularization has produced a serious crisis of the sense of the Christian faith and role of the Church”, and the new pontifical council would “promote a renewed evangelization” in countries where the Church has long existed “but which are living a progressive secularization of society and a sort of ‘eclipse of the sense of God’”. (*Wikipedia, Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization*). On 7-28 October, 2012, there was Synod of Bishops for the New Evangelization with the theme “The New Evangelization for the transmission of the Christian Faith” under the watch of his papacy. According to Pope Benedict XVI (2010), “Our own time, then, must be increasingly marked by new hearing of God’s word and a new evangelization (*Verbum Domini*, 122). Pope Francis (2013:89) noted that “The rise and growth of associations and movements mostly made up of young people can be seen as the work of the Holy Spirit, who blazes new trails to meet their expectations and their search for a deep spirituality and a more real sense of belonging. There remains a need, however, to ensure that these associations actively participate in the Church’s overall pastoral

efforts". The Conciliar Fathers of the Second Vatican Council teach that "The young should become the first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them exercising the apostolate by themselves, among themselves, taking account of social environment"(Vatican II, 1965, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 12). We conclude with the Bishops of the Association of the Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa (AECAWA), thus: "A society that focuses on its youth is a society that cares for its future. We bequeath the youth a legacy of productivity, respect for human life, honesty, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. We would also need to set-up vocational training Institutions in our dioceses to equip the youth with skills to enable them become self-employed and self-reliant" (*A.E.C.A.W.A Communiqué*, 2001, Enugu, 6). The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria as individual pastors and as a Conference have made the youth apostolate and New Evangelization a critical component of their Shepherding ministry. In Nsukka Diocese for instance, Bishop Onah (2017:2) wrote on: "The Diocesan Youth Rally Scheduled to take place on Saturday 6 January 2018, the Solemnity of the Epiphany. Parishes, Chaplaincies and Schools are reminded of our plan to focus on the faith formation of our youth during the year 2018, as we continue to pray for the success of 15th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops ... on the theme: "Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment" to be held in October 2018". Both programs were fruitful in the lives of the local and Universal Church respectively. On 16 March, 2019, he remarked: "This year began with grace-filled diocesan events for which we are immensely grateful to God: the Diocesan Youth Rally held on Saturday 5 January...Such diocesan events are occasions for us to express our common faith as the Family of God in Nsukka. The next appointment with the youths will be a "Youth Weekend" and is planned to take place 2-4 August 2019, the first weekend in August". And to his *Presbyterium (the meeting with his Priests)*, he addressed on the event of the youth weekend thus: "Ensure that enough representatives of the CYON from your parish or institution take part in this event. This is part of our initiative to provide continuous faith formation for our young people. The

struggle for the soul of our youths is fierce in our time and we should not be like generals sleeping on duty in this regard". (Bishop Godfrey Igwebuike Onah, 2019:1; 2019:2). The above reference from Nsukka Diocese is just one example out of so many as youth ministry is found to exist in the dioceses in Nigeria in one form or another and receives a robust attention from their respective Local Ordinary and Pope, the Holy Father in Rome.

Theological Opinions

The main thrust of our discourse here is to study the opinions of some contemporary theologians on the theology of the youth, their aspirations, spirituality and pastoral relevance in the mission of New Evangelization. Ogbonnaya (2000: 23-24) sees the youth with the psychologists as an age arc "driven by powerful needs or drives certain basic feelings particularly those of sex, anxiety, guilt and self rejection, fulfilment of certain tasks to act in certain ways towards themselves and others. The youth needs acceptance and love, independence, security, sex identity, self identity and experience; participation, approval, achievement and conformity. In each of these needs, the youth seeks to come to terms with the society, with self and with life as a whole. Left to achieve this integration alone the beauty of the youth would be corrupt". He maintained that the youth who is fed constantly in the table of the Word and the Eucharist would be free from identity crisis, delinquency, drug abuse, poor self image, career muddle, sexual imbalance, cultism among other immoral vices. However, the youth whose life is Eucharistic would receive divine blessing, gain personal integration and achieve the "developmental tasks" of coming to terms with self, with the society and life at large. According to Rymarz (2011:1), "many Catholic youth and young adults in secular cultures reach, relatively early in life, a plateau of religious involvement and commitment. This was typified as reaching a level of maximum commitment relatively early and then experiencing a stabilization often followed by a gradual reduction in commitment. While not hostile to religion many young people on the plateau do not seem to be very interested in increasing the strength of their

religious affiliation or in exploring new spiritual paths". At this stage, many a youth begin a disaffiliation process from the Church. Therefore, in order to maintain the spiritual growth and wholeness of the youth, Rymarz buys totally the pastoral ministry of New Evangelization. For Echeverria (2013:2), "...the new generations, no matter the continent or cultural differences, should be the privileged field of New Evangelization, not simply as passive receivers of it, but as active agents in it, recalling the words of John Paul II when he stated that "the young are best apostles of the young". Young people are good news for the world, but we must ask ourselves how to make the Good News of Jesus become good news for them. In an era such as ours ...we need to educate them about meeting God in their inner selves. We need to teach about interiority". Merritt (2004:1) noted that "The challenge of evangelizing our youth in the new century will require a deeper understanding of their needs today. Therefore, if the Church offers many benefits to the spiritual and developmental growth of our youth, the question becomes, how do we communicate our values to them? How do we keep them in our parishes and away from the wolves who would lead them astray?" She asserted firmly that "In the Catholic Church youth can find a lively faith, deep roots, comfort, peace, and be challenged by vibrant social teachings. In the Catholic Church, youth are able to identify themselves with something in society".

The new fluid and flexible realities which the youth experience today seem to be diverse from the old certainties and normative patterns of the adult generations. The youth are re-defining values to reflect their beliefs and ideals most of which are not in line with the proven morals and tested models of the old institutions. In a bid to escape into fantasies, many of the youth have embraced strange orientations and greater self-assertions on mirage. They cannot be left to the risks of societal havoc and self-harm, therefore they have to be guided with the *newness* which New Evangelization offers in maximum capacities.

Having made a study of the theological perspectives, let us suggest practical ways of helping the youth in Nigeria embrace the values of New Evangelization in our recommendations that follow.

Recommendations

In order that this study may bear the desired fruits in the life of the youth, this paper recommends the need to have:

Diocesan Pastoral Plan for the Youth

Every diocese in Nigeria should include the youth in its evangelizing mission in such a manner that these young people will grow familiar with the administrative structures and pastoral systems of the Church in the light of new zeal, new expressions and new methods and thus animated and inspired by the triple characteristics of New Evangelization. They should become evangelizers to their peers through different Youth Organizations found in the dioceses. They should be allowed to organize their activities and plan their pastoral programmes as directed by the bishops and supervised by their Chaplains. They should be active participants in the life of the pastoral councils such as Diocesan, Deanery, Parish/Chaplaincy, Station and Laity as active leaders and credible members.

Effective School Apostolate and Efficient Chaplains for the Youth

School apostolate in Nigeria should be intensified with more personnel in the ranks of the clergy and the lay faithful, increased conscious interests and much premium. This will help shield our catholic students and the youths from the evil winds of false doctrine, exploitation, victimization and gross erosion of positive values which are prevalent in contemporary Nigeria. The gains of weekly moral instructions in our schools and colleges cannot be over-emphasized. The presence of chaplains and the erection of chaplaincies in every tertiary institution are pastoral steps worth taken boldly. Therefore, effective chaplains with suitable helps from the bishops

and collaboration from the priests, religious and the laity should be engaged in the school and youth apostolate. The values of New Evangelization should be made to permeate the catholic and non-Catholic schools alike. Apart from the regular and formal education outfits, there is a glaring need for the establishment of skill acquisition and vocational centers in order to imbue the youth with entrepreneurship best practices. This will engage them meaningfully well and would therefore suffocate in their lives those negative dimensions which idleness supplies to their victims. There is need too to appoint Chaplains for every youth body in the diocese and at its various strata like parish, deanery and diocese.

Spiritual Formation and Renewal of Life

The youth are faced today more than before with new possibilities, attractions and distractions, prejudices and circumstances that jeopardize the true meaning of human value and eternal goal. Therefore, in their curiosity and enthusiasm before choices and options presented in the political, social, economic and cultural situations and contexts, they should remain obedient to the Holy Mother Church, deeply guided and enriched by the Spirit of Christ and the values of the Gospel. To foster this enterprise, dioceses should build Youth Centers, install structures of spiritual renewal and regeneration through retreats, life in the spirit seminars, workshops, conferences and other spiritual exercises that would enable the youth discover themselves and offer same to God, the Church and the entire humanity. The youth should be made to benefit from the Church's proper catechesis in all teachable moments and the good lessons drawn from authentic African cultural values which do not contradict the Christian faith.

Social Activities

There is need to expose the youth to healthy interactive fora on constant and consistent schedules. These include but are not limited to essay, sports, cultural dance, and music competitions, among others. They should be

directed well using social outings like cultural fiesta, Valentine's Day celebration, etc. The agrarian parishes and dioceses should encourage food production by the youth and prizes given to the best farmer at the harvest season. The youth who celebrate new yam festival without ownership of farms and barns as persons or groups should be discouraged.

Conclusion

The youth in Nigeria should be exposed to the good news of Christ in such a manner that New Evangelization animates and inspires their thoughts, words and actions. They should be taught the gospel of Christ and the good African cultural values in order to make them truly Christian and authentically African. The current image of the Church since the last African Synod is that the Church is the family of God. The youth should be given the pastoral space to see themselves as important members of this family. Very importantly, since the old methods of evangelization have not yielded the best of results in new contexts and fresh situations, the option is the application of New Evangelization to speak solutions to new realities of our time.

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