Laicology: Theological Foundation of the Mission of the Laity

By

Christian O. Ele, PhD
General Studies Division
Enugu State University of Science and Technology
Agbani, Enugu State, Nigeria
Email: boomdrchris@gmail.com/ christian.ele@edu.ng
Phone: +234 806 366 7566

Abstract

This paper discusses laicology from the perspective of the theological foundation of the mission of the laity. The ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 65) is a gold mine of pastoral progress because of its comprehensive consideration and integration of laicology into her vital aspects. Laicology is the theological study of the status and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world. The laicology of this aforesaid ecumenical council gives the much deserved premium to the laity's relevant position in the Church. This new insight recaptures the almost eroded status of the laity jeopardized by the defects of the old ecclesiology of "societas inequalis" (unequal society). This old vision of the Church stressed the hierarchical pyramid which saw the Church as the Church of the clergy alone. This made the clergy occupy the central place in the Church with the clerical monopoly of ecclesiastical powers while "the lay people occupy the periphery."The Church (Qahal Yahweh) properly so called and as founded by Jesus Christ is "Laos tou Theou" (People of God). In the Church, both the laity (laoi) and the clergy (kleroi) share equal dignity as God's children. Both also share equal membership as people of God and equal responsibility towards the communitarian sense of mission. They carry out this mission in communion (koinonia) and collaboration as "one family of God." However, each person diversely functions according to gifts (charismata) and conditions. Unfortunately, the past relics of the evil of priestly triumphalism are still found in many ecclesial circles. Another evil is "laical clique-ism" which exaggerates the status of the laity. Both evils constitute a dialectical tension which absolutely contradicts the pastoral yeast of the new ecclesiology. The new ecclesiology sees both the clergy and the laity as important pastoral agents and collaborators in the Church. There is, therefore, an obvious consequence on the laity's disposition to function properly as "leaven" in the larger society. Crucial tasks in this arena which rightly falls within their competence cannot but be conscientiously done. The theologico - pastoral method employed in this study is the Shepherding Method of Jesus Christ, the "Bonus Pastor" (Good Shepherd) who said: "I am the good shepherd" as convincingly presented in the

Johannine Christology (John 10:11). This shepherding method as elaborated by Seward Hiltner has caring, educating, healing and sustenance of the flock as vital, indispensable dimensions. The Church in Africa with special reference to the Catholic Diocese of Nsukka, Nigeria is the local context of our study.

Keywords: Laicology, Laity, Mission, Theological Foundation, Africa.

Introduction

The Laicology of the Second Vatican Council (1962 - 65) recaptures the status and mission of the laity which, hitherto, have been gravely neglected. The old ecclesiology saw the Church as the exclusivity of the clergy alone but failed to recognize the membership of the laity and their dynamic missionary character. There is stress in the new ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council that the laity, through their baptism, have important mission to perform both in the Church and in the secular affairs. They permeate the temporal order with the values of the Gospel. They make Christ present in the arena of politics, economics, culture and society. Our investigations reveal that the laity are numerous and that the Churches do not lack them on Sundays. However, the big pastoral challenge lies in their ability to go beyond private piety in the Churches to public prophetic witness through the week as they ought to consecrate the world (consecratio mundi) through their lives as the "leaven" of the society. The mission of the laity is given to them by Christ himself who called them into his vineyard too (Matthew 20:6). This biblical teaching is echoed in the theological opinions of contemporary theologians and buttressed variously by both universal and local magisterium. As they serve in this vineyard as Christians, they remain African people whose cultural heritage has strong influence on their lives. The good aspects of African culture are the "Logoi Spermatikoi" (Seeds of the Word) which constitute the "praeparatio evangelica" in African cosmology. These cultural values should be elevated in Christ through proper inculturation process. This theologico-cultural synthesis will promote the positive effects of social transformation in the modern society of our time. The Church, consequently, will be deeply rooted in Africa.

The concepts: Laity and Laicology Explained

Laity

The term “laity” is derived from the Greek “Laikos” which is the adjective of the noun “laos” which means “people”. This describes a section of the Christian population who do not belong to the clerical or hierarchical status of the Church. In the light of the comprehensive theology of the lay state, “to be laity is to be Church.” This understanding is based on the original unity that exists among the people of God (Laos tou Theou) as members of the Body of Christ.

However, the current classical, magisterial description sees the laity as:

> All the faithful except those in Holy orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the people of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world (Flannery, A. (1990) "Lumen Gentium", 31). This conciliar typological description is the working guide in this work.

Laicology

The concept "Laicology" is derived from two Greek words "Laos/Laikos" which means "people", "lay people" or "laity" and "Logos" which is "science", "word" or "discourse." In the light of its etymologically, Laicology is the science of the laity, word about the laity or discourse on the laity. Therefore Laicology is the theological study of the status and mission of Christ's lay faithful in the Church and in the world. This can also be defined as the theology of the lay state. As an academic discipline, it is a critical branch of Pastoral Theology, known also as Practical Theology. In this paper we shall strive to discuss laicology from one of its vital aspects; namely: theological foundation of the mission of the laity. To this we now turn.

Theological Foundation of the Mission of the Laity

The Church (Ekklesia tou Theou) becomes itself when it fulfills its mission. Mission is the Church's deepest identity (Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975). The Church, in the words of the Conciliar Fathers, is by its very nature, missionary (Vatican 11, Ad Gentes Divinitus, 1990). According to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, (later Pope Benedict XVI) the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council has made us realize that mission is the Church's true name and in some way its definition. In short, the Church "exists in order to evangelize"(Pope John Paul 11, Ecclesia in Africa, 1995). And so, the Church is sent into the world as a "Universal Sacrament of Salvation" (Flannery (ed.) Lumen Gentium, 1990). This is to say that "just as God's will is creation and it is called "the world", so his intention is the salvation of men and it is called "the Church"(Clement of Alexandria, Patrologia Graeca, 201).

Therefore, to accomplish this task of salvation of men (1 Tim. 2:4), God sent his Son, Jesus Christ the Saviour into human history. Hence, "Et Verbum Caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis" (And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt he among us, Jn. 1:14). Christ, "the One sent" (Heb. 3:1) became a missionary who, in turn for the continuation of the mission, gave

the missionary mandate (Matt. 28: 19 - 20) and sent his Spirit (Acts 2: 1 - 41), to the Church. The mission of the Church finds its definition only in the context of the mission of Christ. The laity constitutes an essential part of this missionary Church. The laity are also on mission. In this paper, the discourse is on the theological foundation of the mission of the laity. First, we proceed by studying the biblical foundation.

Biblical Foundation

The Holy Bible has two testaments, namely: The Old and the New. These dual basic structures of the Scripture will guide our discussion. We shall begin with the Old Testament.

Old Testament

"Mission" as a concept is from the Latin word "Missio" which means "sending". Its Greek equivalent is "apostolein" from where "apostolate" is got. Against this backdrop of "sending", one sees that the Old Testament tradition is replete with people "sent" by God to carry out special tasks in the unique history of Israelites as the chosen people of Yahweh. Joseph who was sold into slavery is believed to be God's special design as a preparation for the reception of Israel's sons in Egypt. Joseph fulfilled this mission (Gen. 45:5). Moses was then sent by the same God to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. The book of Exodus documents the story, thus:

> Yahweh said to Moses: And now the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them, so come, I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel, my people, out of Egypt (Ex. 3:10).

The prophets were also called and sent on mission. Isaiah, the prophet recounts the beginning of his prophetic mission in these words: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger? I answered, 'Here I am, send me" (Isaiah 6: 8 - 9). In case of Jeremiah, Yahweh said: "Do not say, 'I am a child.' Go now to those whom I send you and say whatever I command you (Jer. 1:7). When Amaziah, the priest of Bethel wanted to intervene in the mission of Amos, he proved to him that he was a true prophet of Yahweh. In the words of Amos: I was no prophet neither did I belong to any of the brotherhood of prophets, I was a shepherd, and looked after sycamores: but it was Yahweh who took me from herding the flock, and Yahweh said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel" (Amos 7: 14 – 15).

God also sent Samuel on special mission to appoint David, King of Israel. Hence Yahweh said to Samuel, "Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen myself a King among his sons. Samuel did what Yahweh ordered and went to Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:1, 4).

In the Old Testament biblical tradition as the afore-cited texts show, all the true prophets of Yahweh were sent by God with the mission to direct the Israelites along the paths of God's ways. The whole of Israel as God's chosen race can be said to be on "mission." Israel has the mission of bearing the name of Yahweh for all generations. In the New Testament, the Church which is the New Israel is on mission. Let us see what the New Testament says about this theological fact.

New Testament

The missionary motto of Jesus Christ is found in the prophecy of Isaiah (61: 1- 2) which he appropriated to himself. Hence, unrolling the scroll, he read:

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour (Luke. 4: 18-19).

After this reading, he told the listeners: "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen" (Luke. 18:21). Christ fulfilled the Father's salvific mandate via his life, death and resurrection. He was therefore exalted. He declared that all authority in heaven and on earth was handed over to him (Matt. 28:18); though as God he always had it. On the strength of this everlasting power, he gave his apostles the missionary mandate in the following words:

> Go therefore, make disciples of all the 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).

Similarly in Mark's Gospel, we read:

> Go out to the whole world: proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 15:16).

One notices from the aforementioned texts that from the foregoing, the scope of the mandate is the whole world. In Acts 1:8, this is reiterated thus: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and

Samaria, and to the ends of the earth". In the light of this mandate, therefore, the varied and variegated cultures, religions, philosophies and ideologies found all over the world should be converted to Christ through the proclamation of the Good News. The apostles obeyed this mandate. They preached the message to the world around them. It is, therefore, the responsibility of their successors and indeed all Christians to continue to obey this mandate in their concerted efforts to make the Gospel message reach the whole world. This mandate to gospelize "the whole world", "all nations" or "all creation" cannot be said to have been fulfilled without the missionary efforts of the local or particular Church called Nsukka Diocese.

Nsukka as a geographical fact and as a people is part of "the whole world" that must be evangelized (Ele, C., 2001). The lay faithful of Nsukka Diocese share in the demands of this Divine mandate and should therefore become full participants and active collaborators in the work of evangelization. The responsibility is that politics, economics and socio-cultural values of Nsukka must be permeated with the good news of Christ. This arena of the temporal order is an exclusivity of the laity whose presence in these areas must shine out as the presence of Christ. This is because, the laity like the seventy two others have also been sent into world (Luke 10:1) and like the labourers have been told by Christ himself: "You go into my vineyard too" (Matthew 20:4).

The Scripture has multiple evidences to prove the fact that the laity are also missionaries. The gospel of Luke presents the ministry of the lay women and several others who provided for Christ and the Twelve out of their own resources (Luke 8:1-3) In Acts of the Apostles, the lay faithful who were involved in the arduous task of evangelization are presented in chapter 11: 19-21. Their life of witnessing in fellowship and shepherding of each other both in the spiritual and temporal spheres led to their being called "Christians" in Antioch (Acts 11:26). They were called Christians because of the way they reflected Christ in the Church among themselves as believers and in their daily secular professions as members of the civil society. The name "Christian" was given to them by those outside the fold but who admired their way of life. This pastoral method of shepherding the lay faithful by the laity themselves should reflect in the zones/Basic or Small Christian Communities. They sent relief and support to those in need (Acts 11: 29 - 30). Priscilla and Aquila gave the Alexandrian Jew named Apollos further catechesis about the Way in Ephesus (Acts 18:26).

In Paul's Epistle to the Church in Rome, he salutes a good number of lay faithful who worked actively in the vineyard (Rom. 16: 1-16). In his letter to the Philippians he acknowledges the lay men and women who were collaborators in the work of

evangelization (Phil. 4:3). The biblical tradition confirms the laity as missionaries in the world and in the Church.

We have seen thus far the biblical foundation, let us turn to the magisterial teachings of the Church.

The Magisterial Teachings

The vocation and mission of the laity acquired a new accent in the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers recognized the dignity and status of the laity with the vast and various roles they have in the mission of the Church. Hitherto, the laity were seen and not heard. This essay hereunder presents the situation very vividly: "Cardinal Aidan Gasquet relates the anecdote of an inquirer who asked a priest what was the position of the layman in the Catholic Church. 'The layman has two positions' answered the priest. 'He kneels before the altar; that is one. And he sits below the pulpit; that is the other'. 'The Cardinal adds that there is a third that the priest had forgotten: The layman also puts his hand in his purse'" (Congar, Y., 1965).

The propensity to identify the Church with her hierarchical pyramid where the clergy are on top culminated in the ecclesiology of the First Vatican Council. The Church then was seen as a "perfect" society of "unequals" where the laity were passive and merely subordinate recipients of the things necessary for salvation which were made available only through the ministrations of the hierarchy.

However, the nineteenth century world became interested more in dialogue and collaboration. This position of the modern society made the Church to rediscover her laity. The Church thus became more aware of her enviable resources in the educated laity who could promote and defend her interests and further her presence in the secular arena. By this time, the clergy came to realize that the laity constitute a moral force that cannot be neglected in the increasingly pluralistic atmosphere of the society. The layman in France, Germany and England took the bold initiative and worked towards the means of bringing Catholic influence to bear on the essential social issues of the time. This sustained movement towards the right direction led to the approval of "Catholic Action" by Popes Pius XI and Pius XII. These popes through this Catholic Action gave "a definite mandate enabling the laity to co-operate with or even participate in the hierarchy's own apostolate" (Keightley, G.M. 1987). This historic antecedent became an important influence on the magisterium of the Church as made manifest in the laicology of the Second Vatican Council. According to the Conciliar Fathers, "Indeed, the Church can never be without the lay apostolate; it is something that derives from the layman's very vocation as a Christian"

(Flannery, A., (ed.), Apostolicam Actuositatem, 1990). In Lumen Gentium, the Church teaches: "The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through baptism and confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself. The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth" (Flannery, A., (ed.) Lumen Gentium, 1990).

Therefore, the laity who are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ have their apostolate both in the Church and in the world. Practically, their mission is exercised when they evangelize and sanctify men; it is accomplished too when they improve and permeate the temporal order with the spirit of the gospel. This is possible because the lay state is a life lived in the midst of the world and of the secular affairs. By this special characteristic of their circumstance, the laity are called by God as special apostles of the secular arena (Flannery, A., (ed.), Apostolicam Actuositatem, 1990. Consequently, the Church cannot be said to have been truly established and does not fully live, nor is she a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. The truest fact remains that the Gospel cannot take deep roots in the mentality, life and work of a people without the active presence of the laity. Therefore, there is every need for a mature Christian lay faithful (Flannery, A., (ed.), Ad Gentes Divinitus, 1990).

Pope Pius XII "On the Lay Apostolate" emphasized:

> ... even independently of the smaller number of priests, the relations between the Church and the world demand the presence of lay apostles. The Consecratio Mundi (Consecration of the world) is in its essence the task of laymen, of men who are intimately involved in economic and social life, who take part in government and legislative assemblies (Schineller, P., (ed.), 2002).

Pope Paul VI identifies the special field for the laity's evangelical zeal as the wide and complex arena of politics, sociology and economics. Others include the spheres of culture, sciences, arts, international relations and the communications media. He sees other areas proper to lay apostolate as the human love, family values, Christian education of the young, the practice of various professions and the relief of human suffering. According to him, if the laity were to evangelize these areas very actively with sincere evangelical spirit, then they shall have contributed immensely to the building up of the Kingdom of God and thus bringing forth the fruits of salvation (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 70). John Paul II in Christifideles Laici teaches that Christ's invitation "You go into my vineyard too" (Matthew 20: 6-7) is a call not only of pastors, clergy and men and women religious but that by virtue

of this invitation, the laity are personally called by the Lord himself, to labour in his vineyard, the Church and the world. The Holy Father Pope John Paul 11 (1998) warns against two temptations: First, the temptation of being strongly interested in the Church services and tasks that some fail to become actively engaged in their responsibilities in the professional, social, cultural and political world and secondly, the temptation of legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life, that is, a separation of the Gospel's acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in the various situations in the world (Christifideles Laici, 1998, 40).

John Paul II in line with Paul VI reiterates the primordial place of the family in the entire corpus of the lay apostolate (Christifideles Laici, 1998, 40). As he already taught in his earlier work:

> The family finds in the plan of God the Creator and Redeemer not only its identity, what it is, but also its mission, what it can and should do. The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is; its role represents the dynamic and existential development of what it is. Each family finds within itself a summons that cannot be ignored, and that specifies both its dignity and its responsibility: family becomes what you are (Pope John Paul 11, Familiaris Consortio, 1981).

The Christian family is the domestic Church (Ecclesia domestica, ecclesiola) where the parents as chief catechists and pastors of their children should endeavour to inculcate in them the Christian values and good morals.

> The 1983 Code of Canon Law says this on the mission of the laity:
> They have also, according to the condition of each, the special obligation to permeate and perfect the temporal order of things with the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, particularly in conducting secular business and exercising secular functions, they are to give witness to Christ (Pope John Paul 11, The Code of Canon Law, 1983, 225 par.2).

On the laity Paul VI, the Supreme Pontiff (1967) taught that, "Laymen should take up as their own proper task the renewal of the temporal order. If the role of the hierarchy is to teach and to interpret the norms of morality to be followed in this matter, it belonged to the laity, without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiatives freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live" (Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, 1967).

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) enumerates four reasons why the Church needs lay action. They are: "(1) Priests are few. Much as they try they can reach a part simply of the pastoral work - converting, teaching, visiting - that abounds in each parish. When fervent lay people help them through parish and diocesan organizations, the power that priests have to do good is multiplied. (2) Lay people can make contact with persons who would often shirk from meeting priests. They also gain entry into places where a priest could not easily go. (3) They help to relieve priests of certain administrative tasks that do not demand the priestly capacity and so they leave them free for more directly pastoral occupations. (4) Lay people can bring to bear on their own environment the influence of Christian convictions" (Schineller, P. ,(ed), 2002: 28).

One notices from the teaching of the Catholic Bishops in Nigeria that every person should lead true lives of Christian convictions in both private and public sectors of life. The massive amalgam of the influence of this collective witness will renew the face of Nigeria. Nigeria will consequently be socially transformed. The Bishops also called for the transformation of the education sector and the social media in order to grow a new Nigeria. In their words: "Growing a new Nigeria through education requires that knowledge should be communicated along with values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. The absurd culture of examination malpractices by pupils, students, teachers, parents, guardians and administrators must be tackled with utmost seriousness, otherwise our efforts will be in vain". The Chief Shepherds continued: "Our nation also needs to invest in media education, especially to protect our young generations from the ills of the new social media and equip them to engage the communications technology in a critical manner" (Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) (2012). The Catholic Bishops of Nigeria believe that quality education transforms both the individual and the society and the lack of it is a deformation.

Pope Benedict XVI addressed the visiting Brazil Bishops on the identity of the Common priesthood and the Ministerial priesthood in the following words: "While the lay faithful share in the "Common Priesthood", they are not ordained ministers of Christ and His Church. Hence, it is important to avoid the secularization of the Clergy and the 'clericalization' of the Laity." The Holy Father also said, "The truth is that the greater the Faithful's awareness of their own responsibilities within the Church, the clearer becomes the specific identity and inimitable role of the priest as pastor of the entire community, witness to the authenticity of the faith, and dispenser of the mysteries of salvation in the name of Christ the Head". The Supreme Pontiff warned against the priests' engagement in partisan politics, thus: "…priests must distance themselves from politics in order to favour

the unity and communion of all the faithful, thus becoming a point of reference for everyone" (Pope Benedict XVI, Address, 2009).

In 2012, the Shepherd of the Universal Church, Benedict XVI "asked the laity to be "truly co-responsible" for the being and the activity of the Church". Furthermore, he encouraged them thus: "Never tire of becoming more and more refined, through a serious and daily commitment to formation, through the aspects of your particular vocation as lay faithful, who are to be courageous and credible witnesses in every sphere of the society, so that the gospel might be the light that brings hope in difficult situations, in troubles and in darkness that men today so often find along the path of life" (Pope Benedict XVI, 2012). In his Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict XVI noted that "The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society,… is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility" (Pope Benedict XVI, 2005).

For the incumbent Pope Francis, "the Catholic Laity can transform the world". On this note, the Holy Father taught that, "The Church should always value the transformative power of faith-filled laity who are willing to serve the Gospel. We need well-informed lay people, animated by a sincere and clear faith, whose life has been touched by the personal and merciful love of Christ Jesus" (Pope Francis, 2016). In Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis wrote that, "Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of faith" (Evangelii Gaudium, 2013).

Contemporary Theological Opinions

The main thrust of our discussion here is to see the responses of contemporary theologians to the issue of the mission of the laity. In the words of J. Tunde Ogunduyilemi, the significance of theological opinions is that they inform the magisterium. Sound opinions of theologians feed the magisterial teachings with rich contents (2003, Parish Administration).

On the mission of the laity, Anyanwu, J. E. said:

> The lay faithful in the Church should not be different from those in the society. Both the Church and the society have the same God since both are the works of his hands. In the secular arena, they have to penetrate into the temporal scene with the spirit of the Gospel. The spirit of the Gospel is both the weapon and the spirituality (2003, Lay Apostolate in Africa).

According to Veronica Anusionwu, the kingship role of the laity is played when they help direct creation to God. Since they are involved in material affairs, then they should through their activities free the material universe from the effects of sin and direct them to God. They should also help one another by their lives and thus act in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel. She concludes that: "In this way, the spirit of the gospel can permeate created things and orientate them to God"(Anusionwu, V.O., 1994). Asanbe, J. (2003) sees this ordering of the temporal order to God through Christ as "concretized first and foremost in marriage and family life. These become a veritable path to the societal transformation for the lay faithful." Tanko, P. B. (1999:52) sees the specific role of the laity as sanctification of the temporal order." That is, the world within which they live. This does not however, preclude their membership and identity in the Church especially considering the fact that the Church is in the world but not of the world (Jn. 17:16). This follows that the laity have a mission in both the spiritual and temporal orders. This twin-mission is so closely linked that God's plan is, in Christ, to make the world a new creation.

The lay faithful should, based on the exigencies of the contemporary era, communicate the good news of Jesus Christ through the mass media. J. E. Anyanwu links the prophetic mission of the lay faithful with this open proclamation of Jesus through the print and electronic media. Through the mass media, the Church would proclaim Jesus Christ from "the housetops" to great multitudes across the nations. Mass media is a meeting point of different civilizations uniting cultures and peoples. It is the “modern Areopagus.” As an effective and modern version of the pulpit, the lay people should see their write-ups in newspapers, journals, magazines as well as their sponsorships and commitments to Catholic television programmes as veritable tools of evangelization. The use of electronic media is not an exclusivity of the Pentecostals. Televangelism should be integrated as part of the new era of evangelization. Therefore, non-chalant attitude and un-interestedness on the part of catholic clergy and laity in this direction do not promote evangelization in this modern time.

In Nsukka Diocese for example, the diocesan newspaper - The Shepherd should be encouraged to function very well. One can do this by contributing to its growth and even by helping to circulate this important newspaper in the life of this local Church. One should buy or help sell the copies of this newspaper. The laity are encouraged to benefit from the deposit of knowledge in the internet. In the internet, a vast ocean of knowledge lies open to be tapped. However, the youths should desist from browsing those areas that are harmful to their spirituality, health and mature growth like pornography. The internet offers one enormous accumulation of information but does not particularly teach those values needed for the eternal realization of man's ultimate destiny. Instead all the facts lie open for one to choose from, whether they are right or wrong. The modern Catholic evangelizers should make those billions of images which appear on millions of computer monitors around the planet, the galaxy of sight and sound to reflect the face of Christ and re-echo the voice of Christ (Achunike, H.C., 2002:64-81). The electronic revolution today should be applied positively for the realization of multiple possibilities in the field of evangelization. The Catholic lay faithful who are in this field cannot but evangelize by this means and they, indeed, need the co-operation of their other brothers and sisters.

Another area where the laity should exercise their mission is in the arena of Catholic education. The aim of Catholic education is not just to convert people to Christianity but it is also an enterprise which leads to the making of good citizens out of the students, citizens of good character and sound learning. In some schools, morality is decadent and incessant industrial action, examination malpractice, cultism and decay of infrastructures, for examples, suffocate the atmosphere for teaching and learning. The Church through her educationists should participate in education industry, ensure that religion is part of the curricula and thus imbue the young minds with the values of the gospel. This will definitely bring about remarkable dose of social transformation. In the words of Okafor, "the product of Christian education is the true and finished man of character who thinks, judges and acts constantly in accordance with the right reason, illumined by the light of the examples and teaching of Jesus Christ. If such men were ever needed in the world and in greater numbers, one would say, it is today (cf Ofojebe, W., 2002: 176). The problems facing education in Nigeria today are complex and multiple. These should not discourage the Church whose primary office is to teach. The lay faithful in the education sector and in the political class should promote the goals of Christian education.

Our discussion so far shows that the biblical, magisterial teachings and the contemporary opinions of theologians on the theological foundation of the mission of the laity agree that the laity have to work in the Church and as well evangelize the temporal affairs. The laity have their mission in the Church and in the secular arena.

Recommendations

Based on the above study, the following recommendations are hereby proffered**:**

There is greater need today more than ever on the necessity for laity formation; some lay faithful are literates in science, technology, and in many other academic fields but are ignorant of their identity or status and mission in the Church. This lack in knowledge breeds crises of faith and of responsibility in many ways. The priests should step up the platforms of catechesis and fuel the vehicles of kerygma so that Christ's lay faithful shall not perish for want of knowledge. The laity should be docile to learning the doctrines of the Christian faith so that they would be properly equipped for evangelization according to their status and mission.

Collective responsibility and collaboration between the hierarchy and the laity have permanent validity according to the missionary mandate given by Christ, the founder of Christianity. This understanding discourages clerical triumphalism and laical clique-ism in the Church. The laity by virtue of their baptismal character have mission given to them directly by Christ who made them co-workers with the ordained ministers in his vineyard.

References

Achunike, H. C. (2002). "Televangelism and the Survival of Churches in Nigeria, 1970 - 2000" in Achunike, H. C. (ed.) Evangelization in the Third Millennium (A Contemporary Analysis), Nimo; Anambra State: Rex Charles and Patrick, 64-8.

Anusionwu, V.O. (1994). The Role of the Laity in Missionary Activity of the Church in Igboland of Nigeria: A Historical and Pastoral Approach. Rome: Doctoral Thesis. 87.

Anyanwu, J. E. (2003) Unpulished Lecture Notes on Lay Apostolate in Africa. CIWA: Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Asanbe, J. (2003). "The Canonical Duties and Rights of the Lay Faithful in the Church" in Nwaoru, E. O. (ed.) Journal of Inculturation Theology Vol. 5, No. 1. Port Harcourt: CIWA Press.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) (2012). Communique, Promoting Authentic Development in Nigeria, Second Plenary, Umuahia: Bishop Anthony Nwedo Pastoral Centre, 8th -14th September. 8.

Cf. Ofojebe, W. (2002). "The Role of the Church in Education: Past, Present and Future" in Achunike, H. C. (ed.), 176.

Clement of Alexandria. Patrologia Graeca. 8, 201.

Congar, Y. (1965). Lay People in the Church. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press. Xi.

Ele, C. (2001). "Gospelization at the Frontiers of Nsukka Diocese" in The Shepherd Magazine (Maiden Edition). 45.

Flannery, A. (ed.) (1990). "Ad Gentes, Divinitus" 2, 21 in Vatican Council Volume I The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents. Ibadan: The Caxton Press (West Africa).

Flannery, A. (ed.) (1990). "Apostolicam Actuositatem" 1, 2.

Flannery, A. (ed.) (1990). "Lumen Gentium" 10, 48.

Keightley, G. M. (1987). "Laity" in The New Dictionary of Theology. Komonchak, J. A. et al (eds.) Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc. 559.

Ogunduyilemi, J. T. (2003). Unpublished Lecture Notes on Parish Administration. CIWA: Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Pope Benedict XVI (2005). Deus Caritas Est. God is Love. Rome: St Peter's. December, 25. (29).

Pope Benedict XVI (2009). "Address" to Visiting Bishops from Brazil in Vatican City: https://www.catholicsgency.com/news/priests_cannot_be_replaced_b..., retrieved 4/10/19. 1.

Pope Benedict XVI (2012). "Pope Benedict Calls Lay Faithful to be Co-responsible for the Church" in Castel Gandolfo: https://www.catholic.org/news/international/europe/story.phd?=47310, retrieved on 4/10/19. 1-2.

Pope Francis (2013). Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel , Rome: St. Peter's. November, 24. (102).

Pope Francis (2016). "The Catholic Laity can transform the World" "Address" to Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Vatican City: https://www.catholicnewsagency.com>f..., retrieved on 4/10/2019, 1-2.

Pope John Paul II (1995). Ecclesia in Africa. Owerri: Assumpta Press. 55.

Pope John Paul II (1981). Familiaris Consortio. 17.

Pope John Paul II (1983). The Code of Canon Law. 225 § 2.

Pope John Paul II (1998). Christifideles Laici. Bombay: Pauline Publications. 40.

Pope Paul VI (1967). Populorum Progressio, On the Development of Peoples. Rome: St. Peter's. (33).

Pope Paul VI (1975). "Evangelii Nuntiandi", 15, 70 in Flannery, A. (ed.) (1990). Vatican Council Volume II More Post Conciliar Documents. Ibadan: The Caxton Press (West Africa).

Schineller, P. (ed.) (2002). The Voice of the Voiceless. (Pastoral Letters and Communiques of The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (1960 - 2002). Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nigeria. 28.

Tanko, P. B. (1999). "The Catholic Laity and Nation Building" in Awan, A. et al (eds.) Corruption in Nigeria. 1999 Annual Conference of Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria, Uyo. Abuja: Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria. 52.